

The Ten Commandments:

- They show us our sinfulness; they point to our need for Christ. Once we are saved, they show us how to live.
- They are summarized by the word "love": Love for God and people. They also show us how to express this love.
- ✓ Wrong reasons to obey them: As an attempt to appease our conscience, or to gain God's favor.
- ✓ A good reason to obey them: As a means of saying "I love you" to God (and to people).

Our attempts to obey them may seem weak – like "baby steps," compared to what we would like to be. But things will improve as we *grow* in knowledge and grace (2 Peter 3:18).

The Ten Commandments:

- They are applicable in both Old Testament and New Testament eras. (Under the Old Covenant, they were written-out on stone tablets; the people had to decide whether or not to obey them. Under the New Covenant, they are embedded in our hearts.)
- They were written in a form that was easily recognizable within the context of a nation; but they are applicable to both groups and individuals.
- Each command represents a category of commands, applying to both visible actions and invisible attitudes.
- ✓ They imply both what we should do, and what we shouldn't do.
 Prohibitions ("negative" commands) imply obligations; obligations
 ("positive" commands) imply prohibitions.
- ✓ All are a reflection of the moral character of God.

HOW DO WE KNOW THAT THESE STATEMENTS ARE TRUE?

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People make all kinds of claims about the Ten Commandments.

Some even deny their value! Three EXAMPLES:

- ✓ CLAIM: "They are no different than any other regulation found in the Law of Moses." WHAT THEY IGNORE: God himself considered them important enough for him to speak and write them. He did not do this with any of the other commands and instructions.
- CLAIM: "They were cancelled and replaced by Jesus with his own commands." WHAT THEY IGNORE: The New Testament writers quote these commands more than anyone in the Old Testament does, and also base many of their instructions on these commands.
- ✓ CLAIM: "Jesus replaced them with the command to love." WHAT THEY IGNORE: Jesus was just quoting Old Testament passages that are found in the Law of Moses! He described them as a summary, not a replacement. This was not a new idea... even the religious leaders agreed with him (Mark 12:28-34).

The best way to verify that these things are true is to search the Scriptures and find out!

(A) THE FIRST THING WE DISCOVER MAY BE A SURPRISE!

- ✓ It seems that the Old Testament authors (except for Moses) never quoted the Ten Commandments! (There are a small number of verses that may contain a paraphrase of the first two commands.)
- ✓ The New Testament authors are the only ones who quoted them
 and they quoted only the "people" commands! Jesus, Paul and
 James all quote the commands that tell us how to treat people; but
 not the commands that focus on God. (Also, they quoted them to
 both Jews and Gentiles.)



If Jesus was trying to convince people that he was *replacing* the Ten Commandments with something "better," it seems that he didn't do a good job at it! They talk about the Ten Commandments *more than* the Old Testament people did... and *never* claim that Jesus replaced them!

B DOES THIS LACK OF QUOTATIONS INDICATE THAT THE TEN COMMANDMENTS ARE NOT THAT IMPORTANT? NO!!

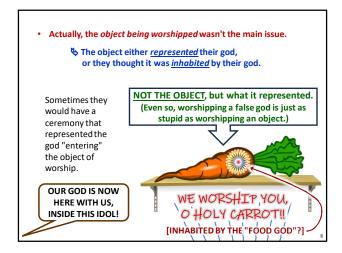
If we look at the laws in both Old and New Testaments, we discover:

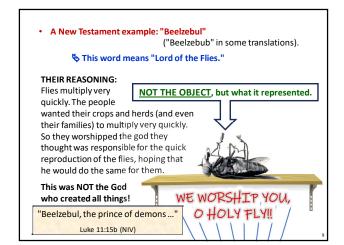
- ✓ Most of them can be grouped into one of ten categories, each centered around one of the commandments. (We might not be sure what category some commands belong in. Others may seem to fit in more than one.)
- ✓ These ten groups of commands *do* affirm the statements we made:
 - ✓ Applicable in all eras, ✓ to both groups and individuals,
 - ✓ applying to both visible *actions* and invisible *attitudes*,
 - ✓ implying what we should do, and what we shouldn't do,
 - ✓ all a reflection of the moral character of God.

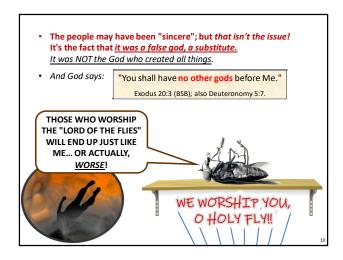


WHAT CAN WE CONCLUDE? Though the Ten
Commandments themselves are not quoted very
often, what they say PERMEATES Scripture!









IN THE OLD TESTAMENT ERA: NATIONS HAD THEIR OWN "GODS." After the rebellion at Babel (Genesis 11), when the nations were scattered: Each nation had its own gods, just as it had its own language. To reject the gods of one's nation was tantamount to rejecting one's citizenship in that nation. ✓ When Ruth left Moab and chose Your people will be my people to follow Israel's God, it was like and your God my God. renouncing her Moabite Ruth 1:16b (NIV) citizenship. √ This passage Has any nation ever traded its gods for new ones, illustrates the even though they are not gods at all? insanity of Israel Yet my people have exchanged their glorious God rejecting the for worthless idols! God of Israel! Jeremiah 2:11 (NLT)

TODAY: Things have changed... or have they? To us, some of the things people used to do may seem a bit silly. But that's because we live after the cross of Christ! Once Jesus died and rose again, the devil had to change his methods. Today, new religions tend to have less focus on objects. Some include a distorted concept of "Jesus," or somehow find a place for him in their "religion."

Some claim to have a "more correct" version of what the

Bible teaches

- Some choose to deny the existence of any deity, and look to created things, instead. (Atheists are in this category.)
- IN THE FUTURE: As we approach the end, the devil may make further changes in how he does things - anything to keep people from focusing on the true God, the Creator of all things.

THE COMMON FACTOR IN ALL OF THIS:

In all ages, all people have had something that they put first in their lives - something that influenced everything else they did.

- This influence may be...
 - ✓ The God of the Bible, who created all things.
 - ✓ A created god or demonic force.
 - A demonic spirit that the individual doesn't even admit to exist. (An example would be the controlling influence that blindly "guides" atheists.)
- Ultimately, it boils down to this: There are only two alternatives.

We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

1 John 5:19 (NIV)

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WHAT IS A "GOD"?

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It is the force that controls a society.

- ✓ It's what makes a society what it is. It influences how it views reality. It determines a society's values, their concepts of right and wrong, their conduct. It influences all of life.
- ✓ This "controlling force" will be either the Creator God, or else a created entity (whether a god, a demonic force, or even a spirit of rebellion that closes its eyes to the existence of either God or gods).
 - ⇒ This verse shows us the only two options. It also shows us what option we, the human race, have chosen.

They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.

Romans 1:25 (NIV)

This "SOCIETY-TO-GOD" relationship is the reason that different societies act differently.

IN GENERAL: It determines the way people act.

- ✓ It's why Moabites act like Moabites; Egyptians act like Egyptians; Germans act like Germans; etc.
- It's why people with different cultures often can't get along with each other, and may even end up killing each other.
- [In today's intermingled society, tensions may be suppressed, until something brings them to the surface.]

MORE SPECIFICALLY: It determines how God requires us to act.

- ✓ It's why God told Israel to live in ways that were different from the nations that surrounded them.
- It's why Jesus told his followers that they must live differently than the world... and why the world hates those who are willing to obey Jesus.

These things apply to ATHEISTS – people who spend their lives denying what they know (or at least knew) to be true.

- God has made all creation in a way that reveals his glory and they reject this (Romans 1:18-32).
- God has embedded within their consciences a basic awareness of right and wrong – and they go against it (Romans 2:14-15).
- Their own beings were created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27) – even the concept of "male and female." They do anything they can to deny the intrinsic difference between people and the rest of creation.

THIS VERSE MAY HAVE SPECIAL APPLICATION The fool* says in his heart, TO AN ATHEIST, BUT IT ACTUALLY APPLIES TO ANYONE WHO DENIES THE GOD OF THE BIBLE

"There is no God."

Psalm 14:1a (BSB) *(moral fool)

These things apply to FAKES - people who claim to know the true God, but who deny him by their actions.

Jesus calls such people "children of the devil" (John 8:44; see also 1 John 3:10).

ANY SUBSTITUTE FOR THE CREATOR GOD IS IDOLATRY.

Both Old and New Testaments warn us about idolatry.

Dear children, keep yourselves from idols. 1 John 5:21 (NIV)

So since you saw no form of any kind on the day the LORD spoke to you out of the fire at Horeb, be careful that you do not act corruptly and make an idol for yourselves of any form or shape, ...

Deuteronomy 4:15-16a (BSB)

"Idols" can be intangible objects (hidden in our hearts), or things we wouldn't claim to be worshipping (such as possessions).

> ... these men have set up idols in their hearts ... Ezekiel 14:3b (BSB)

... greed, which is idolatry. Colossians 3:5b (BSB)

Another example: "Friendship with the world" (see next page). WARNING: Going after other gods, when claiming to follow the true God, is like committing "spiritual adultery."

· These verses mention idols.

[God says] ... I have been grieved by their adulterous hearts that turned away from Me, and by their eyes that lusted after idols.

Ezekiel 6:9b (BSB)

But they were unfaithful to the God of their fathers, and they prostituted themselves with the gods of the peoples of the land, whom God had destroyed before them.

1 Chronicles 5:25 (BSB)

• This verse mentions something we don't normally call "idolatry."

You adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore, whoever chooses to be a friend of the world renders himself an enemy of God.

James 4:4 (BSB)

FOR US, THE BIG ISSUE IS: WHAT AFFECTS US TODAY?

When we condemn *visible* gods, we should remember that this command also prohibits *invisible* substitutes for the true God.

Both are part of the same <u>category</u> of sins that this commandment prohibits.

- We may be tempted to laugh at the "superstitions" of those who worship idols.
- But perhaps we need to focus on the "invisible" gods that we may be guilty of worshipping attitudes and actions that do not involve a visible "object of worship" ... things we might not ever think of calling "gods."

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The prophets often mocked the use of idols.

But they also knew that it was much more than this!

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More could be said; but this is enough for ...

TODAY'S MISSION:

Assuming we don't "literally" bow down to objects, we can ask ourselves about our <u>values</u>, and about what controls our <u>conduct</u>.

WHO/WHAT DO WE TREASURE THE MOST? Jesus says:

For where your **treasure** is, there your **heart** will be also.

Matthew 6:21 (BSB)

Scripture also warns us that the issue is not who/what we <u>claim</u> to follow (or treasure), but who/what we <u>actually do</u> follow/treasure.

These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me.

Mark 7:6b (BSB)

YOUR "GOD" WILL INFLUENCE HOW YOU LIVE!

* EXTRA *

EXAMPLES OF THE CONNECTION BETWEEN A NATION AND ITS GOD.

- ✓ In time of war, destroying a nation's gods went along with destroying that nation.
 - King Hezekiah, of Judah, could acknowledge this ... but could also acknowledge that the God of Israel was <u>not</u> like the world's gods.

"It is true, Lord, that the Assyrian kings have laid waste these nations and their lands. They have thrown their gods into the fire and destroyed them, for they were not gods but only wood and stone, fashioned by human hands.

Now, Lord our God, deliver us from his hand, so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you alone, Lord, are God."

2 Kings 19:17-19 (NIV)

 When people who deny the existence of "a god" destroy a conquered people's culture (their language, customs, etc.), they are <u>blindly</u> doing the same thing – just without the word "God."

- ✓ In battle, it was a serious matter for one nation to capture another nation's gods (and/or the "sacred" things related to that god).
- When the Philistines defeated Israel, and captured the ark of God, it was a serious tragedy for Israel.

"The glory has departed from Israel," she said, "for the ark of God has been captured."

1 Samuel 4:22 (BSB)

In Israel's case, God
himself defended his
ark! २,

After the Philistines had captured the ark of God, they took it from Ebenezer to Ashdod, carried it into the temple of Dagon, and set it beside his statue.

1 Samuel 5:1-2 (BSB)

But when they got up early the next morning, there was Dagon, fallen on his face before the ark of the LORD, with his head and his hands

broken off and lying on the threshold. Only the torso remained. ...

Now the hand of the LORD was heavy on the people of Ashdod and its vicinity, ravaging them and afflicting them with tumors.

1 Samuel 5:4, 6(BSB)

When Judah did get conquered, and went into exile, it was only because the God of Israel <u>permitted</u> it.

 The king of Babylon didn't recognize this fact, and did what nations typically did with conquered nations: He took items from the temple of God, and put them in the temple of his god.

In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.

And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia and put in the treasure house of his god.

Daniel 1:1-2 (NIV)

 God later humbled the king of Babylon (Daniel 4). In the end, the king recognized the God of Israel for who he is (Daniel 4:34-37).
 [Contrast this with the attitude of his "son" (grandson), Belshazzar (Daniel 5, especially verses 18-23).]

Credits

SCRIPTUR

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