



METRO NEW YORK WORLD MINISTRY
ADULT SABBATH SCHOOL CONTRIBUTING NOTES
For the week of August 30 – September 5, 2014
Lesson #10: **The Law**

In our Sabbath School Notes concerning the Law of God, we will (1) defend Ten Commandments as still binding upon the Christian, and (2) consider the relationship between the Law of God, religious liberty, and the cross.

Part I: In Defense of the Ten Commandments

The Ten Commandments are important because:

- God's law is "holy, and just, and good, ... and spiritual." Romans 7:12, 14.
- We will all be judged by this "law of liberty." James 2:12.
- God's law is as eternal and unchanging as God Himself.
- The Bible says, "All his commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever." Psalm 111:7-8.
- Jesus overcame and condemned sin in our flesh and blood "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Romans 8:4.
- There is a great need to raise up the standard of God's moral law because of the widespread lawlessness and immorality in our world.
- Tragically, many Christians teach that believers are under no obligation whatsoever to keep God's moral law.
- The Papacy has tampered with the Ten Commandments within her own denomination by eliminating the second commandment and changing the fourth.
- And lastly, many Christian leaders are currently advocating the legislation of a mandatory Sunday law, which is neither constitutional nor biblical.

Did you know that many of the most respected Christian scholars recognized the binding claims of God's Ten Commandments?

Dwight L. Moody wrote, "The law that was given at Sinai has lost none of its solemnity. Time cannot wear out its authority or the fact of its authorship.... I have never met an honest man that found fault with the Ten Commandments.... The commandments of God given to Moses in the mount at Horeb are as binding today as ever they have been since the time when they were proclaimed in the hearing of the people." *Weighed and Wanting*, 11, 15.



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The founder of the Presbyterian Church, John Calvin, said, “We must not imagine that the coming of Christ has freed us from the authority of the law; for it is the eternal rule of a devout and holy life, and must therefore be as unchangeable as the justice of God, which if embraced, is constant and uniform.” Calvin’s Comment on Matthew 5:17 and Luke 16:17, in *Commentary on a Harmony of the Gospels*, vol. 1, 277.

Scholar Dr. Albert Barnes wrote, “We learn hence: 1. That all the law of God is binding on Christians. Compare James 2:10. 2. That all the commands of God should be preached in their proper place, by Christian ministers. 3. That they who pretend that there are any laws of God so small that they need not obey them, are unworthy of His kingdom. And 4. That true piety has respect to all the commandments of God. Compare Psalm 119:6.” Barnes, *Commentary*, note on Matthew 5:19.

Throughout the Bible, God’s law is exalted. Paul said, “Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.... For we know that the law is spiritual:...For I delight in the law of God.” Romans 7:12, 14, 22.

Paul does not say that the law **was** holy, good, and spiritual. Paul declares that the law *is* holy, good, and spiritual. After all, the psalmist says, “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.” Psalm 19:7. And Solomon wrote, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.” Ecclesiastes 12:13.

The beloved John declared, “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. James said, “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.” James 2:10-11.

When a young man came to Jesus and asked how he might receive eternal life, Jesus said, “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.” Matthew 19:17. The covenant that God wants to make with us includes His law. The Bible says, “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” Hebrews 10:16-17. See also Jeremiah 31:33.

God wants to inscribe His law in our hearts and in our minds. He wants us to not only know His commandments (in the mind) but He wants us to love His commandments (in the heart). Paul said, “For I delight in the law of God after the inward man.” Romans 7:22.



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James said, “If ye fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” James 2:8. It requires love to keep God’s commandments. As Jesus said, “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 neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” Matthew 22:37-40.

Paul declares that the “end” or the fulfillment “of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.” 1 Timothy 1:5. Again Paul writes, “Owe no man any thing, but 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, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.” Romans 13:8-10.

Tragically, some teach that God’s law has been abolished. However, please read the following words of the great preacher and scholar John Wesley:

“The ritual or ceremonial law, delivered by Moses to the children of Israel, containing all the injunctions and ordinances which related to the old sacrifices and service of the temple, our Lord indeed came to destroy, to dissolve, and utterly abolish. To this bear all the apostles witness.... This ‘handwriting of ordinances’ our Lord did blot out, take away, and nail to His cross. See Colossians 2:14. But the moral law contained in the Ten Commandments, and enforced by the prophets, He did not take away. It was not the design of His coming to revoke any part of this. This is a law which never can be broken, which ‘stands fast as the faithful witness in heaven.’ The moral law stands on an entirely different foundation from the ceremonial or ritual law . . . Every part of this law must remain in force upon all mankind and in all ages; as not depending either on time or place, or any other circumstance liable to change, but on the nature of God and the nature of man, and their unchangeable relation to each other.” *Sermons on Several Occasions*, vol. 1, 221-222.

Never in the Scriptures are any of the Ten Commandments degraded or abolished. Paul asks the very question of whether the law is abolished. “Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.” Romans 3:31.

In the book of Isaiah it was prophesied that Christ would come and “magnify the law.” Isaiah 42:21. How did Christ magnify the law? 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. Did Jesus abolish the seventh commandment? Certainly not! He did just the opposite. Christ defined adultery beyond the physical act.



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He magnified the law by declaring that you can commit adultery in your heart. He also magnified that law by living a life of sinless obedience to its claims.

In the end, God will again have a people who will keep all Ten Commandments by His grace. The Bible declares, “Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.” Revelation 14:12. These last-day saints will choose to keep His commandments because:

- Christ is worthy of our obedience.
- We want to please Him who created us and redeemed us with His own blood.
- We desire to show forth our love to both God and man.
- We want to protect ourself and our families from the sure results of transgressing God’s law.
- We need to prepare ourselves by God’s grace to live in the sight of a holy God and holy angels.

Remember, “Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.” Revelation 22:14.

The Ten Commandments of God are His moral rules that govern His creation. The first four commandments define our loving relationship to God and the last six define our loving relationship with our fellow man. If these commandments were strictly kept, it would produce communities of decency and domestic tranquility. There would be no idolatry, profanity, Sabbathbreaking, dishonoring of parents, murder, adultery, stealing, lying, or coveting. How would you like to live in a community like that?

However, some teach that God’s law has been abolished, but Jesus said, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5:17-19.

Some teach that the Ten Commandments did not exist before the days of Moses and therefore we do not need to keep them, because they were exclusively given to the Jews.

It is true that the Ten Commandments were not written down on two tables of stone before the days of Moses. However, that does not prove that they did not exist as moral principles to live by.

Take for example the Bible’s definition of sin, “Sin is the transgression of the law.” 1 John 3:4. Then Paul teaches, “Where no law is, there is no transgression,” “for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” Romans 4:15; 3:20.



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Now we do not need to question which law is spoken of here, Paul clearly teaches, “I had not known sin, but by the law. for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.” Romans 7:7. And what law says, “Thou shalt not covet”? It is the Ten Commandments. See Exodus 20:17.

So the question arises, Did sin begin in the days of Moses, because the Ten Commandments were not written down before his time? The answer is emphatically, No!

The Bible says that Satan was “a murderer from the beginning,” and also “a liar.” John 8:44. Clearly Satan is guilty of breaking the sixth and the ninth commandments. See Exodus 20:13, 16.

Adam and Eve coveted the forbidden fruit which God warned them not to eat. This is in violation of the eighth and tenth commandments, not to steal or to covet. See Exodus 20:15, 17.

Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by eternal fire because of their lustfulness. They too were transgressors of God’s moral law, namely, the seventh commandment, “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” Exodus 20:13.

Then of course, there is the institution of the seventh-day Sabbath at the time of creation, which serves as the fourth commandment in God’s moral law

All these examples teach us that a law need not be written down before it teaches man the standard for morality. It is also evident that when God created Adam and Eve they had the moral law of God written upon their hearts as they in the beginning served Him in perfect obedience.

After Adam and Eve sinned man became increasingly corrupt. However, for nearly a thousand years, Adam taught his descendents the divine instruction that he had received from God.

None of the antediluvians could say, “We are guiltless of our sins because there was no written law.” Paul clearly teaches that when the “Gentiles, which have not the law [that is, have no written law, no Holy Bible containing the Ten Commandments], do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness.” Romans 2:14, 15.

By continued transgression man had darkened his own mind and heart from the light of morality. Yet, man is “without excuse.” Romans 1:20. He will be judged upon the light he has received. See John 15:22.

However, some would object by quoting Deuteronomy 5:3, “The Lord made not this Covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us alive this day.”



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They argue that the Ten Commandments are God's covenant with the Hebrew people. They insist that Moses is here declaring that this covenant was not made with the fathers prior to Sinai, therefore the Ten Commandments did not exist before Sinai.

In answer to their objection, we notice that many Bible scholars understand the passage to mean, "The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers (only) but with us (also)." Moses statement does not exclude the fathers from having a covenant at all with God, but that at Sinai God made His covenant with a nation of people newly delivered from bondage in Egypt.

The problem facing Israel, was that they were a people enslaved for 400 years. During this time they had forgotten much of the requirements of God. And to guarantee that the Ten Commandments were not tainted by the foolishness of man, God wrote them with His own finger.

However some would object, saying, "But the Ten Commandments are only for the Jews because the opening commandment addresses them as a nation, saying, 'I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee.... out of the house of bondage.'" Exodus 20:2.

But we can logically respond, "To whom else could God have given the Ten Commandments?" Were the Egyptians, Edomites, Philistines, or Moabites prepared to receive them? After all, which nation of people had received the greatest amount of light from God to prepare them to receive His moral law?

What God found in faithful Abraham was a nation of descendents that had the privilege of receiving divine instruction. At that time they were the people best prepared to receive His law

It is true that God addressed the Jewish people in giving the Ten Commandments. However, we must remember that the Ten Commandments, like all other messages found in the Bible, were placed in an historical context with real people. Overwhelming, the messages in both the Old and New Testaments were addressed to the Jewish people, by Jewish authors. Even Christ's Sermon on the Mount was to a predominantly, if not entirely, Jewish audience. Yet we know that His sermon has an application for our day.

Consider the writings of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, and other prophets. Did they not also write for us? Are their inspired writings more applicable than the Ten Commandments written by God Himself? Certainly not!

Jesus said it best, "Salvation is of the Jews." John 4:22. The Jewish people were God's instrument to receive the Ten Commandments on two tables of stone, the ceremonial laws and its services, and the health laws. While this knowledge was not for them alone, God chose them as His vehicle to shed this light and knowledge to all nations.



Old Covenant Verses New Covenant

Others would argue that the Ten Commandments were part of the covenant God made with Israel, but we are now under a new covenant of grace that has nothing to do with the Ten Commandments. They quote Deuteronomy 4:13 in support of this, “And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone.”

The key word in this passage is “covenant,” which may be translated “compact,” “league,” or “covenant.” The idea here emphasized is an agreement between two or more parties.

When the Israelites came to Sinai the Lord said to them through Moses, “Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.” Exodus 19:5, 6.

The response of the people was their agreement to obey the Lord. Verse 8. What follows this agreement is God’s proclamation of the Ten Commandments in Exodus chapter 20, followed by a summary of civil and ceremonial laws.

We are told in Exodus 24 that Moses “told the people all the words of the Lord,” and again the people responded, “All the words which the Lord hath said will we do.” Verse 3. “And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord. . . And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient.” Verse 4-7. Then Moses took the blood of certain sacrificial animals and “sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words.” Verse 8.

Notice that the covenant was not the words of the laws and statutes, but that the covenant was made “concerning all these words.” The essence of the covenant was that Israel would obey Him. This meant that they would faithfully keep the Ten Commandments as well as the civil and ceremonial laws. In fact, the Israelites agreed to keep God’s covenant through obedience before they received the Ten Commandments. Therefore, the covenant was obedience to God’s words. The words or terms of the covenant were the Ten Commandments.

However, Israel would break this covenant by transgressing or disobeying God’s law. For example, Moses warned Israel against transgressing the covenant by serving “other gods.” Deuteronomy 17:2, 3.

Despite their almost constant transgression of God’s moral law, they usually continued the ceremonial law with all its sacrifices. They seemingly fell into the trap that their sacrifices, expressing their sorrow



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for sin, was a sufficient substitute for obedience. However, no outward form is an appropriate substitute for heartfelt obedience.

Through Hosea the Lord would declare to the morally corrupt nation, “For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offering. But they like men have transgressed the covenant.” Hosea 6:6, 7.

To the prophet Isaiah, God called Israel’s incense and oblations “an abomination.” Isaiah 1:11. Why? Because their carrying out of the ceremonial law was hypocritical. The Israelites desired forgiveness but did not desire a reformation of heart and soul.

Now, in this long, dismal and disappointing record of Israel’s backsliding, where lay the trouble? Were the terms of the covenant at fault? Can we say that the problem was with the Ten Commandments themselves? Certainly not!

The problem was with the Israelites, who failed to obey God as they had promised. The Israelites failed to see that they were too weak and deficient to keep the Ten Commandments without Divine help. After centuries of disobedience on the part of Israel, God foretells through the prophet Jeremiah the promise of a new covenant. “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.” Jeremiah 31:31-33.

This new covenant was not to usher in an era of grace that would supplant God’s law, but a time when the law of God would be written on men’s hearts by the grace or power of God.

In the new covenant there is a change, not in the terms of the covenant, the Ten Commandments, but a change in the location of these commandments. The new covenant does not end with the Ten Commandments written on tables of stone, but upon the heart and mind of man. It was God’s desire that Ancient Israel would allow Him to write His law upon their hearts and minds. But in their self-sufficiency and failure to want a whole heart cleansing, they failed in keeping the covenant with God.

To make sure that we do not fall into the trap of (1) substituting faith for more rituals in our life, or (2) substituting a sorrow for sin for obedience, we must ever increase our faith in God every day by continued prayer and study. In addition, we must daily be dependent upon the very grace of God, which is the power of God to keep a man from sinning. We must receive His loving kindness each day, and be witnesses of His love and mercy. All these spiritual activities are a daily matter, if we would be His



obedient children that He has waited for so long. Today and forever let us choose to please Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.

Now I would like to close this chapter with some serious comments on the depth of each of the Ten Commandments. Remember, each commandment is a promise that God can write these very principles of love upon our hearts and mind. God is not asking us to try harder in keeping His commandments, but to allow Him to write each and every one of them in the inner man. Let us now consider each one of the Ten Commandments and the blessings that come with them.

First Commandment

“I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.”

“I am the Lord thy God” is a declaration of divine sovereignty and everlasting dominion and rulership. The Ruler of the universe begins His Ten Commandments with His emancipation of His people from the cruel slavery of the world’s strongest nation. After freeing His people, He gave them a perfect law to keep. This perfect law was to protect them from the greatest enemy of all, their own wicked hearts. In the same way that God freed the Hebrews out of slavery, He desires to set us free from the bondage to sin. Only by cooperating with God in having His law written upon our hearts and mind will we be truly free. This first commandment declares that the eternal God, who is the Creator and Sustainer of all things, is alone worthy of our worship. Anything that would lessen our love for God or interfere with the dedication and service we owe to Him is forbidden.

Second Commandment

“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: 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 showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.”

This commandment forbids the worship of the true God by images or similitudes. The attempt to represent God by material objects tends to lower man’s conception of God. And as his conceptions of God are lowered, man himself becomes degraded.



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This commandment also declares that God is a “jealous God.” He becomes jealous when we go after other gods. The very close relationship that God wants with His people is represented as a marriage. If we go after other gods, then we are guilty of spiritual adultery, and God’s displeasure is fitly called jealousy.

This commandment also declares that children can suffer from the consequences of parental wrongdoing. The children themselves are not punished for their parent’s sins, except as they choose to practice them. Typically, children will walk in the steps of their parents. Therefore, by genetics and example children can suffer a great deal as a result of sins committed generations ago. This fearful truth should encourage all of us to follow a course of rightdoing.

This commandment also promises mercy upon those who choose to keep God’s commandments. Thankfully, this promise is not restricted to the third and fourth generation, but to thousands of generations.

Third Commandment

“Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.”

This commandment not only prohibits common swearing, but it forbids us to use the name of God in a light or careless manner. God’s name should always be spoken with reverence and solemnity.

Fourth Commandment

“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: ,wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.”

The Sabbath commandment goes back to the time of Creation. It is to be remembered as the memorial of God’s creative power. It is to be observed from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday. (Note: Each day in the creation week began in the evening, ending on the following evening. See Genesis 1:1 to 2:3.) Pointing to God as the Maker of the heavens and the earth, it distinguishes the true God from all false gods. All who keep the seventh-day Sabbath signify that they have given their full allegiance to Him who gave them life. God has given man six days to labor, but the seventh day He has reserved for Himself. God, of course, permits acts of necessity and mercy to be carried out on the Sabbath, the sick and suffering are at all times to be cared for, but unnecessary labor and pleasure seeking are to be strictly avoided. See Isaiah 58:13-14; Exodus 31:12-17.



The first four Commandments define our relationship with God. And, the last six Commandments define our relationship with one another.

Fifth Commandment

“Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.”

This commandment not only requires children to respect and obey their parents, but also to give them love and tenderness, to lighten their cares, to guard their reputations, and to comfort them in old age.

Sixth Commandment

“Thou shalt not kill,”

All acts of injustice that tend to shorten life, the spirit of hatred or revenge, all acts of self-indulgence that brings injury to our own body, and the neglect for caring for the needy or suffering—all these are, to a greater or lesser degree, violations of the sixth commandment.

Seventh Commandment

“Thou shalt not commit adultery.”

This commandment forbids not only acts of sexual impurity, but also any time we purposely entertain thoughts and desires that are impure.

Eighth Commandment

“Thou shalt not steal.”

This commandment condemns stealing and slavery, and forbids wars of conquest. It condemns theft and robbery. It demands strict integrity even in the smallest affairs of life. It forbids overreaching in trade, and requires the payment of just debts and wages. It declares that every attempt to take advantage of another person’s ignorance, weakness, and misfortune is recorded as fraud in the books of heaven.

Ninth Commandment

“Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.”



Any attempt to deceive another person is here included. By a glance of the eye, a motion of the hand, an expression of the face, a person may easily break the ninth commandment. All intentional overstatements, every hint or insinuation calculated to convey an erroneous or exaggerated impression, even the statement of facts in such a matter as to mislead, is considered falsehood. This commandment forbids every effort to injure our neighbor's reputation by misrepresentation or evil surmising. Even the intentional suppression of truth, by which injury may result to others, is a violation of the ninth commandment.

Tenth Commandment

“Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbor's.”

The tenth commandment strikes at the very root of all sins, which is selfishness. It is the spirit of Satan to covet and live for self. However, it is the spirit of Christ to give and to sacrifice for the good of others.

As we can see, the Ten Commandments of God written upon the hearts and minds of His people would produce such a glorious and beautiful world. But tragically, men continue to rebel against the Law of God, while some religious leaders figure that they can improve upon it. But all this is foolishness before God. Who better than God could decide upon the best commandments? None. And who alone can write them in the inner man? Only God Himself.

But in the end, Satan will try every trick in his demonic book to lead the world away from God's holy law. In fact, it is his devilish plan to inspire men to legislate a law against the Law of God. This we have already seen in the life of Daniel and his faithful friends. See Daniel chapter six and three.

History will repeat itself. But what really leads the world against the Law of God and the people of God is spiritualism. The world is simply deceived through false doctrines and the wonder working miracles of demons and apostate religious leaders.

Part II: God's Perfect Law in Relation to Religious Liberty and the Cross of Calvary

Religious Liberty and the Ten Commandments

Movements are well underway in the United States to secure for the institutions of the church the support of the state. In this way, Protestants are in the process of forming an image to the beast, the union of church and state. These efforts will allow the papacy to regain in America the supremacy she once exercised in the old world. And the end goal is a national Sunday law.



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This push for a national Sunday law interferes with an individual's personal relationship with God. Now, if Protestants in America were contemplating the enforcement of the sixth commandment, Thou shalt not kill, we would say that is a just and moral law. But then, we already have a law against murder.

If Protestants in America were contemplating the enforcement of the eighth commandment, Thou shalt not steal, then, again, we could say we agree with such a moral and just law. But then again, we already have such a law against stealing.

Yet in both of these cases, laws against murder and stealing are not enacted as religious laws, but as civil laws, laws that relate between people. And we need such laws to protect society from harmful and demoralizing influences.

But Protestants in America are contemplating the enforcement of Sunday observance, something that is strictly religious, and they are wrong. So how is it that Protestants are so confused on this matter? Why would they think that they should pass a Sunday law, a law that conflicts with an individual's personal relationship with God?

I believe they are going in the wrong direction for two reasons. First, they are going in the wrong direction because they do not understand the perfect relationship between the Ten Commandments and religious liberty. Second, they are going in the wrong direction because they do not understand the perfect relationship between the Ten Commandments and the Cross.

Let us begin by investigating the relationship between the Ten Commandments and Religious Liberty. The First Amendment to the United States Constitution, reads, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

Much of the debate is over the word "establishment," or the "establishment of religion." What was the founders' intent when they said, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion"? Did they mean that religion should be totally free and independent of government interference? Were they in favor of, what we would call, separation of church and state? Or, were they simply trying to prevent us from having one national church and religion? For example, was it okay for the government to establish religion, to initiate religion for the individual and for the community, but simply refrain from having one recognized religion?

The founders did believe in the separation of church and state, but how much separation? I believe the answer is found by looking at another key word in the First Amendment, that is the word "religion." The First Amendment does not say, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of morality." It doesn't say, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of just laws."



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We are all in favor of moral and just laws. But there is a difference between moral laws and religious laws when it comes to the Ten Commandments. Here is the difference. Moral laws have to do with the last six commandments, which deals with man's relationship with his fellow man. In other words, it is immoral or unjust or illegal or unlawful to steal or to kill, or to rape, or lie under oath, or to commit perjury

But the first four commandments deal with man's relationship with God. This is what we would call "religion." The First Amendment prohibits the government from interfering with an individual's freedom to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience.

George Washington said, "Every man who conducts himself as a good citizen, is accountable alone to God for his religious faith, and should be protected in worshipping God according to the dictates of his own conscience."

North Carolina Constitution of 1776, "That all men have a natural and unalienable right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their own consciences."

Civil government has the right to enact laws that deal with man's relationship with man. However, they are not to legislate laws that deal with man's relationship with God.

Delaware on September 11, 1776, declared in the Delaware Declaration of Rights and Fundamental Rules, "That all men have a natural and unalienable right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their own consciences and understandings; that no man ought or of right can be compelled to attend any religious worship or maintain any ministry contrary to or against his own free will and consent, and that no authority can or ought to be vested in, or assumed by any power whatever that shall in any case interfere with, or in any manner control the right of conscience in the free exercise of religious worship."

Charles Pinckney, a delegate from South Carolina, said, "The Legislature of the United States shall pass no law on the subject of religion." Notice that Congress was to pass no law on the subject of religion. This does not mean we cannot have moral and just laws.

Does a law that prohibits people from stealing deny them of their right to worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences? NO. Does a National Sunday Law prohibit people from worshipping God according to the dictates of his own conscience? YES

So the state should play no role in the enforcement of the first table of the Decalogue, the first four commandment, dealing with man's relationship with God. The state can though enforce fundamental moral standards as a means of regulating man's relationship with his fellow man in society. But even here we must be careful.



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If I were to ask the question, Did the founding Fathers want the Ten Commandments to be the foundation of our government? If that were true, why are the Ten Commandments not written in the Constitution? Why did the Framers fail to authorize the state to tell its citizens that they could not worship false gods, make graven images, take the Lord's name in vain, or profane the Sabbath? Why is the name of "God" not mentioned once in the Constitution of the United States?

Ultimately, the Founders chose to mention religion in only two places—and specifically in reference to what Congress could not do—such as placing religious tests on men running for political office (Article Six, Section 3), or endorsing religion or religious practices (First Amendment). It is clear that Congress shall make no laws in respect to the first four commandments.

But how much separation is there with the last six commandments?

Let us consider the issue concerning Prohibition. This is a law that would prohibit the manufacture and sale of alcohol. Should we as a people, by voice and pen, take a stand in matters of temperance reform? Would we be going too far in supporting legislation prohibiting the manufacturing and sale of alcohol? Would we be taking away someone's right to worship God according to the dictates of conscience? NO.

How many more wives have to become widows, and for children to become orphans for us to say alcohol is an evil blight upon our land. Must the sale of liquor sweep away thousands of happy homes every year?

We are to exercise the pen, voice, and vote on the side of temperance and virtue. Without prohibiting someone from worshipping God according to the dictates of their own conscience, we are to press back the tide of evil in our world. We should as a people be in favor of social and moral reforms. We should be a voice against same-sex marriages. We would do well to have stricter laws against obscenity and child pornography.

Yet in all this, we must never forget that the real reason why there is so much immorality, violence, and profanity in our nation is because most within the Christian world have grossly misunderstood the perfect relationship between the Ten Commandments and the Cross.

The Ten Commandments and the Cross

The everlasting gospel is the message that explains the perfect relationship between the Ten Commandments and the Cross. It is a message that explains the connection between the perfect and sinless life of Jesus and His perfect law. It is a message that helps us understand the perfect relationship between Mount Sinai and Calvary.



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Now, how have people throughout history understood that relationship?

The Jewish nation claimed to keep the perfect law, but they had rejected the perfect and sinless Messiah, Jesus Christ. Therefore, it was not possible for them to understand the perfect relationship between the Commandments and the Cross.

Throughout most of the Christian world, Christians have accepted the perfect and sinless life of Jesus, but they have rejected His perfect law, claiming that the Ten Commandments are no longer binding upon the Christian. Therefore, it has not been possible for most Christians to understand the perfect relationship between the Commandments and the Cross.

So what is the perfect relationship?

Let us begin by understanding the Ten Commandments themselves. The following quotations will show us that the Ten Commandments are righteousness, holy, just, good, and spiritual.

David said, “for all Thy commandments are righteousness.” Psalm 119:172. The apostle Paul wrote that the law is “holy, and just, and good. . . .For we know that the law is spiritual.” Romans 7:12, 14.

God’s desire is that these commandments would be written in our hearts. “I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them.” Hebrews 10:16. See also Hebrews 8:10. This has been God’s desire from the beginning. To ancient Israel God said, “Hearken unto Me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is My law.” Isaiah 51:7. The evidence of whether the law is written on our hearts is our love for God and our fellowman. Matthew 2:36-39.

So the commandments are righteous, holy, just, good, and spiritual. By choosing to break them we sin. See 1 John 3:4. And all of us have broken the Ten Commandments. Romans 3:23. So what can we now do?

When we look at the perfect law of God we stand guilty as lawbreakers. But at the same time the law directs us to a Savior. “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” Galatians 3:24. The perfect law of God brings us to Christ.

This same law shows us our true condition. Paul wrote, “What shall we say in light of all this? Is the law a sinful thing that we’re eager to escape from? Absolutely not! I wouldn’t have understood sin within myself if the law hadn’t pointed it out to me. I never would have known myself as I needed to, except the tenth commandment said, ‘You shall not covet.’ . . . I considered myself a normal, law-abiding person, but when I understood the true meaning of the tenth commandment, sin became very real, and I realized that in the eyes of God’s law, I stood condemned and was as good as dead.” Romans 7:7, 9. The Clear Word translation.



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The law reveals sin to us. It causes us to sense our need of Christ. We go to Him to find pardon for a sinful past, peace to know that we are forgiven, strength to live a different life in Him, and love.

When we go to Jesus we see the beauty of holiness, the joy of a pure life. We ourselves then long to be cleansed of our sins and restored to walk in sweet communion with Him.

Some have asked, Can we be justified or accounted righteous before God by keeping the law? The Scriptures are very clear on this point. Paul wrote, “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall n flesh be justified.” Galatians 2:16. “Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall not flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” Romans 3:20.

Why can't we be justified by the law? James wrote, “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.” James 2:10. We cannot be justified by a law that we have already broken. Even if you could go on in life without sinning on your own, you would still be guilty. This is why we need justification through the shed blood of Christ.

What is justification?

Forgiveness and justification are the same thing. Paul proclaimed, “Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.” Acts 13:38, 39.

Jesus taught that justification and condemnation are opposites, saying, “For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.” Matthew 12:37

When the penitent sinner comes before God and accepts the atoning sacrifice of Christ for his sins, he is forgiven or pardoned for his past sins. The penitent has earned nothing by his works, but is freely pardoned by the grace of God.

Salvation is either by works or by grace, but it cannot be by both. Paul wrote, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” Ephesians 2:8. “And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is not more work.” Romans 11:6.



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So how can we be accounted righteous when God's Law already condemns us?

When we accept Jesus as our personal Savior, He does more than forgive of our past sins. God will credit to our account the righteousness of Christ. "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works." Romans 4:6.

The word "impute" is the same as the word "credit." As it reads in The Clear Word translation, "David said the same thing when he described the happiness of the man to whom God credits righteousness without that man having worked for it."

God will credit the righteousness of Christ to our account. Then when God looks at our record He sees our sins covered, plus 33 years of Christ's obedience. This is why Jesus is called, "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" Jeremiah 23:6.

When God forgives us of our sins, He also credits to our heavenly account the perfect life of Jesus. Christ's sinless life is credited to us by no works on our part. We have merited nothing. It is the free gift of God to them who believe.

Now if God applied to your personal account the perfect life of Jesus, would that motivate you to want to serve Him and follow Him? Would that motivate you to want that very life that has been credited to you? Now what life is that? What is the perfect and sinless life of Christ? It is a life that is in perfect harmony with His perfect law.

While the law is righteous, holy, just, and good, we cannot attain the righteousness of the law by our efforts to keep the law. We must receive the righteousness of God's perfect law from the perfect Messiah, Jesus Christ. If we would open our hearts fully for Christ to abide, then His very life becomes our own. With His abiding presence we are transformed into the altogether beautiful life of Christ. We will then be living the very life that the law requires.

When Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep the commandments." John 14:15, He was saying if you love what I have done for you, keep the righteousness of the law.

We can have the righteousness of the law, but not from the law itself. We receive the righteousness of the law by receiving the sinless and perfect life of Christ. As Paul wrote, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Galatians 2:20.

Christ kept His Father's law that we may keep it too. Paul wrote, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Romans 8:3, 4. So Christ came and lived a righteous and perfect life as



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defined in His perfect law. By ourselves we could never attend to such a righteous life. But Christ came and lived that righteous life for us. Every day He was making perfect decisions and choices for us. He did this that we may keep His law perfectly by the power of the Holy Spirit.

If the Christian world would understand this perfect relationship between the perfect law of God and the perfect life of Christ, then they would not be pushing for religious laws to the Constitution. Only by receiving Christ into the heart can any human being keep the Commandments.

In conclusion, the first four commandments deal with man's relationship with God. The founding fathers were against any law that interfered with man's relationship with the Divine. Even the last six commandments which deal with man's relationship with man are not instituted as commandments in our civil code. With our separation of church and state, religious organizations have the freedom to share the perfect relationship between the Commandments and the Cross in every community across America. As more men and women live by those commandments through the power of the Holy Spirit, we can better fight the tide of immorality by the power of our example, not by the power of the state.

Sabbath School Notes prepared by Pastor Jeff Wehr. Many of my comments came from two great sources, namely, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pages 305-309, and *The Ten Commandments* by Taylor Bunch.