

Lesson 34 - The Decalogue / Ten Commandments

Ex. 20:1-17, Matt. 19:16-22, Matt. 22:34-39

Last week, we learned what God did through **Moses** at the commencement of the Jewish or Mosaic Dispensation.

Moses enlarged the covenant that God made with Abraham into a **National covenant** and organized the children of Israel into a **Nation** and established the **Theocracy**. It was through Moses that God revealed the national rituals of Circumcision, the Passover, the Sabbath, the Levitical Priesthood, the Tabernacle, the solemn Sacrifices, and the solemn Feasts and Assemblies. God also through Moses revealed eternal principles of right and wrong in the provisions of the decalogue (Ten Commandments) and that is what we will study today.

As we start, let's learn the term "Decalogue". In decalogue the root deca meaning "ten" is combined with logos, Greek for "word". Thus the "Decalogue" is the "10 words" or "Ten Commandments". In the book of Exodus, the original Decalogue, or Ten Commandments, was handed to Moses by God atop Mount Sinai after Moses led the Hebrew people out of Egypt and across the Red Sea.

Please turn in your bible to Exodus chapter 20 - (I am reading from the ESV)

"God spoke all these words, saying,

2 "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery."

- I am your LORD. I am your GOD.
- I am powerful. I defied the armies and power of the greatest nation (at that time) on earth
- I carried you to freedom. You were formerly a subjugated people of slaves.

Because of that, God have them 10 direct commands. Each of these commands has a DIRECT application as well as in-direct application.

The First Commandment

3 "You shall have no other gods before me."

Literally, "before my face". This does not mean, "You shall put me above all other gods", as some have tried to make it appear to mean. It means, rather as is stated in

Deut 6:13-14 - *"It is the Lord your God you shall fear. Him you shall serve and by his name you shall swear. 14 You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are around you"*

This command was directly against **polytheism** - the belief in more than one god - and, indirectly against

infidelity - toward their God

heresy - to have opinions against God's word

materialism - to worship the God that can give you the most

skepticism - no man can serve two masters

etc.

The idolatry of natural religion has been a plague among men for thousands of years and persists to today.

Re-stated in the New Testament:

In Acts 14 at Lystra, Paul heals a man that was lame in the feet from birth and the people exclaim that Paul and Barnabas are "gods" to which Paul replies: *"Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, **that you should turn from these vain things to a living God**, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them."*

Why does God want to be the only God in your life? Because He is the only true and living God and all other gods or false idols that one might put before oneself are vain and do nothing for you - false gods cannot LOVE you with all that includes and implies

The second commandment:

Ex. 20:4-6

4 "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. 5 You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, 6 but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

This is **prohibition of image worship and idolatry**

Re-stated in the New Testament:

John writes in 1 John 5:21 - *"my little children, guard yourselves from idols"*

indirectly this is a prohibition of such sins as:

superstition - excessively credulous belief in and reverence for supernatural things

witchcraft - the practice of magic, esp. black magic, the use of spells and the invocation of spirits

necromancy and occultism - consorting with fortune tellers and spirit mediums to communicate with the spirits of the dead

sacrilege (profanation of holy things);

simony (sahy-muh-nee) (the making of profit out of sacred things or the buying and selling ecclesiastical preferments, benefices) (Acts 19:25)

The third commandment:

7 “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.”

This is directed against swearing, blasphemy, cursing, breaking of religious vows, derision of religion, irreverence, perjury, etc.

Re-stated in the New Testament:

Jesus said in Matt. 5:34 - *“But I say to you, **Do not take an oath at all**, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God,”*

James writes: Jas. 5:12 - *“but above all things, my brethren, swear not”*.

For clarity - to take the name of the Lord “in vain” means to use the name or authority of the name of the Lord in an empty or irreverent or derisive way.

This last Fall, I heard a lesson by Chad Sychtysz, from the Kent church of Christ titled [“The Way you talk gives you away”](#). It is posted on the web, and I suggest you listen to it. You will cringe and you might be surprised at how many ways English speakers have invented to take the Lord’s name in vain.

“God! No!”

“Jesus Christ!”

“Oh my God!”

If we are to be a people of God, we must revere the name of our Lord.

Remember: “the Lord will not hold him **guiltless** who takes his name in vain.”

The Fourth Commandment:

8 “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. 11 For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the

Sabbath day and made it holy.”

This command is not re-enacted in the New Testament, for the obvious reason that Christians have, from apostolic times, kept the first day of the week, the Lord's Day. The observance of the first day of the week was instituted and authorized by the apostles themselves, who were guided into all the truth by the Holy Spirit (John 16:13), as soon as the gospel was first proclaimed as fact and the first local churches were established.

Acts. 20:7, I Cor. 16:2. Rev. 1:10

Under the Mosaic dispensation, the seventh day was set aside as the “Sabbath”, instead of the first, second, third, etc. day of the week, because that was the “day” on which God rested at the conclusion of His creative activity (v. 11). Moreover, the Sabbath itself was designed to be a memorial of the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage:

Deut. 5:15 - *“You shall remember that you were a slave[a] in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. **Therefore** the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.”*

so therefore would have no significance for Gentiles.

We as Christians keep the first day of the week, the Lord's Day, as a memorial of the resurrection of Jesus, which occurred on the first day (Mark 16:9). Hence there is neither command nor precedent in the apostolic writings for Christians to keep the Jewish Sabbath. The Lord's Day is intended to be essentially a day of Christian worship, benevolence and service where possible.

John writes in Rev. 1:10 - “I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet...”

To the extent possible, we too should strive to be “in the Spirit on the Lord's day”.

By this, I mean, let's honor the “Lord's Day” with spiritual pursuits and leave the other things to the remaining six days.

The fifth commandment

12 *“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.*

This is directed against disrespect, irreverence, disobedience on the part of children towards their parents. Here God reinforces the primacy of parental authority in the government of the family.

Re-stated in the New Testament:

Eph. 6:1 - *"Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right."*

Eph. 6:4 - *"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."*

The sixth commandment

13 *"You shall not murder."*

This is directed against the taking of HUMAN life in any form, such as homicide, suicide, infanticide, abortion, etc. What about some forms of birth control - the type that prevent a fertilized egg from implanting in the womb? Is it the taking of incipient life?

This command does not apply of course in matters wherein we act as instruments of the state, as for instance, in war, in the execution of criminals, or in protecting life from unjust attack; for we are commanded to "be in subjection to the higher powers" i.e. our civil rulers. But books are written on all of these subjects. See Rom. 13

This command is directed also against hatred, for we are told by John in 1 John 3:15 - *"whosoever hates his brother is a murderer"*, and against envy, quarreling, abusive words, imprecations, slander, scandalmongering, seduction, or any other practice that tends to destroy the spiritual life.

Re-stated in the New Testament:

Rom. 13:9 - "You shall not murder"

The Seventh Commandment

14 *"You shall not commit adultery."*

This is directed against adultery (illicit sexual intercourse between married persons, thus breaking the marriage vows); against fornication (illicit sexual intercourse between un-married persons, or between one who is married and one who is unmarried); against sex perversion, sex abuse, sodomy, lasciviousness, lewdness, and all form of sexual and social impurity.

Restated in the New Testament:

1 Cor. 6:9-10 - *"Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: **neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who***

practice homosexuality, 10 nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

1 Cor. 6:18 - "Flee fornication"

1 Cor. 5:9 - "have no company with fornicators"

See also Rom. 1:26-27; 2 Cor. 12:21; Gal. 5:9; Eph. 5:3-5; Col. 3:5; 1 Tim. 1:9-10

The eighth commandment

15 *"You shall not steal."*

This is directed against robbery, theft, extortion, fraud, usury, etc.

Restated in the New Testament:

Eph. 4:28 - "Let him that stole steal no more"

The ninth commandment

16 *"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor."*

This command is directed against:

lying

railing - To "rail" on (in modern usage "against") anyone is to use insolent or reproachful language toward one (9 times in NT)

hypocrisy -

detraction - a lessening of reputation or esteem especially by envious, malicious, or petty criticism : BELITTling, DISPARAGEMENT

calumny (ka-ləm-nē) - a misrepresentation intended to harm another's reputation
false suspicion

and in general, all sins by which the honor or character of our neighbor is injured.

Restated in the New Testament:

Col. 3:9 - *"lie not to one another"*

Eph. 4:25 - *"Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another."*

The tenth commandment

17 *"You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's."*

Covetousness is the most universal of all sins, yet seldom realized or admitted by the individual. The sins of envy and jealousy usually have their root in covetousness. This command is directed, therefore, against the love of worldly goods, stinginess, God-robbery (Mal. 3:7-10), jealousy, envy, discontent, etc.

The implication of the command is that we should be content with what we possess, and should not be envious of what belongs to others.

Restated in the New Testament:

Eph. 5:3 - *"covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints."*

Luke 12:15 - here Jesus says: *"Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."*

See also: Col. 3:5, 1 Cor. 5:11, Rom. 13:9-10

What then are the two greatest commandments of the Law?

Matt. 22:35-40 - *"And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. 36 'Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?' 37 And he said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.'"*

Deut. 6:4-5 - *"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."*

Lev. 19:17-18 - *"You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him. 18 You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord."*

These two Commandments, although not themselves included in the decalogue, embrace within their scope, inferentially at least, all our obligations to God and all our obligations to our fellow-men. For this reason they are said to be the two greatest commandments of the Law.

Are the Ten Commandments binding upon Christians, i.e. upon God's children under the New Covenant? And why?

Since they are all, with but one exception, re-enacted in the New Testament, then yes, they are

with but one exception.

The Fourth commandment - the commandment to keep the Sabbath, has not been re-enacted in the NT and is therefore not binding upon Christians.

How were the Ten Commandments first revealed to the Hebrew people?

The words of the Ten Commandments were spoken by Jehovah Himself to the children of Israel at Sinai.

Exodus chapters 19-20 - The people were first required to wash their clothes, to sanctify themselves, in short, to make all necessary preparations to meet with God Almighty Himself. Two days were spent in ceremonies of purification and preparation for this sublime event. Then on the third day Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet God; and while the whole assembly stood at the foot of Sinai, God Himself descended to the summit of the holy mountain, in the midst of fire, with thunderings, lightnings, and the sound of a great trumpet.

Ex. 19:18 - "Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the Lord had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly."

Then at length, while the people were greatly moved with awe, God spoke out of the midst of the fire, in such manner as to be heard by all the people, the sublime words of the Decalogue (Ex. 20:1-17).

After the Decalogue was concluded, the people retired from the foot of the mountain, and requested that God henceforth communicate His word to them through Moses. This request was granted. The Ten Commandments were later written on two tablets of stone, which were delivered to the Israelites through Moses, to serve as their fundamental law.

Ex. 31:18, 32:1-20, 34:1-9, 34:27-35