

The Sword AND Staff

“Preach the Word” (II Timothy 4:2) • “Feed the Flock” (I Peter 5:2)

THOUGHTS ON THE TEN COMMANDMENTS



■ BY JAMES E. GIBBONS—1535 Fairfield Drive—Mt. Airy, N.C. 27030 U.S.A.

WHEN ADAM AND EVE sinned, and the human race became a dying race, God's long-range plan called for a Saviour. As God promised, with time there would be born of the "seed" of woman (a virgin birth) one who would "bruise" the head of the old devil in destroying his power over the human race (Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 7:14; 9:6,7; Matthew 1:18-23; Luke 1:31-33; Galatians 4:4; Hebrews 2:14-17). Many things had to be demonstrated and proved to mankind in man's

preparation for the coming of the Saviour, but God moved on in that direction.

In Genesis 12:1-3 we read of the call of Abraham. Through this great man of faith and his descendants God would more in particular unfold his great plan of redemption. Finally through him (Abraham), "all families of the earth" would be "blessed." After that great trial of faith as recorded in Genesis 22, God again said

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Proverbially SPEAKING...

THE CLOSER we get to God the more we realize how far away we are from Him.

"When love is in the heart, duty is a delight; and when duty is a delight, life is sublime."

Sometimes we think the water is deep when it is only muddy—we just can't see how shallow it really is (. . . and the same can be said about some preaching).

"When we look at a Christian woman we should see an inward glow, not an outward show" (I Timothy 2:9,10).

When people act unusual and irregular, there is something unusual and irregular going on in their lives.

"Love is chiefly the source of active obedience: while fear is satisfied by the absence of provocation, love wants not only to abstain from evil but to do good."

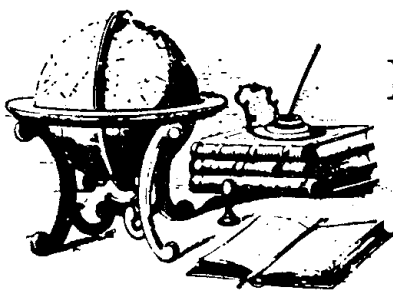
If you don't know where you are going, you won't know if and when you get there.

"It is not the happy people who are thankful; it is the thankful people who are happy."

Many people don't accept the truth because they refuse to believe there is such a thing as error (especially in religion).

"Life is of no real value except to serve THE ONE who gave it."

We oppose smoking for the same reason that we oppose abortion: human life is sacred.



EDITORIAL COMMENTS...

DANGEROUS TIMES, RELIGIOUSLY SPEAKING, AND HOW TO DEAL WITH THEM

THIS KNOW also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers (slanders), incontinent (without self-control), fierce (brutal), despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady (headstrong), highminded (haughty), lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. . . ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. . . But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity (love), patience (perseverance). . . but evil men and seducers (impostors) shall wax (grow) worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But (as for you) continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them, and that. . . thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect (complete), thoroughly furnished (equipped) unto all good works.—*The apostle Paul* (II Timothy chapter 3) □

FOR THOSE WHO MIGHT BE CONCERNED

WE HAVE no subscription setup or policy with this publication. This is not a commercial endeavor. All that we are concerned about is paying our bills, keeping on publishing, and even expanding our outreach. But, as is stated in the boxed information on this page, "We are totally dependent upon your financial backing in the publication of this religious paper. . . Subsidizing gifts are definitely needed along for us to continue this unselfish labor of love for God and truth." It is not our policy to ask, but simply to continue, survive, or expand on the basis of those contributions (and about 20,000 are going into the mail each time now). Although the editor has his own print shop (gradually assimilated for this purpose), it still takes several thousand dollars each time an issue goes into the mail. For those who might be interested (or concerned) and wish to back our humble efforts, for some reason we have experienced some lean months recently. Our aspirations and ambitions seem to exceed our resources. We have no sectarian ax to grind, but simply love the truth and wish to present the truth for the sake of the truth (not to advance some denominational division). In this day of apostasy, falling away, it is our conviction that this is what the world (church) needs. □

THOUGHTS ON THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

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to Abraham, "And in thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed: because thou hast obeyed my voice" (Genesis 22:18; Acts 3:25,26; Galatians 3:8,16).

The Ten Commandments

When the descendants of Abraham were seemingly sidetracked and enslaved in Egypt for a number of years (Genesis 15:13-16; Exodus), it looked like a regressive interlude in God accomplishing his purpose. But that was not the case. From the Garden of Eden eviction of man, involving all the patriarchs from Adam to Moses, God had largely left man to himself to do his own thing. Man had a vague concept of right and wrong with no written laws. But by means of himself man did not attain the righteousness of God. He seemed hopeless. He could not, so to speak, lift himself by his own bootstraps. In God's Providence, with the deliverance of the children of Israel (Abraham's descendants) from Egyptian bondage, man would no longer be without a legal system; the situation was to change. While encamped at Mt. Sinai (also called Mt. Horeb) in their exodus from Egypt, in an awesome manner they received the ten commandments and all of the Old Testament laws which would fully regiment their lives. In view of this, the apostle Paul in Galatians 3:19 puts forth a relevant question about the law which he proceeds to answer, "Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made. ..." God was getting man ready for the Saviour. The law served as a moral restraint, and at the same time decidedly proved to man by way of experience his inability to be saved by law. It showed just how hopeless his situation really was. Sin is the transgression of the law (I John 3:4), and "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). In more ways than one "the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ" (Galatians 3:24).

The ten commandments were given by God three

times to Israel, and they are recorded two places in the Old Testament Scriptures, Exodus 20:1-7 when they were first spoken by God at Mt. Sinai and Deuteronomy 5:6-21 when Moses reviewed them before Israel at the end of their wilderness wanderings just before they went into the Promised Land. The silence of eternity was broken when God first spoke them audibly and directly to the children of Israel as his voice thundered from Mt. Sinai (following the great commotion in nature that was calculated to put fear into the hearts of these primitive people, Exodus 20:18-21). Then during the forty days that Moses was up in the mountain God gave the ten commandments written upon tables of stone. But Moses in righteous indignation broke these tablets of stone upon descending the mountain and finding the children of Israel already breaking the first two commandments in worshipping a golden calf. Again God gave Moses a second set of tablets with the commandments during another forty-day stay on the mount (making three times altogether that they were given).

Summary of the Ten Commandments

All of the other laws of the Old Testament rest upon the foundation of the ten commandments (and in a large measure, civilized human society itself). The ten commandments involved God and man, the first four directly tied in with God and the last six having to do with man. When questioned by the lawyer, testing Jesus, as to "the great commandment of the law," Jesus perhaps alluded to such categories. Answering, "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:35-40). The apostle Paul said "to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" (Romans 13:8-10).

We might summarize the ten commandments in another way: Worship God, honor your parents, and respect all men (and their possessions). The Almighty and Holy God of eternity as the source of all life and the Creator is to be worshipped. This life is passed on through parents to others, so as the secondary source of life fittingly they are to be honored (in a sense, they stand in the place of God). This life which has been created by God, and passed on by the parents, is very sacred. We are made in the image and likeness of God. We are not to take human life (kill) because of this. And this sacred relationship whereby this life is passed on to others, marriage, is to be respected (along with our sexuality). If we do not respect our sexuality (giving way to immorality), we will not respect what our sexuality produces (other human beings). This respect for the divine image that is in us will prompt us, by

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word or deed, to treat one another with decency and respect (and to respect the property rights of others, whether it involves stealing or coveting). All of this is very simple, but, oh, so basic!

That Which Is Commanded

The ten commandments say a lot. But the commands of God, even strictly by a legalistic Old Testament approach, always imply more than is said. If it is a positive command, there usually is a backside negative aspect involved. If the command is negative in nature, there is a positive implication. Then besides the positive aspect and the negative (and vice versa), there usually are other implications that are inherent in the command. The negative command prohibits all that is necessary (detrimental) in fulfilling the command, and the positive command allows all that is necessary in its fulfillment. All of this can be seen in the one commandment God gave to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. We get the impression that it was basically negative in nature in that it prohibited. God said, "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:17). However, the positive aspect is seen in the preamble to the command, "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; But. . ." (2:16). And that which was detrimental to the fulfillment of the command was understood by Eve to be part of the command (although unexpressed originally, 2:16,17). Here is what she said to the devil, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, *neither shall ye touch it*, lest ye die" (3:2,3). It was not enough not to eat of the forbidden tree, they were not to touch it either. As Paul would say in the New Testament Scriptures, "Abstain from all appearance of evil" (I Thessalonians 5:22). Certain things are outright sin, and others are "weights" that will pull us down into sin (Hebrews 12:1).

New Testament Obedience to Commands

Although we are not under the ten commandments today as such, being Christians, all of them in some sense (except sabbath observance) are found in the New Testament (this side of the cross of Calvary, Hebrews 9:15-17). John 1:17 makes a profound statement: "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." This word translated "truth" sometimes means reality (in addition to that which is true in contrast with the false). The law involved a "shadow of good things to come" (Hebrews 10:1; Colossians 2:14-17). This is true regardless how you choose to look at it (the Old Testament was the shadow; the New Testament is the reality behind the shadow that was cast). Even in the way the Lord treated the commandments of God we can see this. Legalism was not and is not enough, although the letter of the teaching must be kept (or it is not kept at all). The heart is involved in keeping the commands of God. Jesus

said, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill. . . But I say unto you" (Matthew 5:21,22). To Jesus, uncontrolled anger and malicious name calling approached murder. John wrote, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him" (I John 3:15). Again Jesus said, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matthew 5:27, 28). The sermon on the mount (where these words are found) involves the nature of the righteousness that was to be in the kingdom of Christ (Matthew 5:20). It involved the heart. In Romans chapters 7 and 8, Paul puts the law of sin and death and the law of the Spirit in bold contrast. In the midst of this he writes, "For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Romans 8:6,7). The law of God in its Old Testament application did not subject the "carnal mind." It was very much like handing an unconverted person the Bible externally and, without a change of heart, charging him to keep the commandments of God. The law of the Spirit involves conversion to Christ, getting the inside straightened out, then letting the Holy Spirit control the inner person (and thus the whole person). "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:1). Cushioned by the grace of God, and empowered by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we are in a better position to keep the commands of God.



MOSES BREAKING THE TWO TABLES OF STONE.

The Preamble to the Ten Commandments

With these thoughts behind us, and as we approach each of the ten commandments individually for a brief study, we notice (as God began to speak) that the ten commandments as a whole were prefixed with sort of a preamble. "And God spake all these words, saying, I am the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Ex-

odus 20:1,2). This is the basis (and authority) upon which God gives these monumental commandments with the expectancy that they will be obeyed. The commands actually rest upon the LORD God: (1) Just who he is (“I am *the LORD*”); (2) Whose he is (“I am the LORD *thy God*”); and (3) What he had done for them (“which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage”). We are reminded of what God said to Abraham, more generically, centuries before, “I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect (upright)” (Genesis 17:1b). All morality must have its roots in God, absolutes, whose unchanging character is the law of the universe. And, as someone has said in reference to the giving of the ten commandments, “The manifestation in act of his power and of his love precedes the claim for reverence and obedience.” (It almost sounds like the New Testament: “For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s,” I Corinthians 6:20). Gratitude would be one of the compelling motives for obedience to the ten commandments.

I. “Thou Shalt Have No Other Gods Before Me” (Exodus 20:3).

This first and great commandment was given over against the backdrop of a world that was engrossed in polytheism, superstition, and given over to the darkness of idolatry (not that there were in reality other “gods”). This commandment is the very foundation for all of the others that follow. Remove it, and you will have trouble in enforcing the others. In the New Testament Scriptures, the Lord Jesus Christ as he answered the temptation of the devil, summarized various Old Testament references and gave the positive backside of this commandment. “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Luke 4:8). The forbidding of the worship of “other gods” implies that they should be worshipping the one true God (and him alone). It is even as Jesus said, “Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:24).

Deuteronomy 6:4,5 fits right in with this command further emphasizing its positive side in a most emphatic way. “Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.” This declaration that “the LORD our God is *one LORD*” is capable of several meanings as the Hebrew word for “one” here has various shades of meaning, we understand. The LORD (JEHOVAH) is the only living and true God; he only is God, and he is but one (yes, one, alone, unique, and indivisible). Since he is one, he is all. He is everything. Therefore, the totality of this injunction (and expected commitment and loyalty to God): “Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with *all* thy soul, and with *all* thy might.”

Monotheism in Nature and Religion

We make this immediate observation from our present perspective and vantage point in passing: The awesome manifestation of power that we see in nature about us (which can be described as nothing less than almighty) harnessed and governed by higher

systematic intelligence (which apparently is supreme, as it is consistent throughout the universe) declares that there is *God*. And the unity of nature (as seen in harmonious and consistent laws which can be depended upon) points to *one God*, not many conflicting deities. Monotheism is the foundation of all truth (which is “monothematic”) whether it be in “science” (nature) or in religion (or morals). Yes, there is one God who “hath made of one blood all nations” (Acts 17:24-29). This one God gave his “only begotten son” (just one), John 3:16, to be our Saviour. Consequently, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). As there is only one God, and one Saviour, there can be only one way of salvation. There is only one church and one system of religious truth (not many). The Bible says, “There is one body (i.e., church—Colossians 1:18), and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Ephesians 4:4-6). Denominationalism contradicts the oneness of God as seen in nature and as taught in the Holy Scriptures. How tragic (and absurd)!

Consequent Admonitions

And would that our Jewish friends could see that the one God of the Old Testament has accomplished his purpose with Israel after the flesh as outlined to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3; Galatians 3:6-29), that Israel after the flesh has been superseded by “Israel after the Spirit” (the church), and that this one God of eternity is to realize his one purpose for all of his creation, one world, through the one universal church (which is for everyone, not just one nation).

Then let us always remember the one true God as he has enjoined in the first of the ten commandments: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (and the flip side of this command in serving him only as God, the LORD God). Someone has well said, “He who begins by erasing the first commandment will sooner or later make a clean sweep of all the ten.”

II. “Thou Shalt Not Make Unto Thee Any Graven Image” (Exodus 20:4).

It is hard for us today to understand ancient man’s predisposition to idolatry, but God knew (and history confirms the reality of this problem). This commandment was not only given, God goes at length to explain what he means (20:4,5). We know assuredly what is commanded on the basis of what is prohibited. Nothing, absolutely nothing, is permitted that might lead into idolatry. With this precept we have a hint as to the penalty that would be incurred with its violation (and Israel would experience this more than once, and eventually in Babylonian Captivity).

The reason for this prohibitive commandment is tied in with the positive side of the first commandment (just who God really is). Reinforcing this commandment, God would soon have Moses remind the people that he talked with them “from heaven” (20:22,23). Then Moses would later remind them that they “saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice” when God spoke

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to them at Mt. Sinai (Deuteronomy 4:12). In other words, getting right at the positive reason for this command (or the positive backside), Jesus said in John 4:24, "God is Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Yes, man was to make no graven image for he himself was made in the very image of God; God is Spirit, and that image in man has to do with the spiritual (not the physical). Through faith by means of the inner spiritual man we are to draw near to God (Hebrews 11:6). Idolatry has to do with worshipping that which is seen; God and eternal realities, the unseen.

Monotheism, Then Idolatry

Contrary to what is commonly thought and taught by our "learned" men of today, mankind was first monotheistic and then went into idolatry. Monotheism, with its lofty concepts, did not evolve from the primitive and less sophisticated deification of the elements of nature into a multiplicity of "gods" (and idols). All men originally knew the one God, and those who came along later were "without excuse" (Romans 1:20). Paul tells of their digression. "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain (empty) in their imaginations (thoughts), and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into images made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Where God also gave them up. . ." (Romans 1:21-25a).

Graven images are multiple monuments to the total lie (and are representatives of total apostasy), cutting right at the heart of all truth (for God is Spirit, God is One, and truth is one). The prophet Habakkuk said that the idol was "a teacher of lies" (Habakkuk 2:18). Resuming Paul's thoughts about idolatry in Romans chapter 1, he said that those given to idolatry "changed the truth of God into a lie" (1:26). In the wake of this intellectual and spiritual darkness followed depravity, degradation, and the moral abandonment of mankind. Read about it in Romans 1:18-32, as Paul repeatedly tells us that "God gave them up" (1:24, 26, 28ff). It is not a very lovely picture.

"Unto the Third and Fourth Generation"

In rounding out our thoughts on this commandment, let us say a word or two about the penalty involved in breaking this negative precept. God declared, "Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments" (Exodus 20:5,6). God is one and their devotion to him had to be singular. He is pictured as being jealous (zealous, or impassioned) when anything takes his place. He is a jealous God because he is God—there is none other.

The curse of idolatry is represented as the visitation of "the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation" (and the idolator is seen as one who hates God). At the same time God was showing his mercy unto thousands of them that loved him and kept his commandments (even unto a "thousand generations," Deuteronomy 7:9). (Note: it is called mercy even though they loved him and kept his commandments. Remember what Jesus said in Luke 17:10). The penalty may sound severe ("unto the third and fourth generation"), but the roots of idolatry are lingering and hard to uproot. However, in contrast with his judgment, his mercy is pictured as extending to a "thousand generations." We are inclined to believe that "unto the third and fourth generation" and "thousands" (or, "thousand generations") are what we call idioms. Notice Psalms 105:8 (50:10). The "third and fourth generation" would mean a long time; whereas in contrast with this, a "thousand generations" would seem almost forever. The penalty was great; but God's mercy was greater.

III. "Thou Shalt Not Take the Name of the LORD Thy God in Vain" (Exodus 20:7).

In this third commandment we have a transition from the visual to the verbal. As someone has said, "Both image and name are aspects of identity, and man must take care lest he infringe on the sanctity of God in any manner." In the Bible names are always important, and of all names, the name of God is of the utmost importance. "The name of God is the declaration of his being and his character." In a very real sense, it stands for God himself. "The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe" (Proverbs 18:10; i.e., Psalms 20:1; John 1:12; etc.).

The Unspeakable Name of God

In the Bible what we know about God is largely embodied in the expressions by which he has revealed himself to mankind. "In the beginning God (Hebrew: *Elohim*, plural) created (singular) the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). "And God (*Elohim*) said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. . ." (1:26a). (From our Christian vantage point this is very interesting, as well as meaningful—Cf. Matthew 28:19; II Corinthians 13:14). Then along beside of God (*Elohim*) Moses placed another appellation in Genesis 2:7, "And the *LORD* God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." This name "LORD" Moses had been fully familiarized with in connection with the burning bush in the desert. Here he was called to his great work of delivering the children of Israel from their Egyptian bondage. God reassured him by saying, "I AM THAT I AM. . . Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." Then he said, "The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations" (Exodus 3:14,15). Furthermore, we read in Exodus 6:2-5ff, "And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the LORD: And I appeared unto

Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty (cf. Genesis 17:1), but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them. And I have established my covenant with them. . . and I have remembered my covenant." He continues, speaking of their deliverance and taking them unto himself as a people because of this covenant. All of this is tied up in the name LORD (here also translated "JEHOVAH"). It would seem that the designation God (*Elohim*) identifies deity more generically from the viewpoint of his almighty power and might. In LORD (or JEHOVAH) we get a more specific name. Here God intends to identify himself in covenant relationship to his people. His goodness and benevolence are in the forefront. The English adaptation "LORD" (from Coverdale) represents the unspeakable name of God. Unspeakable because the Jews later (after the Babylonian Captivity) got to the place they wouldn't say it (even in worship), lest they take it in vain. Consequently we have lost the exact pronunciation of the



STONING THE BLASPHEMER.

name. They used a substitute word for it when they came to it in the Scriptures. That was before they had a vowel system in their written language. Therefore we don't have the exact pronunciation today.

Exercising the Utmost Caution and Care

Any way you choose to look at it, man is to exercise the utmost caution and care that he doesn't take the name of God (in any sense) in vain (or lightly). Ref-

erence to deity should never be made in a frivolous, insincere way. No, never should God's name be used as a curse word in blasphemy (or even as a byword). Blasphemy was such a serious offense among the Jews that we read, "And he that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, he shall surely be put to death. . ." (Cf. Leviticus 24:10-16). God's name also is taken in vain when men live hypocritical lives, and still profess to be his people. Paul wrote of the common hypocrisy of the Jews of his day. He even mentioned some of the ten commandments in this connection, then he concluded, "Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written" (Cf. Romans 2:17-24). We can make the name of God a curse word. Likewise, in empty, shallow worship God's name is taken in vain. Quoting from Isaiah, that was the Lord's indictment of many in his day, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me. . ." (Matthew 15:8,9a). And this commandment in Exodus 20:7 is appended with these words, "For the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." Men may overlook the casual use of God's name, but God is not going to let the offender get by with it. This is serious.

The Positive Backside of This Commandment

If man is not to take God's name in vain, the implication is that there must be a proper way in which his name is to be taken. When our minds are filled with the wonderful truth of the reality and identity of God (just who he is. . . just what he has done, and is, in relationship to man), there is no problem in knowing how we should do this. It is even as our Lord taught his disciples to pray, putting it uppermost in the prayer, "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. . ." (Matthew 6:9b). With the utmost deference, God's name is to be venerated, honored, glorified, and praised (by word of mouth and by our godly lives). The Psalmist said, "Every day will I bless thee; and I will praise thy name for ever and ever" (Psalms 145:2). Amen!

IV. "Remember the Sabbath Day to Keep It Holy" (Exodus 20:8).

Israel was told to "*remember* the sabbath day to keep it holy." In what sense were they to "remember" it? Had God told them to do this before? There is no record in the Bible that God had spoken to man about the sabbath before the exodus from Egypt. What we read about in the first few chapters of Genesis is what Moses wrote down during the wilderness sojourn. And the information given in Exodus 20:11 was a backdrop for the commandment as given to Israel (for their benefit). The only hint of information about a sabbath before the giving of the ten commandments was in connection with the coming of the manna (Exodus 16:15-31), foreshadowing the actual giving of the law. But as far as the giving of the sabbath law itself, Nehemiah 9:13 and 14 read, "Thou (God) camest down also upon Mt. Sinai. . . And madest known unto

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them (Israel) thy holy sabbath, and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant." Perhaps to remember, in the fourth commandment, is best understood in the sense of not forgetting; remember as each sabbath day comes around week after week. In restating this commandment in Deuteronomy 5:12, Moses simply said, "Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee."

Some Summary Statements About the Sabbath

God made known the sabbath to Israel (Nehemiah 9:13,14). It was part of that body of laws that constituted the Old Testament (or covenant) (Deuteronomy 5:2ff). It was a day of rest (and the order of creation is remembered). God expressly said to Israel (through Moses), "It is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you" (Exodus 31:13; Ezekiel 20:10-12). And this day of rest commemorated their deliverance from Egyptian bondage (Deuteronomy 5:12-15) (where they had little rest). Of all the Old Testament laws, the sabbath was the one with which Jesus had the most trouble involving the Jewish leaders of his day, and it is the only one of the ten commandments not found in the New Testament in some sense. In fact, Paul pictures it as nailed to the cross with the rest of that system of religion as far as Christians are concerned (Colossians 2:14-16; Galatians 4:10,11; 5:4). No one is to judge us by whether we keep the sabbath or not today (Colossians 2:16). We are under the New Testament (Hebrews 9:15-17), and the early church met on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 2:1,42; I Corinthians 16:2; Revelation 1:10). Christ came forth from the grave on the first day of the week (Mark 16:9; Psalms 118:22-24).

The Backside of the Fourth Commandment

Although sabbath observance was not incorporated into the New Testament religion, mankind generally has seen the wisdom of having a time for rest. And the "backside" of this commandment, which is actually spelled out, is very relevant for us today. It reads, "Six days shalt thou labour" (why talk about rest if they hadn't been working?). The work ethic is engrained throughout the Bible. Proverbs 6:6 strongly admonishes, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise." In the Roman world that was largely shackled by slavery, and consequently with the tendency of free men to look down upon work as degrading, the apostle Paul was quick to maintain its dignity and necessity. Foregoing his privilege of being supported in preaching the gospel many times, the apostle Paul worked with his own hands, setting an example for the new Christian (Cf. II Thessalonians 3:7-12; Acts 20:33-35). Paul even said (very emphatically), "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat" (II Thessalonians 3:10). In this day when leisure and pleasure are deified, we need to

get back to the basics. Work, productivity—necessities; and how honorable! There is much enjoyment to be found in employment.

V. "Honour Thy Father and Thy Mother" (Exodus 20:12).

This great commandment serves as a transition from the first four to the ones that follow. From worshipping the Creator and source of life, parents are to be honored who pass this sacred life on to others, and

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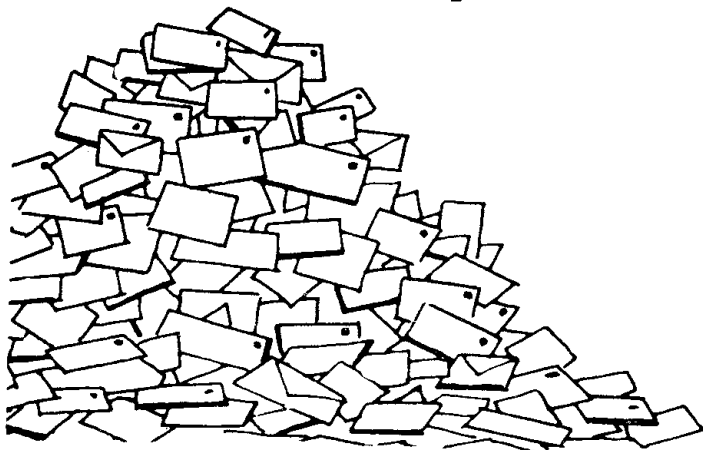
BIBLE QUESTIONS *(over the Ten Commandments)*

1. Where in the Old Testament do we find a record of the ten commandments (two places)?
2. What was the other name for Mt. Sinai (the place the ten commandments were given)?
3. How were the ten commandments first given to the children of Israel?
4. How many times were the ten commandments actually given to Israel?
5. What did God say that sort of constituted a preamble to the ten commandments that followed?
6. How many of the ten commandments directly have to do with God, and how many with human relationships?
7. Which of the ten commandments are the most positive in the way that they are expressed (stated in a positive way)?
8. In connection with the breaking of which of the ten commandments does it say the iniquity of the fathers would be visited "upon the children unto the third and fourth generation"?
9. Which of the ten commandments specifically have to do with speaking?
10. Which is the only one of the ten commandments not found in some sense as part of the New Testament?
11. What reason for keeping the sabbath is found in the Deuteronomy account that is not found in Exodus?
12. Which one of the ten commandments did the apostle Paul say was the first with promise?
13. Why was man commanded not to kill another human being?
14. Besides the regular meaning of adultery, in what two other ways did Christ say a person could commit this sin?
15. What does the apostle Paul call coveting in the New Testament?
16. James wrote: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is _____."
17. What did the apostle Paul say was the fulfilling of the law?
18. What prompted Moses to break the tables of stone containing the ten commandments?
19. Where were the tables of stone containing the ten commandments finally kept?
20. John wrote: "For the law was given by Moses, but _____ and _____ came by Jesus Christ."

(NOTE: Answers found elsewhere in this issue of the paper).

READERS'

... Response



APOLOGY: Please accept our humble apology for slowness in getting correspondence answered. "We" have no staff of secretaries, etc. to handle such, and this is done by the "editor" as time allows. Be it known that you are appreciated.

FLORIDA:

■ *"THE SWORD AND STAFF is the best paper. It helps me to walk close to our dear Lord. You state things as they are. Most preachers around here are afraid they will hurt somebody's feelings. . . Thanks for your wonderful work for our wonderful Lord."*

VIRGINIA:

■ *"Please discontinue. . ."*

OHIO:

■ *"Your SWORD AND STAFF is by all means the best publication we have in the brotherhood. . . You are really serving the Lord with every publication."*

■ *"I have just finished reading THE SWORD AND STAFF. I really enjoyed the articles. Thank you very much. May God bless you. I would like for you to put me on your mailing list. . ."*

■ *"I want to let you know how much THE SWORD AND STAFF means to me. I look forward to each publication. It's refreshing to read articles that are true to God's Word. My wife and I receive the publications of. . . from the church where we attend. These two publications seem to lack guts with their articles. I think they are more concerned in not offending those in their denominational thinking. . ."*

MICHIGAN:

■ *"We received the last SWORD AND STAFF and it is really packed full of gems. It is really appreciated. Thanks!"*

ILLINOIS:

■ *"Please take our name off your mailing list."*

■ *"I love to read THE SWORD AND STAFF. It is so full of real good reading! I recently received a tract entitled, 'What Must I Do to Be Saved?' and didn't realize that you print tracts. Do you have a listing of available tracts? Would you please send it? God bless."*

MISSOURI:

■ *"I am a better informed person because of THE SWORD AND STAFF."*

■ *"Thank you so much for the sample copy of THE SWORD*

AND STAFF. I think it's the best little magazine I've ever read. One can't put it down once they've started reading it. . . Our preacher read the sample and was so excited he ordered several volumes already. . ."

■ *"I received the bound volumes of THE SWORD AND STAFF, volumes 25 and 26, and volumes 23 and 24. I have been reading from both volumes and enjoying the many wonderful articles. I would also like to have the 80-81-82 bound volume, and the 83-84 volume, and if the 77-78-79 volume is still available please include it also."*

"Do you have any material on the evils of Freemasonry? I know that masonry is not in harmony with the Holy Scriptures. . . My heart is heavy with the burden for my brethren who believe strongly in this work of men. . ."

"I read the article about the NACC and the changes in the Christian Churches. I began to notice some of these changes a few years ago at the NACC in Dallas, Texas when they had as one of the main speakers the minister of the First Baptist Church. There were some comments made but they always have some explanation or excuse. . ."

NEBRASKA:

■ *"Please cancel my magazine. Thanks."*

OREGON:

■ *"Here is some to help with the next paper. Thank you for your continued devotion to the Lord. There is always something in each issue that I need to incorporate in my life."*

■ *"We like your paper very much and wish to contribute to its ongoing. You are doing a very good work. Thank you and whoever sent our name in to receive the paper. We've been getting it for a long time but weren't able to contribute till now."*

THOUGHTS ON THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

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the image of God in all men is to be mutually respected by all with deference and dignity. Paul summed up the remaining commandments under loving neighbor as self (Romans 13:8-10), then he said, "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." This love is *agape*, the love of esteem and respect.

"Double Honour" to Parents

The word "honour" here is from a verb that means "to be heavy," and hence also "to be rich, to be honored" (we understand). Even as Paul instructed that certain elders in the church were to be counted worthy of "double honour" (1 Timothy 5:17), the Jews realized this significance in reference to parents. (1) Parents were to be honored in the sense of being highly respected, venerated, and even feared (Leviticus 19:3). Mentally, they were to be held in the highest esteem, and by word and deed. (2) This brings us to the second aspect of this honor. Even as they were told in Proverbs 3:9 to "honour the LORD with thy substance," they were likewise to honor their parents in a material sense (especially helping them with their material needs in their old age; but some tried to get around this responsibility later, Matthew 15:4-6; Mark 7:10-13). Such honoring is to be carried out in the context of the church too (i.e., "Honour widows that are

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widows indeed," I Timothy 5:3; Cf. verses 4 and 8). In oriental fashion, we even find children bowing before parents in the Bible (Genesis 48:12; I Kings 2:19). Even though parents sometimes were not honorable, they were to be respected by their children (Genesis 9:20-27).

The Backside of This Commandment

The violation of the negative backside of this commandment was a capital offense. Exodus 21:17 dealt with cursing parents (just the opposite of honoring), "And he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death." Exodus 21:15 had to do with "smiting" (assaulting) parents (just the opposite of giving them a helping hand), "And he that smiteth his father, or his mother, shall be surely put to death." Leviticus 20:9 further emphasizes the death sentence in connection with this offense. The Lord Jesus definitely saw this as the negative backside of this commandment to honor parents (Matthew 15:4). An amplification of this negative problem is seen in Deuteronomy 21:18-21. But it seems that this part of the commandment was never extensively carried out.

The First Commandment With Promise

Looking back from the New Testament, the apostle Paul speaks of this commandment to honor father and mother as "the first commandment with promise" (that they would live a long life) (Ephesians 6:1-3). It was the first of the ten commandments actually to "spell out" such a promise (or any promise). God attached this promise to the commandment when he initially uttered it (Exodus 20:12). However, years later when Moses rehearsed all of the commandments before Israel, he amplified the promise in connection with this one by saying, "That thy days may be prolonged, *and* that it may go well with thee, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee" (Deuteronomy 5:16). Longevity was not the only thing involved. God made the honoring of parents a prerequisite for the people remaining in the Promised Land. As someone has said, "The Holy Land will not tolerate you if you will fail to honor your parents, for in such a case harmonious social life by Biblical standards would be impossible." The family unit built around respect for parents is the very basis for an enduring, stable, and orderly society. Take this away, and they would be in trouble (any people will be in trouble). If they obeyed God, the land would be theirs (Deuteronomy 6:17,18). Otherwise, like the nations before them, the land would "spue" (vomit) them out (Leviticus 18:24-28; 20:22; 26:33; Deuteronomy 4:26,27; 28:62,63).

VI. "Thou Shalt Not Kill" (Exodus 20:13).

In speaking to those who sought to kill him, Jesus said, "Ye are of your father the devil. . . He was a murderer from the beginning. . ." (John 8:44a). Yes, the old devil was and is involved in the death of the human race. Next Cain, being inspired by the devil, became the first man to take another's life in the slaying of his brother Abel (Genesis 4). Although many concepts

of right and wrong were vague during the patriarchal age, the wrongness of murder was self-evident. God made in plain to Noah after the flood in Genesis 9:6, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man." Before the flood, "The earth was filled with violence" (Genesis 6:11-13). Now, as part of the Old Testament, God explicitly said in the ten commandments, "Thou shalt not kill (murder)" (Exodus 20:13). This imperative commandment very appropriately followed the one involving honoring parents in their sacred trust of passing life on to posterity. This most radical crime against human life is forbidden. Except for taking human life judicially (at God's command), this injunction was general. Capital punishment itself was a basic part of the Old Testament system. As Paul said, it was the law of sin and death. However, personally God commanded, "Thou shalt not kill." Murder personally was forbidden (even suicide) for man was made in the image of God. What an awful thing (the ultimate crime), taking the life of another! Man is more than an animal.

The Deeper Spiritual Significance

The Lord Jesus Christ used this commandment to show the deeper spiritual significance of his teachings. He said, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill. . . But I say unto you" (Matthew 5:21,22). To him, uncontrolled anger and malicious name calling came from the same source as murder and were in the same category. Behind it all was the heart of man, and as a man thinks in his heart, so is he (Proverbs 4:23; Matthew 15:19). Then when man speaks, ". . . out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matthew 12:34-37; Luke 6:45). James speaks of cursing man "made in the similitude of God" (James 2:9,10)—how wrong it is! Then John, getting right at the heart of the matter, said, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him" (I John 3:15). According to the New Testament, the person who hates is guilty of murder in the sight of God. And malicious name calling is simply a venting of that which is within.

The Positive Backside of This Commandment

The opposite of hate is love in the immediate context (I John 3:14,15). And, looking at the legal application of this commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," the positive backside would be to save and preserve life. Let us illustrate from the fuller New Testament application of this truth. One time when Jesus and his disciples were passing through Samaria, they were not welcomed or received by them. Angered and agitated, James and John wanted to call fire down from heaven to consume them. Jesus said, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. . ." (Cf. Luke 9:51-56). Another place Jesus said, "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). We can see this bold contrast in the story of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37). A man had been robbed, wounded,

and left near death. The good Samaritan finds him, has compassion on him, and, treating his wounds, takes steps to restore and preserve the man's life. The positive backside of this commandment can also be seen in the contrast of Romans 12:19-21. "Dearly be-



loved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." Yes, any way you look at it, Jesus came to save, not to destroy; to give life (and life eternal), not to kill. As Christians, that is our mission in the world too.

Additional Thoughts on This Commandment

Following, for your consideration, are one writer's thoughts on what is included in this commandment (for us today):

"This commandment, which is general, prohibits murder of every kind. 1. All *actions* by which the lives of our fellow creatures may be *abridged*. 2. All *wars* for extending empire, commerce, etc. 3. All *sanguinary laws*, by the operation of which the lives of men may be taken away for offences of comparatively trifling demerit. 4. All *bad dispositions* which lead men to wish evil to, or meditate mischief against, one another; for, says the Scripture, He that *hateth his brother* in his heart is a *murderer*. 5. All *want of charity* to the helpless and distressed; for he who has it in

his power to save the life of another by a timely application of succour, food, raiment, etc., and does not do it, and the life of the person either *fails* or is *abridged* on this account, is in the sight of God a *murderer*. He who neglects to save life is, according to an incontrovertible maxim in *law*, the same as he who takes it away. 6. All riot and excess, all *drunkenness* and *gluttony*, all *inactivity* and *slothfulness*, and all *superstitious mortifications* and *self-denials*, by which life may be destroyed or shortened; all these are point-blank sins against the sixth commandment" (Adam Clarke).

To this could be added abortion, which is killing (the cutting off of human life). Then we oppose smoking (any use of tobacco) for the same reason that we oppose abortion—human life is sacred.

VII. "Thou Shalt Not Commit Adultery" (Exodus 20:14).

Even as human life made in the image of God is sacred, the union, bond, and relationship whereby this life is brought about is sacred. Purity of family life is another pillar of a stable, enduring society. If we do not respect our sexuality in fidelity to the marriage relationship, we will not respect what our sexuality produces (other human beings). This disregard will hasten the deterioration and disintegration of human society (and the bulwark of decency and dignity that holds it together). Men will act like animals.

God commanded (in no uncertain terms), "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14). Adultery was (and is) the sin committed by married people in being sexually promiscuous with someone else (Ezekiel 16:32; Hosea 4:13). This sin could be committed by a married man or woman (or one betrothed) and not by an unmarried or unbetrothed one or a harlot (Deuteronomy 22:22-29). Although later expanded to include other sexual offenses, they are not dealt with in the original command. Breaking this commandment was a capital offense, and the directive was that both parties were to be put to death (Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22). The sanctity of the fountain of life had been corrupted (as well as the holy bonds of matrimony broken). Certainly, in the sight of God, adultery is an awful sin.

Adultery Considered from Its Source

The Lord Jesus Christ got right at the heart of the problem, giving us deeper insights and expanded concepts of what this commandment really meant (and especially as part of Christianity today). He said, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell" (Matthew 5:27-30). The act of adultery, and everything

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leading up to it, is prohibited by this commandment (even the improper, unseemly thoughts of the heart). Lust is unlawful desire. To have strong sexual feelings toward someone not a person's mate is called adultery by the Lord. The law of Moses did not say that, nor would such a contention hold up in court today, but with God it will (for he knows all). With the lust of the heart, the right eye and right hand are mentioned. The eye sees and the hand symbolizes action, leading into adultery. The Lord does not literally mean the eye is to be plucked out, nor the hand cut off, although that would be better than being cast into hell. We know the body as the receptacle of life is sacred and is not to be desecrated. Rather, something spiritual is involved. Anything that would be a stumbling block to us, leading into adultery (starting with adulterous thoughts inspired by what is seen), is to be gotten rid of—plucked out, cut off (even though it be as dear to us as the right eye or the right hand). Yes, the act of adultery, the very thought, and anything that would fuel thoughts of lust are prohibited. In our sex oriented society today much is covered and prohibited by the Lord's expanded treatment of this commandment (whether it be pornography, movies, much of TV, or immodesty in dress). The wise person will realize how serious this commandment really is and take the Lord seriously (I Corinthians 6:9; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:3-12).

Divorce, Remarriage, and Adultery

Adultery is sexual infidelity in marriage. Then to this definition the Lord Jesus added the deeper meaning of adultery in the heart (lust), and now divorce and remarriage (except for one cause) is called adultery. Let us hear the Lord as he continued in Matthew 5:31 and 32, "It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorce: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery." Again he dealt with the same subject at another time when he said, "And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery" (Cf. Matthew 19:3-12). Moses and the Jews allowed divorce and remarriage for many causes, but not so with Christ. Marriage is for life. If a marriage ends in divorce, *except for the cause of sexual infidelity*, and remarriage occurs as a result of it, adultery is committed by all involved (the divorced husband, the divorced wife, and whoever marries either of them). (Paul even made mention of what the Lord said in I Corinthians 7:10,11).

Yes, in these Scriptures the Lord says that marriage again after divorce, except it be for "fornication," will result in adultery. The word translated "fornication" is the Greek word *porneia*. Moulton and Milligan in their *Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament* say

that this word "originally meant 'prostitution,' 'fornication,' but came to be applied to unlawful sexual intercourse generally." In Hosea 2:2 (Septuagint Greek Old Testament), *porneia* ("whoredoms," fornication) and "adulteries" are applied to the same person. Obviously the term is used generally in I Thessalonians 4:1-7. So, the Lord is simply saying except for sexual immorality, generally speaking, when he said "except it be for fornication."

In this day when divorce and remarriage are occurring in epidemic proportions, it seems that many preachers have tried to gloss over these Scriptures, but the Lord said such marriages are adulterous. All that we know is what the Bible says.

The Positive Side of This Commandment

In giving this commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," a positive backside is implied. After God had finished creating everything, including man (as male and female), we read, "And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Genesis 1:27,31). In particular, after telling of the creation of woman and man, Moses offered this commentary: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:24).

The book of Proverbs, which warns about the strange woman, also tells of the positive backside of this commandment. "Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well. Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad, and rivers of waters in the streets. Let them be only thine own, and not strangers' with thee. Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love. And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger? For the ways of man are before the LORD, and he pondereth all his goings" (Proverbs 5:15-21).

The apostle Paul spoke of the intimate relationship involved in marriage and gave personal instructions about it (I Corinthians 7:2-5). And very fittingly Hebrews 13:4 reads, "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." God made man, and he knows what is best for man.

VIII. "Thou Shalt Not Steal" (Exodus 20:15).

In this commandment the respect for a person is extended to his property. The right of the individual ownership of property is implied. Really, everything belongs to God (Deuteronomy 10:14; Psalms 24:1; 50:10). But, fittingly (Genesis 1:26-28), "the earth hath he given to the children of men" (Psalms 115:16). In the possession and orderly control of this property, or objects of property, man is not to steal from another. It has been said that theft, or stealing, is the taking or keeping of that which does not belong to us.

In Israel stealing was not a capital offense, unless it involved stealing (kidnapping) another human being for purposes of slavery (Exodus 21:16; Deuteronomy 24:7). However, if a thief was killed in the act of stealing at night, the one who killed him would

"MORE BLESSED TO GIVE. . ."

(Acts 20:35)

Our Lord and Savior was a Giver,
And so must His people be. . .
He blesses souls with a servant's heart,
Not them that stammer ME! ME! ME!!!
They say they're worked too hard
For what all they think they've got,
And aren't about to share it
With the "undeserved" who have not.
'Tis the thinking of this cold world
To TAKE! TAKE! TAKE! all you can—
To give without thought of due return
Cuts against the selfish grain of man.
'Tis more blessed to GIVE! GIVE! GIVE!!!
In kindred spirit of God's grace;
For the life that's given just to taking,
In the end leaves no redeeming trace.
Lest we forget Who gives us life,
And calls us all to serve,
Pray, thank Him for His priceless Gift,
His own dear Son,
The Gift we none deserved.

—By **BOB WICKLINE**

not be held accountable for it (Exodus 22:2,3). If a thief stole something and then had killed or sold it, his penalty was greater than if he still had it in hand. For larger livestock (oxen), if it had been killed or sold, he had to restore fivefold; for sheep, fourfold. If that which had been stolen was found in hand (and still alive), he had to restore double. Cf. Exodus 22:1-4,7; etc. The New Testament makes it plain that thieves will not go to heaven (I Corinthians 6:10).

Multi-Application of This Commandment

"The eighth commandment forbids theft and robbery, the surreptitiously and fraudulently taking of something." As someone has said, "All *rapine* and *theft* are forbidden by this precept; as well *national* and *commercial* wrongs; as petty larceny, highway robberies, and private stealing: even the taking advantage of a seller's or buyer's ignorance, to give the one *less* and make the other pay *more* for a commodity than its worth, is a breach of this sacred law." Strictly speaking, stealing involves that which is taken covertly on the sly, whereas robbery has to do with taking something violently and openly (with a high hand). However, robbery is a more aggravated form of the same offense.

Various applications occur in the Bible. Isaiah pictures the national leaders of his day as "thieves" (Isaiah 1:23). He speaks of social injustice, how that they "take away the right from the poor of my people, that widows may be their prey, and that they rob the fatherless" (Isaiah 10:1-4). When Jesus cast the money changers out of the temple area, he said that they had made the house of God "a den of thieves (robbers)" (Mark 11:15-17). Extortion, their mishandling

of moneys, put them in the category of thieves. John in his gospel account called Judas a thief (John 12:4-6). In the closing book of the Old Testament, Malachi asked this shocking question, "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation" (Malachi 3:8-10). How many are robbing God by withholding that which they should be giving today?

The Positive Backside of This Commandment

This commandment does have a positive backside. Paul, admonishing the Thessalonian Christians, told them "to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing" (I Thessalonians 4:11b,12). Then, more explicitly, the backside is brought out in Ephesians 4:28, "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." How plain and simple (and how good and noble)! And if we must suffer for any cause, let it not be "as a thief, or as an evildoer," but as a Christian (I Peter 4:15,16). Amen.

IX. "Thou Shalt Not Bear False Witness Against Thy Neighbour" (Exodus 20:16).

A commandment involving the tongue is dealt with in both tables of the law, the first having to do with God in the third commandment, and now in this commandment, man. Basically this commandment is clothed in legal language, but it has to do with more than testifying in court. The very character of the person speaking is involved "for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh" (Luke 6:45). The whole spectrum of the sins of the tongue, having to do with that which is false, is condemned by this commandment: lying, deception, gossip, slander, flattery, etc. Then by not even uttering a word, a person can actually act out a lie by being a hypocrite.

But in its basic Old Testament application this commandment has reference to testifying as a witness (as in court). Deuteronomy 19:15-20 gives more information about this. In court, two or three witnesses were necessary before a verdict could be reached. In carrying out the sentence of the convicted person, the hands of the witnesses were the first upon him in its execution (Deuteronomy 17:7; Acts 7:58,59). However, they were instructed, "If the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother; Then shall ye do unto him, as he thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put evil away from among you." (In the New Testament Scriptures we find that it says that "all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone," Revelation 21:8).

Satan and God in Sharp Contrast

In this commandment Satan and God are vividly seen in sharp contrast (as they are represented by the lie and the truth). Jesus accused the Jews of his day, saying, "Ye are of your father the devil. . .He. . .

(Continued on Next Page)

THOUGHTS ON THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

(Continued from Last Page)

abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it" (John 8:44). To accomplish his evil designs the old devil lied to Eve in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3), and he has been lying ever since (Acts 5:3; I Timothy 4:1,2). He uses the lie to ensnare and enslave man, to disrupt the harmony of human relationships, and to corrupt the great truths of God. In contrast with the devil, God cannot lie (Titus 1:2). The Holy Spirit is called "the Spirit of truth" (John 16:8-13). Jesus Christ, the Son of God, said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). Christianity is called "the way of truth" (II Peter 2:2), and the truth is what sets men free (John 8:31,32).

The Backside of This Commandment

That brings us to the backside of this commandment. From the Christian perspective, the apostle admonished the Ephesians, "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another" (Ephesians 4:25). A few verses before (4:14), he warned of false doctrine, and "the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." Then the positive side of the admonition follows (4:15), "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." Anyway you choose to look at it, we need to speak the truth. Deception is of the devil.

X. "Thou Shalt Not Covet" Anything That Is Thy Neighbors (Exodus 20:17).

There are several words in the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament that are translated "covet," "covetous," and "covetousness." Whether it be to fix the desire intensely upon for oneself, to lust after, to want more than ones share, to love money and to be greedy of gain, to stretch out earnestly for, or to desire so strongly for something that the desire is implemented by irregular and dishonest behavior, all point to the same thing, covetousness. All of these shades of meaning show the overlapping and implementing facets (and factors) in this word and in this commandment.

The Root of All Kinds of Evil

Although this sin basically is in the heart, it is the root from which all kinds of sins spring. Micah 2:2 verifies this, as the prophet said, "Woe unto them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds! When the morning of light, they practice it, because it is in the power of their hand. And they covet fields, and take them by violence; and houses, and take them away: so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage" (Cf. Joshua 7:21 also). The apostle Paul perceived this as he wrote in the New Testament, "For the love of money is the root of all (kinds of) evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves

through with many sorrows" (I Timothy 6:10). Paul spoke of the second table of the law being fulfilled by love (Romans 13:9,10). Selfishness is the opposite of love. Covetousness is the absorbing impulse of selfishness. Therefore, if love is the fulfilling of the second table of commandments, covetousness is its converse (the breaking of that table). Paul in Romans 7:7ff, it seems, looked upon this commandment as forbidding all improper appetites and desires (which are the beginning of all sin that is committed by us). To be such an awful sin, we hear so little spoken about it today!

Inadequacy Taken Care Of

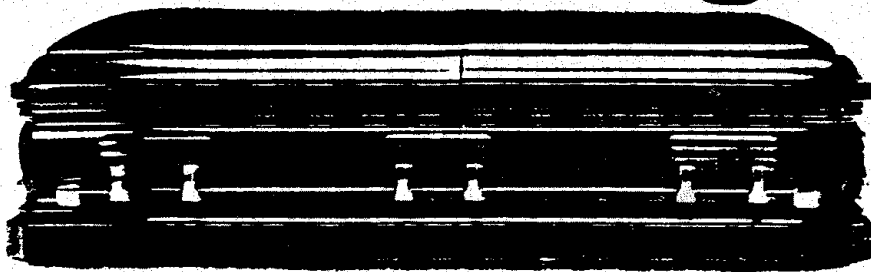


Inclusive of Both Tables

The apostle Paul in two different places called covetousness "idolatry" (Colossians 3:5; Ephesians 5:5). He admonished the wealthy and well-to-do Christians not to "trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God" (I Timothy 6:17). The material things (riches) as idols are put in contrast with "the living God" (and Jesus said, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon," Matthew 6:24). This brings us back to the first table of the law where God said, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (followed by the prohibiting of making "any graven images"). The rest of the first table of commandments follows, directly involved with God, and the second, man. Both tables, all of the commandments, have their foundation in God as stated in the first commandment. Breaking the last commandment about coveting also means that a person is breaking the first commandment. In fact, all of the commandments are interwoven and stand together. It is no wonder that James said, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (Cf. James 2:8-12).

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Warnings About Covetousness

In Luke 12:15ff, the Lord gives a warning about covetousness (and at the same time we see how that selfishness is basically involved in this sin). "And he said unto them, Take heed and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things he possesseth." Then he proceeds to illustrate with a parable. "And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." The personal pronouns "I" and "my" are found eleven times here. He was selfishly grasping for more for his own self-indulgent purposes. What a warning for us today! Paul says that a covetous person will not go to heaven (I Corinthians 6:10; Ephesians 5:5).

The Backside: A Life Without Worry

There are different Scriptures that show the positive backside of this commandment (and the desirability of taking heed to it). We read this admonition in Hebrews 13:5ff, "Let your conversation (manner of life) be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper. . ." The life of materialism is the opposite parallel to the one wherein God is trusted (as materialism is idolatry). Learning to trust God in a life divested of materialism brings contentment.

In I Timothy Paul warns of those who suppose that "gain is godliness," then he said, "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content" (I Timothy 6:5-8). Later in this chapter he admonished some not to "trust in uncertain riches, but the living God" (6:17).

That was the essence of what the Lord taught in the sermon on the mount when he warned about laying up treasures for ourselves on this earth in contrast with laying up treasures in heaven (i.e., using material things for good now). He then stated, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." The famous lesson about worrying follows. After all, mammon (the god of materialism) is not Almighty, and riches are uncertain. Consequently, a life dominated by materialism will be dominated by worry. In contrast with that, Jesus said, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Cf. Matthew 6:19-34). Therefore, he tells us not to worry about the tomorrow.

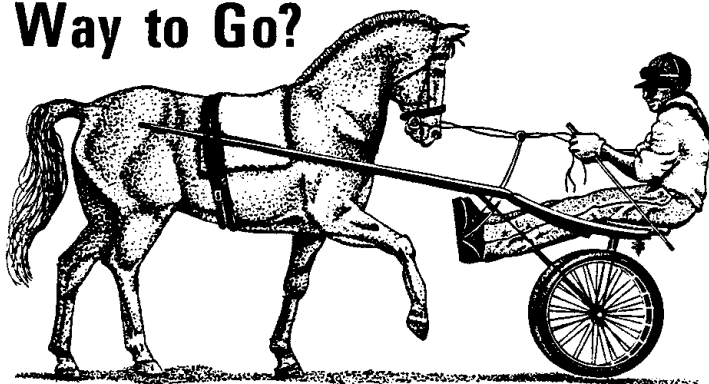
And instead of coveting, laying up treasures on earth, and grasping for more, we are laying up treasures in heaven by putting our material things to good use now in good and benevolent causes. Proverbs 21:26 speaks of the one that "coveteth greedily all the day long: but the righteous giveth and spareth not."

Let us practice the backside of this commandment. "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed" (Psalms 37:3). Contentment will be our lot in life. □

A GOLDEN RULE

LIVE every day as if it were your last. Do every job as if you were the boss. Treat everyone else as if he were you.—*Selected* □

Confused About Which Way to Go?



Go back to the Bible and the local
UNDENOMINATIONAL NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH
and you will be right on course.

Do You Know How You Look?

IT IS SAID that some New Guinea tribesmen have no mirrors. When shown a photograph of their group, one may recognize everyone in the picture before realizing that the unfamiliar face is his own. He knows the faces of others, but his own face he does not know! This is rather humorous, also pathetic.

Some people know so little about themselves. They know more about other people than they know about themselves! They are more familiar with the faults of their neighbors than they are of their own. Why is this true? Because they seldom, if ever, look into the mirror of the soul—God’s great book (James 1:16-25; Hebrews 4:12,13). To the end that they see themselves as they really are, every person should look in the mirror (read their Bible daily). By so doing, he can see reflected his own personality—his own faults and failings—and improve his moral and spiritual appearance (if he is honest). Only the person who knows the Bible knows himself.—*Adapted*

What Is Your God?

PRIDE makes a god of self, covetousness makes a god of money, sensuality makes a god of the belly, whatever is esteemed or loved, feared or served, delighted in or depended on, more than God, that (whatever it is) we do in effect make a god of.—*Selected* ☐

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Answers to: BIBLE QUESTIONS

1. Exodus 20:1-17; Deuteronomy 5:6-21;
2. Deuteronomy 5:2;
3. God spoke them audibly from Mt. Sinai in their hearing—Exodus 20:1,19;
4. Three times: 1st, God spoke them directly; 2nd, on tables of stone that Moses broke; 3rd, on tables of stone again;
5. Exodus 20:2;
6. First four have to do with God, and last six with man;
7. Exodus 20:8,12;
8. Exodus 20:4,5;
9. Exodus 20:7,16;
10. Exodus 20:8; 31:13; Ezekiel 20:10-12; Colossians 2:14-16;
11. Deuteronomy 5:15;
12. Ephesians 6:1-3;
13. Man is made in the image of God—Exodus 20:13; Genesis 9:6;
14. Matthew 5:27-32; 19:9;
15. Colossians 3:5; Ephesians 5:5;
16. James 2:10;
17. Romans 13:8-10;
18. Exodus 32:15-19;
19. Exodus 25:21; 40:20; I Kings 8:9; Heb. 9:4;
20. John 1:17.

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