

Ten Commandments A

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

God's Holy Mandates

Introduction

Before analyzing each one of the Ten Commandments individually ^{Exodus 20:3-17, Deuteronomy 5:7-21}, it is important to study them as a whole and any observed structure, as well as having a sense of God's perspective on the intent of the decrees in order to have more insight for the entire study.

- There are three general types of Law in the Bible.
 1. Law of God: the Ten Commandments
 2. Law of Moses: the Pentateuch (Genesis through Deuteronomy)
 3. Law of Christ: Sermon on the Mount ^{Matthew 5-7} (Sermon on the Plain ^{Luke 6:17-49})
(an interpretation and expansion of the Law of God, based in love ^{John 13:34, Romans 13:8,10})

General Information

This examination of the Ten Commandments will begin with a few foundational details:

- The Ten Commandments are also known as the *Decalogue* (Greek for "ten words").
- The commandments were communicated by God to Moses through spoken ^{Exodus 20:1} and written (inscribed on "stone tablets by the finger of God" ^{Exodus 31:18, Deuteronomy 9:10}) means when the Israelites were at Mount Sinai, after God had freed them from slavery in Egypt.
- There is no known reason why the number of commandments is ten, but historical tradition suggests God decided on the number of fingers on two hands in order to aid in memorization.
- There are three suggested interpretations for God's purpose(s) for the Ten Commandments.
 1. They were given only to the Nation of Israel in ancient times and do not apply today.
 2. The commandments were given as a means of obtaining salvation.
 3. They are God's unchanging moral standards for regulating human conduct, but they also prove that man is incapable of a perfect life and is in absolute need of a Savior ^{Galatians 3:24}.

Jesus proves to us in His Sermon on the Mount ^{Matthew 5-7} that #1 is incorrect and the fact that nowhere near the Ten Commandments or anywhere in Scripture are the concepts of forgiveness or salvation associated with the Ten Commandments proves #2 is incorrect. For these and many other reasons, #3 is the correct purpose for the Ten Commandments.

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- The Ten Commandments are obviously not suggestions, but supremely serious decrees that God presented (in the second person) as distinct commands directly to (all) His people.
- What did Jesus mean when He said He came to “fulfill” the Law ^{Matthew 5:17} ?
 - † Jesus came to earth to provide a more complete interpretation and deeper understanding of the Law (e.g., requirement for obedience in thought as well as in deed).
 - † He came to perfectly live out the Law so that He would meet all of the Law’s requirements, authorizing Him to be the sacrificial “Lamb without blemish or defect” ^{1 Peter 1:18-19}.

Structure of the Ten Commandments

Next, even after an initial reading, a structure becomes apparent within the Ten Commandments.

- The first 4 commandments deal with a heavenly perspective (man’s relationship with God) and the last 6 focus on earthly issues (centering on man’s relationship with his fellow man). This structure is commonly referred to as the vertical and horizontal parts of the decree, and often interpreted to be a symbolic view of the cross. Furthermore, this structure is found in other Biblical statements of doctrine and guidance, and always with the vertical aspect first.

The most important statements with the vertical/horizontal structure are the commands to “love the Lord your God” and to “love your neighbor as yourself”, which can be found in the NT ^{Matthew 22:37,39, Mark 12:30-31a}, but they are based on OT decrees ^{Deuteronomy 6:5, Leviticus 19:18}. Jesus also stated that all other commandments “hang” on these ^{Matthew 22:38,40, Mark 12:31b}.

This structure is also observed in the Lord’s Prayer. The prayer clearly contains both the vertical ^{Matthew 6:9-10, Luke 11:2} and horizontal ^{Matthew 6:11-13, Luke 11:3-4} perspectives.

In addition, the Beatitudes are vertical ^{Matthew 5:3-6,8} & horizontal ^{Matthew 5:7,9-10} in structure.

This structure model can also be found in single OT ^{Psalms 37:3} and NT ^{Matthew 6:33} verses.

These important doctrinal statements, all with the vertical and horizontal structure and always in that order, emphasize the focus of life must always be Heavenly first and earthly second.

God, Man and the Ten Commandments

Finally, another key perspective God wants Christians to have involves His attitude toward humans, how His outlook should determine man’s view of man and how these perspectives should affect the Christian’s interpretation of the Bible (generally) and the Ten Commandments (specifically).

- God made man (*âdâm*) in His (their) image ^{Genesis 1:26-27}. Exactly what this means has been discussed over thousands of years, and while there is no universally accepted or complete

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understanding of this concept, here are a couple of aspects that are generally agreed upon: (1) Adam was created as the crown of creation with a spirit ^{Genesis 2:7} that separates man from all other created life and (2) man was created with the Godly characteristics of intellect, emotion and will. These characteristics were granted to man in order for him to have unique capabilities for relationship and communication with the Author and Creator of the universe.

- Adam ignored the command of God not to eat the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil ^{Genesis 2:16-17}, and he ate and fell ^{Genesis 3:1-7}. Adam's fall removed the spirit from him and passed along this trait to future generations. And even though Adam's offspring (including all other human beings) were and are born in Adam's image ^{Genesis 5:3}, the Bible also emphasizes that Adam's likeness passed on the image of God ^{Genesis 9:6, 1 Corinthians 11:7}.
- As a result, God continues His desire to have the same intimate relationship with man that He had with Adam in the Garden of Eden. So despite the fall, God has blessed man with the capacity to return into that type of relationship, and the ability to think about it and decide.
- The special relationship that God decided to have with all men is illustrated in the Biblical passages that speak about the connection between man's love and service for God.

When a man chooses to love God, he must also love the rest of mankind. This concept is implied in the greatest decree ^{Matthew 22:37,39}, but stated explicitly by John ^{1 John 4:20-21}.

And, it is clear that if a man wishes to serve God, he must serve mankind ^{Matthew 25:31-40}.

- So in conclusion, God made the definitive point that when any one part of the law is broken, the entire law has been violated ^{James 2:10}. In other words, from the perspective of God, a sin against man, who has been created by God in the image of God, is just as serious as a sin against God, because all sin is ultimately against God ^{2 Samuel 12:13, Psalm 51:1-4, Luke 15:21}.

Summary

In closing, the New Testament teaches that Jews ^{Romans 2:17-24} and Gentiles ^{Romans 2:14-15} alike have both head knowledge and heart understanding about the Ten Commandments. As a result, the Ten Commandments will always make unsaved men/women aware of their fleshly inability to please God and point them toward Jesus and His sacrifice on the cross. Following their conversion, Jesus equips people with Grace and the Holy Spirit, and reminds them of their responsibility to keep the Ten Commandments in their heart and mind as the unchanging moral standards for regulating their conduct while on earth ^{Matthew 5:17-19}.