

First Century Fellowship Ministry

A Biblical Church of God

The Ten Commandments

This study of the Ten Commandments, Exodus 20:1-17, will begin by answering a few questions. Were the Commandments nailed to the cross? Were they done away with, abolished, through the sacrifice of Jesus? Do we have to obey them now or are they just guidelines for us?

To true believers these may seem like foolish questions, however, many churches calling themselves Christian or Bible based churches disregard the Commandments of God or, at best, choose which they feel are applicable to them.

Many of these churches will cite Colossians 2:14, ¹⁴ “Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to the cross;” (KJV) and Ephesians 2:15-16 to justify their claim, ¹⁵ “Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of the commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; ¹⁶ And that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby;” (KJV). These, they will say, show the commandments were nailed to the cross. They make the assumption that these are God’s Commandments, the Ten Commandments of the Old Testament that were nailed to the cross. There are a couple of problems with this assumption. First, we need to make sure we have the issue in context. Second we need to ensure the translation is correct and accurate. Checking other translations helps most of the time.

The Bible will interpret and explain itself if we allow it to. This involves reviewing all other scripture that may help to explain or clarify a point.

So using these two points let's see where it leads. The translation most widely used on this issue is the KJV. When I read the New Testament and reach a verse or thought I do not fully understand I have found the Amplified Bible to be very helpful. It gives all words that could be translated to English from the original Greek transcript.

We will take Colossians first. In the Greek, *chriographon tois dogmasin*, is literally translated as, "handwriting in decrees or dogmas. This has been used in the New Testament in other verses and always refers to decrees written by men (Luke 2:1; Acts 16:4, 17:7; Ephesians 2:15). It is not used to refer to any part of the Commandments or law of God. It has nothing to do with the Biblical law.

Let's look at the context. The apostle Paul was writing to the church in Colossae. In pagan Greek religious practice, which the members of the church at Colossae formerly participated in, they had a written account of one's sins called "a note of debt". A man was required to keep a written debtor and creditor account with himself of the acts of each day. Based on the year end summary the man had to reconcile his actions. If favorable he had established the foundation of a stock of merit for the next year, if it was against him, it must be liquidated by future good deeds, justification by works. ("The Two Babylons" by Alexander Hislop). These dogmas, written decrees, were done away with, nailed to the cross, when Jesus was crucified and died for our sins.

If we move back to verse 13 and look at it with a proper understanding of verse 14 it puts the entire issue in context,

13 "And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; 14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;". The practice of the "note of debt" of sins was done away with not the law or commandments of God.

Ephesians 2:15-16 is rendered this way in the Amplified Bible, 15 "By abolishing in His [own crucified] flesh the enmity [caused by] *the Law with its decrees and ordinances* [which He annulled]; that He from the two might create in Himself one new man [one new quality of humanity out of the two], so making peace. 16. And [He designed] to reconcile to God both [Jew and Gentile, united] in a single body by means of His cross, thereby killing the mutual enmity and brining the feud to an end." What we see by this quick analysis is the difference of "*the law of commandments contained in ordinances*" in the KJV and, "*the Law with its decrees and ordinances*", in the Amplified Bible.

Paul is writing to the church in Ephesus. Here there was considerable enmity between Jews and Gentiles. The strict traditions and laws of Judaism, the written decrees, were mostly responsible for this problem. These decrees were contrary to the commandments and law of God. Because of the written decrees most Jews looked down on Gentiles with contempt.

Paul acknowledges the problem and shows how, through the coming of Christ Jesus and His Gospel these things were put aside (Ephesians 2:11-16). Jesus also chastised the Pharisees for their "traditions" (Mark 7:5-8; also in Matthew 15:6-9). 5 "Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands? 6 He said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied

of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. 7 Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. 8 For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do."

In addition to the above explanations we need to remember Jesus did not come to earth to do away with the law or commandments of God, He expected us to obey and keep them.

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, not one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. (Matthew 5:17-18).

Fear God and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man (Eccl 12:13).

And they were both righteous before God, and walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless (Luke 1:6).

Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping of the commandments of God (1 Cor 7:19).

He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him (1 John 2:4).

By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments and his commandments are not grievous. (1 John 5:2-3).

The First Commandment

(Exodus 20:2-3)

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of
the land of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.
You shall have no other gods before Me.

When a builder plans to erect a building or a structure the first thing he does is establish a sturdy and sufficient foundation to support all that follows. Our Creator God did the same thing. We know He is the Creator because He started off His book, the Bible, by stating, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." (Gen 1:1). God Created. He is the Creator. The Creator God, the God of Israel and the God of the Bible.

The First Commandment is this foundation. It is the most important and it lays the foundation for all that follow it. If we have other things or gods before our Creator God, nothing else we do matters.

Do we, in our present society, afford God the same respect and adoration we give entertainers, sports figures, other celebrities or mother earth? Do we worship our children, parents, spouses, money or possessions more than we do God? If we worship our Creator God correctly, as He instructs us, this will become our foundation for what we are becoming.

When asked by the lawyer which was the greatest commandment in the Law, Jesus said to him, "*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.*" This is the great and foremost commandment." (Matthew 22:37-38; Jesus referenced Deut 6:5). Here he gives us the meaning and the spiritual intent of the first four commandments. By keeping them as God instructs we show our

love for Him. The first commandment tells us nothing, no other gods shall be before Him. That means the worship or adoration of anything or anyone else shall not be before Him, in place of Him or placed on the same level as Him. We must worship the Creator, not the created. We are to love, respect and honor God with all of our heart, soul and mind if we wish to have a living relationship with Him.

Lucifer, Satan was the first to break this commandment, (Ezekiel 28:14-19; Isaiah 14:12-14). He tried to set himself above the Creator God. Lucifer worshipped himself more than the true God. In Isaiah 44:6 the Lord spoke to Jacob stating, "...I am the first, and I am the last; and besides Me there is no God."

So what did Lucifer think he was doing? The same thing that brought Lucifer down is the very same ailment we have, pride, an exaggerated view and opinion of self. An unchecked ego. Lucifer did not think he was equal to God. He felt he was better and would exalt his throne above God's.

Is pride a bad thing? If we allow it to overcome or control our morality or system of values, yes it is. 1 John 2:15-17 states, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever."

What does this system of values consist of? Lust of the flesh, we pursue anything that satisfies us. Cars, boats, houses, money, food. This leads to idolatry. All more important to us than God.

Lust of the eyes, we are captivated by things that please our sight. Basically, covetousness. (Another commandment as we will see). This is idolatry.

Pride, the glory that comes from our individual possessions, our self and our accomplishments. Pride causes us to focus on and be devoted to ourselves. We become the object of our devotion, not God. This is the most common form of idolatry now. An elevated sense of self-worth to the exclusion of all else.

Where do our values and morals originate? Is it in accordance with the spiritual laws of the Creator God or have we substituted something, or someone else. "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:26).

"That base, or body of beliefs from which you operate, is your system of morality and ethics." Herbert Armstrong, 1983.

Who and what you are is defined by your system of morals and ethics. Where is your base? What is your foundation? Is it in God's law or governed by the world? Do not forget who the god of this world is. He is the author of the "other" system, Satan.

Think about it. He is the source of much of what we believed before we were called. Satan has done a good job at downplaying the commandments. Hey, they were nailed to the cross. You don't have to go to church on the seventh day, Sunday is the new day of worship. We celebrate Christmas and Easter now. We don't pay attention to those Jewish festivals. We cannot Judaize things. That's how real Christians worship the Lord!

If we let the ways of the world influence our values and our morality, if we are or become "of the world" the love of the Father is not in us.

The world, and its god Satan, have a tremendous pull on us to conform to the world. Satan is very good at his job. He will include parts of God's system to give legitimacy to his system. He will make it god like but not truly God like in an attempt to make

it righteous. The most appealing part, it pulls at our pride. It tells us what we want to hear. He makes it so appealing and easy for us, we feel it must be the right thing. Satan made eating the forbidden fruit and the knowledge of good and evil appealing enough that Adam and Eve gave up Eden for it. As hard as we try we are constantly pressured by friends, family and peers to go along to get along. By remaining in the world we put the Father out of our world. He becomes less important. These other things become the idols we worship.

You are a slave to whom you obey. But, therein lies the solution. "Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves to sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slave to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification." Romans 6:16-19.

We cannot properly worship our Creator God if we are enslaved or captivated by anything else. Cars, Boats, money, ourselves, flesh, lust or pride. It is not possible to have divided loyalty. "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to the one and hate the other. You cannot serve God and wealth." (Luke 16:13). (Also read, Galatians 6:10; 1 Thessalonians 2:4)

To change we must start by making our foundation strong. We need to make the commandments, the spiritual law of God that foundation. We must realign our value system so that every

decision we make at work, at home, regarding our children and grandchildren, with our friends reflects God's laws. "And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He that saith, I know Him and keep not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." (1 John 2:3-4).

Jesus has instructed us, "...it is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." (Luke 4:4; Matthew 4:4). God's written Word is the Bible, both Old and New Testament. Throughout the New Testament we see the apostle's speaking of scripture. That scripture is what we now call the Old Testament. This is our instruction manual, our guide book of life, our foundation.

We have been called to be "first fruits", the small first harvest at Christ's second coming. "Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures." (James 1:17-19).

When we worship God it must be in spirit and in truth. "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." (John 4:23-24).

If we fail to completely give ourselves to God no matter what else we do we are worshiping in vain. "...This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me. But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men." (Mark 7:6-7; Matthew 15:8-9. Jesus was referencing Isaiah 29:13). How are you worshiping? Are you falsely worshiping according to the traditions of men or are you worshiping God as He instructs, with

your whole heart and soul and mind. Do not allow your time to be wasted by false traditions. Follow the true God as He instructs us. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matthew 6:33).

The pull and influence of this world, led by its lord Satan, is constantly trying to pull us away from the greatness and glory of the true God. We are called to be first fruits, the small flock. We need to resist the world and its power and rely on our Creator God. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." (1 John 3:1-3).

Strive to follow the example set forth by Jesus. Surrender fully and completely to the Father. We can do nothing apart from Him. Anything we do will end up being in vain if we try to do it on our own. Even when under terrible duress Jesus said to the Father, "...nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." (Luke 22:42).

The reward is great. The discomfort, short and temporary.