

THE LAW OF GOD

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Moses and the Ten Commandments

Exodus 20

Moses did not go up to the mountain with tools to make the tablets.

Why did God choose stone?

COMMANDMENTS, TEN

The Ten Commandments form the heart of the special COVENANT between God and His people. He told them, "Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people... And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" <Ex. 19:5>. These verses also emphasize that their obedience to the Commandments was to be the basis of Israel's existence as the special people of God.

The commandments cannot earn salvation

God never intended for the Ten Commandments to be a set of regulations by which the people of Israel would earn salvation. God's favor had already been freely granted! This was overwhelmingly demonstrated by His deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage <Deut. 4:37>. Therefore, at the heart of the covenant relationship laid an act of divine GRACE. God even prefaced the Ten Commandments with a reminder of His deliverance <Ex. 20:2>.

1. "You shall have no other gods before Me" <Ex. 20:3>. Since God's character forms the basis of the covenant with His people. He demands absolute loyalty. And when the intent of the heart is to put God first, a person's outward actions will reveal it. Then others will see what God's character is like through the actions of His people.
2. "You shall not make for yourself a carved image" <Ex. 20:4>. The second commandment is necessary because people do not always keep the first. The Israelites made a golden calf to worship even as the Lord gave the laws to Moses. And since Israel had so many contacts with people who did worship images, including replicas of their earthly rulers, God gave them this law. God has never been a tangible, visible Being <Deut. 4:12>, but always a Spirit <John 4:24>.
3. "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain" <Ex. 20:7>. God's name and His character are inseparable. Using His holy name lightly in a vain, empty manner is insulting and degrading. This could be done by perjuring oneself in a court of law or by cursing. However, this commandment also applies to hypocritical worship, using God's name in meaningless prayer and praise <Is. 29:13>.
4. "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" <Ex. 20:8>. Sabbath means "rest," but God intended for this day to stand for more than an absence of work. It was to be a day of worship as well-- a day for setting aside all thoughts of materialistic gain and thinking about Him. God Himself set the pattern by ceasing from His labors after creating the world. Why, then, must modern-day Christians feel that being busy is equated with being spiritual?
5. "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land" <Ex. 20:12>. God established parents as the authority figures in the family unit. Children often get their first

impressions about God from their parents. Parents who walk in the Spirit, honestly desiring to follow the guidelines of the Scriptures, will set better examples for their children. And children who want to please God will respect their parents, regardless of pressure from the world and their peers.

6. "You shall not murder" <Ex. 20:13>. Commandments six through nine pertain to our relationships with one another. The breakdown of these guidelines has plunged many civilizations into decay. A person who cares about others, beginning with those in the home, does not want to harm them. This law reveals God's attitude toward people created in His image. No one has the right to take that life from another.

7. "You shall not commit adultery" <Ex. 20:14>. Technically, this commandment refers to being sexually involved with a married person; but it is traditionally used to prohibit all sexual relationships outside of marriage. Again, this commandment involves a right relationship with God and with others. Adultery is possible only if people are prepared to hurt others, and to enjoy themselves at the expense of other people. A right attitude toward keeping God first and not harming others is tied together in these commandments. A person who does not steal will not take another's mate. And he does not allow covetous thoughts to grow in his mind. He wants God to have his total allegiance.

8. "You shall not steal" <Ex. 20:15>. Stealing involves taking something that does not belong to you. This could be another's life, marriage partner, or reputation. This law also emphasizes the importance of getting all you own through lawful channels.

9. "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor" <Ex. 20:16>. A good relationship demands honesty in speaking of another. The old saying, "A man's word is as good as his name" is sometimes a joke today. But God's people ought to cherish their own reputations and that of others. If a person is unwilling to speak ill of another, he is less likely to steal from him or to commit murder.

10. "You shall not covet" <Ex. 20:17>. Jesus elaborated on this commandment by stating, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" <Matt. 22:39>. You do not harm people you care about.

This tenth commandment is an outgrowth of the first. If a person's heart is fixed on the Lord, he will have the right attitude toward others. Consequently, the desires that rise from his heart will not cause pain or loss to others. The right motive (pleasing God who is first in your life) will result in obeying the other commandments (not hurting others).

Jesus enlarged on the idea prevalent in the Ten Commandments by emphasizing the heart attitude: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" <Matt. 5:8>. The Christian has blessed joy on earth when his priorities are straight.

God gave us the Law for three basic purposes

1. To direct the people in their worship
2. In their relationship to Him
3. In their relationship to one another

LAW

1. Fornication

In Israel the sexual union was most sacred. A newly married woman charged with premarital sex with a man other than her husband was to be put to death if the charge was proven. If the charge was not proven, her husband had to pay a large fine and keep her as his wife. Also, he could never divorce her <Deut. 22:13-21>.

2. Adultery

Under God's law adultery was a serious crime, perhaps because tearing apart the two who had become one amounted to murder. Those convicted of adultery were to be put to death <Lev. 20:10-12; Deut. 22:22>. A betrothed woman (virgin) was protected by the law, but she was also considered to be married in some cases. If she and some man other than her betrothed had sexual union, they were to be put to death <Deut. 22:23-24>.

3. Homosexuality

Sodomy or male homosexuality was pointedly condemned and prohibited. It brought death under God's law <Lev. 20:13>. By implication, the same penalty was probably also meted out for female homosexuality, or lesbianism.

4. Prostitution

Prostitutes of every guise (male or female, cultic or non-cultic) were to be put to death <Lev. 19:29; 21:9>.

5. Incest

Sexual union with one's own offspring or near relative was to result in death <Lev. 20:11-14>.

6. Bestiality

Having sex with a beast (a common feature of Canaanite worship) was an offense punishable by death <Ex. 22:19; Lev. 18:23; Deut. 27:21>.

7. Transvestite

The distinction between the sexes was to be retained in their outward appearance. Hence, transvestite (wearing the clothing of the opposite sex) was forbidden. <Deut. 22:5>

Crimes against an individual's

Crimes against an individual's person-- Crimes of violence against others were serious criminal offenses. The following crimes are cited in biblical law.

8. Murder

The willful and premeditated taking of a human life was punishable by death. Accidental killing, killing as an act of war, and lawful executions were not considered murder <Ex. 21:12-14; Num. 35:14-34>. The sixth commandment is, "You shall not murder." Jesus pointed to the spirit of this commandment when He expanded it to forbid hatred, anger, bitter insults, and cursing <Matt. 5:21-22>.

* In the USA. We punish people for killing others but we don't punish the government for killing unborn children. THE VALLEY OF SON OF HINNON

HINNOM, VALLEY OF

[HEN nahm]-- a deep, narrow ravine south of Jerusalem. At the HIGH PLACES of Baal in the Valley of Hinnom, parents sacrificed their children as a burnt offering to the pagan god Molech <2 Kin. 23:10>. Ahaz and Manasseh, kings of Judah, were both guilty of this awful wickedness <2 Chr. 28:3; 33:6>. But good King Josiah destroyed the pagan altars to remove this temptation from the Hebrew people.

This valley would become known as the valley of slaughter

The prophet Jeremiah foretold that God would judge this awful abomination of human sacrifice and would cause such a destruction that "the Valley of the Son of Hinnom" would become known as "the Valley of Slaughter" <Jer. 7:31-32; 19:2,6; 32:35>. The place was also called "Tophet."

IT WAS USED AS A GARBAGE DUMP

Apparently, the Valley of Hinnom was used as the garbage dump for the city of Jerusalem. Refuse, waste materials, and dead animals were burned here. Fires continually smoldered, and smoke from the burning debris rose day and night. Hinnom thus became a graphic symbol of woe and judgment and of the place of eternal punishment called HELL.

GEHENNA THE GREEK WORD FOR HELL

Translated into Greek, the Hebrew "Valley of Hinnom" becomes gehenna, which is used 12 times in the New Testament (11 times by Jesus and once by James), each time translated in the NKJV as "hell" <Matt. 5:22; Mark 9:43,45,47; Luke 12:5; James 3:6>.

The smoke of their torment

Rev 14:11

"And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name." (NKJ)

9. Assault and battery

God's law expected people to live at peace with one another. But realizing that offenses might occur, God provided legislation about assault and battery. If injuring a person caused the victim to lose time but no further harm was done, the offender had to pay his victim for the time lost. Presumably the courts established the fine in such cases <Ex. 21:18-19>. If someone maimed his foe in a struggle, he would pay for the lost time; but he would also suffer the same disfigurement at the hands of the court <Lev. 24:19>. Some important exceptions to this punishment should be noted.

10. Disfigurement

If the victim were a slave, disfigurement resulted in his freedom (a very heavy financial loss to the guilty party). If the slave died, the offender was to die. If the slave survived and was not disfigured, there was no penalty on the master, except that exacted for loss of time <Ex. 21:20-21,26-27>.

11. A child attacking the parent

If a son or daughter attacked either parent, the attacker was to be put to death <Ex. 21:15>. One law called for the severing of the hand of a woman who attacked a man's genitals, even though she may have been trying to protect her husband <Deut. 25:11-12>.

12. Miscarriage

Miscarriage, or the death of the mother resulting from a blow by someone in a fight, brought death upon the attacker. Premature birth caused by this offense required a money fine determined by the husband as governed by the courts <Ex. 21:22>.

13. Rape

A man who raped a betrothed woman was to be put to death <Deut. 22:25-27>. However, if he raped or seduced an unattached woman, he was to pay a large fine and propose marriage. A girl's father could refuse the marriage and keep the money; but if he approved, the rapist had to marry the girl and could never divorce her <Ex. 22:16-17; Deut. 2:28-29>. If the seduced girl was a betrothed slave, she was considered unattached (for she had not yet been released from slavery). Consequently, the attacker was not put to death. But the man had to bring a guilt offering before God to make restitution for his sin.

14. Oppression

In Israel the defenseless were to be defended. Those without rights or power to enforce their rights were protected by God. These included the alien passing through the area and the alien who was a temporary or permanent resident. The widow, orphan, deaf, blind, slave, hired hand, and poor were to be given just wages, paid immediately, given interest free loans (except aliens) in emergencies, gifts of food at festivals, and the privilege of gleaning, etc. <Ex. 22:21-24; Lev. 19:14,33; Deut. 24:14; 27:18-19>.

15. Kidnapping

Capturing a person to sell or use him as a slave was a capital offense <Deut. 24:7>. This prohibition extended to foreigners, (unless they were prisoners of war; <Ex 22:21-24>), the blind and deaf <Lev. 19:14>, and all people <Deut. 27:19>.

16. Slander

Slander (making malicious statements about another person) was strictly forbidden and punished if the crime was committed during a trial <Ex. 23:1>. This was viewed as a mortal attack on a person <Lev. 19:16>.

17. Jesus declares two Laws

Matt 22:37-40

37 Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'

38 "This is the first and great commandment.

39 "And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'

40 "On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." (NKJ)