

END-TIMES ISSUES



#142 Commandment #10 – The commandment that's different.

GOD DOESN'T TELL US TO KNOW ALL THE END-TIME DETAILS. HE TELLS US TO **BE READY.**

A N D B E Y O N D I

1

The Tenth Commandment: How does it fit with the others?

THE COMMANDMENT, AS SEEN IN THE TWO ACCOUNTS:

You shall not covet your neighbor's house.

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, or his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

Exodus 20:17 (BSB)

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.

You shall not covet your neighbor's house or field, or his manservant or maidservant, or his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

Deuteronomy 5:21 (BSB)

- Both communicate the same message, though they are arranged in slightly different ways. Deuteronomy adds the word "field."
- Since the word "covet" is used twice, some groups divide this into two commandments. (They combine the first two commandments.)

2

"THE UNPLEASANT TRUTH."

It's unpleasant ONLY for sinners.
For everyone else, it is a great, wonderful privilege!

"THE GREAT AND AWESOME PRIVILEGE!"

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- God has an exclusive, sovereign claim on us. Our obligation to him is complete loyalty in thought, word and deed, *at all times*.
- Sinless people** see this as a great and awesome privilege – to be the image-bearers of their Creator and Redeemer, and to reflect his moral character throughout the world, by the way they live!
- Sinners**, in contrast, can see this as quite unreasonable, and intrusive, an impediment on their freedom, and impossible to do.

3

The problem is... WE ARE ALL SINNERS!

- We *don't* submit to God's exclusive claim over us.
 - We *don't want to* do it, because it's our *choice* to sin.
 - We *can't* do it, because it's our *nature* to sin.
 - We are hostile to God's law, and will not submit to it. (We even *hate* the word "submit.")
 - We have become slaves to sin, and view it as "freedom."
 - We are under the wrath of God; and will stand condemned before Jesus, the holy judge.
- We have **no hope.**

CAN'T GOD BE SATISFIED WITH A COUPLE HOURS ON SUNDAY?

I DESERVE SOME "ME-TIME," ONCE IN A WHILE!

I CAN'T EVEN FUNCTION WELL, UNTIL AFTER BREAKFAST!

4

But God... In him, there is hope!

- Because of his love, Christ died for us, even while we were still sinners. He died, to pay for our sins; he came to life, to bring new life to us.
- Because of his grace (which we don't deserve), he offers us mercy. As we trust him, he begins to restore us to what humans were like before sin entered into the world.
- He changes our hearts, minds, and wills – giving us the *desire* to live for him. He also gives us the ability – the power – to live for him. By the power of the Spirit, we *can*, and *must*, put to death our old ways!
- Because of this, we no longer need to be slaves to sin. Our old habits and thought patterns still plague us; but as we submit to his word, he uses it to change us, making us more like him in holiness. (This is a lifelong process.)

5

Finally...

- Because he has changed our nature, we look forward to the day when we will *fully* live the way were created to live, reflecting the moral character of God in all of life.

On that glorious day – when Jesus returns, and the New Jerusalem comes down from heaven to the earth – what type of life will we be living?

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A life that is based on the Ten Commandments!
(The expression of God's moral nature, and our moral obligation.)

Obedience was our natural response, before sin entered the world. For all who belong to Jesus, the day is coming when it will once again be natural!

6

WHAT IS LIFE LIKE, WHEN BASED ON THE TEN COMMANDMENTS?

We do not fully live this way *now* (though it's our goal).
But we *will*, in eternity; and we *will be glad that we do!*

- **Commandment #1** – The Ten Commandments are about our relationship to the sovereign God, who both created us, and redeemed us. This first commandment is the starting point, the foundation on which all the others are based.
- As God's people, we are completely dependent on him, for both our existence, and our salvation. Because of this, he has an exclusive claim on our lives. He is *our* God, the only true God. We owe *him* complete allegiance, and must reject any rival – whether that be a statue (idol) or a status (wealth, comfort, self-will, etc.).
- Because his faithfulness and steadfast love for us is great beyond comprehension, we will not only *recognize* God's exclusive claim on our lives, but we will *rejoice* in giving him all that we owe him: all that we are. We will have complete loyalty to him – a loyalty that is not mere duty, but which involves a passionate devotion to him, and to none other.

7

- **Commandment #2** – The rejection of "images" includes the rejection of any "image" (physical or mental) of a false god (which, according to the First Commandment, we are to reject, anyway). But the greater focus is on false "images" of the *true* God.
- This would include any *physical* representation of God – who *cannot* be accurately represented by *anything* in creation. But it also includes any *mental* "image" of who God is, that does not agree with the way he describes himself in Scripture.
- There is one "image" that God has given us of himself – and that's *us*, the human race. We were created in God's "image." Unfortunately, sin has marred this "image" in *us*; but it is faithfully seen in Jesus Christ, the sinless "God-man." Scripture describes him as: "the image of the invisible God" – the only exact representation of God's nature.
- Because of these things, our understanding of who God is will be based on *his* revelation to us about his nature and character, not based on what we would like him to be. We will embrace him on *his* terms, aware of the limitations of our own imaginations. We will worship him the way *he* requires, based on what *he* has revealed about himself.

8

- **Commandment #3** – Our attitude toward God will be characterized by reverential fear – the type of fear and awe that every created being should have toward the Creator. His "name" represents everything he has revealed about himself. This will impact the way we use his name, for our words will reflect our attitude toward everything that pertains to him.
- Every misrepresentation or misuse of God's name represents a *lie*. Even if we are not making a false statement about "who God is" (the Second Commandment), we are misrepresenting his reputation and honor – his character – in the eyes of people. It is significant that the word "vain," in this commandment, is also used to describe the "false testimony" in the Ninth Commandment, in Deuteronomy 5:20.
- To *trivialize* God's name – to use it as a byword, without reverence and honor – is to diminish His person and His glory. It shows disrespect for the God to whom we owe everything.
- "Taking God's name in vain" is not just an issue of what we *say*. It also involves what we *do*. We are God's representatives on earth; and sinful conduct – even mistreatment of the physical Bible – can communicate to others something about God that contradicts what our words say.

9

- **Commandment #4** – We will demonstrate that God, not work, is the central focus of our lives. We will work – doing the normal activities of life – serving him in a way that brings him glory. By doing this, our work will gain an eternal significance that cannot *exist* without God.
- We will also set aside time to redirect our focus from work and toward our God, because we rest in *him*, and not in our own activities. We will recognize that this rest is intended for *all*, and we will *collectively* rejoice in God and what he has done; for he has exclusive claim over *all* of our lives. Our rest in God won't be passive inactivity, but a redirection of our energies toward the worship and praise of the one who both made us and saved us. As we glorify him, we, as God's image-bearers, share in his glory.

As we obey these four commandments, we will be living-out the full meaning of what it means to "love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, strength and mind." But we won't be satisfied with doing just this.

We will also be wanting to "love our neighbor as ourselves"; for we can't separate love for God from love for neighbor. In fact, love for neighbor is one of the ways we express love for God. This is where the rest of the commandments find their place.

10

- **Commandment #5** – God has established an authority structure *under God*, in which we are to interact with other people. This includes the relationships between "superiors," "inferiors" and "equals" – with the words "superior" and "inferior" referring only to level of authority, not to moral superiority or degree of importance. (*All* are important in God's sight.) "Honor" does not mean "blind obedience"; for all that is done must be done in a way that honors God, and places him central in our lives.
- The proper parent-child relationship – if expressed in the manner taught by Scripture – is the primary authority structure that God has established, and a pattern by which we can learn how live in all other authority structures. Because God is the *ultimate* authority, our attitude toward *human* authorities will greatly impact our attitude toward God.
- It is within this context, that we will exercise love for neighbor. Yet the *ultimate* expression of this commandment won't be just getting along with other people; it will be building upon the godly heritage of previous generations, expanding it in our own generation and passing it on to others who will do the same. *This* is the ultimate expression of "honor."

11

- **Commandment #6** – Because God has exclusive claim over our lives, and human life is made "in the image of God," our attitude toward human life will be a reflection of our attitude toward God. Human life is a gift from God, and belongs to God; and no human has the right to destroy it without its maker's authority.
- So we will do all that we can to nurture and develop human life (in whatever form we may encounter it), rather than diminish and destroy it. We will avoid any form of violence against our neighbor, whether physically, verbally, or in thought; for God places *all* these things in the same *category* of sin. Physical expressions of this sin may have a more devastating effect on a person than do the other expressions; but at the core, they are *all* a reflection of anger, hatred, and lack of love.

These last six commandments (#5 through #9) – the "people commandments" – focus on human interactions. Yet each of them, in various ways, has a connection to our interaction with God.

12

- **Commandment #7** – God has created the union of male and female to *also* be a reflection of the nature of God (the merging of unity and plurality – “the two shall be one”); and he has instructed us in how this union is to function. He has chosen this to be the means by which more “image-bearers” are created, to advance his kingdom throughout the world. He has also used this relationship to teach us about the relationship between God (Jesus) and the people he has redeemed. Therefore, we will avoid all distortions and perversions of sexuality, *even in thought*. Rather, we will treat it as *holy*.
- The *binding* nature of the marriage covenant is a reflection of the covenantal relationship God has with his people. Even the deep emotions that are a part of marriage, are placed there by God, to *teach* us about his love for us, about faithfulness, and about the jealousy a partner has, when betrayed by the other.
- God chose this *exclusive* relationship between God and his people to be portrayed in marriage – which means there is a close connection between our attitude toward sexuality and our spirituality.

13

- **Commandment #8 (Part 1: Working)** – God created us with the task of working with creation and improving it for the glory of God and the good of humanity (including ourselves). We are to use our time, talents and opportunities to accomplish this; and we have a right to enjoy the fruit of our work – whatever God may graciously give to us. We also have an obligation to defend the rights of *others* to use their time and abilities to work to God's glory, and to enjoy the results of their work. Because of this, we will joyfully take the opportunity to glorify God in all that we do and all that we have, and to encourage others to do the same.
- We will also be opposed to taking advantage of others, whether by visible or deceptive means, but will make it our goal to appropriately reward those who work. We also oppose the taking from others (by obvious or deceptive means) the things that God has given to them; for it is the same as stealing from God.
- These things influence our attitude toward our own wealth and possessions, as well as other people's wealth and possessions.

14

- **Commandment #8 (Part 2: Sharing)** – Yet because we, God's people, are all part of God's covenant community, we have an obligation to use our gifts and abilities for the good of *all*. As the *body* of Christ, we need *each other*, working together and helping each other, so that we can *all*, as one body, serve God unhindered, and enjoy the fullness of life that God offers us.
- To choose to *not* share with those who have genuine needs is to choose to *not* live our lives for God. Our actions in this matter demonstrate whether our ultimate loyalty is to God... or to the things he gives us. This is one of the ways we express love for each other... and for God. And to not do this is also stealing from God, who gave us these things for the good of *all*. After all, God has given these things to us so that we can serve *him*, by means of how we use them. And this includes serving him through serving his people.
- We use our wealth and possessions to express where our ultimate loyalty belongs. Either we are loyal to *God* (as seen in our joyful giving back to him, through our sharing with others); or loyal to our wealth and possessions (as seen by our merciless clinging to them).

15

- **Commandment #9** – Just as we are to guard our speech, when talking about God, so also we are to guard our speech, when interacting with people. Just as we are to honor God in the way we use his name (which represents everything about him), so also we are to honor each other, by guarding the truthful representation of reality in all our relationships.
- Based on this, integrity and truthfulness will characterize all that we say – whether it involves what we say in a court setting, our influence in social interactions, or what we say in one-to-one conversation. Our speech will be used to build others up, rather than to tear them down; and we will avoid meaningless and useless talk that serves no purpose in God's community.
- As people who bear the image of God, we have a *right* to the truth. As we speak truthfully and with integrity to each other, we are showing proper respect to them, and to God, who's image they are.

As we come to the *Tenth* Commandment,
note how different from the others it is.

16

- **Commandment #10** – All the previous commandments focus on issues that can often be *visibly* observed, and for which Scripture provides *penalties* for disobedience. But the Tenth Commandment has no visible expression, and no penalties attached to breaking it.
- At the same time, it is the most “killing” of all the commandments; for it is the root, or starting point, for all of the others. It is impossible to break one of the other commandments without *first* breaking this one. *All* sins begin in the heart; and this is where God's judgment begins.
- We are in a covenant relationship with the God who made us. In this relationship, he deserves – is *worthy* of – our utmost devotion and loyalty; as well as contentment in the way he blesses us, and with all that he brings into our lives. If he has redeemed us (i.e., if we have repented and trusted him, and are now following Jesus), then he is even *more* worthy. He deserves to be the central point in all that we desire; and everything else must spring forth from this central point.
- When we covet, we are redirecting our desire from God to something else – usually our own desires. Because of this, the avoidance of coveting is to be our greatest desire, along with faithfulness to God. What we do in this matter will greatly affect how we relate to God and to others.

17

The Tenth Commandment

You shall not covet ...

Exodus 20:17a & Deuteronomy 5:21a (BSB)

... is different from all the other Commandments.

- **The First 9 Commandments** focus on *visible* conduct. Violations can be *seen*, and are linked to penalties – even death, in some cases.
- **The Tenth Commandment** focuses on *invisible* conduct. Violations are *invisible*; and there are no penalties connected to them.

☞ **Coveting is a *secret* sin; yet it is the *most deadly* sin.**

WHY?? Because *this is where all other sins begin*. Every violation of every other commandment starts here.

[We plan to look at this issue next time.]

18

- It's **easy** (relatively speaking) to obey the **visible** expressions of the first **NINE** commandments! Some people actually do it!
 - I don't go after other gods.
 - I believe what the Bible says.
 - I'm careful about how I use God's name.
 - I go to church every week.
 - I honor my parents.
 - I don't kill people.
 - I don't commit adultery.
 - I don't steal things.
 - I don't lie.

I THINK I DO QUITE WELL!
- But when we get to **Commandment #10**, we discover that the Law has a **deeper** focus ... one that we **don't** obey... **AND IT KILLS US!**

You shall not covet ...
Exodus 20:17a & Deut. 5:21a (BSB)

10. I do covet!

GASP!! OH NO!

SOME "REAL-LIFE" EXAMPLES!

① In this passage, Jesus first mentions **five** "people commandments":

"Good Teacher, **what must I do to inherit eternal life?**"

Jesus replied ... "**You know the commandments:** 'Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not bear false witness, honor your father and mother.'"

★ **"All these I have kept from my youth,"** he said. ★

Luke 18:18b, 19b, 20-21 (BSB)

Then, Jesus mentions **Commandment #10**:

On hearing this, Jesus told him, "**You still lack one thing:** Sell everything you own and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow Me."

But when the ruler heard this, **he became very sad**, because he was extremely wealthy.

Luke 18:22-23 (BSB)

I LOVE MONEY TOO MUCH, TO FOLLOW JESUS.

② When Paul focused on just the **external** aspects of the Law...

... as to **righteousness** in the law, **faultless**.
Philippians 3:6b (BSB)

I'm really good at doing good!

When he understood the meaning of the Tenth Commandment...

For I would not have been aware of coveting if the law had not said, "**Do not covet.**" ... but when the commandment came, **sin sprang to life and I died**.
Romans 7:7b, 9b (BSB)

Woe is me! I have broken them ALL!

- Without this **commandment**, we may think we have LIFE. We may have the "righteousness" of the Pharisees.
- But once we understand **what the commandment means...** it **KILLS** the life we thought we had. It leaves us with **no hope**.
- Yet in these **same** Commandments, **there is hope!**

JESUS

... came and obeyed the Law *perfectly*.

- He was **perfectly righteous**; and offers to **trade** his **righteousness** for our **sin**... and to take the punishment that we deserve.
 - But this offer is available **only** for those who are willing to stop clinging to their sin, and make the trade.
 - THEN, God will see **us** as totally righteous, and fulfilling the Law (even though it's actually Jesus' righteousness that he sees).
- For those who are **willing**, God **changes** our hearts, so that we begin to **love** righteousness and **hate** sin. He even puts within us the **desire** and the **ability** to change.
 - The change begins **now**, and will be completed when we are in Jesus' presence. *In the meantime...*
 - Our old ways will fight us; we will have wins and losses. But *in Christ*, there will be a final victory – and we will be forever free from the **violations** of the law that so easily plague us, today.

OUR MISSION!

PURSUE

THE CHANGE THAT GOD OFFERS US!

HOW?

God changes the hearts of his people, so that they *want* to follow the Law. He gives them the ability to do so.

The Holy Spirit changes our values and desires, using Scripture to "renew" our thinking (Romans 12:2).

So...

Pursue this change by pursuing Scripture!

CONTROLLED BY THE FLESH:

So I discovered that **the very commandment that was meant to bring life actually brought death**.
Romans 7:10 (BSB)

CONTROLLED BY THE SPIRIT:

He thus condemned sin in the flesh, **so that the righteous standard of the law might be fulfilled in us**, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.
Romans 8:3b-4 (BSB)

Credits

SCRIPTURE

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