

# Exodus 20:1-21

## God gives Israel the Ten Commandments

*(The People's Bible, Exodus, white cover, pages 132-138; green cover, pages 119-126)*

### Look

Verse 1      *"And God spoke all these words."* The Ten Commandments are called "*words*." This is in distinction to the "*laws*," which follow in Exodus chapter 21. The words were a general summary of God's will, which the laws applied to specific problems and conditions in Israel. The two together form the Book of the Covenant (Exodus 24:3,7).

God also wrote the ten "*words*" on two tablets of stone (Exodus 31:18).

The numbering and arrangement of the Ten Commandments is not indicated. There are 11 "you shalls," and we know there are 10 commandments (Deuteronomy 4:13). Some churches divide them differently by making the first two "you shalls" into two commandments and combining the last two into one.

Verses 8-12      The Third and Fourth Commandments contain some elements of the laws God gave only to Israel. The Sabbath law was a ceremonial law. The promise that the Israelites would live long in the land if they kept the Fourth Commandment was also spoken to them, for they were the only ones who were promised the land. However, note Ephesians 6:3, where Paul quotes from Exodus chapter 20 and replaces "*in the land*" with "*on the earth*."

### Discuss

1. In which of the commandments does God protect (1) our neighbor's property? (2) his institution of marriage? (3) our neighbor's life? (4) our neighbor's reputation? (5) God's holy name? (6) himself as the only true God?
2. What impression did all this have on the Israelites?

### Apply

3. Why is it vital even for New Testament Christians to have a healthy respect ("fear") for God?

*God gave his ten "words" from Mount Sinai, telling the Israelites his will and impressing on them his power and holiness.*