

# The First Word: The LORD

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[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning. My name is Sean. For those of you who are new or don't know me, it's good to see some faces coming back from summer break and traveling. It's good to see some new faces as well. Please turn with me in your Bibles to Exodus chapter 20.

We've been in a series in the book of Exodus for a while now. If you don't have a Bible, if you raise your hand, we have some people around us who can bring you a Bible that you can use while you're here. We're in chapter 20, which is where we find the famous Ten Commandments of the Bible.

We're going to do a mini-series within our series in the book of Exodus. We're going to slow way down and take ten weeks to cover the Ten Commandments, one commandment at a time.

I know that's the slower pace than we usually go through the Bible, but I think it will serve us. So Exodus 20, 1-3, let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's Word.

Heavenly Father, Your law is perfect. It is sweeter than honey from the honeycomb.

[ 1 : 26 ] It refreshes our souls. And so we incline our ears and our hearts to Your Word once again. May the words of our mouths and the meditations of all of our hearts be pleasing in Your sight, O Lord, our rock and redeemer.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. If you would please stand with me for the reading of God's Word from Exodus 20. I will read just verses 1, 2, 3.

And God spoke all these words, saying, I am the Lord, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

You shall have no other gods before me. This is God's holy and authoritative Word.

Please be seated. The Ten Commandments are arguably the best known verses in all of the Old Testament.

[ 2 : 46 ] You know, substantive philosophers and legal scholars from all generations have wrestled with its meaning and significance, including from Philo to King Alfred, Thomas Aquinas, John Calvin, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Montesquieu, Immanuel Kant, Thomas Jefferson, Pascal, Spinoza, Nietzsche, and more.

But despite its indisputable influence and impact on human civilization, people have also rebelled against the Ten Commandments in every age. In fact, it has become fashionable in the 20th and 21st century to devise one's own Ten Commandments, to replace the original Ten Commandments. Bertrand Russell, the British philosopher and mathematician and a famous atheist, formulated his own Ten Commandments in 1951. Michael Schmidt Salomon, a German philosopher, devised his own set of Ten Commandments in his 2005 book, Manifesto of Evolutionary Humanism.

Richard Dawkins, the English biologist and a promulgator of atheism, wrote his own alternative Ten Commandments in his book, The God Delusion, in 2006. And his compatriot, Christopher Hitchens, the English journalist, wrote his own version in a 2010 Vanity Fair article.

And the latest one I'm aware of is Lex Bair and John Figdors. John Figdor was formerly an atheist humanist chaplain at Stanford University. And as a publicity stunt, they crowdsourced a new version of the Ten Commandments with submissions by nearly 3,000 or so people.

[ 4 : 27 ] And then they wrote their own version of the Ten Commandments and published it in a book called Atheist Mind, Humanist Heart, rewriting the Ten Commandments for the 21st century. It's from 2014.

And they cheekily call their Ten Commandments the Ten Non-Commandments. And as I read through these pseudo Ten Commandments, I noticed some fascinating overlaps.

For example, they invariably contain a commandment that is explicitly a rejection of divine authority and a reification of human ability to discern truth for itself.

One of Bertrand Russell's commandment is, have no respect for the authority of others, for there are always contrary authorities to be found. Michael Schmidt Solomon says, have no fear of authorities, but rather the courage to reason for yourself. Richard Dawkins writes, form independent opinion on the basis of your own reason and experience. Do not allow yourself to be led blindly by others. Question everything. Christopher Hitchens' last commandment is this, be willing to renounce any God or any faith if any holy commandments should contradict any of the above, meaning any of Christopher Hitchens' Ten Commandments. [ 5 : 50 ] Christopher Hitchens baldly claims to be the final arbiter of truth in place of God. The crowdsourced version of Bayer and Figdor's Ten Commandments says, God is not necessary to be a good person or to live a full and meaningful life.

There is no one right way to live. And their official version says, there is no God. There is no universal moral truth. Our experiences and preferences shape our sense of how to behave. Fascinating overlaps. In summary, every single one of these Pseudo-Ten Commandments remove divine authority as the foundation for morality and replaces it with human authority. It takes God out of the center of life and puts man at the center of it and that is the biblical definition of sin and pride.

These man-made Ten Commandments not surprisingly lack a foundation and are full of contradictions. Several of them include the golden rule which is taken from Matthew 7, 12. [ 6 : 58 ] Whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them. They also include, they include that from the Bible without any sense of irony. And then several of them propound moral relativism.

They say there is no moral truth. But then immediately, side by side, they make absolute moral claims that people have to obey. I mean, if there is no one right way to live, how can you even have Ten Commandments?

As renowned Yale law professor Arthur Allen Leff once noted in his article, in the presumed absence of God, the only available evaluators are people. Then only a determinate and reasonably small number of kinds of ethical and legal systems can be generated. Each such system will be strongly differentiated by the axiomatic answer it chooses to give to one key question.

Who among us ought to be able to declare law that ought to be obeyed? Stated that baldly, the question is so intellectually unsettling that one would expect to find a noticeable number of legal and ethical thinkers trying not to come to grips with it.

[ 8 : 10 ] Either God exists or he does not. But if he does not, nothing and no one else can take his place. So we're back to square zero.

And we come to appreciate the wisdom of Exodus 20 verse 1. And God spoke all these words. The foundation of human morality is not man, but God.

Only God can speak into law what ought to be obeyed by all of humanity. Human reason is woefully inadequate foundation for human life. We need divine revelation.

Verse 1 emphasizes that these are the words of God himself, twice using the Hebrew word for word, once in the noun form, all these words, and then once in the verbal form, God said, saying. So this is why what we know the Ten Commandments, what we know as the Ten Commandments are called traditionally the Ten Words. That's what it means in Hebrew, the Ten Words of God.

[ 9 : 18 ] That's what it's called in Exodus 34, 28, Deuteronomy 4, 13. And that's why sometimes the Ten Commandments are called the Decalogue. You've probably heard that before. That's from the Greek words, to make up ten words.

That's what it means. And these are not ten impersonal laws or abstract commandments or principles that are derived from some rationality or human culture. They are not laws devised by men in order to control the masses.

No, they are ten words that God spoke. And therefore they carry divine authority. This is the first striking insight from this passage.

The Lord is a speaking God. Scripture repeatedly makes the point that while the idols of the world cannot speak, the Lord, the true God, speaks.

Jeremiah 10, 5 mocks the idols of this world precisely at this point. It says their idols are like scarecrows in a cucumber field and they cannot speak. A God that does not speak can be manipulated to our liking.

[10:25] We can speak for that God. We can put words in his mouth. And this is precisely what sinful human beings want to do. We want to call the shots.

We want to be in the driver's seat. As Peter Jensen, an Australian bishop and theologian, writes in his book at the heart of the universe, we would prefer a dumb, dark thing, a non-relational, far away God to be approached on our own terms and worshipped as we see fit.

We want a God that we can approach on our own terms. We want a God that we can worship when it's convenient and when we feel like it. We want a God that helps us fit in with the culture and makes us popular with the world.

We want a God who will comfort us and make us feel better about ourselves without making any uncomfortable or difficult demands of us. We want a God who conforms to our agendas and sensibilities, not a God who demands our allegiance and submission.

But approaching God on our own terms and worshipping him as we see fit is not possible when it comes to Yahweh because he speaks.

[11:39] The Lord defines himself. We cannot define him to our liking. The Lord speaks the words to which we, you and I, are held accountable.

We cannot put our own words in his mouth. And the first thing that the Lord speaks in verse 2 is his name, his identity.

I am the Lord. When the word Lord appears in all caps in the Bible, as I've mentioned before, it's a rendering of the four consonant name of God.

In English, Y-H-W-H, Yahweh or Yehovah. Earlier in chapter 3, the Lord revealed the meaning of his name to Moses saying, I am who I am.

That means the Lord, Yahweh, is self-existent. He is sovereign. He is sovereign. All other beings are derivative and dependent.

[12:39] But God is self-existent and independent, not dependent on anything else. It also means that he is unchanging and timeless. He is not different from who he was.

And who he was is not different from who he will be. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He was and is and will be. That is what it means to be the I am who I am.

And that means God is faithful. He is always true to himself, faithful to his character. You and I, because we're fallible and sinful, we can fold under pressure and act out of character in a manner that is inconsistent with our own convictions.

But God never does that because he is the I am who I am. The words of man fall to the ground, but the word of the Lord never falls to the ground. Human checks bounce.

Human deals fall through. Human guarantees fail. But the promises of the Lord always prove true. So when God made his promise to deliver Israel from their slavery in Egypt, he was signing on the dotted line when he declared his name, Yahweh.

[13:53] He was putting his glory and reputation on the line. And here in Exodus 20, verse 2, we are reminded of the fact that Yahweh has made good on his promises. I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

He has done it. He has redeemed Israel from their slavery in Egypt. And this is very important. Note well here that the Lord gives the law, the Ten Commandments, to the Israelites after he has already delivered them out of Egypt.

God is not saying to his people, if you obey all these commandments, then I will bring you out of the land of Egypt. God has already brought them out.

The law of God is not the condition that Israel must meet or a cost that they must pay in order to be delivered. The law sets Israel apart as God's people because God has already chosen them and because he has already delivered them.

It's because the Lord has already rescued Israel from their servitude Pharaoh in order to serve him, in order that they might serve him, that he now gives them this law. It's the same for us as Christians.

[15:12] All of the imperatives of Scripture, what we must do, are based on the indicatives of Scripture, what God has already done in Christ. Christianity is the only religion in the world that flips this around.

Every other religion in the world is merit-based, is what you do that earns God's favor, the favor of the deity, but in Christianity you have the unmerited favor of God, that is the grace of God, and then he sets us apart with his law.

In Egypt, the Lord delivered Israel with the sacrifice of the Passover lamb, and here, the Lord delivers God's people, he delivers us with the blood of Jesus Christ, the Passover lamb. And it's because we have been saved and not belong to him that we now live a holy life of obedience. This is a pattern that's consistent throughout Scripture. Look at what Ephesians 4, verse 1 says, walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called. In other words, you have already been called to belong to God. You are his, and therefore, live like it. Walk in a manner worthy of it.

[16:29] 1 Corinthians 6, 20 says, for you were bought with a price, so glorify God in your body. We don't glorify God with our bodies.

in order to earn God's favor and gain our standing with God. No, we glorify him because we have already been bought with a price by the blood of Jesus Christ.

When you feel guilty and ashamed due to sin in your life, do you feel like you cannot approach God in prayer or worship? Do you feel like you cannot serve him because of how sinful you are?

When you sin, do you beat yourself up, wallow in guilt, and try with all your might to conjure up feelings of sincere remorse and squeeze out some tears in order to feel like you've done enough penance?

When you have not read your Bible for the day, do you feel like God is not going to bless your day or answer your prayers? If you've answered yes to any of those questions, then you are living as if the basis for your right standing with God is not what Christ has accomplished for you, but what you do, your performance.

[17:50] The good news of Jesus Christ comes for our good works. And it's only when we rightly understand the gospel that we can rightly understand the law.

The law is given not to enslave us, but to protect us from being enslaved again. The law is not a cage to keep us in, but a fence to keep evil out.

The law is an expression of God's grace for those whom he has already saved by his grace. God's grace is not a curse. And it's not a curse. It's not a curse.

This now brings us to the actual commandment. The first of the ten words in verse three, you shall have no other gods before me. Before getting to the substance of the command, we need to note that this command is addressed personally and individually.

The second person pronoun, you, is singular in the Hebrew. Early in verse two, when the Lord said, I am the Lord, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the second person pronouns there were also singular, and that's unusual.

[19:02] The phrase, I am the Lord, your God, occurs frequently in the Old Testament, and usually it is addressed collectively to Israelites as a nation. So the you and the your is plural, usually.

But this is one of those rare instances when the you is singular. So then verse two is highly personal. I am the Lord, your God.

The Lord is not speaking to you all. He is not speaking to the Israelites collectively. No, he is addressing his ten words, eyeball to eyeball, to every individual Israelite.

He is pointing his finger and saying, I am the Lord, your God. And you have to remember the context in which this command is being given.

Matt preached an excellent sermon for us this past Sunday from chapter 19. Remember some of the details from that. We're here on Mount Sinai, and the mountain is literally on fire because the Lord has descended on it in fire.

[20:07] Thick cloud and smoke is swirling all around it. There are thunders and lightnings. We had a pretty spectacular thunderstorm on Friday. Was it Friday? It was awe-inspiring.

Imagine being outside in the middle of that and imagine that happening all right in front of you, right around the mountain. And there's a very loud trumpet blast, so loud in fact that it says it makes the people physically tremble.

You've all seen like souped up cars pull up next to you with the bass all the way turned up and the volume turned all the way up and it's so loud. It's not shaking just their car, it's shaking your car and you're in it.

So imagine that except enough to shake a throng of hundreds of thousands of people. And not only the people are trembling, it says the whole mountain trembled greatly.

So it's an earthquake, a thunderstorm, and a conflagration, a forest fire. Maybe it's, maybe it looks a lot like a volcanic eruption. It's all wrapped up in one.

[ 21 : 22 ] It's an apocalyptic scene. And not only that, you have to take three whole days to prepare and to purify yourself for this encounter with God.

And even after purifying yourself for three whole days, if you are not Moses or Aaron or the priest, you could not even touch the edge of the mountain. So imagine, in modern day, this is anachronistic, but imagine hazard tapes, the bright yellow and black hazard tapes all around the mountain with do not enter signs or rather, if you enter, you will die signs.

That's the context. Everything about the situation screams the Lord is holy. The Lord is mighty. The Lord is awesome. Not awesome in the trite sense that we use the word awesome, like everything that is remotely positive is awesome.

No, awesome in the sense that he makes you fall prostrate with your face down to the ground in utter submission. Awesome. Terrifyingly, breathtakingly awesome.

[ 22 : 42 ] And it's in that environment that Yahweh finally speaks and as you listen with bated breath, you cannot believe your ears. This immense and awesome God singles you out and says, I am the Lord your God.

God. Do you get what an unspeakable privilege this is? Sure, you're the God of all creation.

Yeah. Well, of course, you're the God of the nation of Israel. But wait a minute. You're telling me that you are my God.

You, the great I am, the ancient of days, the rock of ages, the Lord almighty, you are my God.

Yes, that is exactly what he is saying. If you are a Christian, God chose you specifically and individually from before the foundation of the world.

[ 24 : 08 ] He knew you specifically and individually when you were still in your mother's womb. And this morning, he declares over you, you are mine and I am yours.

I am the Lord your God. And it's precisely because the Lord is your God that the first commandment is absolutely necessary.

You shall have no other gods before me. The command, you shall have no other gods is intentionally general in order to be comprehensive.

It encompasses all the other commands in scripture about idolatry. Later in Exodus 23, 13, it says, make no mention of the names of other gods. Many places in scripture say, you shall not go after other gods or serve other gods or turn to other gods.

Other verses say, more specifically, you shall not fear other gods. You shall not bow yourselves to other gods or sacrifice to other gods. But the second command encompasses them all.

[ 25 : 22 ] You shall have no other gods. You can't even have them. In light of its cultural context, this command is all the more remarkable because every surrounding nation in the ancient Near East was polytheistic.

Yahweh's demand for total exclusive allegiance and worship is unique, literally unique in the history of religion.

Some scholars argue that the first commandment does not actually teach monotheism, which teaches that there is only one God. Some scholars argue that the first commandment reflects henotheism, which is believing that there are many gods but believing that there is one god among them all that is supreme.

But that's not true. Henotheistic nations, when they fought against other nations and they were victorious, they would pillage their belongings, including the other nations' idols, and then they would take those idols and place them in their temple of their god as a symbol to represent the fact that their god is superior.

Their god has subjugated these gods. That's what henotheistic nations do. But far from placing the foreign idols within their temple, the Israelites were commanded in Deuteronomy 7 verse 5 to break down their altars and dash in pieces their pillars and chop down their ashram and burn their carved images with fire.

[ 26 : 55 ] So in 1 Chronicles 14 verse 12 after defeating the Philistines it says that the Israelites left their gods there and David gave command and they were burned.

This is not a henotheistic practice. It's a strict monotheistic practice because there's only one God. Still others argue that Israel practiced monolatry rather than monotheism. Monolatry is where you acknowledge that there are other gods exist but you choose to worship only one God.

God. This is not quite accurate either because Jeremiah 2 11 states clearly that these other nations gods are no gods at all. They are not lesser deities or other people's deities they are no gods at all.

In Isaiah 41:29 the Lord says that the idols are all a delusion their works are nothing their metal images are empty wind. Paul also confirms this in 1 Corinthians 8:4-6 Therefore as to the eating of food offered to idols we know that an idol has no real existence and that there is no God but one for although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth as indeed there are many gods and many lords yet for us there is one God the Father from whom are all things and for whom we exist and one Lord Jesus Christ through whom are all things and through whom we exist God's people do not acknowledge other gods while worshipping one God we acknowledge that there is only one God and that's what the first commandment demands you shall have no other gods before me when it says you shall have no other gods before me that could be a little ambiguous in [28:55] English but that's not speaking of priority or order that you can't have any other gods before or ahead of Yahweh no in speaking of having no other gods period the phrase before me is a Hebrew idiom that literally means before my face it means it means in God's presence everywhere Psalm 139 where shall I go from your spirit or where shall I flee from your presence if I send to heaven you are there if I make my bed in Sheol you are there God is everywhere he says have no god before my face there's no exception to choose Yahweh is to forsake all other gods that's why prophet Elijah challenges the Israelites in 1 Kings 18:21 and he says to them how long will you go limping between two different opinions if the Lord is God follow him but if

Baal is then follow him this is an either or not a both and proposition that's why Joshua says in Joshua 24:15 choose this day whom you will serve whether the gods your father served in the region beyond the river or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell but ask for me and my house we will serve the Lord Yahweh will countenance no rival or peer in 1st Samuel 5:2 to 7 Philistines actually defeat the Israelites in battle because the Lord is no longer fighting on their behalf because of their sin and tragically Philistines capture the Ark of the Covenant which represents the footstool of God and they being good polytheists and henotheists place the Ark of the Covenant inside the temple of

Dagon and exactly what you would expect happens the next day they're going to the temple of Dagon and the idol of Dagon is decapitated falling before the Ark of the Covenant before the feet of the Lord God they quickly fix it up and dress it up and then they go to bed and the next day they come back again it is decapitated and this time his hands are cut off too and it's lying on the ground they realize okay we cannot keep the God of the Israelites with us he's too hard on us and on our God so they send the Ark of the Covenant back to the Israelites with offerings and sacrifices that's what a God is like we've been witnessing God's radical intolerance of other gods so far throughout the book of Exodus when the Lord was delivering Israel out of the land of Egypt remember what he said in Exodus 12:12 on all the gods of Egypt

I will execute judgments I am the Lord the Lord systematically demonstrated that the gods of Egypt are no gods at all through the signs and wonders that he brought there turned the Nile into blood exposed the god of the Nile Hopi as nothing the Lord brought a plague of frogs upon the land of Egypt exposing the Egyptian goddess of fertility Hecate or Hecate who takes the form of frog as nothing the Lord strikes the dust of the earth and turns them into gnats exposing the Egyptian god of the earth Geb to be nothing the Lord kills the livestock of Egypt with the plague exposing the Egyptian god Hathor who is depicted as a cow to be nothing the Lord sends a destructive thunderstorm upon Egypt exposing both the Egyptian god of the sky Horus and the god of the storm set as nothing the Lord destroyed the remaining crop of their crops with locusts exposing the Egyptian god of fertility and agriculture Osiris as nothing the Lord brought utter darkness upon Egypt exposing the Egyptian sun god Ra as nothing and finally he kills the firstborn son of the heir the heir parent of Pharaoh himself because Pharaoh styled himself to be god thereby exposing him to be no god at all and all of this serves this one purpose Exodus 9:14 that he might show that there is no there's none like me in all the earth the Lord is not content to be one of many gods or even to be the top god in your pantheon of gods he insists that he is the only god and demands worship to the exclusion of all other gods are there gods other than Yahweh in your life Jabulon

[33:59] Buddha Allah Shia an ancestral spirit it's not only these false gods that are objects of idolatry Habakkuk chapter 1 verse 11 speaks of guilty men might is their god some people worship their strength their might their authority their power Job says to God in Job 31:24 to 28 if I have made gold my trust or called fine gold my confidence if I have rejoiced because my wealth was abundant or because my hand had found much this also would be an iniquity to be punished by the judges for I would have been false to God above money can be an idol that's why Jesus says in

Matthew 6:4 you cannot serve both God and money Philippians 3:19 describes the enemies of the cross of Christ this way their God is their belly and they glory in their shame with minds set on earthly things

Colossians 3:5 teaches us that covetousness is idolatry it's not an accident that the first commandment is you shall have no other gods before me and the last commandment is you shall not covet there's a symmetry in the 10 commandments commands 1 2 3 and command 10 deal with the heart and the mind what you worship what you desire what you love and then command 4 and 9 deal with your speech what we say you shall not falsely represent God by taking up his name in vain and you shall not falsely represent your neighbor by giving false testimony and then commands 4 to 8 deal with your actions what we do so idolatry and coveting are intimately related so then from these biblical examples we can discern that an idol is one what you count on and put your trust in other than God and two an idol is what you desire and are devoted to more than God what do you count on and put your trust in other than God your attractiveness your athleticism your intelligence your wealth your spouse do you count on the next president to solve all your ills and guarantee a prosperous future do you rely on horoscopes or tarot cards for security you must cast down those idols because God will allow no rival do you covet a man or woman that is not your lawfully wedded husband or wife what do you desire and covet what are you devoted to more than God are you devoted to climbing the ladder of success are you devoted to having fun are you devoted to creating the picture perfect life or a family on

Instagram or YouTube are you devoted to getting likes and views are you devoted to pleasing your parents more than God are you devoted to your children more than you are to God Jesus says very clearly in Matthew 10:37 whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me are are are you devoted to preserving your own life your comfort and security at all costs evangelizing unbelievers at the cost of my reputation at work or school uprooting my family and moving to a foreign country to do missions work where there are bad schools and dirty water forget about it speaks very clearly about that too in Matthew 10:38 to 39 whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me whoever finds his life will lose it and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it we must cast down those idols these false gods did not bring you out of your slavery to sin they enslave you it's the

Lord who brought you out of your slavery to sin and you shall have no other gods before him this is the most important commandment out of the ten because everything else flows from it if you examine the penalties that are prescribed in other parts of the Old Testament for breaking these commandments you can see that there is a descending order of severity in the punishment which suggests that it's organized in that way doesn't mean the other commandments are not important it just flows that way the first five commandments are all connected to how we relate to and worship and honor God the second five commandments are all connected to how we relate and treat our neighbors this is why in Matthew 22 Jesus sums up the entire law of God with the greatest commandment you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind this is the great and first commandment and a second is like it you shall love your neighbor as yourself on these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets [39:37] Jesus is getting right to the heart of the first commandment it's about love and it's about loyalty it's about having an undivided heart because there is only one God our heart of devotion to God should be undivided for us as new covenant believers the first commandment applies not only to God the father but to Jesus as well to the triune God father son and holy spirit why because Jesus has fulfilled the first commandment and brought it to its intended end and goal in Exodus 20 Lord appeared on a mountain in a cloud revealed his glory and said you shall have no other gods before me but in Matthew 17 the Lord again appears on a mountain in a thick cloud and Jesus is transfigured and his glory is revealed and God the father speaks again but this time he says this is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased listen to him it says of

Jesus in John 1:17-18 for the law was given through Moses grace and Christ no one has ever seen God the only God who is at the father's side he has made him known Jesus is the one who fulfilled the law of Moses Jesus is the only God who is at the father's side he is the one the son of God who reveals the father truly to us and because Jesus brought the first commandment to its intended end and goal no one can worship the father while denying the son that means Muslims do not worship the same God as we do because they deny that Jesus is the son of God Allah of Islam is not the God of Christianity in fact not even all the Jews worship the same God as we do because many of

them also deny Jesus the son of

God 1 John 2:23 says clearly no one who denies the son has the father whoever confesses the son has the father also that's why the New Testament apostles treat the Jewish rejection of Jesus as tantamount to them rejecting their father their forefather's faith the God of the Old Testament is the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ so let me ask you do you love Jesus with all your heart with all your soul and all your mind because that is the first and greatest commandment if you're honest you will admit like I do that we have all been unfaithful to him later in Exodus 34 the Lord warns Israel not to whore after other gods the language of whoredom is picked up and used all throughout scripture because

God describes his covenant relationship with his people as a marriage in Jeremiah 31:32 the Lord says of his people they broke my covenant though I was their husband in the book of Hosea the Lord commands prophet Hosea to take a wife of whoredom who will cheat on him again and again and again with other men so that his life might be a living parable of how Israel God's people have even though they are betrothed to him were unfaithful to him again and again and again and that is all of our story we have cheated on him before his face it's like a shameless woman who brings in an adulterer before her husband's very eyes only to vex his mind the more that's what we have done to God to

Jesus our bridegroom what we would never tolerate in our own human marriages we have done recently to our God I know that nowadays there's increasingly talks of open marriages and such but I hope all of you have enough biblical sense and enough self respect to never consent to such a ridiculous arrangement the intimacy in marriage is directly proportional to its exclusivity that's why when I officiate weddings I invite the bride to declare her consent this way will you have this man to be your husband to live together in the covenant of marriage will you love him comfort him honor and keep him in sickness and in health and forsaking all others be faithful to him as long as you both shall live that's what marriage is but we have whored after other gods and that's why

[44:56] Jesus came to reclaim us as his bride that's why Jesus died on the cross it says in Ephesians 5:25 he gave himself up for his bride Jesus to sanctify her having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word in order to cleanse us of our infidelity and impurity Jesus died on the cross for our sins and rose victoriously from the dead and it's his blood that cleanses us of our guilt and removes our shame so for those of you who have not yet entrusted your life to Jesus Jesus is extending his hand out to you will you let him take your hand will you enter into a covenant relationship with him that's why we call our membership covenant a covenant because we as the body of Christ enter into we're saying we're pledging our relationship with

God our allegiance to him will you enter into a covenant relationship with God and forsaking all others be faithful to him for the rest of your life let's pray Lord help us forgive us for our idolatry forgive us for our infidelity thank you Lord for being Yahweh I am who I am because when we were faithless you were faithful we love you Lord in Jesus name we pray amen