

=THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL=

Lesson 5

The Ten Commandments

AIM: to teach my pupils the aim and content of the law.

POINT OF CONTACT: The law is like a mirror to show us how we look. It is like a plumbline to reveal the crookedness of a building. It is like a scale to weigh us. In other words, the law was given to reveal to man his inability to save himself and not to give man a set of rules to keep in order to be saved. This is shown to us in Romans 3:20 and 7:7. You could bring a plumbline or a mirror. Show the pupils that the mirror does not clean up the face; it just reveals the condition of the face. A plumbline does not straighten the building; it just reveals the crooked condition. This was the purpose of the giving of the law.

INTRODUCTION: Now let us look at the Ten Commandments. Bear in mind, we are to attempt to keep them, realizing all the time that we cannot and that they are only to reveal our condition before God to lead us to Christ and His righteousness.

- I. “THOU SHALT HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME,” Exodus 20:3. The words, “before Me,” could be worded, “but me.” In other words, He is our only God. Jehovah is the only God we are to have and trust.
- II. “THOU SHALT NOT MAKE UNTO THEE ANY GRAVEN IMAGE,” Exodus 20:4. This means “to carve or hew” an image. We are not to make outwardly an external idol, even as the previous commandment says we are to have no gods at all but the true God. Notice several things of which we are not to make images:
  1. “Any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above.” This had to do with the Egyptian god, Osiris, and his wife, Isis. They were the supreme divinities among the people. God is saying we are to make no likeness of God at all.
  2. “Or that is in the earth beneath.” This would be the likeness of a beast, etc. Among the Egyptians the ox was not only sacred but literally adored. They always worshipped a living ox. They had a particular living ox which they supposed to be the habitation of their god, Osiris. They imagined that on the death of the ox their god entered into the body of another, etc. This famous ox-god they called Apis. They also worshipped the stork, the crane, the hawk, the crocodile, serpents, beetles, frogs, etc.
  3. “Or that is in the water under the earth.” All fish were esteemed sacred among the Egyptians. These were oftentimes worshipped. God forbids any images being worshipped or carved whatsoever.
- III. “THOU SHALT NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD THY GOD IN VAIN,” Exodus 20:7.
  1. This prevents any swearing using the name of the Lord.
  2. It also prevents all light and irreverent mention of God.
  3. It includes much slang. Much of our slang had its origin in God. For example: “Gee” was originally Jesus; “gosh” and “golly” came from the light use of the word God.
  4. This could also be applied to any light mention of God. This includes prayers that are not meant or that are said lightly, worship in the service or songs about God sung lightly.
- IV. “REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY, TO KEEP IT HOLY,” Exodus 20:8. God has always appointed one day for diversion for the health and spiritual nurture of man. Something else is in the next verse. It says, “Six days shalt thou labour.” Therefore, he who idles away time on any of the six days is as guilty before God as he who works on the seventh day.
- V. “HONOUR THY FATHER AND THY MOTHER,” Exodus 20:12. This is to be an affectionate respect, a protection, and a care for our mothers and fathers. Also notice that this commandment carries with it a promise of long life. In the New Testament where the list of terrible, awful sins is mentioned, invariably being disobedient to parents is included.
- VI. “THOU SHALT NOT KILL,” Exodus 20:13. This word “kill” means “murder.” This has nothing to do with accidental death, etc. It pertains only to murder. Jesus added to this commandment about murder in the New Testament when He said that a person who hates is guilty of murder also.

- VII. "THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT ADULTERY," Exodus 20:14. Of course, this means the improper, unholy relationship between the sexes. Jesus added to this when He said a man who looks after a woman and lusts after her in his heart is guilty of adultery. This is the truest and the strictest meaning of this commandment.
- VIII. "THOU SHALT NOT STEAL," Exodus 20:15. All theft is forbidden by this teaching: petty larcenies, highway robberies and private stealings. Taking advantage of a buyer or seller's ignorance to give one less or to get more for a commodity than it is worth is included here. This would also include stealing from the government and especially stealing from God, His tithe. This also has the implication that it is wrong to defame a person by stealing from his character. In other words, backbiting or saying anything that would hurt a man's character or steal his reputation from him would be a breach of this commandment.
- IX. "THOU SHALT NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS AGAINST THY NEIGHBOUR," Exodus 20:16. This applies not only to giving a false oath on the witness stand but to all whispering, talebearing, slandering, etc. Actually, some think that it is all intent to injure another in his spirit, person, or character, whether the statement is false or true.
- X. "THOU SHALT NOT COVET," Exodus 20:17. The word "covet" means "to desire unlawfully." No doubt this is the root of all the others. Covetousness makes us break every other commandment.

CONCLUSION: Not a one of us can pass the test of the commandments listed above. We do our best, and to be sure, we should, but we find ourselves unable to meet the conditions of these commandments. Hence, we look at them, compare ourselves to them, and realize that we cannot save ourselves. This leads us to turn to Christ and accept His righteousness, for He fulfilled the law for us.