



1st Commandment: No Other Gods

Video Transcript

Chapter 1: A Covenant Offer

00:00-01:42

Tim: The 10 Commandments don't come out of nowhere. They are what God says to Israel after he rescues them out of Egypt and then brings them to the foot of Mount Sinai. And God's offer is this, "Listen to my voice. Keep my covenant."

Jon: Okay.

Tim: The terms of this covenant are gonna set you apart. It's gonna be a holy nation, set apart. It'll be a priestly kingdom. And then my representatives to the nations. So that's God's offer, and the 10 Commandments are the first of these terms of the covenant.

And they begin this way, Exodus 20, verse 2: "I am Yahweh, your Elohim, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery."

So notice what we begin with is who God is to the people. This is a family whose fundamental identity is "we used to be slaves." So we are a liberated people, and Yahweh is our liberator. Which means that one way to think about the Ten Commandments is it's like a freedom ethic. It's the ethic of the free.

Jon: How to live as a free people.

Tim: Yeah. Also this thing of "I am Yahweh, your Elohim." I'm yours. There's a phrase that's going to get repeated throughout Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, and the prophets, this phrase where God will say, "I will be your God and you will be

my people." And this is really similar to the well-known phrase from the Song of Songs, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine." This is covenant language.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So there's no command here. The first words of the 10 Commandments are not a command, they're just a statement.

Chapter 2: The Meaning of "Before Me"

01:42-02:59

Tim: So with that in mind, let's now hear the first actual command of the 10 words.
"There will not be for you any other *elohim* before me."

Now, that little phrase "before me," *'al peney* or *'al panai*, is a very common prepositional phrase, this is the grammar term, to refer to something being in a physical location, like right in front of you. It most literally means "in front of my face." But this phrase also can mean "against the face."

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So let's say you have a hostile army coming towards you. They are also before your face.

Jon: Before your face, but they're coming against you.

Tim: Against your face.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Yeah. Okay.

Tim: So this phrase *'al-panai* also—this is going to be confusing to us—can be used not in the sense of in front of you but in the sense of beside you.

Jon: Hmm?

Tim: It is sometimes used in the sense of "instead of."

Jon: It's very flexible?

Tim: It's very flexible. But you can actually plug this idea of "no other *elohim*" into every one of those meanings, and it works.

Jon: So don't put anything else in front of me, beside me, against me, instead of me.

Tim: "There will not be for you any other *elohim*," No thing else is your life.

Chapter 3: Other *Elohim*

03:07-04:00

Jon: Okay. And *elohim* is the Hebrew word that just means “spiritual being.”

Tim: Yes. And it is used to refer to the one God of Israel, the creator of all, but then also to other spiritual beings, real or imagined.

Jon: We do know that there’s other spiritual beings. We call them the host of heaven.

Tim: Yeah, and then they’re also called by other titles in the Bible. So messengers, that is, angels. You have the divine council members, like the sons of God. Spirits, this is the class of creatures that are spiritual beings. Deuteronomy 10:17, Moses says, “Yahweh, your Elohim, he is the Elohim of *elohim*.”

Jon: Yeah, he’s in a class of its own.

Tim: Yes. Any other spiritual being other than Yahweh isn’t on the same rank as Yahweh and is not worthy of your ultimate loyalty and allegiance.

Chapter 4: Spiritual Powers Today

04:00-05:17

Jon: Okay. In our context, we kind of dismiss this idea, almost too much, of other spiritual powers.

Tim: Yeah. But we do actually still have these higher powers, higher ideals that command our loyalty. And when humans give our imaginations and desires and allegiances to anything that’s not the source of all reality, it will eventually lead us on a path that dehumanizes us and other people. I guess it’s easy to see that with sex, for example, or with money.

Jon: With greed.

Tim: Yeah, or with power. When those become ends in themselves, it leads to our destruction.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: It is possible to live your human existence in a lie, thinking that someone or something or some power has a claim on me that actually doesn’t. But when I get in touch with the one who truly has a claim on my life, because they’re the author of my life, then I’m living in the truth, and I’m living in the road to freedom.

That’s a concept that we’re watching come into birth right here as we hear God say these words. These are world-shaping words. And it’s just the first command.