

END-TIMES ISSUES



#111 Commandment #7 – Issues and observations (3).

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

AND BEYOND I

PART 3 of: Issues and Observations Related to ...

THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT.

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

Last time, we began with:

A basic principle that 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.
- ✓ Commands that do not apply to us are treated like *facts*, and must be understood within their context.

Some basic principles to guide us when we're not sure...

Matters related to the *Seventh Commandment* are ultimately based on *God's* definition of the nature of male and female, and the nature of marriage, and all that these imply. Other commandments, such as "Do not covet (lust)," may also apply to one's situation.

- There is no possible way that Scripture could list *all* the possible *Seventh Commandment* sins. After all, people are constantly inventing *new* ways to sin.
 - ✓ Because of that, Scripture teaches us *principles* to apply to life. (This requires us to be willing to learn what Scripture says.)
- Understanding these commandments will guide us into understanding the nature of the conduct we may be considering.
 - ✓ Anything incompatible with what Scripture says is to be avoided!

God provides an escape from temptation; but we must be *willing* to accept it.

- If you belong to God, he is faithful, and will provide a way to get through the temptation.
 - ✓ This does not mean that temptations will always go away; rather, God will enable you to "stand up" under them. (Some translations use the word "endure.")
- The key issue is this: You have to be *willing* to take the opportunity he gives you.

No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide an escape, so that you can stand up under it.

1 Corinthians 10:13 (BSB)

- When we habitually choose to not take the escape God provides, it can become so *habitual* that we don't realize we're doing it.
- Bad choices result in bad options.
 - ✓ If we have ignored or rejected all the *good* options, we (and others around us) may be left with trying to do "damage control." It may become a matter of trying to choose the least-sinful option, to minimize the damage of what has already been done.
 - ✓ This does not turn the *bad* choice into a *good* one. "Lesser evils" are *still* evil. There will *still* be bad consequences. But it may prevent *even worse* consequences from occurring.

KING DAVID'S EXAMPLE: NOT TAKING THE "ESCAPE OPPORTUNITY."
Glance (not intentional) ⇒ **Temptation** (to keep glancing intentionally) ⇒ **Choosing to ignore the opportunity to "escape."** ⇒ **Lust** (after yielding to the temptation) ⇒ **Adultery** (after being overpowered by the lust).

It is important to know the difference between temptation and lust.

But each one is **tempted** when he is lured and enticed by his own **desires**. Then when desire conceives, it gives birth to **sin**, and when sin is full grown, it gives birth to **death**.

James 1:14-15 (NET)

- Saved people have a **new nature**. Our former (*old*) nature tries to convince us that it is still our master. But we do not have to obey it.
- This **old nature** has desires, and it tries to lure and entice us by those desires.
 - ✓ [In the right context, many "desires" are *good*. But when the old nature takes hold of them, they become *evil*. So, in this passage, some translations may say "lusts" or "evil desires."]
- When we are faced with this desire, we have to choose whether to give-in to it, or to run from it. This is **temptation**.
- If we say "yes" to the temptation, the *old nature's* desires become *our* desires. At that point, we become guilty of **lust**.

Some may ask – and it is a legitimate question we need to consider.

What if I can satisfy my desires *without* anyone else being involved?

- There are many different ways that people can violate this commandment. This can include sinful *actions*; but people may also be satisfied with sinful *thoughts*.
- This can include "old" ways that have been around since sin entered the world... and it can include "new" ways, encouraged by perversions of modern technology.
- **Is it sin?** The previously-stated principles can answer this question for us. For example, are we trying to gratify lustful sexual desires?
- **Is it harmless, if others are not involved?** *If it is sin*, there *will* be consequences, even if others are not involved and we don't see the consequences. *All* things – even *good* things – have consequences. In some sin situations, the consequences might not be as *bad* as when others are involved; but they exist nonetheless, and *are* bad.

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We can *all* ask this, since *even thoughts* can violate the commandment.

What if I *already* committed sexual sin? [[regardless of what the sin might have been]]

- **If we sinned**, we cannot undo it. But we *can* repent. God will forgive us for the *eternal* consequences; but there will still be consequences in this present life.
- **We need to:**
 - ✓ Follow Jesus' instructions (especially if it involves other people): "Go and sin no more!" – i.e., leave your life of sin.
 - ✓ If our sin involved *actions* against someone, we may have to confess our sin and accept the consequences.
 - ✓ Do whatever you *morally* can do, to minimize the consequences – i.e., the effects on others (first priority) and on self (second priority). Be aware that this doesn't mean there will be *no* consequences.

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Marriage situations in the Bible that may confuse us.

There are marriage situations that may seem to *contradict* what Scripture teaches; yet they are *not condemned*. They may be *permitted*. They may even be considered necessary in one situation, yet be *condemned* in another.

Issues to consider:

- **Marriage within the family.** This is related to the question many ask, "Where did Cain get his wife?"
- **Levirate marriage.** Situations where a man was required to marry his dead brother's wife.
- **Polygamy.** Having more than one wife.

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ALL OF THESE ISSUES – EVEN THOSE *NOT* CONSIDERED SINFUL – ARE THE RESULT OF SIN IN THE WORLD.

- Some problems are caused by the *direct sin* of people.
- Others are the result of *the existence of sin* in the world – unfortunate consequences that are the result of the Fall (Genesis 3).

Either way...

★ These things would not have become an issue if sin and death had never come into existence. ★

Sin in the world has made *many* things necessary.

We have certain obligations that are *morally* necessary because of the *presence* of sin in the world (and its effects).

EXAMPLE: Modest clothing (an example that is also related to this commandment). Clothes were *not* necessary before sin entered the world. (Compare Genesis 2:25 to 3:6-10+, 21.)

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Marriage within the family: Today we would call it "incest." Yet where did Cain get his wife? (As well as others at that time?)

And Cain had relations with his wife, and she conceived and gave birth to Enoch.

Genesis 4:17a (BSB)

- It would have been his *sister*. *There were no other options!*
- Yet we read in the Law given to Moses that such marriages are *prohibited* (Leviticus 18:6).

None of you are to approach any close relative to have sexual relations. I am the LORD.

Leviticus 18:6 (BSB); examples in the verses that follow.

❖ **Is this a contradiction?**

- ✓ NO! Actually, this is a situation where *biological* issues have *forced* a moral obligation.

HOW?

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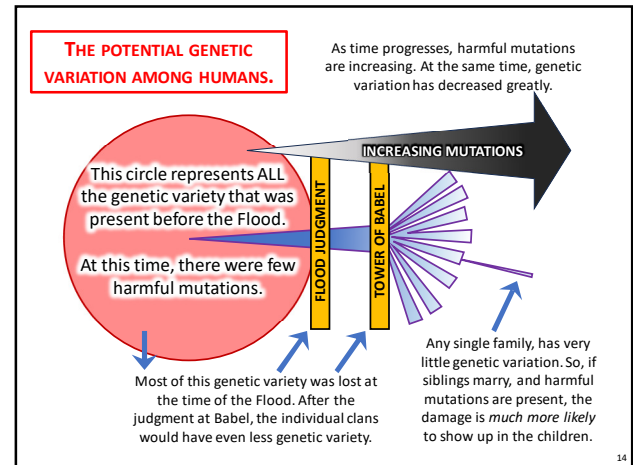
THE EFFECT OF GENETICS.

- **Adam and Eve** had 100% of the possible genetic diversity for all the potential varieties of the entire human race... and *no harmful mutations*.
 - ✓ *Harmful mutations* did not begin to occur until after sin entered the world, and sin's consequences affected *everything*.
- **Adam's and Eve's children**, having nearly perfect genes, could marry with *no negative side-effects*. Cain could marry his sister.
- **At the Flood**, most of the genetic variety in the human race was lost. Even so, Noah's grandchildren only had siblings and cousins to marry.
- **At Babel**, when the people spread across the earth, each small group would have an even smaller amount of genetic variety.
 - ✓ At the same time, harmful mutations would be slowly increasing (and probably at a faster rate, after the Flood).
- **In Abraham's day**, it was still acceptable for him to marry a half-sister. (But we might ask: Is it possible that doing so had something to do with her infertility? If so, God used it to make them rely on *him*.)

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- **In Moses' day**, when God gave us the Law, the situation would have become bad enough that God forbade marriage *within* the immediate family. The potential genetic problems were getting worse.
 - **Since then**, it has become even worse. Today, *first cousins* that marry have a 6% chance of having children with a genetic defect; and siblings who marry have a 25% chance.
-
- As genetic variety *decreases*, the chance of existing harmful mutations expressing themselves *increases*. The closer the family relationships of those getting married, the greater the chance of genetic problems.
 - Both parents need the *same* harmful mutations, for it to seriously affect their offspring. It's possible that this can happen for *any* two randomly-chosen people who marry (3% chance). But when close family members marry, the possibility *increases greatly* (25% chance).
 - Since these mutations can cause serious problems for the children – or even death, *to deliberately choose this for your children is not an expression of love!* The only way to *minimize* this is to *prohibit* marriage within the family. *God prohibited it to protect the children!*

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The issue of levirate marriages.

(This word comes from the Latin, and means "husband's brother.")

When brothers dwell together and one of them dies without a son, the widow must not marry outside the family. **Her husband's brother is to take her as his wife** and fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law for her.

The first son she bears will carry on the name of the dead brother, so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel.

Deuteronomy 25:5-6 (BSB); see vs. 7-10 for consequences of not doing so.

- This situation would have never have occurred, if sin had not entered the world. After all, levirate marriages happen only after a man (a brother) has *died*.
- This could result in a man (the living brother) having *two* wives, if he already had a wife. And though this was not part of the original marriage concept (as expressed in Genesis 2), it became necessary – all because of the presence of *death* in the world (which is the consequence of sin).

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WHY LEVIRATE MARRIAGES PROBABLY MAKE NO SENSE TO US.

- **Be aware:** Most of us will find it difficult to comprehend the social structure that existed in the Old Testament era. What we *do* learn about it tends to be interpreted through the "lens" of our own society's views – which are very much the *opposite* of what we see in Scripture.
- People back then didn't do things *our* way, so their views tend to be considered antiquated or backwards – or "just plain wrong." The tendency is to criticize or mock the way *they* did things, simply because it doesn't match the way *we* do them today.
- **This isn't always deliberate.** People tend to *assume* they do things the "right way, then evaluate other people based on that assumption. Few people ever ask, "How does *Scripture* say a society should be run?" – and *then* evaluate the issue. Usually, it's treated as a matter of different *opinions* – their "stupid" ones vs. our "enlightened" ones.

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WHY DID THEY DO IT? (THE BACKGROUND, A QUICK OVERVIEW.)

- For them, people had their specific places in society; but *everyone* was important. There was also an importance in maintaining the social structure, including one's family lineage.
- Since family lineage was generally (with rare exceptions) passed down through a male member of the family, if the husband died without a son, his family line was in danger of being extinguished.
- To prevent this, the closest brother (usually) was to marry the widow and (hopefully) have a son who would be treated as though he were the dead brother's child. That son would be the one who would continue the family line.
- This arrangement would also protect and provide for the widow.
- It is important to note that this was *not* a situation in which a man just wanted to have multiple wives. It was a specific situation that was *not* based on him choosing a wife. It was a *necessity* that was endorsed by God, because of the nature of life in this fallen world.

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SHOULD WE PRACTICE THIS TODAY?

- The levirate regulation was given to *national* Israel. Few, if any, of us live in a society that has such a social structure.
- In Christ, we are under the New Covenant, which has a different focus. Its members are spread out across the world, and our focus is no longer on a national social structure.
- However, we *do* have obligations to take care of members of the body of Christ – especially those who are most vulnerable. Regarding widows, Scripture gives us examples of caring for them, such as Acts 6:1-6.
- There are specific regulations about who we are to take care of, and under what circumstances. The church is instructed to *not* take care of just anyone who wants it, but only those with a *genuine* need! The widow also has specific obligations and qualifications. (See 1 Timothy 5:3-16. Several other passages, some even in the Old Testament, have much to teach us on this issue.)

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Polygamy

All instances in Scripture involve a *man* having more than one wife. There are no examples of a *woman* having more than one husband.

- Polygamy was a common practice in the ancient Near East.
- Yet 100% of all Scripture passages that focus on the nature of marriage describe it in terms of *one* man and *one* woman.

... a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and **they** will become **one flesh**.

Genesis 2:24b (BSB)

... a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and **the two** will become **one flesh**."

Ephesians 5:31b (BSB), quoting Genesis 2:24b

... each man should have **his own** wife, and each woman **her own** husband.

1 Corinthians 7:2b (BSB)

NO PLURAL NOUNS HERE!

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THE ISSUE:

- Scripture gives *examples* of people who practiced polygamy. Under certain circumstances, levirate marriage might result in polygamy. But in most situations, it was a *choice*, not an *obligation*.
- We don't find any "do not" command that prohibits polygamy; yet *never* does Scripture *endorse* polygamy as "a legitimate choice." Instead, Scripture treats polygamy as something that "existed."
- Scripture does have a few regulations that deal with polygamy, such as the need to treat each wife properly. It also limits the number of wives that a leader could have: In the Old Testament, kings were *not* to take many wives (Deuteronomy 17:17) – though some of them did. In the New Testament, church leaders were to be "the husband of *one* wife" (1 Timothy 3:2, 12; Titus 1:6).
- It is significant that every instance of polygamy found in Scripture, in which there is a description of their family life, the situation is always associated with conflict and strife.

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SHOULD/CAN WE DO IT?

- **Since there is no command about it, the facts are to influence our thinking.** Facts, such as: ✓ it is *never* endorsed; ✓ it is *always* portrayed in a negative manner, whenever we read about the family life in such a situation; and ✓ it is incompatible with its spiritual counterparts – what marriage is meant to *represent*, such as: Jesus and the *bride* (= singular, not plural) of Christ.
- **We also need to consider the fact** that 100% of the statements made in Scripture (commands and instructions) either *affirm* monogamous marriage (one man and one woman), or else is a statement *compatible* with monogamy, but *not* with polygamy. *None* of the very few regulations that focus on polygamy are *endorsements*.
- **Since there are no commands or facts that promote polygamy**, attempts to "justify" it have to rely on human-invented arguments, or point to examples of people in Scripture who were did it (100% of whom were sinners, even if they were attempting to follow God). *Neither* of these are good arguments for polygamy.

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WHAT IF A PERSON WHO IS ALREADY DOING IT BECOMES SAVED?

- Historically, Christians have considered it wrong, based on what Scripture says regarding the nature of marriage. They also recognized that polygamy existed at times in the past, and occasionally in the present. (Societies that have a Christian influence tend to have little or no polygamy.)
- Missionaries have sometimes had to deal with situations that involved actions that people have done *before* they were saved. It always turns out that *it would have been better to not get into that situation, than to try to remedy already being in that situation*.
- Dealing with such situations is often a matter of "damage control." When something like this has happened, there may be no good options. At times, it may be less damaging if the person remains in the polygamous situation – especially if it is a situation in which separating from the "extra" wives could leave those wives in a destitute or even life-threatening situation.

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OUR MISSION:

Focus on **LEARNING**,
so we will make
wise choices.

What can we learn?

1. We can learn Scripture principles that can guide us in our responses to situations that don't seem to have a clear answer.
2. It's helpful to understand the reasons for certain Old Testament practices, so we can think clearly, if the matter comes up.
3. God *does* provide a way out of temptation. It is better to choose that way, than to have to deal with the consequences of sin.
4. If/when we *do* sin, we have an obligation to repent and trust God for wisdom to deal with the damage... and to learn to "go and sin no more."

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"DAMAGE CONTROL"

This does NOT mean hiding the sin and living a life of hypocrisy and pretension. It means accepting responsibility for your sin, dealing appropriately with it, and minimizing its opportunity to grow or create additional problems. If the sin has left you with only *bad* options, choose the one that is the *least* sinful and damaging.

Credits

SCRIPTURE

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