

END-TIMES ISSUES



#109 Commandment #7 – Issues and observations (1).

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

THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT.

You shall not commit adultery.
Exodus 20:14 (BSB); also in Deuteronomy 5:18

It has ① an **immediate focus**, and it represents ② a **general principle**.

- ✓ **Immediate focus:** A prohibition against violating the marriage relationship. The focus is on humans as "*male-female units*." This commandment has to do with "the sanctity of marriage."
- ✓ **General principle:** The moral qualities which are required by this commandment – such as faithfulness and purity – also apply to other relationships, including our relationship with God.

Last time, we looked at what Scripture says about the *immediate focus*. But there were (potentially) some questions and issues to examine – and that is today's focus.

A basic principle needs to guide us:

FACTS are to influence our **THINKING**.
— They will indirectly influence our *actions*.

COMMANDS are to influence our **ACTIONS**.
— They will indirectly influence our *thinking*.

- ✓ Each passage must be understood within its context. That will determine *how* they are to influence us.
- ✓ Commands that do not apply to us (such as the Old Testament sacrifices) are treated like *facts*. They will still have a relevance, intended to influence our thinking; but their relevance will not be the same as it was for the original recipients.

Now to look at various questions and issues.

Are there any *lists* of the sins that violate this commandment?

- There are a variety of lists that *include* examples of sins that violate this commandment. But except for Leviticus 18, there is no list that is dedicated to this commandment.
- ✓ Statements about such sins are found throughout Scripture – given as commands, prohibitions, instructions, and examples. Anyone who is willing can learn about such sins, simply by reading the Bible.
- ✓ It would do no good to come up with a "complete" list. Even if a list were present in the Bible, it would be incomplete today, for people continue to *invent* new ways to sin.

They invent new ways of sinning ...
Romans 1:30b (NLT)

- **In the Old Testament:**
 - ✓ The main list is found in Leviticus 18. (A smaller list is found in Leviticus 20:10-24.) As we read relevant passages in the law, we discover that some of these practices required the punishment of *physical* death, while others didn't. Yet all were sin, which makes us worthy of God's wrath and *spiritual* death.
 - ✓ Regarding the sins that required the death sentence: It seems that, once Moses and Joshua had died, the people tended to ignore these regulations. Yet, even if none of the proscribed judgments are followed, it *still* expresses God's *righteous* wrath against them.
- **In the New Testament:**
 - ✓ Jesus includes some sexual sins in a list in Matthew 15:18-20 (and the parallel passage, Mark 7:20-23). But the Jews didn't need lists, since they already had the Old Testament. So, most lists that include sexual sins are found in Paul's letters to *Gentiles*, who did not have much exposure to the Old Testament. There is also a short list in the book of Revelation.

Some of the Larger New Testament Lists

that include direct references to sexual sins.*

- **SINS THAT COME FROM WITHIN A PERSON** – Matthew 15:18-20; Mark 7:20-23.
- **SINS THAT DESERVE DEATH** – Romans 1:26-32.
- **SINS THAT EXCLUDE PEOPLE FROM THE KINGDOM OF GOD** – 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 4:25-5:6 (mixed with various exhortations).
- **SINS THAT EARN THE WRATH OF GOD** – Colossians 3:5-9; Ephesians 4:25-5:6 (also listed above).
- **SINS THAT WILL EXCLUDE PEOPLE FROM THE HEAVENLY JERUSALEM** – Revelation 22:15.

* There is also a sin list in 1 Timothy 3:1-7. It doesn't make a direct reference to sexual sins, but states in various ways that their concept of "love" will be totally distorted. This will characterize the "last days."

What are the types of things that Scripture associates with sexual sin, or contrasts with it?

- We live in a day in which sexual sin is considered to be "not sin." Yet in Scripture, we see a *consistent message*. Certain things are often linked with these sins, being similar in moral nature, consequences, or in some other way belonging to the same category. In contrast, certain things are treated as incompatible in every way.
- Because of the time and space required for an in-depth examination, our goal here is to limit ourselves to looking at the over-all picture, not the specific sins that each passage focuses on. (You are free – and encouraged – to examine each passage in more detail.)
- Most of the verses included here are ones that we referred to last time, when examining Seventh Commandment obligations. Here, they are listed in random order.

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• **Things ASSOCIATED with sexual sin:**

- ✓ Being like the heathen who do not know God; taking advantage of others; will be punished by God; rejecting God (who prohibits such practices) – 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8.
- ✓ Sinning against the body – 1 Corinthians 6:18.
- ✓ Being thrown into hell; also bad consequences for others – Matthew 5:27-32.
- ✓ Defiled; to be punished; detestable to God – Leviticus 18:24-30.
- ✓ Idolatry – Ephesians 5:5.
- ✓ To be judged (condemned) by God – Hebrews 13:4.
- ✓ Deeds of darkness; orgies, drunkenness, debauchery, dissension, jealousy – Romans 13:12-13.
- ✓ Gratifying the flesh/sinful nature – Galatians 5:16-21.
- ✓ Sexual sins mentioned in many lists of sins; among the "works of the flesh" – (verses listed on a previous page).

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• **[Things ASSOCIATED, continued.]**

- ✓ Violating one's marriage covenant made before God; going down the path of death – Proverbs 2:16-19.
- ✓ Sinning against God – Genesis 39:9b.
- ✓ Sexual sin is one of the *consequences* of rejecting God and suppressing the truth you *know* about him – Romans 1:18-32.
- ✓ Worthy of death or other punishments (depending on the nature of the sin) – Leviticus 20:10-24.
- ✓ Continually sinning; deceiving (seducing) others – 2 Peter 2:14.
- ✓ The land will become filled with wickedness – Leviticus 19:29.
- ✓ The pathway to Sheol (= grave, death, hell) – Proverbs 7:24-27.
- ✓ Covenant-breaking; treachery; an act of violence – Malachi 2:13-16.
- ✓ Things pagans choose to do – debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing, idolatry – 1 Peter 4:3.

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• **Things CONTRASTED to sexual sin – incompatible things:**

- ✓ Sanctification (holiness); self-control; honorable living; the Holy Spirit – 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8.
- ✓ The kingdom of God – 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.
- ✓ Honoring God – 1 Corinthians 6:18-20.
- ✓ Being God's holy people; inheritance in the kingdom of God; being "children of the light"; with the fruit of goodness, righteousness, truth; pleasing God – Ephesians 5:3-10.
- ✓ Considering sexual sins to be repulsive – Jude 1:22-23.
- ✓ Honoring marriage (as God defines marriage); purity – Hebrews 13:4.
- ✓ Behaving decently – Romans 13:13.
- ✓ The paths of life; the paths of the righteous – Proverbs 2:16-20.
- ✓ A willingness to do whatever is necessary to stop your own sexual sin – Matthew 5:28-30. (See explanation on the next page.)

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Do we *really* need to cut off body parts?

But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

If your right eye causes you to sin, **gouge it out and throw it away**. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

And **if** your right hand causes you to sin, **cut it off and throw it away**. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to depart into hell.

Matthew 5:28-30 (BSB)

- This passage focuses on what many people consider to be the most "harmless" of sexual sins (if they consider it a sin at all): one that occurs only in *thought*, not in *deed*. Jesus warns us that even this "tiny" sin is enough to send us to hell.
- Does this passage tell us to start chopping-off body parts?

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- **First:** In this passage, Jesus is warning us about the seriousness of this sin. *It will send you to hell.*
- **Second:** *If* these things *did* cause the sin... *yes, it would be better* to cut them off. Jesus says so – and *he's not exaggerating!*
- **Third:** The key to this passage is the word "If."
- ✓ If all we needed to do, in order to stop sinning, was to remove a body part, *it would be worth it!* But the problem is that a person can be without hands and *still* lust. A person can lack eyes and *still* lust. **THESE ARE NOT THE CAUSE!**
- ✓ The actual CAUSE of this sin is the heart (which, in Scripture, includes the mind) – and this takes a surgery that *no human* can perform. Only "Surgeon Jesus" can "heal" us of our sin.

For **out of the heart** come **evil thoughts**, murder, **adultery**, **sexual immorality**, theft, false testimony, and slander.

Matthew 15:19 (BSB)

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WHY is sexual immorality a sin against one's body?

Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.

1 Corinthians 6:18b (ESV)

- **Paul doesn't point to a specific reason for saying this;** but the context of this verse shows us how horrible the sin is, and offers suggestions to answer this question:
 - ✓ Its effects on the body (or person) will be enslaving and destructive in ways that other sins aren't... often permanently. It is *self-destructive*.
 - ✓ The whole person (body and soul) are the "tool" that is being used to commit the sin against itself.
 - ✓ If you *are* truly saved, you are sinning against the *body* of Christ, who you are united with, by uniting yourself to the *body* of a prostitute (or adulteress, etc.). This cannot be an ongoing lifestyle for a saved person.
- **Consider the context of this passage...** (Next page.)

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Passages like this are given to the whole church. The way individuals respond will determine whether or not it applies to them. (Those who choose to ignore these instructions *prove* that they are not really part of the "body of Christ.")

WHO do you want joined to?

Do you not know that your **bodies** are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one **body** with her? For, as it is written, "The two will become one flesh."

But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.

Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the **body**, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.

Or do you not know that your **body** is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your **body**.

1 Corinthians 6:15-20 (ESV)

14

What about the woman caught in adultery? Jesus let her go!

- This account is found in John 7:53 – 8:11, and is surrounded by mystery and controversy.
 - ✓ The text itself is *absent* from most *early* manuscripts; and when present, it was sometimes placed at *other* locations in the gospels (in some cases, even attached to the book of Luke.)
 - ✓ Some people suggest that it is an accurate account of something that happened, but that it existed as a separate "fragment" (not originally attached to one of the four gospels)... and that it was eventually attached, in order to keep it preserved.
 - ✓ As far as interpreting the text, people tend to "find" in it whatever view *they* want to promote – even heresy.
 - » EXAMPLES of false teaching: ✓ adultery is no worse than other sins; ✓ Jesus replaced the "Law" with "love," ✓ forgiveness is the *opposite* of justice (so we can ignore justice); ✓ the Bible promotes the mistreatment of women; etc.

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- **An issue to consider, when trying to interpret this passage:**

✓ The moral law has a "hierarchy" or "order of priority" in it. Things higher in the hierarchy take precedence over things lower in it. This can be seen in the Old Testament (Jesus didn't invent it), but it is more visible in the New Testament.

EXAMPLE:

#1 LOVE FOR GOD
↑
#2 LOVE FOR NEIGHBOR
↑
(lower) RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES

» **Old Testament example:** Obedience (= love for God) is more important than sacrifices (= religious activity) – 1 Samuel 15:22.

» **New Testament example:** Teachers will be judged more strictly.

Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.

James 3:1 (BSB)

- ✓ This is also why we can find some events (in *both* Testaments) that *seem* to break the law (mainly religious activities), yet the people were *not* sinning.

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- **What actually happened? (PART 1)**

The scribes and Pharisees ... brought to [Jesus] a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before them and said, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery.

"In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such a woman. So what do You say?"

John 8:3-5 (BSB)

- ✓ **The issue (according to them):** Does Jesus agree with the Law?
- ✓ **The reality:** The religious leaders were not looking for *truth* or *justice*. They just wanted to *trap* Jesus, so they could condemn him.
- ✓ Adultery requires *two* people. For the woman to be "caught in the act of adultery," a man would have to *also* be involved! If the leaders cared about the Law, they would have also brought the man.

"If a man commits adultery with another man's wife—with the wife of his neighbor—**both** the adulterer and the adulteress are to be **put to death.**"

Leviticus 20:10 (BSB)

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- **What actually happened? (PART 2)**

They said this to test Him, in order to have a basis for accusing Him. But Jesus bent down and began to write on the ground with His finger.

John 8:6 (BSB)

This was complete hypocrisy with evil motives.

- ✓ These were the nation's religious leaders. They *knew* that the Law forbids favoritism (Leviticus 19:15; Deuteronomy 1:17; 16:19); and that the Old Testament also forbids letting guilty people go free (Proverbs 17:15; 24:24).
- ✓ All they wanted to do was to get rid of Jesus. They thought that *any* answer would trap him, and they could accuse him – either to the Romans (who would arrest him), or to faithful Jews (who would stop following him).

What did Jesus write on the ground?

- ✓ Scripture doesn't tell us, so we *don't know*. *Any* suggestion is pure speculation. If we needed to know, God would have told us. (Perhaps he was just ignoring them! After all, they were ignoring the *Law-giver*!)

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• What actually happened? (PART 3)

When they continued to question Him, He straightened up and said to them, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to cast a stone at her."

John 8:7 (BSB)

Jesus pointed to the *greater* issue.

- ✓ First of all, he *affirms* the requirements of the law. *The leaders* are the ones who are to initiate the punishment (as the law says), because *they* were the ones who *witnessed* the act.
- ✓ Jesus acknowledged the Law's requirement of death. *But there was a more serious issue that needed dealt with.* They were the leaders of Israel, and were leading the *nation* astray. They were violating the very Law they *claimed* to be following. They were unfaithful to God, which, incidentally, God calls "spiritual adultery," *even in the New Testament* – James 4:4.

The hands of the witnesses shall be the first in putting [the person] to death, and after that, the hands of all the people. So you must purge the evil from among you.

Deuteronomy 17:7 (BSB)

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• What actually happened? (PART 4)

And again He bent down and wrote on the ground.

When they heard this, they began to go away one by one, beginning with the older ones, until only Jesus was left, with the woman standing there.

John 8:8-9 (BSB)

The religious leaders had to acknowledge (in their hearts) their sin.

- ✓ First, Jesus gave them time to think...
- ✓ By saying "Let him who is without sin...", Jesus wasn't lowering the sinfulness of adultery, but pointing out that the leader's sins were greater. They were asking about stoning the woman, while letting her partner go free – something that *they knew* God condemns.
- ✓ He also wasn't implying that a person has to be *sinlessly perfect* before he can administer justice. *But the person has to deal with his own greater sin first.*
 - » This is the focus of Jesus' saying in the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew 7:1-5: "STOP! Deal with your own [greater] sin first!"

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• What actually happened? (PART 5)

Then Jesus straightened up [from writing on the ground] and asked her, "Woman, where are your accusers? Has no one condemned you?"

"No one, Lord," she answered.

"Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared.

John 8:10-11a (BSB)

The woman is spared; but *not* because her sin didn't deserve death.

- ✓ Jesus was *not* telling her that her sin was inconsequential.
- ✓ Rather, the law required "two or three witnesses," and there *weren't* any.
- ✓ As a human, Jesus was not a witness to the sin. So, he couldn't condemn her.

On the testimony of two or three witnesses a man shall be put to death, but he shall not be executed on the testimony of a lone witness.

Deuteronomy 17:6 (BSB)

Because they had let the man go unpunished, it was *impossible* for justice to occur.

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• What actually happened? (PART 6)

"Now go and sin no more."

John 8:11b (BSB)

Sin remains "not an option."

- ✓ As God, Jesus knew her heart. So he warned her that she had to "go and sin no more."
- ✓ *This is the same theme that we see from cover-to-cover in the Bible: Sexual sin is NOT to be considered an option!*

Some things to consider:

- Jesus always upheld the law, *as it was intended to be upheld.*
- Jesus did not "cancel" justice, in hopes that the woman "might someday get saved." *God* is involved in saving a person; and he can direct the circumstances to make it possible, *even if she were to be put to death.*
- Injustice often occurs in this world. We should never forget the coming final Day of Justice, at which time all the injustices will be dealt with.

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OUR MISSION

RECOGNIZE the seriousness of sin, and the importance of the Seventh Commandment!

Recognize also that doing this *requires* us to REJECT the views of the world, as they pertain to this commandment. (And **recognize** that, if you do so, the world may respond to you in a hostile manner. You'll have to decide if you think following Jesus is worth it.)

NEXT TIME ...

We plan to look at some more of the questions and issues that are related to this Seventh Commandment.

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Credits

SCRIPTURE

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