

The Ten Commandments

Commandment 1: You shall have no other gods before me

How many gods do Christians worship? Christians are often accused of being polytheists (people who worship many gods) – especially by the Muslims due to their misunderstanding of the doctrine of the Trinity.

Exodus 20: 2 – 3 “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me.”

1) The case for monotheism

- Deuteronomy 6: 4 “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.”
 - It is vitally important that when God revealed His oneness that He does not use the general term for God – Elohim – but uses His covenant name – “Jehovah”
 - In other words He is not saying that there is only one God and we can choose which god that will be
 - What He is emphasising is that there is only one God and He – Jehovah, the God of the covenant – is that one and only God and there are no other gods besides him.
- We cannot say that all gods are one god with different names. There are fundamental and intrinsic differences between the gods of the various religions and Jehovah – the God of the covenant
 - Some are distant and impersonal
 - Some are a mere force
 - Some are sinful
- Thus Jehovah cannot be equated with other gods in any way – even to say that they are the same god with different names.
- Due to the “Shema” (Deuteronomy 6: 4) and the first commandment the Jews viewed relating anything or anyone to God or to be equal with God as blasphemy.
- John 10: 33 “We are not stoning you for any of these,” replied the Jews, “but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God.”
 - Jesus was accused of blasphemy in His claims to be God.
- Thus the oneness of God was a belief that was firmly entrenched in Jewish faith.
- Jesus never claimed to be a different god to Jehovah but rather He is the same God who came down to earth as a man.
 - John 1: 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
 - John 1: 14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us
- Thus in believing that Jesus is God we do not deny that God is one but God retained His unity – His oneness – even when He became a man in Jesus.
 - Only God can make a new covenant with man that would render the old covenant obsolete
 - Thus Jesus is the God of the covenant – not only the new covenant but also the old – one God who made 2 covenants

2) The LORD God is a jealous God

- Joshua 24: 19 – 20 Joshua said to the people, “You are not able to serve the LORD. He is a holy God; he is a jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your

sins. If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, he will turn and bring disaster on you and make an end of you, after he has been good to you."

- God had kept His covenant with His people – Israel – and had brought them out of slavery in Egypt as he had promised.
- No other god had delivered them but God himself.
- Moses cannot claim to have delivered them out of slavery as He couldn't have done it without God – it took a miracle of God to deliver a whole nation out of slavery from another nation.
 - We should not worship any person as if he/she is God or a god.
- The Israelites were prone to worship other gods
 - Whilst Moses was on the mountain receiving the ten commandments the Israelites made a golden calf and "These are your gods who brought you up out of Egypt" (Exodus 32: 4)
 - They did not delay in their worship of other gods breaking the first commandment before Moses had even brought it down the mountain.
 - God's anger burned against them and He wanted to destroy them but Moses interceded on their behalf.
 - Deuteronomy 4: 24 "For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God."

3) **We shall not have any other gods**

- God knew that the world was full of other gods that were worshipped
 - God had delivered Israel out of Egypt where many other gods were worshipped and many Israelites possibly worshipped the Egyptian gods as well
 - He was leading them to Canaan where the people worshipped other gods.
- Knowing how easy it would be for the Israelites to be led astray to worship other gods besides Himself He gave the first commandment so that they knew what was expected of them when confronted with such a temptation.
 - 2 Corinthians 11: 3 – 4 "But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough."
- Even under the New Covenant we can be led astray to serve other gods rather than having a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.
- Various Christians worship many things along with Jesus:
 - Ancestors
 - Spirits
 - Mary
 - Saints
- Others put their trust in things as if they were god and rather trust them than trust god:
 - Money – bank account
 - Job
 - Insurance company
 - People
- What gods do we place before God?
- If we have any gods before God – if we have lost our sincere and pure devotion to Christ and have become more devoted to anything or anyone else then we need to repent and turn back to give our primary devotion to Jesus