

ANCIENT LAW | TIMELESS TRUTH

A Study of the Ten Commandments



THE TEN

- 1- THOU SHALT HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME.
- 2- THOU SHALT NOT MAKE UNTO THEE ANY GRaven IMAGE.
- 3- THOU SHALT NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD THY GOD IN VAIN.
- 4- REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY, TO KEEP IT HOLY.

COMMANDMENTS

- 5- HONOR THY FATHER AND THY MOTHER.
- 6- THOU SHALT NOT KILL.
- 7- THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT ADULTERY.
- 8- THOU SHALT NOT STEAL.
- 9- THOU SHALT NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS.
- 10- THOU SHALT NOT COVET.

LOVE GOD AND KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS

WHAT IS LAW?

- A social construct used to regulate and maintain order in a society.
- A system of rules and regulations.
- A fact of the natural order deduced from repeated scientific observation

ANCIENT LAW CODES

- Many societies in the Ancient Near East had legal codes.
 - These law codes were usual *caustic* "If a man does x, you shall do y."
 - Often authorized by a god and given by the king.
- The most famous ancient law code is the Code of Hammurabi
 - 18th Century BC
 - 242 laws regulating commerce, violence, treatment of animals, property rights, etc.

SUZERAIN VASSAL TREATIES

- An ancient covenant document outline terms of relationship between a king and his vassals.
 - Often written up between a conqueror and a conquered people.
- Included three primary sections:
 - Historic Preamble
 - Terms of the Covenant
 - Blessings and Curses

GENRE COMPARISON AND THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

- Knowing the genre of a biblical text helps us interpret it better
- Knowing the background of other ancient texts from the same or similar genres helps us identify what is unique about God's revelation in scripture.
- Distinct Features of Old Testament Law
 - Both *caustic* and *apodictic* (“Thou shalt”, “Thou shalt not”)
 - A Suzerain-vassal treaty from a benevolent liberator. A covenant directly between a God and his people

WHAT IS TORAH?

- “Torah” is the traditional designation used by the Jewish people for the first five books of the Bible.
- The Hebrew word תּוֹרָה does not mean “law”
 - Translated in the LXX and New Testament as “Nomos” which does mean “law”.
- Instead, it means “teaching” or “instruction”
- How might this change or alter the way we perceive the old Testament “Law” of Moses and the Ten Commandments in particular?

THE GOSPEL AND THE LAW

- The Ten Commandments were *not* intended be a means to earn our salvation.
- The Ten commandments assume the salvation that the Lord has already won on our behalf.
 - It teaches us how to live in relationship with God
- Calvin's three uses of the law:
 - Conviction of Sin
 - Restriction of evil and sin
 - Training in righteous living

INTRODUCING THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

- Appear in two places in the Bible: Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5.
- Nowhere in the Bible are they called the “Ten Commandments”
 - Instead, they are called the “Ten Words”
 - *Decalogue* comes from the Greek *deka* (ten) and *logos* (word)
- The chapter is also introduced with covenantal language (Deut 5:3)
- These are the Ten “Words” (Principles) of Covenant Relationship

STRUCTURE OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

- Introduction: (Historic Preamble)
 - “I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt...”
- The first 3 commandments regulate the divine relationship
- The last 6 commandments regulate human relationships
- The 4th commandment is transitional relating to both God and human relationships



THE TEN COMMANDMENTS AS THE FIRST BILL OF RIGHTS

- In American society we generally think of rights as something that I, the individual, possess.
- The Ten Commandments conceive of rights as something that others possess. God tells us not to guard our own rights, but commands us not to violate the rights of others.

NUMBERING OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Reformed Tradition	Catholic/Lutheran Tradition
1. You shall have no other gods before me	1. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a graven image.
2. You shall not make for yourself a graven image	2. You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.
3. You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain	3. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy
4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.	4. Honor your father and your mother.
5. Honor your father and your mother	5. You shall not kill
6. You shall not kill	6. You shall not commit adultery
7. You shall not commit adultery	7. You shall not steal
8. You shall not steal	8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor	9. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife; and you shall not desire anything that is your neighbor's	10. You shall not desire anything that is your neighbor's.

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

- “You shall have no other gods before me”
- “YHWH has the right to absolute allegiance” (Block)
- “The Lord will have himself alone to be exalted in his people, and claims the entire possession of them as his own.” (Calvin)

ABSOLUTE ALLEGIANCE

- God has a right to our absolute allegiance.
- He does not want shared allegiance or partial allegiance.
- Like marriage, our covenant with God in worship is exclusive.