



Learn Your Bible

Resources to help you learn and understand the Bible

Short Study 075: The Ten Commandments

Study Author: Michael Button

Read Exodus 20:1-17

Introduction: The Ten Commandments (also called the Decalogue) were given to Moses on Mount Sinai (also called Mount Horeb) during the Exodus journey, and written by God Himself on tablets of stone. Though included in the wider laws given specifically to the Hebrew community, the Ten Commandments are for all time for all humanity. They can also be found in Deuteronomy 5:6-21 which records Moses' recitation to the people. It is important to consider how they should be applied in the 21st. Century, which is the primary purpose of this study.

Prologue (vs 1-2): God's opening words set the Commandments in the context of a Covenant. Obedience is a response to God's sovereign action, in this case delivery from slavery. Consider how the New Covenant (Luke 22:20) should motivate Christians' obedience to Christ.

- 1. Put God first** (v3). What does this mean in terms of our plans and ambitions?
- 2. No idols** (vs 4-6). What does it mean for God to be 'jealous'? See what the commentators say about the inherited punishment in verse 5, and the contrasting mercy in verse 6.
- 3. Proper use of God's Name** (v7). We sometimes speak of a person's 'good name', referring to their upstanding character. Consider how the good name of Christ can be brought into disrepute by using it flippantly or acting irresponsibly as a Christian.
- 4. Respect the Sabbath** (vs 8-11). For the Hebrews/Jews this was Saturday, not Sunday, but the actual day is less important than the meaning – which is a day of rest from labours. Opinions differ as to what constitutes 'work'. The strict interpretation of 'work' held by the Pharisees and others in Jesus' day was the prime cause of their clash with Jesus (for example Mark 4:2). How do you use our day of rest (Sunday for Christians)?
- 5. Honour Your Parents** (v12). 'Honour' means 'respect', rather than 'obey', though obedience is expected whilst one is under their parents' care. Read what commentators say about the result of honouring parents (i.e. living long in the land).
- 6. Do not murder** (v13). This is self-explanatory, but see the wider meaning in Matt 5:21-22.
- 7. Do not commit adultery** (v14). Again, see the wider meaning in Matt 5:27-30.
- 8. Do not steal** (v15). Can this be applied to wasting an employer's *time* for which one is being paid, or using it for personal use?
- 9. Do not falsely accuse** (v16). It is easy to see how this applies in a court of law, but what about 'gossip' that does not speak well of a person?
- 10. Do not covet** (v17). Most of us today do not have servants, or oxen; but what might tempt our envy to arise?

To think about: There has been plenty to think about already in this Study, but in addition, ask yourself generally "How faithfully am I keeping these commandments?"

To dig deeper: Read about the Ten Commandments in a Bible Commentary and/or Bible encyclopaedia/Bible dictionary.