

## TEXTUAL ISSUES NAMES 20 (EXODUS 20)

CONTEXT...

- ⌘ What am I to do with “these people?”
- ⌘ The Amalekites learned not to mess with the Lord God Yahweh. *Yahweh is our banner!*
- ⌘ Moses gets some great advice:  
*Teach them the decrees and laws, and show them the way to live and the duties they are to perform.* –Jethro<sup>Exodus 18:20</sup>  
*Now I know that the LORD is greater than all other gods, for he did this to those who had treated Israel arrogantly.* –Jethro<sup>Exodus 18:11</sup>
- ⌘ After Moses had gone down the mountain to the people, he consecrated them, and they washed their clothes. Then he said to the people, “Prepare yourselves for the third day. Abstain from sexual relations.” –Exodus 19:14-15

Exodus 20:1-11. *How to Revere the Lord God Yahweh.* With their consecration, the people awaited the Lord God to speak, and wow did He...

*I am the I AM, your God; I am the One who brought you out of slavery in Egypt. Therefore—*

1. *You shall worship no gods but Me.*
2. *You shall not make idols of anything, in heaven, on the earth or in the sea. Furthermore, you shall not bow down to them—because? I am, Yahweh the Lord Your God, and I am jealous of my creation, for I punish the children for the sin of the fathers to the third & fourth generation of those who hate Me. BUT, I show love to a thousand generations of those who love Me and keep My commandments.*
3. *You shall not abuse My authority, for My Name is sacred—I am Yahweh your creator. The Lord God Yahweh will not excuse those who misuse the Name; e.g., who take oaths flippantly in My Name.*
4. *Remember Sabbath. Keep it holy, set apart, sacred. You’ve got six days a week to work, but on the seventh day—that is a Sabbath, dedicated to the Lord God Yahweh, your creator. On the Sabbath, you will not do any work, nor your children, nor your servants, nor your animals, nor the visitors within your city. After all, in six days, Yahweh made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all of creation. But Yahweh rested on the seventh day. So? Yahweh, the Lord God Almighty, set apart the Sabbath, thus making it holy.*

### EXODUS 20:1-11

And God spoke all these words:

- <sup>2</sup>“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.  
<sup>3</sup>“You shall have no other gods before [or *besides*] me.  
<sup>4</sup>“You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. <sup>5</sup>You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me, <sup>6</sup>but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love Me and keep My commandments.  
<sup>7</sup>“You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses His name.  
<sup>8</sup>“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. <sup>9</sup>Six days you shall labor and do all your work, <sup>10</sup>but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. <sup>11</sup>For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but He rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

- Q Who is Yahweh in this passage—that is, how does He introduce Himself as the author in a preamble to the Ten Commandments (“words”)?
- Q Why does the Lord God want us to worship only Him, the Lord God Almighty?
- Q How does idol making interfere with worshipping the Lord God? Why not a statue? A painting? Veneration vs. worship... Compare the worship area in a CofC to a Roman Catholic to a Baptist. And, what about crying out, “Oh, my stars!”—idolatry, or slippery linguistics?
- Q Why does the Lord God punish the children, to the third and fourth generation no less, for their fathers who “hate the Lord God?” See especially Deuteronomy 24:16: “Fathers are not to be put to death for their children or children for their fathers; each person will be put to death for his own sin.”
- Q How does the Lord God’s extension of love to thousands of generations for love and obedience help us revere the Lord God?
- Q How is idol worship connected to all His reminders about punishment and reward for generations to come? [Hint: check out 1 Samuel 19:13]
- Q Why would the Lord God need to remind us not to use His authority in vain, to misuse His authority? Just what authority do we have when using His authority in our interaction with others? What does it mean to cry out, “Sweet Jesus!” or “God damn it!” or “Oh my lord!” or “Gosh!”
- Q What is the purpose of keeping Sabbath? See [TheScoop.DThomasPorter.com/?p=256](http://TheScoop.DThomasPorter.com/?p=256)
- Q Why did the Lord God make Sabbath holy? Going to lunch today at Chick-fil-A? Why not?
- Q How should we observe Sabbath? On what day should it be observed? And, for those who must work on the Sabbath day? Pastors, first responders, Rabbi’s, nurses, physicians?
- Q Why is it important to obey these first four commandments?



God is smart—<sup>14</sup>

His commands are there to help us stay  
closer to the Lord our God.

<sup>14</sup>“God is not very smart, for “very” implies a non-existent continuum. God is smart, period, in the absolute. Therefore, we can better understand God’s revelation in history, the natural world, and in Scripture if we continually ask—**Why** did God allow that in history? **Why** did God create the world with such beauty, and trauma? **Why** did God give us these commands in Scripture? With every answer, we learn how and why... God is smart. “God is smart” thus becomes a potent hermeneutic.” Use it often and much more of the full riches of our heritage will become apparent. See <http://TheScoop.DThomasPorter.com/?p=114>

Exodus 20:12-17. How to Revere People.

5. *Cherish, honor and take care of your father and mother—when you do, you will live long in the land the Lord God Yahweh Almighty is giving you.*
6. *You shall not murder, in thought, word or deed.*
7. *You shall not violate your covenant of marriage—do not commit adultery, in thought, word or deed.*
8. *You shall not take what is not yours—do not steal.*
9. *You shall not provide false evidence against your neighbor.*
10. *You shall not be discontented because you want your neighbor's house, your neighbor's spouse, your neighbor's wealth, whether in terms of servants, employees, or animals—anything that belongs to your neighbor.*

**EXODUS 20:12-17**

And God spoke these words:

"Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.

<sup>13</sup>"You shall not murder.

<sup>14</sup>"You shall not commit adultery.

<sup>15</sup>"You shall not steal.

<sup>16</sup>"You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

<sup>17</sup>"You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

- Q Why are we to "honor our father and mother?" How does this help us revere people, the creation of the Lord God? Why does God's command come true?
- Q When should we murder? When should we not? What is it about murder that creates distance between us and the God we serve? Why? Distance between us and other people?
- Q Why should we not steal? What is it about stealing that creates distance between us and the God we serve? Distance between us and other people?
- Q When should we lie? Should we ever give false testimony? Under what circumstances do we lie? Give false testimony? Distance between us and other people?
- Q What's the problem with coveting? Is that not what drives the capitalistic system? What is it about coveting that creates distance between us and the God we serve?

Exodus 20:18-26. The People React & God

*Elaborates.* As the thunder and lightning, to say nothing of a trumpet blasting, and a smoky mountain, we trembled in fear, keeping our distance from the mountain where the Lord God and Moses were having their tête à tête. Kvetching to Moses, we said—“Speak to us yourself, but we do not want the Lord God speak to us. Otherwise, we will die!”

Moses reassured us—“Don’t be afraid, for God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from being separated from Him.” So, we did indeed remain at a distance while Moses and God were enveloped in a thick darkness during their tête à tête.

Yahweh then said: *Tell them you have seen for yourselves that I, the Lord God, have spoken from heaven—so, don’t make for yourselves little gods of silver or gods of gold. Here’s what you are to do:*

*Make an altar of earth for Me—sacrifice your burnt offerings [holocaust] and fellowship offerings, your sheep and goats and cattle.*

*Wherever I cause My name to be honored, I will come to you, keeping you close to Me. If you decide to make an altar of stones, make sure they are not dressed—tools defile such an altar. And, for the record, when you go up to My altar, don’t use steps. Otherwise, your nakedness will be exposed on it.*

- Q Why were we afraid of the Lord God to speak to us? And now?
- Q Why did the Lord God come to earth, testing us?
- Q Why were we commanded to avoid making any god images of silver and/or gold?



What is the cause of the Lord God’s name being honored during a sacrifice?

Why not dressed stones for the altar?

And avoiding steps? What’s that all about? [Hint: see Deuteronomy 23:12ff]<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup>“Designate a place outside the camp where you can go to relieve yourself. As part of your equipment have something to dig with, and when you relieve yourself, dig a hole and cover up your excrement. For the LORD your God moves about in your camp to protect you and to deliver your enemies to you. Your camp must be holy, so that he will not see among you anything indecent and turn away from you.”

**EXODUS 20:18-26**

When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance <sup>19</sup> and said to Moses, “Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die.”

<sup>20</sup> Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning."

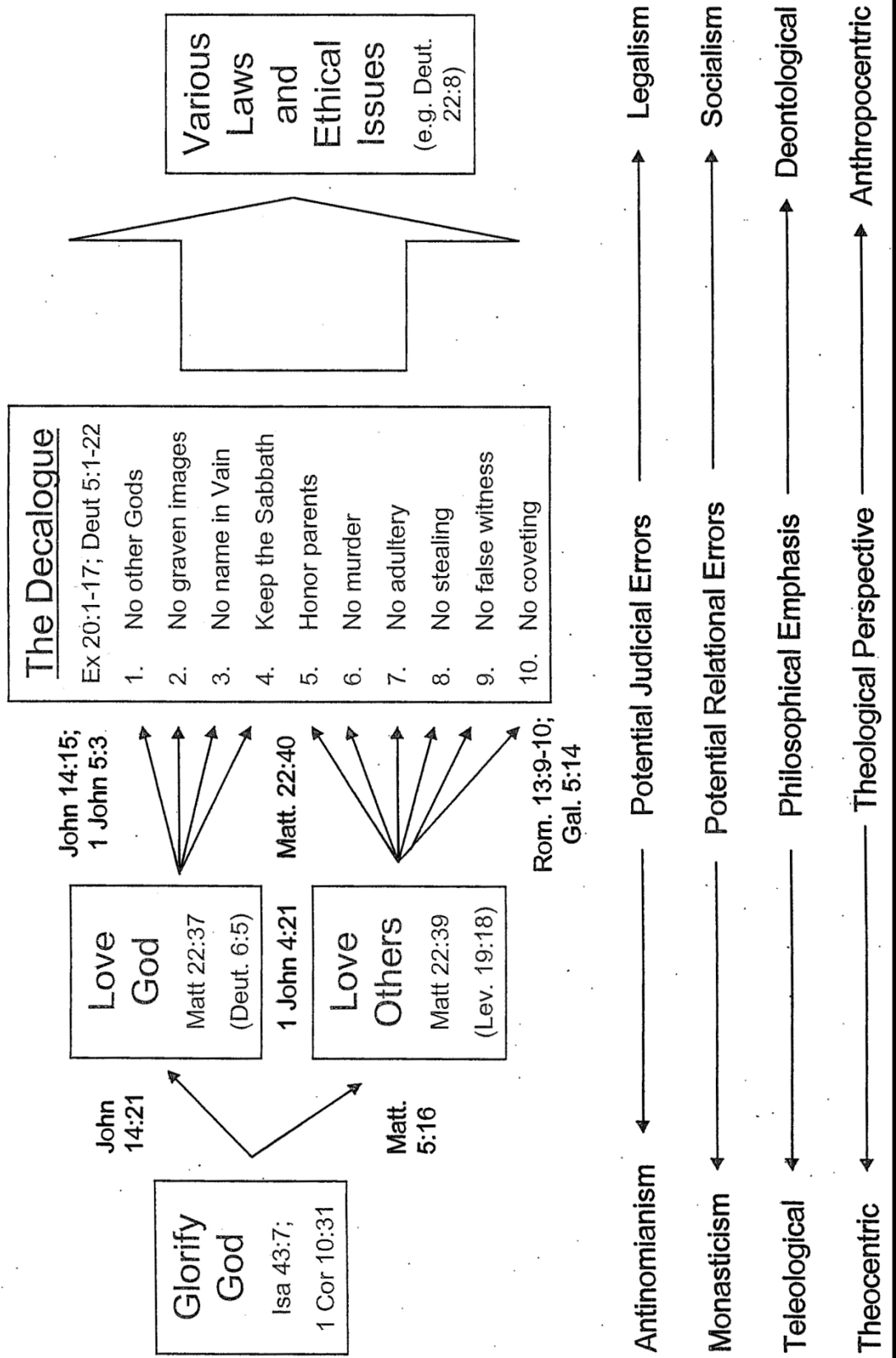
<sup>21</sup> The people remained at a distance, while Moses approached the thick darkness where God was.

<sup>22</sup> Then the LORD said to Moses, “Tell the Israelites this: ‘You have seen for yourselves that I have spoken to you from heaven: <sup>23</sup> Do not make any gods to be alongside Me; do not make for yourselves gods of silver or gods of gold.

<sup>24</sup> ‘Make an altar of earth for Me and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, [often interpreted as “peace offerings”] your sheep and goats and your cattle. Wherever I cause My name to be honored, I will come to you and bless you. <sup>25</sup> If you make an altar of stones for Me, do not build it with dressed stones, for you will defile it if you use a tool on it. <sup>26</sup> And do not go up to My altar on steps, lest your nakedness be exposed on it.”



# The Structure of Christian Ethics





**20:1** *words*. A technical term for "(covenant) stipulations" in the ancient Near East (e.g., among the Hittites; see also 24:3,8; 34:28). The basic code in Israel's divine law is found in vv. 2-17, elsewhere called the "Ten Commandments" (34:28; Dt 4:13; 10:4), the Hebrew words for which mean literally "Ten Words." "Decalogue," a term of Greek origin often used as a synonym for the Ten Commandments, also means literally "Ten Words."

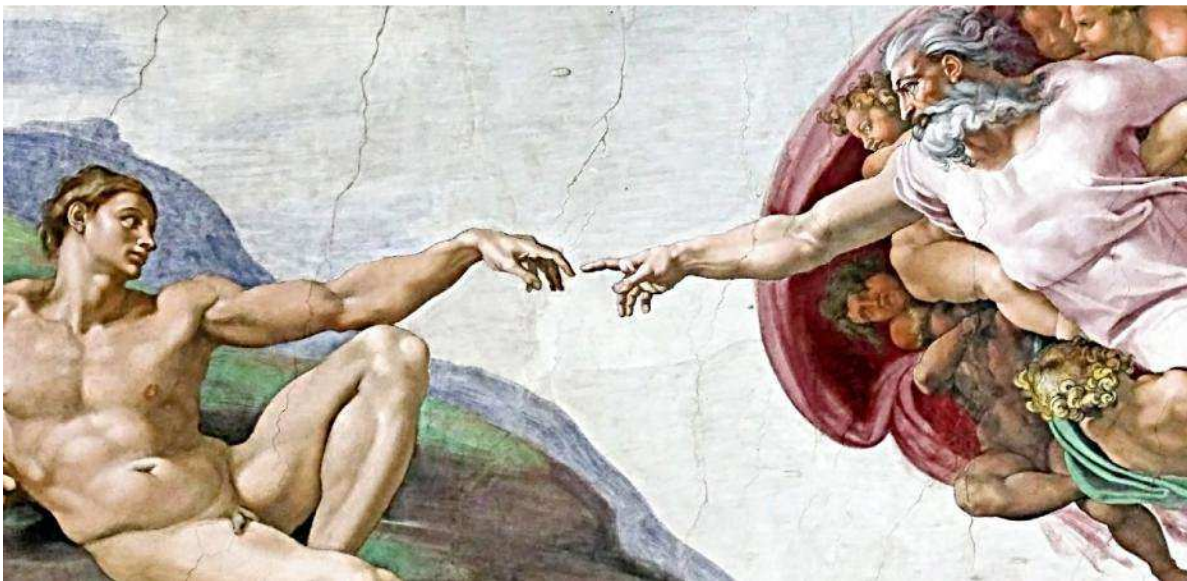
**20:2** *I am the LORD your God, who brought you out*. The Decalogue reflects the structure of the contemporary royal treaties (see note on Ge 15:7). On the basis of

- (1) a preamble, in which the great king identified himself ("I am the LORD your God"), and
- (2) a historical prologue, in which he sketched his previous gracious acts toward the subject king or people ("who brought you out . . ."), he then set forth
- (3) the treaty (covenant) stipulations (see Dt 5:1-3,7-21) to be obeyed (in this case, ten in number: vv. 3-17).

Use of this ancient royal treaty pattern shows that the Lord is here formally acknowledged as Israel's King and that Israel is his subject people. As his subjects, his covenant people are to render complete submission, allegiance and obedience to him out of gratitude for his mercies, reverence for his sovereignty, and trust in his continuing care. Yet, when one examines these commandments more closely, one can easily see they are wise ways to help us revere our King.

**20:3** *before (besides)*. The Hebrew for this word is translated "in hostility toward" in Ge 16:12; 25:18. Something of that sense may be intended here. In any event, no deity, real or imagined, is to rival the one true God in Israel's heart and life.

**20:4** *idol in the form of anything*. Any idol intended to resemble God would be a sinful misrepresentation of Him (see Dt 4:12,15-18), to say nothing of being inadequate and misleading. Since other gods are not to be worshiped (see v. 5), making idols of them would be equally sinful (see Dt 4:19,23-28). See what happens to our understanding of God when this image is in our minds...



<sup>16</sup>Adapted, corrected, and revised by D. Thomas Porter from Compton's Interactive NIV © 1996.

**20:5** *jealous God.* God will not put up with rivalry or unfaithfulness. Usually his "jealousy" assumes the covenant relationship (analogous to marriage) and the Lord's exclusive right to possess believers and to claim our love and allegiance. Jealousy is part of the vocabulary of love. The "jealousy" of God—

- (1) demands exclusive devotion to himself (see 34:14; Dt 4:24; 32:16,21; Jos 24:19; Ps 78:58; 1Co 10:22; Jas 4:5),
- (2) delivers to judgment all who oppose him (see Dt 29:20; 1Ki 14:22; Ps 79:5; Isa 42:13; 59:17; Eze 5:13; 16:38; 23:25; 36:5; Na 1:2; Zep 1:18; 3:8) and
- (3) vindicates his people (see 2Ki 19:31; Isa 9:7; 26:11; Eze 39:25; Joel 2:18; Zec 1:14; 8:2).

In some of these passages the meaning is closer to "zeal" (the same Hebrew word may be translated either way, depending on context).

*to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me.* Those Israelites who blatantly violate God's covenant and thus show that they reject the Lord as their King will bring down judgment on themselves and their households (see, e.g., Nu 16:31-34; Jos 7:24 and note)--households were usually extended to "three or four" generations. See Psalm 109:12.

*hate.* In covenant contexts the terms "hate" and "love" (v. 6) were conventionally used to indicate rejection of or loyalty to the covenant Lord.

**20:6** *a thousand generations of those.* See 1Ch 16:15; Ps 105:8. *love me and keep my commandments.* See Jn 14:15; 1Jn 5:3. In the treaty language of the ancient Near East the "love" owed to the great king was a conventional term for total allegiance and implicit trust expressing itself in obedient service.

**20:7** *misuse the name of the LORD.* By profaning God's name—e.g., by swearing falsely by it (see Lev 19:22; see also Jer 7:9), as on the witness stand in court. Jesus elaborates on oath-taking in Mt 5:33-37.

**20:10** *On it you shall not do any work.* Two reasons (one here and one in Deuteronomy) are given:

- (1) Having completed his work of creation God "rested on the seventh day" (v. 11), and the Israelites are to observe the same pattern in their service of God in the creation;
- (2) the Israelites must cease all labor so that their servants can also participate in the Sabbath-rest--just as God had delivered his people from the burden of slavery in Egypt (see Dt 5:14-15).

The Sabbath thus became a "sign" of the covenant between God and Israel at Mount Sinai (see 31:12-17; see Genesis 9:12).

**20:12** *Honor.* (1) Prize highly (see Pr 4:8), (2) care for (see Ps 91:15), (3) show respect for (see Lev 19:3; 20:9), and (4) obey (see Dt 21:18-21; cf. Eph 6:1). *so that you may live long.* "The first commandment with a promise" (Ephesians 6:2).

**20:13** See Mt 5:21-26. *murder.* The Hebrew for this verb usually refers to a premeditated and deliberate act as in a crime. If so, then killing during war, clearly premeditated and deliberate, must be assessed also according to this command by the Commander in Chief.

**20:14** See Mt 5:27-30. *adultery.* A sin "against God" (Genesis 39:9) as well as against the marriage partner. Remember, whenever adultery is committed, behaviorally or in one's mind, there are at least three people involved—the object of your adultery, yourself, and Holy Spirit.

**20:17** *covet.* To break God's commandments inwardly is equivalent to breaking them outwardly (see Mt 5:21-30). This command is distinctive in that it speaks clearly to the mind, not just behavior.

**20:18-21** Concludes the account of the giving of the Decalogue. The order of the narrative appears to be different from the order of events, since v. 18 is most likely a continuation of 19:25. On this reading, the proclamation of the Decalogue took place after Moses approached God (v. 21). Biblical writers often did not follow chronological sequence in their narratives for various literary reasons. The purpose of chronological displacement here may have been either (1) to keep the Decalogue distinct from the "Book of the Covenant" (24:7) that follows (20:22-23:19), or (2) to conclude the account with the formal institution of Moses' office as covenant mediator—or both.

**20:19** See Heb 12:19-20. Israel requests a mediator to stand between them and God, a role fulfilled by Moses and subsequently by priests, prophets and kings—and ultimately by Jesus the Christ.

**20:22-23:19** The stipulations of the "Book of the Covenant" (24:7), consisting largely of expansions on and expositions of the Ten Commandments. **20:22-26** Initial stipulations governing Israel's basic relationship with God (cf. v. 3). **20:22** *heaven*. God's dwelling place. Even on "top of Mount Sinai" (19:20) God spoke from heaven.

**20:23** See vv. 3-4. The contrast between the one true God "in heaven," who "does whatever pleases him" (Ps 115:3), and idols of silver or gold, who can do nothing at all (see Ps 115:4-7; see also Ps 135:5-6,15-17), is striking indeed.

**20:24** *altar of earth*. Such an altar, with dimensions the same as those of the altar in the tabernacle (see 27:1), has been found in the excavated ruins of a small Iron Age (10th, or possibly 11th, century B.C.) Israelite temple at Arad in southern Palestine. *burnt offerings*. See Lev 1:3. *fellowship offerings*. See Lev 3:1. *Wherever*. Not the later central sanctuary at Jerusalem, but numerous temporary places of worship (see, e.g., Jos 8:30-31; Jdg 6 :24; 21:4; 1Sa 7:17; 14:35; 2Sa 24:25; 1Ki 18:30).

**20:25** *do not build it with dressed stones*. Many ancient altars of undressed stones (from various periods) have been found in Palestine. *defile it if you use a tool on it*. For reasons not now clear, but perhaps related to pagan practices. Or, quite clear now as we see the false pride taken in building cathedrals which celebrate the architect, city, or nation rather than the Lord God presumably being worshipped in same.

**20:26** *nakedness be exposed*. Men who ascended to such altars would expose their nakedness in the presence of God. Although Aaron and his descendants served at stepped altars (see Lev 9:22; Eze 43:17), they were instructed to wear linen undergarments (see 28:42-43; Lev 6:10; 16:3-4; Eze 44:17-18).