

# THE TEN COMMANDMENTS



The cover image for this booklet represents how the law of God is destined to be established over the whole earth, as biblical prophecy shows: "For the earth will be filled With the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, As the waters cover the sea" (Habakkuk 2: 14); and, "...For out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:3).

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Lord, I do not change...,” and in Hebrews 13:8: “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”

In Psalm 111:10 we find this nugget of wisdom: “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments. His praise endures forever.”

The wise person will receive and obey God's Commandments, which outline God's Way of Life. The fool will not! Learning to fear God and depart from the evil ways of this world means that we do need to study the Word of God to find out what we should do. As we learn, we should then fear to disobey what we have learned.

Theoretically, what a difference it would make if everyone on earth kept just one of these Ten Commandments! Yet when Jesus Christ sets up the Kingdom of God on earth, ALL ten of the Commandments will be kept and the world will be a completely different place—so much better than it has ever been!

Those who think that these Commandments are done away with ought to consider the wonderful scenario ahead—no wars, no hatred, no broken families, no abusive behavior, no human trafficking, no injustices, no prejudices, no genocides, no starvation! In considering whether or not to keep the Ten Commandments, they just might come to realize the correlation between keeping the commandments and living in true peace and harmony.

We who understand the Truth that God has revealed to His Church, should be so grateful for this knowledge, and we should be diligently putting into practice what we learn, even while mainstream Christianity largely ignores the Truth that God has given to us! God's spiritual Law of the Ten Commandments does not change by the passing of time. If we want to please God and be in His Kingdom, obedience to His Law and His Way of Life are essential.

Solomon effectively summarizes the issue in Ecclesiastes 12:13: “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all” (or: “the whole duty of man”).

To understand and live by God's Law is indeed our duty. And it IS more priceless than anything else. We must treasure it and NEVER forsake it, because if we were to do this, we would forsake GOD.

Someone in whom God's Holy Spirit dwells:

Romans 8:9: "But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His."

Someone who believes that there is no salvation in any other name than Christ:

Acts 4:12: "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

We understand that it may be very difficult for someone who may have been misled by the false teaching that the Ten Commandments have been done away with, to change course and go in the opposite direction. But change is a must in order to please our great Creator God. Obedience is a critical matter in the eyes of God, not the self-willed approach that is often taken by man. The Commandments are not to be ignored by God's people, but often are by those who have been seduced by false teachers.

Before the Ten Commandments were pronounced by God to His nation Israel, as recorded in Exodus 20, God told Moses to tell the children of Israel:

"You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. 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; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel" (Exodus 19:4-6). They were to be different than all of the other nations.

Fast forward to the Church of God founded on the day of Pentecost (see Acts 2). As the ancient nation of Israel and as the people of God were set apart around 3,500 years ago, so also has the true Church of God been set apart since its inception almost 2,000 years ago.

We read in 1 Peter 2:9-10: "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy."

God instructed His people at Mount Sinai to keep His Law, and today, the message is the same. We read in Malachi 3:6: "For I am the

## Introduction

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The concept of the Ten Commandments—also referred to as the Decalogue—has been known since time immemorial, often being referred to in religious and even nonreligious articles, books, movies and TV shows. However, many false ideas are associated with these Commandments, as very few people truly understand their unique meaning and significance, resulting in opposition to keeping them today, even among professing Christians.

In this booklet, we will discuss many of the false interpretations and misconceptions about the individual commandments and the entire Decalogue, and we will show how the Ten Commandments ARE to be understood and what they mean for us today.

The Ten Commandments are listed in their entirety in Exodus 20 and in Deuteronomy 5.

Quoting from Exodus 20:1-17, we read:

"And God spoke all these words, saying:

"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me.

"You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

"You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor

your cattle, nor your stranger who *is* within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

“You shall not murder.

“You shall not commit adultery.

“You shall not steal.

“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that *is* your neighbor’s.”

In reading the plain words of these instructions, it would seem that everyone would understand their meaning. Sadly, this is not the case at all. Just the opposite, everyone has their own opinion or interpretation, but a closer look at God’s Word—the Bible—reveals what God is really saying.

## Conclusion

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We have given you the clear biblical evidence for the necessity of keeping the Ten Commandments, and we have answered many of the objections that are raised by those who think differently.

If you had an open mind when you started to read this booklet, then we hope that you are convinced to start keeping these commandments of God. If not, you will be denying the Truth that God has revealed through His Church, and you will also miss out on the sure understanding that God looks after those who do His Will. That assurance in this sick, evil, corrupt, malevolent and wicked society is priceless, and if it is ignored, it is at the reader’s peril.

It is worth mentioning here how a true Christian is identified. Note the following Scriptures which are by no means exclusive, but if someone professing to be a Christian does not fulfill at least these requirements, then he or she is not a true Christian:

Someone who has repented, believes, has been baptized, and has received the laying on of hands by God’s ministry:

Acts 2:38: “Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Acts 8:36–37: “Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, ‘See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?’ Then Philipp said, ‘If you believe with all your heart, you may.’”

Acts 8:16–17: “For as yet [it—the Holy Spirit] had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they [the apostles] laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.”

Someone to whom God has given His Holy Spirit and who is obedient to God:

Acts 5:32: “And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit [which] God has given to those who obey Him.”



# Chapter 1

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## God's Law Before and Since the Creation of Man

It might be surprising to learn that most of the Ten Commandments were already in force and effect—in a spiritual way—BEFORE the creation of man, and that ALL of them became LAW in its physical and spiritual application *with* the creation of Adam and Eve.

Before the creation of man approximately 6,000 years ago, a cherub by the name of Lucifer sinned. In our booklet *Angels, Demons and the Spirit World*, we state the following under “Lucifer and Satan” on page 40:

“The Bible reveals that God created all of the angels. They were not created as robots, but as spirit beings with the power to choose and to decide. One high-ranking angel, a cherub by the name of Lucifer, rebelled and sinned against God (Isaiah 14:12–15; Ezekiel 28:11–17). Lucifer wanted to ‘ascend to heaven’ to dethrone God (Isaiah 14:13). He wanted to ‘ascend above the heights of the clouds’ (Isaiah 14:14). This shows us that he was here on earth, because he wanted to ascend above the clouds of the earth to go to heaven. When he sinned, he was thrown back to this earth (Isaiah 14:12). He became Satan, which means enemy or adversary. Lucifer, or Satan, was already here on earth when Adam and Eve were created. We are told that the serpent was already here in order to deceive Eve when Adam and Eve were placed in the Garden of Eden. The serpent is identified as Satan the devil (Revelation 12:9). Since Satan appeared to the first man and his wife as the deceiver, he must have lived on this earth prior to man as Lucifer—when he was not yet the deceiver—before he tried to ‘ascend to heaven.’

“Actually, before he was sent to earth, Lucifer had been trained in heaven before the very throne of God, and he had angels under his command. We read in Ezekiel 28:14 that he was the anointed cherub who covers. Recall that the cherubs covered the throne of God when God appeared to Moses in the Tabernacle. Also, we read in Ezekiel 28:14

that Lucifer was on the holy mountain of God in heaven (compare Hebrews 12:22). When he sinned by trying to ascend from this earth to heaven to dethrone God, he was cast out of the mountain of God (Ezekiel 28:16). Christ later said that He saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning (Luke 10:18)."

Before his rebellion, he **chose**, of his own free will, to love and serve God, but later on, he took his "eyes" off of God. His focus changed from serving God to elevating himself to become God. In Isaiah 14:13–14 we read: "For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.'"

Satan and his demons sinned when they rebelled against God (2 Peter 2:4; 1 John 3:8). Sin is defined as the transgression of God's LAW of love (1 John 3:4; Romans 13:8–10). So we see that sin was committed even before the creation of man.

Then after Adam and Eve were created, they sinned while in the Garden of Eden. This was long before the Ten Commandments were announced to the people by God through Moses at Mount Sinai.

We read in 1 Timothy 2:14 that "Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression." Eve sinned when she violated God's Law. This means that God's Law of the Ten Commandments was already in effect long before Abraham or Moses. Paul tells us in Romans 4:15, "...where there is no law there is no transgression." And remember, if we sin, we are "convicted *by the law* as transgressors" (James 2:9).

Adam and Eve transgressed the Law of the Ten Commandments when they took of the forbidden fruit. They sinned by *disobeying God*, by *stealing* from Him and by *lying* to Him about it. They also committed *idolatry* by following Satan, *desiring* to have something that was not theirs. Later, Cain sinned by *murdering* his brother Abel (Genesis 4:7–8). The men of Sodom were *sinful* against God (Genesis 13:13) in violating His commandments and principles pertaining to marriage (Genesis 18:20).

Long before Moses, God prevented two pagan rulers—both referred to as Abimelech—from sinning against Him by having an *adulterous relationship* with Abraham's and Isaac's wives (Genesis 20:6; Genesis

My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them" (Ezekiel 36:26–27).

Far from abolishing the Ten Commandments, Christ commanded us to keep them in a new way—with even more zeal and enthusiasm, and with much deeper spiritual understanding and commitment—showing the love toward God and neighbor in a way that is impossible for the carnal mind (Romans 8:6–9). It requires that God give us a "new heart" and a "new spirit," and that is exactly what He promises us, so that we can obey the "new" commandment of manifesting godly love by keeping His commandments.

us will we be able to begin to manifest that great godly love toward God and others. As a whole, and barring a few exceptions, Old Testament Israelites did not have the Holy Spirit within them, and neither did the disciples prior to Christ's resurrection and the Day of Pentecost, but Christ announced to them that the Holy Spirit would be given to them (John 14:16), which would, in turn, give them the power to love each other *as Christ loved them*.

Even though the command to love God and neighbor had been given from the beginning—and it was therefore an “old” commandment—it now became a “new” commandment, in that it encompasses a much more demanding degree of love that can only be manifested through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

In order to fulfill Christ's “new” commandment to love each other as He loved us, we must become a “new” creation and put on the “new” man (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15; Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10). We are to become a “new lump”—“unleavened” (1 Corinthians 5:7), without malice and wickedness (verse 8). We must walk the “new and living way” of love which Christ consecrated for us (Hebrews 10:20). When we have been baptized and received God's Holy Spirit, we are to walk “in newness of life” (Romans 6:4)—or, as we quoted John above, we are to “walk” “in love.”

In order to become a new creation, enabling us to keep Christ's “new” commandment, we must receive God's Holy Spirit and be led by it (Romans 8:14).

We read in Ezekiel 18:31: “Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die...?”

### **Notice God's Promises**

“Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God” (Ezekiel 11:19–20).

And again: “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in

26:10). Later, Joseph refused to *commit adultery* with Potiphar's wife, knowing that this would be a sin (Genesis 39:7–9). Jacob sinned by *deceiving, or lying to*, his father Isaac (Genesis 27:35). Jacob knew that *stealing* was sinful (Genesis 30:33; 31:39). Joseph later explained that kidnapping a person was *stealing* and therefore sinful (Genesis 40:15). His brothers understood, too, that *stealing* was sinful (Genesis 50:17; Genesis 44:8).

*Fornication* was understood to be a sinful act long before God spoke the Ten Commandments to Israel (Genesis 34:7, 31; 38:24). *Murder* also was declared to be sinful (compare also Genesis 49:6–7), and the midwives refused to *kill* the Israelite baby boys because they feared God (Exodus 1:16–17).

As we have already seen, the commandment against *idolatry* was in force and effect prior to Moses. Further proof can be found in Genesis 35:2–4 and in Joshua 24:2, 14.

God clearly identified the observance of the seventh-day *Sabbath* as a law that had to be obeyed, even prior to arriving at Mount Sinai (Exodus 16:4–5, 22–30). After all, it had been in effect since Adam and Eve were created (Genesis 2:2–3). There is no evidence, however, that the Sabbath was in force and effect prior to the creation of man. Jesus said that the Sabbath was made *for man* (Mark 2:27), indicating it was not created for angels.

We see, then, that all of the Ten Commandments were in force and effect since the creation of man. In breaking them, man fell into transgression—he sinned.

I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining. He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him..."

### **No Contradiction**

Again, the context is loving our brethren. And even though John says that this is not a new commandment, he goes on to say that it is a new commandment. Is there a contradiction? Some try to explain this by saying that even though it is an old commandment, it is always new for us. But this is not really convincing.

The key to understanding this "mystery" is to return to Jesus' statement in John 13:34. When quoting this passage above, we purposefully omitted the second part of Christ's saying. Let us now read the passage in its entirety: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another."

The *New King James Bible* places erroneously a semicolon before "as I have loved you," thereby totally obscuring the meaning. In the original Greek, there were no commas or semicolons, and the translator added those, as he felt best, but in this case, he did so wrongly. Christ was saying here that *we are to love one another as He loved us; that is, in the same way as He loved us.*

He repeats this command in John 15:12: "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." Notice, no semicolon here before the word "as." And He explains in the next two verses this extraordinary love: "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you" (verses 13–14).

The connection between loving each other—even to the point of death, if necessary—and obeying Christ is obvious (compare John 14:15, 21). Christ gave up His eternal existence as an immortal God being and became a mortal man and died for us so that we could inherit eternal life, and He demands of us that same kind of unselfish and outgoing love toward others.

This is not remotely possible for a human being to fulfill, except through and with the help of God. Only if God's Holy Spirit dwells in

His statement should persuade an honest person that the Ten Commandments are no longer valid. Christ never said that He gave a new commandment to *replace* the Ten Commandments. On the contrary, He told the young rich ruler that he had to *keep* the Ten Commandments if he was to enter the Kingdom of God and inherit salvation and eternal life (Matthew 19:16–26).

### **What Is Meant by a New Commandment?**

What then did Jesus say, and what did He mean when He spoke of a “new commandment”?

He says this in John 13:34: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another...” The Greek word for “love” is *agapao*, which is derived from *agape*, describing “godly love.”

But to love one another is hardly a new commandment that was not stated before. When Christ was asked what was the greatest commandment in the Law, He responded by quoting two Old Testament passages, demanding that we love God with all our heart and our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:36–40). In both cases, the Greek word for “love” is *agapao*, referring to “godly love.” When we keep the Ten Commandments, we show our love toward God and our neighbor, because we honor God in the way that He requires of us, and we do not harm our neighbor by, for instance, killing him, lying to him, committing adultery with his wife or with her husband, or lusting after the things that our neighbor has.

1 John 3:11 confirms that the message of love toward one another is not really anything new: “For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.”

And again, we read in 2 John 5–6: “And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning, that we love one another. This is love [Greek, *agape*], that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it.”

We also read this startling statement in 1 John 2:7–10: “Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning. Again, a new commandment

## Chapter 2

### Why So Much Opposition?

There is, generally, very little respect for God and His Commandments today. We read from time to time how little is known in present society with regard to the Ten Commandments. When polls are taken and people are questioned, many know much more about the celebrity culture than they do about the things of God, and few today could name the Ten Commandments in order, or even just a few of them.

Around 3,500 years ago, God spoke the Ten Commandments to the ancient nation of Israel, as we read in chapter 20 of the book of Exodus. Even though all of the Ten Commandments had been in force and effect since the creation of man, the Israelites had undoubtedly forgotten most of them while in Egyptian slavery.

God had to remind the Israelites of His Laws for their own good and personal well-being, and for order in their society. The Commandments, when properly kept, taught them that they were to respect God and their fellow man, which in turn, would help to form and stabilize them as the new nation that God brought out of Egyptian captivity.

On the website “*National Center For Constitutional Studies*,” there is an article entitled, “Why Do Materialists Fear the Ten Commandments?” They make some very interesting observations, as follows:

“The most basic concept leading to the establishment of freedom in America is that, ‘Men are endowed with certain unalienable rights.’ But immediately following is the recognition that declaring rights is one thing but preserving and protecting them is quite another. What good does it do, when one is face-to-face with a pistol-carrying thug, to declare, ‘I have an unalienable right to my life and property?’ No thief or murderer will be deterred by that declaration. Hence, the Founders knew there must be a basic set of laws given to declare what actions are illegal and perhaps what the punishment will be for breaking those laws. In other words, without law there is no protection of rights.

## Chapter 21

### The New Commandment of Jesus

“William Blackstone... said it was necessary for God to disclose these laws to man by direct revelation:

“The doctrines thus delivered we call the revealed or divine law, and they are to be found only in the Holy Scriptures. These precepts, when revealed, are found upon comparison to be really a part of the original law of nature, as they tend in all their consequences to man’s felicity’ (*The Five Thousand Year Leap*, pp. 131–132)...”

#### **Ten Commandments No Longer in Force?**

So many people today deny the existence of God and, therefore, anything that emanates from the Bible is seen as irrelevant, with man’s ideas taking precedence over God’s instruction. Also, human nature is set against doing the Will of God. In addition to that, mainstream Christianity generally takes the view that the Ten Commandments are done away with, and so there is often little support from those who profess Christianity but who teach erroneous doctrine.

There are many invalid comments by those who believe that God’s Commandments are no longer necessary. One such faulty opinion reads as follows: “Christians are free from that law that [was] given only to Israel. Christians lead good lives by being led by the Spirit of YHWH my father—read Galatians 5:16–18. Christians lead good lives because it’s in their hearts to do so, not because the 10 commandments [tell] them to.” This shows the deceptive lack of understanding that is touted by so many “religious” people today.

On the other hand, one writer observed, quite accurately, that “Today is a day of lawlessness. The spirit of our times is one of unbounded ‘freedom,’ one of casting off all restraints, despising all authority... God Himself is no longer feared by the majority... Because of abounding iniquity on every hand, the love of many professing Christians for their God and His Law has grown cold, just as Christ prophesied (Matthew 24:12). Yet we see in Holy Scripture that the only true freedom is freedom from sin. Concerning the purpose of Christ’s coming into the world, God’s angel Gabriel said to Joseph, ‘And thou shalt call His name JESUS (that is, ‘JEHOVAH is Savior’): for He shall save His people from their sins’ (Matthew 1:21).”

Those who think or argue that the Ten Commandments are no longer necessary today—and there are many, even in so-called Christian

Some claim that Jesus came to do away with the Law of the Ten Commandments and replace it with a “new” Law that happens to be identical to the Ten Commandments, except for the omission of the Sabbath. This treacherous and deceitful argument has convinced quite a few people that they do not have to keep the Sabbath anymore. But the Truth is that the Ten Commandments have not been abolished, and when you break one of the Ten Commandments, you break them all.

Please note these excerpts from pages 14–15 of our free booklet, *Baptism—A Requirement for Salvation?*:

“What, exactly, is it that we need to repent of...? Simply put, we must repent of the sins we have committed. What is sin? The biblical definition is: ‘...sin is the transgression of the law’ (1 John 3:4, *Authorized Version*). Which law? The law of God’s Ten Commandments. James calls it the ‘royal law according to the Scripture’ (James 2:8). It defines our love toward God and our love toward neighbor. When we break even one of the Ten Commandments, we are guilty of having broken them all and have become a transgressor of the law (James 2:10–11).

“The law of the Ten Commandments is a spiritual law, as Paul explains in Romans 7:14, because it regulates not only our actions, but also the motives and intents of our heart. We sin when we commit adultery (Exodus 20:14), but we also sin when we desire or covet the wife of another man (Exodus 20:17), or when we look at another woman with the desire to commit adultery with her (Matthew 5:28). Additionally, we sin when we kill someone (Exodus 20:13), but we have already sinned by violating God’s spiritual law of the Ten Commandments when we even hate another human being (Matthew 5:21–22; 1 John 3:15).”

It is true that Christ said He gave the disciples a “new” commandment, but as we will see, not even the most liberal “interpretation” of

defines love toward our fellow man, we all will suffer the consequences.

### ***Fulfilling the Law***

When we LOVE our neighbor as ourselves, we FULFILL the Law. Loving our neighbor as ourselves means to not break the Law, but to keep and apply the Law—because if we do, we will not do any harm to our neighbor nor to ourselves. If we have enough love for ourselves that we want to be in God’s Kingdom, then we must love our neighbor as ourselves, by keeping God’s Law, which defines for us what love is.

2 John 6 says: “This is love, that we walk according to His commandments.”

As we explained in previous chapters of this booklet, including in [chapter 20](#), only with God’s love in us (John 17:26)—which has been shed or poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5)—can we REALLY love our neighbor as ourselves. And God’s love is practical, not something that is merely theoretical (1 John 3:17–18).

1 John 2:5 says that *God’s love* is perfected in us if we keep His Word—His Law. In doing so, we **fulfill** God’s Law.

1 John 5:3 adds that *God’s love* in us helps us to keep His commandments—to love Him and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Christ told us that we love Him if we keep His commandments (John 14:15). God’s Ten Commandments tell us how to love God and how to love our neighbor as ourselves; how to avoid doing him any harm; and how to do him good. God’s love in us will help us to do just that.

churches—might want to think about why God would give these Commandments in the first place if they were not right for all people of all ages, because they define love toward God, as well as love toward fellow man.

### ***Basic Building Blocks of Society***

It should be noted that the Ten Commandments are really the basic building blocks of law and order in society throughout all generations—past, present and future. In spite of Jesus saying that He came to fulfill the Law of the Ten Commandments, not to destroy it, (see Matthew 5:17), many unfortunately believe that it has been done away with. The true Church of God has always taught that Christ’s words here must be understood in the way that “fulfill” means to “fill to the full, to magnify, to enlarge,” not to do away with or bring to an end. Otherwise, Christ would have said: “I did not come to do away, but I came to do away.”

When addressing two of the Ten Commandments, we read in James 2:10 that “whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.” That should be clear enough for anyone to understand!

### ***Keep the Ten Commandments***

We read in 1 John 2:3–6: “Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.” Jesus kept the Ten Commandments, and so must we.

In 1 John 5:2–3 we read: “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 burdensome.” That is contrary to popular belief! Many in mainstream Christianity believe that God’s commandments are a burden. For the carnal mind, which is hostile toward God and unwilling and unable to keep God’s commandments, they might very well be. But true Christians have learned that the Ten Commandments can be kept with God’s help.

We read that in the end time, the Ten Commandments are still in force and effect. Revelation 12:16–17 describes events when Satan pursues God’s people at the end of this age: “But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

Revelation 14:12 says: “Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.”

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

### **Why Opposition to Keeping the Ten Commandments?**

1. The love for God and His Commandments is not taken seriously by professing “Christians” who are often led astray by false shepherds.

This attitude of antipathy may affect even true Christians. It was prophesied in Matthew 24:12, when talking about members of the true Church of God: “And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.” “Love” is a translation of the Greek word *agape* and refers to God’s love, which has been poured out in a true Christian’s heart by the gift of the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5). Due to lawlessness or the transgression of the Law, God’s love in them will grow cold—they will become less and less motivated to maintain and use it, and will engage instead in more and more lawlessness.

2. Man feels that he has all the answers, so why bother with religion and God’s commandments?

3. Scholars teach that liberation *from* religion and liberation *from* marriage are prerequisites to true human flourishing (as American journalist, David French, wrote in April 2019).

4. As we read in Romans 8:7: “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.” Therefore, it is to be expected that those who do not have God’s Holy Spirit or who do not use it enough, but “quench” it, will have problems in obeying the Ten Commandments, and they will “justify” not having to do so.

love for him. Rather than being happy that our neighbor is blessed with a lovely wife, faithful employees, or nice possessions, we are unhappy that he has them and we don’t. We WANT to have them too! And so, given enough time and opportunity, we will try to get what our neighbor has.

That is why Christ tells us, for example, in Matthew 5:27–28: “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

Christ addresses the lust of the eyes—covetousness—which will lead to the actual act of adultery, unless it is being overcome.

Many times, a covetous person refuses to work with his own hands, preventing him from being able to obtain some of the things that his neighbor has, without coveting.

Proverbs 21:25–26 says: “The desire of the lazy man kills him, For his hands refuse to labor. He covets greedily all day long, But the righteous gives and does not spare.”

Covetousness takes away from us the energy to lead an honest and upright life; instead, we become obsessed with the things that our neighbor has. Our sound mind becomes impaired.

Notice Paul’s conduct and advice in Acts 20:32–35:

“So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I have coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel. Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

We are blessed when we love others and do them good. This is how we love others as ourselves. When we covet, we destroy ourselves. Notice 1 Timothy 6:10 in the *Authorized Version*: “For the love of money is the [or “a”] root of all evil, which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”

Covetousness destroys us. If we do not repent of covetousness, we will not enter God’s Kingdom (1 Corinthians 6:9–10).

The Bible makes it very clear that by violating God’s Law that



Church on whom we bring reproach through our individual actions, and it does include, of course, our lack of love toward God by profaning His name (Proverbs 30:8).

When we steal, we also do not show much love for ourselves. Under God's laws, the penalties for theft were very harsh (Proverbs 6:31). Even though they are not today (unless you [are perceived to] steal from the government), if you are caught, your reputation suffers—even today. You do not really show a great deal of love for yourself either if you engage in theft.

A thief who refuses to repent will not be in God's Kingdom (1 Corinthians 6:9–10). Also, when we steal, we lose all credibility. Who wants to hire a thief and give him a job? Who wants to entrust his fortunes to a thief? His life is ruined.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor (Exodus 20:16).

When we lie about our neighbor, we do not love him. When we libel and slander our neighbor, we most certainly do not show him any love. One of the worst things you can do to your neighbor is to damage his reputation by lying about him.

When we lie, we also do not love ourselves. Proverbs 19:5 says: "A false witness will not go unpunished, And he who speaks lies will not escape."

When a liar is caught lying, his reputation is damaged. Trust between friends will have been destroyed, perhaps forever. And most importantly, God will not allow a liar to enter His Kingdom (Revelation 22:15).

Zechariah 5:3–4 has this to say about liars and thieves:

"Then he said to me, 'This is the curse that goes out over the face of the whole earth: "Every thief shall be expelled," according to this side of the scroll; and, "Every perjurer shall be expelled," according to that side of it.' 'I will send out the curse,' says the LORD of hosts; 'It shall enter the house of the thief And the house of the one who swears falsely by My name. It shall remain in the midst of his house And consume it, with its timber and stones.'"

You shall not covet your neighbor's house, your neighbor's wife, his servants, his animals, or anything else that your neighbor may have (Exodus 20:17).

When we covet the possessions of our neighbor, we do not show

## Chapter 3

### How to Number the Ten Commandments?

Even the question as to *how* to number the Ten Commandments is an issue of considerable confusion.

As mentioned earlier, the Ten Commandments are listed in Exodus 20:1–17 and also in Deuteronomy 5:6–21. There is universal acceptance that the number of the commandments God gave to us is ten. In fact, it is recognized that the Bible calls this set of commandments from God, "...the Ten Commandments" (Exodus 34:28; Deuteronomy 4:13; 10:4).

There is, however, much disagreement as to *HOW* to number the Ten Commandments. Many professing Christians count the Ten Commandments differently today than the Jews do; than the early New Testament Church did; and, most importantly, than GOD numbers them.

#### **How the Jews Count Them**

For instance, the Jews count Exodus 20:2–3 as the First Commandment, which reads, "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me."

The Jews count Exodus 20:4–6 as the Second Commandment, which reads:

"You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve [*margin*: worship] them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments."

### **Many Count Them Differently**

Many professing Christians count the entire passage of Exodus 20:2–6, as quoted above, as just ONE commandment, believing that all these verses describe just the First Commandment. However, the early Church understood Exodus 20:2–6 as describing TWO commandments, not just one.

Why the discrepancy? It was Augustine, a Catholic bishop of Hippo in North Africa, who, in the fourth century, combined the First and the Second Commandment as ONE commandment, *so as to allow the worship of images*. In order to reach the number ten, he divided the last or the TENTH Commandment into two.

### **The Correct Understanding**

The Jews and the early Church correctly understood that the entirety of the TENTH Commandment reads as follows: “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor’s” (Exodus 20:17).

This is clearly just ONE commandment. Augustine, by deleting the Second Commandment and still wanting to reach the number “ten,” divided the Tenth Commandment into two, claiming that the first part of verse 17 (“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house”) constitutes the Ninth Commandment, and that the second part of verse 17 (“... you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor’s”) constitutes the Tenth Commandment.

Anyone should be able to see that this distinction is highly arbitrary. Why would God give one commandment against coveting our neighbor’s house and another commandment against coveting our neighbor’s wife, his servants, his animals and ANYTHING that belongs to him?

### **Different Wording in Deuteronomy**

Augustine’s arbitrary division of the Tenth Commandment into two commandments is also manifestly wrong for the reason that the parallel Scripture in Deuteronomy 5:21 lists the people and things not to be coveted in a slightly different order, and it does NOT begin with not coveting the neighbor’s house. It reads:

said to him, ‘Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.’” (Compare Revelation 13:10).

You shall not commit adultery (Exodus 20:14).

If we love our neighbor, we will not commit adultery with our neighbor’s wife. That should be obvious. Committing adultery with a married person shows a total lack of love for the defrauded and betrayed marriage partner. The husband’s adultery with another woman also shows a total lack of love for his wife. Committing adultery breaks our word and promise to the mate to always love him or her and to always be one flesh with him or her.

At the same time, when we love our neighbor by not committing adultery with his or her mate, we are loving ourselves. If we commit adultery, we actually hate ourselves.

Proverbs 6:23–29, 32–35 reads:

“For the commandment is a lamp, And the law a light; Reproofs of instruction are the way of life, To keep you from the evil woman, From the flattering tongue of a seductress. Do not lust after her beauty in your heart, Nor let her allure you with her eyelids. For by means of a harlot A man is reduced to a crust of bread; And an adulteress will prey upon his precious life. Can a man take fire to his bosom, And his clothes not be burned? Can one walk on hot coals, And his feet not be seared? So is he who goes in to his neighbor’s wife; Whoever touches her shall not be innocent... Whoever commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding; He who does so *destroys his own soul*. Wounds and dishonor he will get, And his reproach will not be wiped away. For jealousy is a husband’s fury; Therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance. He will accept no recompense, Nor will he be appeased though you give many gifts.”

You shall not steal (Exodus 20:15).

When we steal from another person, we are not showing him love. Ephesians 4:28 states: “Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.”

Rather than stealing from another person, we are to give others what they need. Loving others means giving to them, not taking away from them. We do not love others when we steal. This applies foremost to the person from whom we steal, but it also includes those in the

Matthew 15:4–6 states: “For God commanded, saying, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.’ But you say, ‘Whoever says to his father or mother, “Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God”—then he need not honor his father or mother.’ Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition.”

When we truly love someone, we will show our love through our actions (1 John 3:17–18). We also find that we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. We certainly do not want to harm ourselves, so in honoring and loving our parents, we love ourselves at the same time. Ephesians 6:1–3 tells us that if we love and honor our parents, it will be well with us and we will live long on the earth.

You shall not murder or kill (Exodus 20:13).

We do not show love to another person when we take his life. However, some feel it is alright to take another person’s life under certain circumstances, for instance in war. But God tells us this in Matthew 5:43–48:

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.” (Compare also Luke 6:27–36).

We are to do good to those who hate us. We don’t do good to them if we kill them. Galatians 5:14–15 tells us: “For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!”

When we love others, we don’t kill them. And when we don’t kill them, we love ourselves at the same time since we don’t enter the vicious cycle of violence where death leads to death, including our own. Notice Christ’s warning to Peter, in Matthew 26:52: “But Jesus

“You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife; and you shall not desire [or covet] your neighbor’s house, his field, his male servant, his female servant, his ox, his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s.”

It is obvious that the entirety of Exodus 20:17 and of Deuteronomy 5:21 constitutes just ONE commandment.

### **Paul’s Numbering**

For further proof that Augustine’s renumbering of the Ten Commandments must be rejected, please note that Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, made no distinction between coveting our neighbor’s house or his wife. There is only ONE commandment against coveting, as Paul clearly explains.

He said in Romans 13:9: “For the commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ ‘You shall not murder,’ ‘You shall not steal,’ ‘You shall not bear false witness,’ ‘You shall not covet,’ and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

He also wrote in Romans 7:7: “... for I would not have known covetousness [i.e., that it is wrong and a sin] unless the law had said, ‘You shall not covet.’” Again, no distinction is made between coveting our neighbor’s house and coveting our neighbor’s wife, servants or animals.

### **Where Did this Counting Error Come from?**

As mentioned, the reason Augustine renumbered the Ten Commandments (by counting the First and the Second Commandment as just one commandment) was a strictly “political” one. *It was done for the purpose of allowing the worship of images and statues as part of the worship of God.* But as we will see, THAT is EXACTLY what the Second Commandment prohibits. While the First Commandment prohibits the worship of anything else BUT God, the Second Commandment prohibits the worship of statues in connection with the worship of God. This means, it is wrong to bow down and worship in front of a statue that supposedly depicts Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary or a “departed saint.”

The Bible is very clear that neither Mary, the mother of Christ, nor any of the dead Christians, such as the Apostles Peter, Paul and John, are alive today. Rather, they are in their graves, awaiting the resurrection from the

dead to eternal life. It is therefore useless, for that reason alone, to bow down in front of a statue that allegedly represents or depicts them, and pray to them for help. It is also clearly prohibited in the Bible to do so.

In addition, the Father is God, but so is Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:8), and to make a statue of God and to worship IT is also in clear violation of the Second Commandment. This is true even apart from the fact that virtually all pictures or statues that purportedly represent God the Father and Jesus Christ are in total opposition to every description given of God in the Bible.

For instance, when Christ was on earth in the flesh, He was a Jew (Hebrews 7:14). He did not wear long hair (compare 1 Corinthians 11:14). He was a carpenter, working outdoors (Mark 6:3), but virtually all statues and pictures portray Christ as a non-Jewish feminine-looking man with long hair. When seeing pictures and statues of God the Father, they resemble the imagined “appearance” of Greek and Roman gods, but not of God the Father.

In conclusion, Augustine’s renumbering of the Ten Commandments, which has been adopted today by so many professing Christians, is in DIRECT CONTRADICTION to God’s inspired Word! Correctly numbered, here are the Ten Commandments in an outline format (for the complete presentation, compare Exodus 20:1–17 and Deuteronomy 5:6–21), as inspired by God Almighty:

### ***The Correct Counting of the Ten Commandments:***

1. I am the LORD your God. You shall have no other gods before Me.
2. You shall make for yourself no image to bow down to it and worship it.
3. You shall not take the name of your God in vain.
4. You shall keep the Sabbath day holy.
5. Honor your father and your mother.
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness or lie.
10. You shall not covet anything that is your neighbor’s.

In the next ten chapters, we will explain in detail the true meaning and intent of each of these commandments.

## Chapter 20

### Love Fulfills the Law

Far from teaching that love does away with God’s Law, the Bible tells us that we keep the Law when we love—or to say it differently, when we do not keep the Law, then it shows that we do not love.

Romans 13:8–10 states:

“Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ ‘You shall not murder,’ ‘You shall not steal,’ ‘You shall not bear false witness,’ ‘You shall not covet,’ and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment [or “the fulfilling”, so the *Authorized Version*] of the law.”

God says that he who loves another fulfills the Law. Each and every command that regulates our relationship with another human being falls under the heading, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” And if we do that, we will do no harm to our neighbor (as it says in verse 10).

We see from this Scripture that love and law are not exclusive—rather, they complement each other. When we love, we *fulfill* the Law—we *do* what the Law tells us to do.

### ***The Last Six Commandments Define Love for Our Neighbor***

While the first four of the Ten Commandments regulate our love toward God, the last six regulate our relationship to our neighbor—how we show love to our neighbor, how we do no harm to our neighbor. Notice:

Honor your father and your mother (Exodus 20:12).

When we love our parents, we will honor them. We do not love our parents by dishonoring them.

## Chapter 4

### The First Commandment

*“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me” (Exodus 20:2–3).*

The clear command is to not have other gods, but more is involved. Not having other gods presupposes that we acknowledge the one true God. We have the Creator as our God, and no other.

When Adam and Eve chose to disobey the instruction of God, they chose not to acknowledge the authority of God. Even if they were not worshiping another god, they were not honoring the true God.

When the Israelites were in bondage in Egypt, it was only the great Creator God who had the power to release them. While all Israel stood before Mount Sinai on that wonderful day when the Ten Commandments were spoken to them, it shook with thunder and lightning as the Creator’s voice boomed across the plain below. It says in Exodus 20, verse 1, that God **spoke** all these words. What a unique and yet terrifying situation they found themselves in!

God began with a short preamble to the commandments in which He proclaimed His identity. “I am the LORD your God!” The word “LORD” transliterates into English as YHWH, the pronunciation of which remains uncertain. Some Bible translators render the meaning of this name as the “Eternal”, the “Ever-Living” or the “Self-Existent One.” That is to say, “He who has life inherent within Himself.” Those are titles of the One to whom we should and must worship, not any human being or inanimate object!

#### **What Is Idolatry?**

What does it mean to not have other gods before the true God?

*Unger’s Bible Dictionary* gives this explanation: “In a general sense, idolatry is the paying of divine honors to any created thing; the ascription

to do on the Sabbath!’ But He said to them, ‘Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? Yet I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the temple. But if you had known what this means, I desire mercy and not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is Lord... of the Sabbath.”

Christ was chiding the Pharisees for being merciless. They did not allow the disciples to pluck heads of grain on the Sabbath, even though they were hungry. Christ compares this situation with David when he and his men ate from the showbread because they were hungry. The law against eating from the showbread was not given, however, for a situation where someone was hungry and had nothing else to eat. Likewise the commandment against work did not apply to the priests who brought sacrifices at that time, nor to God’s ministers today who engage in ministerial functions on the Sabbath.

When we keep the rules and regulations of the Law of God in the Spirit, we keep them in accordance with their spiritual intent, which might mean that we have to be more “restrictive” or more “permissive” than the mere letter. The *rules* of God’s spiritual Law are written in our hearts; they have become part of our inner being. Isaiah 51:7 tells us that God’s people “who know righteousness,” are those “in whose heart is My law.” David exclaimed that God’s Law was in his heart (Psalm 37:31). But at the same time, we read that he meditated on God’s statutes (Psalm 119:23); and that he did not forget God’s Law (verse 61).

He obviously read the written “rules” of God’s Law in the Bible; the idea is plainly ridiculous that he rejected any written rules and believed that he was just “automatically” doing what was right, because God’s Law was in his heart.

Paul spoke about the fact that we need to obey God’s teaching “from the heart” (Romans 6:17). We can and will do so, with the help of God’s Holy Spirit within us, when God has written His Law in our hearts (Jeremiah 31:33).

of divine power to natural agencies.” It then continues to give several different classifications of objects of idolatry—the inanimate, animals, certain areas of nature, plus a number of other areas. Suffice it to say, put simply for the people of God, idolatry is anything or anyone that comes before the true God. It really is as simple as that.

This means that there is a very close connection between the First and the Second Commandment, which will be explained in the [next chapter](#). But this connection is not the one that was taught by Augustine, as explained previously.

It seems today that so many things or people are worshiped rather than the true God. But God says that He is a jealous God, intolerant of unfaithfulness.

He is jealous of us for our own good. In Exodus 34:14, we read: “... for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God...” Here “jealous” can also mean “zealous,” which is for our well-being. (This will be further explained in the [next chapter](#).) Allegiance to the one true God is before all. The Second, Third and Fourth commandments define the nature of this allegiance. It is a question of priorities!

When the Commandments were spoken at Mount Sinai, the surrounding area, and probably the whole world, was full of idolatry. The Israelites had just left Egypt, a land steeped in paganism and idolatry where the Egyptians worshiped false gods, some animals and even the Pharaoh. The Israelites had been in that land for hundreds of years and the inevitable consequence was that many of the Egyptian ways and habits would have rubbed off on them.

### ***Egyptian Deities***

Quoting *Unger’s Bible Dictionary* again, it has this to say about the idolatry of Israel’s neighbors, particularly Egypt:

“Israel adopted in the course of her history many idolatrous practices from her heathen neighbours.”

About the Egyptians, we read:

“They had a bewildering conglomeration of deities. It is impossible to list all of the gods sacred to this people. Every aspect of nature, every object looked at, animate as well as inanimate, was viewed as indwelt by a spirit which could select its own form, occupying the body of

2 Corinthians 3:3–6 does not teach that the Ten Commandments are abolished. Quite to the contrary, the passage teaches that the Ten Commandments must be kept today. However, they must be kept in the Spirit—they must be applied in our lives with their spiritual intent.

Paul reiterates the same in Romans 7:6, which reads:

“But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.”

### ***Christ Came to Exalt the Law***

We must realize that Christ came to exalt the Law and make it honorable (Isaiah 42:21). How did He do that? He came to teach His followers the spiritual application of the Law, going beyond the application of the letter.

For instance, we read in Matthew 5:21–22 that we sin and are guilty of murder when we hate someone. Under the letter of the Law of the Ten Commandments, we would only be guilty of murder if we actually killed someone. But serving God in the newness of the Spirit, we are already guilty of murder when we have the wish to kill another person, because we are filled with hate and rage toward him or her.

When we keep the Law in the Spirit, we are to look beyond the letter and keep the Law in accordance with the spiritual intent. This could also mean that sometimes, the letter might appear to prohibit something when viewed with the carnal mind, but it does not really do so when considering the spiritual intent.

### ***The Spirit of the Law—Right Sabbath-Keeping***

A good example is the way in which the carnal Pharisees and Sadducees taught the people about the Sabbath. We referred to this before in this booklet. They applied the Law quite literally, from a very carnal viewpoint, but since they did not have the Holy Spirit and since they did not have God’s Law written in their hearts, they did not understand and teach the spiritual intent.

We read in Matthew 12:1–8: “At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, ‘Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful

better promises." The Greek word, translated as "established," "enacted" or "founded," is *nomotheteo*. The word *nomos* means, "law."

In Hebrews 7:11, the same word *nomotheteo* is translated as "received the law." In James 4:12, the noun *nomothetes* is used in the Greek and rendered there as "Lawgiver." In Romans 9:4, the related Greek word *nomothesia* is translated as "giving of the law."

### ***New Covenant Based on God's Spiritual Law***

Hebrews 8:6 tells us that Jesus Christ is Mediator of a better covenant, which, having better promises—including the promise of the Holy Spirit and eternal life in the God Family—is based or enacted or founded on God's given Law. The New Covenant is based on God's spiritual Law, but not on laws that God has decreed are no longer valid.

But this does not mean that the Ten Commandments ceased to exist when the Old Covenant ended (see [chapter 7](#)). Some preach that the Old Testament laws were allegedly identical with the Old Covenant, and when God abolished the Old Covenant, He also abolished the Ten Commandments and all the other Old Testament laws. Christ, so the argument goes, replaced the Old Covenant (allegedly identical with all of the Old Testament laws) with a New Covenant, and this New Covenant is allegedly identical with a "New Law." This "New Law" allegedly includes, for instance, nine of the original Ten Commandments, but it leaves out the fourth commandment (to keep the Sabbath holy), as well as the statutes regarding the annual Holy Days, tithing, or clean and unclean meat, just to name a few. This erroneous teaching is fully discussed in our free booklet, *And Lawlessness Will Abound*. See also [chapter 20](#) of this booklet.

The New Covenant is not based, for example, on the sacrificial system, the Levitical priesthood, and other rituals and washings. However, as explained above, it *IS* based on the Ten Commandments.

In [chapter 14](#) of this booklet, we discussed 2 Corinthians 3:3–11, pointing out that the tablets of stone (with the Ten Commandments) never entered the hearts of the Israelites—never became part of their being. As the tablets were of stone, so were their hearts. That is the reason why God, in a New Covenant, replaces our stony hearts with hearts of flesh, so that we can walk in God's statutes and do them as He expects (Ezekiel 11:19).

a cow, a crocodile, a fish, a human being, a tree, a hawk etc. In their hieroglyphic inscriptions and their tomb paintings, ancient Egyptian artists have left impressions of literally thousands of deities. The Pyramid Texts mention some 200. The Book of the Dead catalogues 1200. Many of the Pharaohs were believed to be incarnate..."

Does God tell us to have no other gods before Him and that He is a jealous God, just because He wants praise? Of course not! God knew that pagan worship is harmful and destructive, with some even burning their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods (see Deuteronomy 12:31)! In fact, it has been argued by some that false religion may have hurt more people than any other force on earth. If everyone's affections were instead set on the one true God, above all others, then there would be perfect peace and happiness. God is love (1 John 4:8), and He has our very best interests at heart. God is "jealous" not for His own sake—but for ours!

### ***Obedience and Love***

In Deuteronomy 11, Moses ties obedience to love, as we read in verse 1: "Therefore you shall love the LORD your God, and keep His charge, His statutes, His judgments, and His commandments always."

Israel had previously been told to keep God's statutes, judgments, and commandments, and he *reminds* the Israelites that they had not seen the chastisement of the Lord. They had been children in the wilderness and had not experienced the plagues that came upon Egypt, even though they had seen the miracles in the wilderness. Those to whom he was speaking were 40 to 60 years old, as all the others had died. Therefore, Moses reminded them of God's miracle in overthrowing Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea. He also reminded them of the rebellion of Korah (Numbers 16) and of the miracles in the wilderness. In Deuteronomy 11:16 is a stark warning: "Take heed to yourselves, lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them."

This was another reminder against idolatry, and in the next verse is the consequence of disobeying that commandment: "...lest the LORD's anger be aroused against you, and He shut up the heavens so that there be no rain, and the land yield no produce, and you perish quickly from the good land which the LORD is giving you." If Israel

rebelled, God threatened that there would be no rain and they would perish from the land—a matter of cause and effect!

We read in Isaiah 44:6: “Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, And his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: ‘I am the First and I am the Last; Besides Me there is no God.’”

### ***Even Satan and the Demons Believe***

In the New Testament, James has something to tell us about acknowledgement of and belief in the existence of the one true God. He says in James 2:19: “You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!” Yes, Satan and the demons acknowledge and believe in the true God, but they are not about to serve and obey Him! Knowing the righteous judgment of God for disobedience, they tremble! They know that belief in God and acknowledgement of His existence are not enough—but they are unwilling to obey Him!

Notice Peter’s words, as recorded in Acts 5:32: “And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit [which] God has given to those who obey Him.” If God gives His Holy Spirit only to those who obey Him, then He also withholds it from those who disobey Him! Obedience is a requirement for salvation!

In the booklet *The United States and British Commonwealth in Prophecy*, written by Mr. Herbert W Armstrong, the late Pastor General of the (now defunct) Worldwide Church of God, we read the following in chapter 11, page 170, under the heading “Definition of God”:

“Let me give you still another definition of God. Although the only wise and true God is the Great Creator-Ruler of the universe, there are many false or counterfeit gods. Satan palms himself off to the deceived as God—and indeed the Bible plainly calls him the god of this world. Idols were worshiped as gods—and still are, today, even in so-called ‘Christian’ churches. Whoever, or whatever, you serve and obey is your god!”

“The very word ‘Lord’ means ruler, master, boss—the one you obey! Jesus exclaimed: ‘And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?’ (Luke 6:46). If they did not OBEY Him, then He was not their Lord! So WHY did they call Him LORD, when He was not their Lord?”

The fact that God’s Law is written in our hearts does not mean that, suddenly, there are no more written rules which define the Law of God. Rather, what is meant by this is that the written rules have become an integral part of the person; the true Christian has internalized these rules and identifies him- or herself with them. To put it differently, the written rules have become an inward part of the Christian; they have become part of his or her character; they identify the Christian and describe his or her personality and very being.

For instance, Deuteronomy 6:6–7 states, in connection with God’s pronouncement of the Ten Commandments to the Israelites under Moses: “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.”

Deuteronomy 11:18 states, in connection with the second giving of the Ten Commandments under Moses: “Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul...”

Proverbs 3:3 says: “Let not mercy and truth forsake you... write them on the tablet of your heart...”

Proverbs 6:21 states that we are to bind a particular law continually upon our heart. The context is the command and admonition against adultery, compare verses 20, 22–24, 27–29.

Hebrews 8:10 describes the New Covenant, and true Christians—spiritual Israelites (Galatians 6:16)—are living already today under the conditions of the New Covenant:

“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”

Yes, God’s Law must be written in our hearts. But notice, it is still God’s *spiritual* Law (Romans 7:14)—defined and described by the words and the rules of the Ten Commandments—that is written in our hearts.

We explain in our free booklet, *And Lawlessness Will Abound*, that the New Covenant is not a covenant without written rules; just the opposite is true. We read in Hebrews 8:6 that the New Covenant is “established” on better promises. The *New Revised Standard Version* says here, “enacted through better promises.” The *New Jerusalem Bible* states, “founded on



“first commandment with promise” (verse 2).

Secondly, you do not know, by yourself, what is right. In fact, God chides those who live by their own standards, doing what is right “in their own eyes” (Deuteronomy 12:8; compare Judges 17:6; 21:25). You might think that if you “love” your neighbor, you won’t do him any harm, but that is a false assumption. With that rationale, people have killed others in war; they have aborted their unborn children; they have engaged in “alternate lifestyles”; and they have committed fornication and adultery (after all, isn’t it “love” to have an “affair” with a “misunderstood” or “unloved” man or woman?). Further, without God’s love in you, you do not really love God either. People may think they do, but, again, they are wrong. And so, they have created idols for themselves, believing they are serving God; they have created their own weekly “day of worship” and their annual “religious” holidays; and they have trampled God’s Sabbaths under foot, thinking that God does not care whether we keep them or not. Man’s “love” is a misguided counterfeit of the true love of God, which, we repeat, is defined as keeping the commandments of God!

### **Keep the Whole Law**

The apostle James silenced those who claim that we today do not have to keep all of God’s Ten Commandments. We read in James 2:8–12: “If you really fulfill [that is, keep] the royal law according to the Scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself,’ you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever shall keep [or, fulfill] the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. For He who said, Do not commit adultery, also said, Do not murder. Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty.”

James tells us that we sin if we break just one provision of the “whole” Law. He makes it clear that the “law” he is talking about is, in fact, the Ten Commandments. He illustrates this point by selecting two of the Ten Commandments—the law against murder and the law against adultery. He explains to us that, if we violate even one of the Ten Commandments, we are still a “transgressor of the [entire] law.”

“Then again, Jesus said: ‘Not everyone who says unto me, “Lord, Lord,” shall enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of my Father in heaven’ (Matthew 7:21). Only they who obey God can be His children and enter His Kingdom! Your God is the one you OBEY!

“Paul explained in Romans 6:16: ‘Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one’s slaves whom you obey, whether of sin *leading* to death, or of obedience *leading* to righteousness?’”

### **What or Whom Do We Truly Serve?**

What is our life primarily devoted to? What do we truly love above anyone and anything else? With some people it is the self! With others, their spouse or children, or career or material possessions, or maybe even other people. If the answer is not God at all times, then we are breaking the First Commandment! For with our whole being we must love God more than anyone or anything else! When asked about which is the great commandment, Jesus was unequivocal in His answer. We read this in Matthew 22:35–38: “Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, ‘Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?’ Jesus said to him, “*You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.*” This is *the* first and great commandment.”

This is truly the greatest of all the commandments—Jesus said so! To live a truly happy and fulfilled life, we must make sure that we are not putting other “gods” before the true God. Yet there are many who vie for our affections!

The modern so-called gods will be a thing of the past when Jesus returns. All of this culture of worshiping anything other than the Creator will become history, and that is really good news!

Establishing, developing and maintaining that personal relationship with the one true and living God is the most important commitment Christians can ever make! That is the primary focus of the first of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:3, which states very clearly and very simply:

“You shall have no other gods before Me.”

### ***The Father and the Son***

We understand, of course, that God consists of two Persons—God the Father and the Son, Jesus Christ. We also know that the word “LORD” can refer to both of them, or either one of them. We read that the Father created everything through Jesus Christ.

While the Person in the God Family who dealt directly with Israel was Jesus Christ, He acted on behalf of the Father. While the Father is greater than the Son, both are one—totally unified in Will and Purpose. Therefore, when we read that God says that we must have no other gods before Him, He is referring to both members in the God Family.

For more information and biblical proof, please read our free booklets, *Is God a Trinity?*, *God Is a Family*, and *Jesus Christ—a Great Mystery*.

## Chapter 19

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### God’s Law in Our Hearts — No More Rules to Be Obeyed?

It is a common misconception, and a very deceitful one, that Christians do not need any written rules, as (so it is claimed) they will “automatically do what is right, since the law of God is written in their hearts.” With this dangerously deceptive concept, traditional Christianity attempts to justify their claim that Christ came to do away with the rules and regulations of the Ten Commandments of the “Old Testament.” They state that today’s Christians only need to follow some nebulous and ill- or undefined spiritual principles, without the need for any written rules. They claim that this is because we are not to follow the letter of the Law, but the Spirit.

The fact is, you are a true Christian if you have received the Holy Spirit of God. It dwells in you, and it is through the Holy Spirit that you have received the love of God (Romans 5:5). The love of God is defined as keeping the commandments, as it says in 1 John 5:3: “For this IS the love of God, that we keep His commandments.” Paul tells us that “love is the fulfillment [better: fulfilling] of the law” (Romans 13:10). Love does not do away with it; quite to the contrary, it fulfills or keeps it. Rather than thinking that the Ten Commandments have been abolished, God’s Holy Spirit in you reveals to you that the Commandments are still binding for you, and God’s love in you will motivate you to keep them.

Some believe and teach that you will automatically do what is right if you have God’s Holy Spirit living within you—that you do not need “rules” to tell you what to do. First of all, this concept is a contradiction in terms. If God’s Holy Spirit “tells” you to do what is right and how to live a “holy” life, then it tells you to keep God’s Law of the Ten Commandments, as God’s Law is “holy, just and good” (Romans 7:12). For instance, Paul explains to us in Ephesians 6:1 that it is “right” that children obey their parents, and that such conduct conforms to the

## Chapter 5

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### The Second Commandment

*“You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments” (Exodus 20:4–6).*

The First Commandment prohibits us from having any other god before the true God, and the Second Commandment tells us that we must not create a likeness of anything (including man, animals or any inanimate or lifeless imagery), *to represent God in our worship.*

While the Second Commandment also *prohibits the worship of idols representing other gods*, as we are not to worship other gods in the first place, the main emphasis of the Second Commandment is directed toward *the worship of images, which are supposed to represent the true God* in any way. We are prohibited from even *creating* images of God—the Father and the Son—as well as angels.

No idol made of wood or stone can represent God. Idols are deaf, dumb, blind, and powerless (compare Isaiah 44:18).

Paul’s letter to the Romans indicates that the worship of created things—not just their images—is wrong in the eyes of God (Romans 1:25). Paul also warns the Colossians against worshipping other supernatural beings: “Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind” (Colossians 2:18).

#### ***Pictures or Statues Depicting God the Father and Jesus Christ***

Regarding pictures, images or statues of the Father and of Christ

(including those which picture God the Father on His Throne and Christ in the manger or on the cross), we clearly read that we are not to have images of God (Exodus 20:4). Since both the Father and Christ are God (John 1:1; Hebrews 1:8; Titus 2:13), the creation and use of images or pictures of the Father and of Christ violate this express prohibition.

Some say that this commandment does not prohibit us from portraying Christ when He was a man, and not God. Even though Christ became fully man—fully flesh—He nevertheless did not cease to be the Personage that He had always been before—the Son of God, the second member in the God Family. That is why He, when here on earth, was called “Immanuel” or “God with us,” and that is why people, recognizing this fact, worshipped Him in the flesh.

In addition, Paul tells us that we are not to know Jesus Christ any longer according to the flesh (2 Corinthians 5:16), as He is now again a glorified, all-powerful and divine God being. He is depicted in Revelation 1:14, 16 with eyes as a flame of fire and as the sun shining in full strength. Pictures which show Christ today, as a man, are totally inaccurate, even from a human standpoint. As we mentioned before, Christ is portrayed with long hair, although Paul said that it is a shame for a man to wear long hair (1 Corinthians 11:14). And even though Christ was a Jew, pictures today show Him with features which have no resemblance to Jewish men, but which, instead give Him an effeminate appearance.

### **What About Using Crosses?**

Many people worship crosses—either in Church services or at home when they fall down in front of it and pray before it, thereby thinking that they reach God by such activity.

When addressing the cross and its worship or use in religious services or at home, we should realize that the Bible does not even say that Christ was nailed to a cross, as it is pictured and portrayed today. In every case when the word “cross” is used in the *Authorized Version* or the *New King James Bible*, the Greek word is *stauros*.

According to *Young’s Analytical Concordance to the Bible*, the meaning of that word is simply, “stake.” *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* agrees, defining *stauros* as a “stake or post, as set upright,” explaining that it could refer to a pole or a cross.

1 Corinthians 8:7–13), it expects that they, in time, will grow in the knowledge of God and, in submitting to the guidance of the Church ministry, will come to understand the Truth in the matter. It is clarified, of course, that they must never try to convince other Church members of their unique individual religious conviction (which is not based on Church teaching), and that they must be very circumspect in the practical application of their conscience, as this could otherwise create division within the congregation.

In conclusion, we should carefully heed God’s admonition to His followers in Ecclesiastes 7:16–18: “Do not be overly righteous, Nor be overly wise: Why should you destroy yourself? Do not be overly wicked, Nor be foolish: Why should you die before your time? It is good that you grasp this, And also not remove your hand from the other; For he who fears God will escape them all [*New International Version*: “...will avoid all extremes”].”

regarding conduct that the Bible permits, compare Revelation 22:18; Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Proverbs 30:5–6]. Here [in Matthew 18:18] it relates primarily to church discipline...”

Christ empowered the leadership of the Church throughout the Church’s history and existence, to discern God’s Will regarding binding Church decisions as to what God permits and prohibits, based on His Law, and who is to be excommunicated and reinstated, based on the Church leadership’s discernment of the person’s repentance and God’s forgiveness [or the lack thereof].

Over the centuries, the true Church of God has declared, based on the directions and instructions of the Bible, that it is wrong to observe Christmas and Easter, or to participate in any of their customs. Furthermore, it has declared as binding, God’s injunction to observe the weekly Sabbath and the annual Holy Days. In this context, it has recognized and therefore dogmatically pronounced that God gave the Jews the sole responsibility of maintaining the Hebrew calendar.

God’s Church has also declared God’s Law of abstaining from unclean food, while clarifying that it is wrong to insist that we must be vegetarians or vegans today. Rather, that it is not wrong to eat the flesh of clean animals (while rejecting the consumption of fat and blood).

The true Church of God has determined for a long time that it is wrong for a Christian to vote in governmental elections and to serve on a jury, and it has pronounced God’s revelation of circumstances when God binds a marriage, and when a Church member is free to divorce and remarry. God’s Church has also clarified that we are not obligated to observe new moons, and it has determined, based on the Bible, that the Passover is to be kept in the beginning of the 14th of Nisan, as this was the correct time when ancient Israel, Jesus and the apostles observed it.

In addition, as mentioned, God’s true Church and its ministers have also declared, with godly authority, that it is not wrong or a sin to eat out in a restaurant on the weekly Sabbath or annual Holy Days, including during the Night to Be Much Observed on the First Day of Unleavened Bread. Even though the Church respects the conscience of (newer) members who may not be comfortable with going out on a weekly or annual Sabbath, because the Church realizes that their faith may (still) be weak (compare the principle in Romans 14:2;

The *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* by Vine adds the following, when discussing the kind of death that Christ endured:

“... *stauros* denotes, primarily, an upright pale or stake. On such malefactors were nailed for execution. Both the noun and the verb *stauroo*, to fasten to a stake or pale, are originally to be distinguished from the ecclesiastical form of a two beamed cross.”

Since pagans already worshiped the cross as we know it today, before they entered the Catholic fold; and as the Roman Church allowed them to continue to worship the cross—only now in association with Christ; and as the Romans used a two-beamed cross as one of their methods of crucifixion, it can be easily seen how the Roman Church was able to convince an unsuspecting world that the CROSS was the method of Christ’s crucifixion.

However, as mentioned, it is highly unlikely that Christ was killed in that way. In the New Testament, the word for *stauros* is equated with a “tree”—and never with a two-beamed “cross.” Also, Christ had to carry His “cross” (*stauros*) to Golgotha (Matthew 27:32; John 19:17). Some commentaries say that this was only the cross beam—that is, only a small part of the “cross.” However, the Bible does not seem to support this. We read that Christ carried His “cross”; that subsequently, Simon, a Cyrenian, was compelled to bear “His cross” (Mark 15:21); and that after His crucifixion had begun, His mother and other relatives stood “by the cross of Jesus” (John 19:25). In all these passages, the same word *stauros* is used in the original Greek for “cross”—with no indication of just different parts of the “cross” being described at different times.

### **Can We Have Idols in Our Mind?**

A clear connection between the First and the Second Commandments can be seen when we consider that we can commit idolatry not only by the use and worship of idols representing God, but also by the idols in our minds, thereby placing them before the true God.

The *Jewish Publication Society of America*, in its 1917 version of the Bible, translates Ezekiel 14:3–4 by using the expression “idols in their minds” and “idols in his mind.” Other translations use the word “heart” rather than “mind,” saying in verse 3: “...these men have set up their idols in their hearts.” The Hebrew word used here can be translated

either as “heart” or “mind,” depending on the context. So the question that needs to be answered is, what is an idol? Is it only an image of something that is made to be worshipped, or can it be more than this?

The apostle Paul tells us that we are to put to death covetousness, which is idolatry (Colossians 3:5). Therefore, the Tenth Commandment is linked to the Second Commandment. If we covet anything belonging to another person, we are making an idol of what we covet. This would include our neighbor’s spouse, car, house, job, holiday, etc. We would be coveting something that God says is not ours to have because it is someone else’s possession!

### ***An Idol is Not Just a Religious Symbol or Image***

The Second Commandment is also linked to the First, because anything that we put before God basically becomes our idol. We know that God commands us to give thanks for all things, but if we covet, then instead of giving thanks for what we have, we are complaining about or coveting what we do not have. That is the reason why the apostle Paul tells us in 1 Timothy 6:8–9: “And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.”

However, idolatry is more than just the wrongful desire for physical things.

Returning to Ezekiel 14:3, 4, the *Soncino* commentary explains:

“More lit. ‘have brought up their idols to their hearts,’ an idiom for ‘have set their mind upon their idols.’ The phrase does not imply that they were worshiping idols, but that their thoughts were influenced by pagan ideas, such as believing in magical spells and divination. This has been a stumbling block to them willfully placed by themselves in their way and leading them into iniquity.”

Just reading through chapter 13 of the book of Ezekiel, we see many references to false divination, false prophets and magical charms—all things that God hates because they turn people away from Him. Today this would include séances, mediums, astrology, horoscopes, fortune telling, etc. In this case, the idolatry would be leading us to not rely on God and His revealed Word, but on a false diviner or fortune teller.

In Job 27:5–6 we find Job stating: “Till I die I will not put away

so, since ‘whatever is not from faith [or conviction] is sin’ (Romans 14:23). It would be advisable, though, to review the Scriptures to see whether your conscience is based on the Bible or merely on man-made traditions. *God never accepts our conviction as justification for the violation of His law, and man-made regulations can... cloud the intent of God’s commandments in the minds of men.*”

### ***Ministerial Authority***

The last sentence should also be viewed in light of the fact that God gave the ministry of His Church the authority to bind and to loose, and with it, the responsibility to explain biblical passages that might not be clear at first sight (Matthew 16:18–19, Matthew 18:18 and John 20:23).

The ministry has been given the authority from God, to “bind and loose,” and to “remit” and “retain” sin. It is critical that we understand correctly the scope of this authority. The *Nelson Study Bible* comments on Matthew 16:19 and on Matthew 18:18: “In rabbinical literature, binding and loosing refers to what was permitted or not permitted. So this passage may refer to judgments that Peter [and the other apostles] would make about what would be permitted or forbidden in the church... As in [Matthew] 16:19, the tenses [in Matthew 18:18] imply that what is loosed or bound on earth will have been determined already in heaven. In other words, this is a promise of divine direction...”

The *New Bible Commentary: Revised*, agrees and adds the following remarks: “... Judicial rulings, like the promulgation of rules of conduct, are binding.”

The *Broadman Bible Commentary*, commenting on Matthew 18:18, explains the meaning and scope of “binding and loosing” as follows: “The authority to bind and loose, given to Peter in [Matthew] 16:19, is here extended to the whole church [that is, its ministry]. In [Matthew] 16:19 it seems to relate primarily to instruction, what conduct is permitted and what is not [we might insert here that this would include conduct that is not clearly defined in Scripture. The Church is not permitted, however, to do away with any of God’s commandments, judgments or statutes, compare Matthew 5:17–19; James 2:10; Mark 7:6–13. Likewise, the Church is not to add prohibitions

the following statements in his *Commentary on the Torah*, regarding Deuteronomy 4:2:

“One may think that, by doing more than the law requires, one is doing better, being more religious, more observant, when one is in fact thus violating the law... Adding to a command is as dangerous as taking away from it... in postbiblical Judaism a principle developed of ‘building a fence around the Torah’...”

Although this practice may seem logical to the human mind, in its final analysis it is in violation of God’s command to not add to His Law.

We find that Moses was very careful not to add anything to God’s commandments, and he reminded the people before his death that they must not do so either (Deuteronomy 5:33). He added that they must not turn to the right or to the left, but that they had to be careful and watchful to stay on the narrow road (Deuteronomy 5:32). This injunction complements of course the command to not add to or take away from God’s Law.

When we are tempted to add to or delete from God’s commandments, in the letter and in the spirit, then we are in the process of sinning. We need God’s wisdom to show us exactly, in a given situation, what His command is, rather than replacing God’s lead with our own self-righteous and presumptuous human imaginations.

### ***Eating Out on the Sabbath***

We should also accept the fact that God leads His Church through His ministry to advise members when questions arise. For instance, the question as to whether or not to eat in a restaurant on the weekly and annual Sabbaths has been a stumbling block for some.

We wrote this in our free booklet, *God’s Commanded Holy Days*:

“If Church members today eat occasionally in a nice, quiet restaurant on the Sabbath or a Holy Day after Church services, for instance, while, at the same time fellowshiping with other brethren and speaking about the things that pertain to God, then we must not condemn them for that. For instance, Church members might be traveling for quite a distance to attend Church services, looking forward to spending additional time with their brethren after services.

“If, on the other hand, your conscience does not allow you to go to a restaurant on a Sabbath or a Holy Day, then you must not do

my integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go...” Job believed in his own righteousness so much that he accused God of wrongdoing (compare Job 19:6–12). As long as he made an idol of his own righteousness, which was self-righteousness, he could not understand God and His righteousness.

Idols can relate to physical objects and the desire for the possessions of others, but they can also include the belief in things like charms, divination or astrology. They can even pertain to our reliance on our own self-righteousness and integrity. As we read in Ezekiel 14:3–4, idols can indeed be in our minds. And any idol, whether an object or a wrong thought pattern or concept, can lead us away from obeying God and can cloud our understanding as to what and who He is.

### ***The Bronze Serpent***

In Numbers 21:4 we read: “Then they journeyed from Mount Hor by the Way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the soul of the people became very discouraged on the way.” The people spoke against God and Moses, and so God sent fiery serpents and many Israelites died (verses 4–6). Moses prayed for the people and God said to him:

“Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live.” However, the serpent became an object of worship, as we read in 2 Kings 18:4, and was broken in pieces.

This example shows the proclivity that man has to worship the inanimate, which is something the Second Commandment instructs us not to do and is something that the people of God must take seriously and obey.

### ***God Is a Jealous God***

The Second Commandment also includes the following statement in Exodus 20:5: “...you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me.”

*Young’s Analytical Concordance* shows that the word for jealousy in this verse is *qanna* which can mean zealous and jealous.

The same word is used in the same context in other verses as follows:

Exodus 34:14 reads: "...for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God..."

Deuteronomy 5:9: "... you shall not bow down to them [carved images] nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me..."

Deuteronomy 6:15: "...for the LORD your God is a jealous God among you..."

The word *ganno*, also meaning zealous and jealous, is used in Joshua 24:19 and Nahum 1:2, also referring to God as being a jealous God in respect to worshipping idols. There are a number of other references too. We can quickly understand that God is zealous, which can be defined as "jealous for the good or the promotion of some person or object; ardent; eager; fervent; devoted." That is a quality of God and must also be a quality that we must have.

Deuteronomy 4:23–24 states: "Take heed to yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the LORD your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of anything which the LORD your God has forbidden you. For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God."

### **God Will Not Accept Unfaithfulness**

The following Scripture also shows that God does not accept unfaithfulness toward Him. He was to be first in the lives of the ancient nation of Israel and, therefore by extension, is to be first in our lives today.

Deuteronomy 12:30 says: "... take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them [pagan nations], after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, 'How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.'"

They were instructed to put God first, to love God with every fiber of their being, to teach God's Way to their children, and not to learn the way of the heathen. Nothing else would be acceptable.

God was making sure that His people kept **Him** at the center of their lives, and we should do exactly the same today!

We know that God is perfect in every way. How then are we to

### **Limitations of the Pharisees**

"The Pharisees totally misinterpreted the prohibition against carrying burdens on the Sabbath. They decreed that a person was guilty of breaking the Sabbath if he carried a sheet of paper, or any food that weighed as much as a dried fig, or if he carried more than one swallow of milk, or enough oil to anoint a small part of the body. If a fire broke out in a person's home on the Sabbath, he could carry out only the necessary food to be consumed on the Sabbath. This meant that if the fire broke out at the beginning of the Sabbath—right after sunset—the person could take out enough food for three meals; but if the fire broke out on the afternoon of the Sabbath, he could only take out enough food for one meal. The rest could not be carried out and had to be left behind, to burn with the building. Further, only necessary clothes could be taken out of a burning house on the Sabbath.

"Very likely, the Pharisees had been subconsciously influenced by their former Babylonian environment when they devised those Sabbath rules. The Babylonians had set apart the seventh day of the Babylonian week, called 'Shabattum,' as 'ill omens' or 'evil days.' For instance, it was forbidden on those days to eat flesh cooked upon coals. One must wonder whether we find a reason here why some Orthodox Jews have misunderstood the above-described passage in Exodus 35:3 regarding 'kindling a fire,' falsely concluding that even turning on a light switch was prohibited. The Babylonians also forbade the change of garments on those days, as well as calling for a physician. As we will see, Christ had to deal with a similar Pharisaic concept. The Pharisees in His day insisted that He should not heal anyone on the Sabbath—that people were not supposed to request healing on that day. Again, the parallel to Babylonian superstition is evident.

"We might laugh about those restrictions today, but these were no laughing matter at the time of Christ. He had confrontations with the Pharisees on numerous occasions when He refused to abide by their man-made Sabbath rules. We must be careful today not to create for ourselves, and others, similar rules on how to keep—or not keep—the Sabbath, when such rules cannot be found in Scripture."

Again, it is all based on the biblical injunction to not add to or delete from God's commandments. *Richard Elliott Freedman* makes



of Christmas. God will rebuke us, and we will be found 'liars,' since we have misrepresented God.

"Let's also note how the apostle Paul approached the Christians in Corinth... he tells them in 1 Corinthians 4:6: 'Now, brothers, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, 'Do not go beyond what is written' (*New International Version*).

"A similar reminder is recorded in the second letter of John. He states in verse 9: 'For if you wander beyond the teaching of Christ, you will leave God behind; while if you are loyal to Christ's teachings, you will have God too' (*Living Bible*). Those who do celebrate Christmas 'go beyond what is written,' and 'wander beyond the teaching of Christ,' thereby leaving 'God behind.'"

### **Weekly Sabbath Observance**

This concept is not limited to Christmas celebrations. It can affect us in many different ways in our daily lives. We might take weekly Sabbath observance as an example. Are we becoming too liberal in our conduct, or are we becoming too strict? If we add to or delete from the commandments that God gave us regarding the true worship of the Sabbath, we are guilty of sin.

As we have explained in this booklet, there is no doubt that true Christians today are commanded to keep the Sabbath. Those who refuse to do so, and who claim that Christ abrogated the Sabbath and replaced it with Sunday worship, are guilty of sin and of lying, and Christ told them that they are worshipping Him in vain, "teaching as doctrines the commandments of men" (Mark 7:7; Isaiah 29:13).

But notice also what we are saying in our free booklet, *God's Commanded Holy Days*, in describing the sinful conduct of the Jews in regard to Sabbath observance at the time of Christ:

"From God's perspective, the Sabbath is a Feast Day, intended to be a day of joy and happiness, as well as physical and spiritual renewal. We can learn from the mistakes of the Pharisees and avoid repeating them today. By adding humanly devised restrictions to God's Sabbath commandment, the Pharisees did, in fact, violate God's law (Matthew 23:4; Mark 7:8-9, 13)...

understand the verses quoted above?

One commentator observed that "this is part of the second commandment—you shall have no other gods before God. The meaning is clear, beautiful and as righteous as a man being jealous for his wife. In an environment where many gods compete for the affection of man, God is intensely competitive in vying for the affections of His people."

### **Full Devotion Necessary**

God was "jealous" in the sense that He expected full devotion, not merely a partial, lukewarm commitment. Worship belongs to God, and He is right to be "jealous" of it.

When we lack full devotion to God, we are devoted to someone or something else, thereby violating both the First and the Second Commandments.

God entered into a committed relationship with the ancient nation of Israel. In Exodus 19:4-6 we read: "You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. 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; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel."

The commitment was that Israel was to "obey My voice" and to "keep My covenant," as God put it. The demands of the covenant were the laws and statutes that regulated the relationship between Israel and God, and between the Israelites themselves. We read the response from the Israelites in Exodus 19:8: "Then all the people answered together and said, 'All that the LORD has spoken we will do.' So, Moses brought back the words of the people to the LORD." An agreement had been reached!

We know that Israel reneged on these commitments time and time again. We can read this in Psalm 78:10-11, where the sub-heading to the chapter in the *New King James Bible* is "God's kindness to rebellious Israel": "They did not keep the covenant of God; They refused to walk in His law, And forgot His works And His wonders that He had shown them."

### ***We Must Have a Special Relationship with God***

As the people of God, Israel failed miserably much of the time. As the people of God and “spiritual Israel” today, we have a special relationship with God.

In our booklet *God's Teachings on Sexual Relationships*, we state the following on page 26: “As we can see from Ephesians 5:31–32, Paul is addressing here the mystery of the relationship between Christ and His Church. He emphasizes that those who are called must come out of the ways of this world in order to be joined with Christ. Christ must be continuously living within them (1 John 2:15–17; Romans 12:2; Galatians 2:20). Paul also shows that the physical institution of marriage is pointing at a spiritual union between God and man. It is pointing at a spiritual marriage between Christ and His Church.”

In 2 Corinthians 11:2, the apostle Paul wrote: “For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.” Paul desired that the Church be fully devoted to Christ. His “jealousy” was one of wanting the very best for the Church and their relationship with God. Anything that would divert their attention and commitment of worshipping God would be seen as a disaster. That was a type of godly jealousy, where Paul earnestly wanted the best outcome for the Church, which would be their closeness and commitment to worshipping God.

If Paul could be “jealous” for God in the right way, how much more would the perfect Creator God have righteous jealousy for the spiritual well-being of His people?

Conversely, human jealousy is usually (but not always) a very negative force. As mentioned above, the jealousy of a righteous husband for his wife would be an exception. In the “works of the flesh” in Galatians 5:20, we read some traits to be avoided: “... idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies,” none of which, along with the other “works of the flesh,” are to be part of a true Christian’s Way of Life.

In 1 Corinthians 10:22 we read: “Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?” This was talking about idolatry, and it is a very dangerous exercise to provoke God in such a way; particularly, when true Christians should have known then, and should know today, that God always has our best interests at heart, and that

## **Chapter 18**

### **Do Not Add to or Delete from God’s Commandments**

God’s command to not add to or take from His Law has wide-ranging applications and *practical consequences* in many areas of daily life. For instance, when we look at the question as to why we are not to observe Christmas or Easter, the first answer might be because they are pagan, not Christian, and because the Bible nowhere commands their observance. In fact, God prohibits His followers from worshipping Him in the same way that pagans worshipped their gods (Deuteronomy 12:29–32), and Christ warned us that we are not to uphold human traditions while rejecting God’s commandments (Mark 7:8–9).

But there are additional important reasons to consider, not limited to the question of Christmas and Easter observance, and they affect our worship of God in other ways.

#### ***Christmas Celebrations***

In our free booklet, *Don’t Keep Christmas*, we state the following:

“Moses reminded ancient Israel of a timeless principle when it comes to true worship. We read in [Deuteronomy] 4:1–2: ‘Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you to observe, that you may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers is giving to you. You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you’ (Compare Deuteronomy 12:32, Revelation 22:18–19).

“We find the same admonition in Proverbs 30:5–6: ‘Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him. Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar’... So if we contend that Christmas is a festival that honors God, then we add to God’s Word, which has nothing to say about the celebration

them. However, they did not provide spiritual forgiveness, and later on, Israel misused and abused animal sacrifices in a terrible way so that God had to remind them that He did not desire animal sacrifices, but an upright and humble heart.

Animal sacrifices were a means of maintaining a relationship between God and man, by “forgiving” the physical transgression and allowing the transgressor to remain within the community of Israel. *They were never meant to provide spiritual “forgiveness” of sin.* They never abolished or superseded the spiritual penalty for sin, which is eternal death (Romans 6:23), nor did they make possible the means of inheriting eternal life. Only the Sacrifice of Christ can bring about such spiritual forgiveness, and allow us to continue on our righteous path (1 John 1:8–9; Romans 8:3–4) to ultimately be given eternal life at the time of Christ’s Return.

Hebrews 10 does not address the Ten Commandments at all. It speaks about the temporary sacrificial system which was abolished when Christ died for our sins.

God’s jealousy is based on His love and concern for us. He wants us to make it into His Kingdom—for eternity!

### ***Jealousy Is Used in the Bible in Both Positive and Negative Ways***

When jealousy is used as an attribute of carnal man, it is invariably used in a negative way, but when used as an attribute of God, it is always used in a positive sense, because God is perfect in all His ways.

Isaiah 42:8 contains more than just a clue as to why God is a jealous God: “I am the LORD, that is My name; And My glory I will not give to another, Nor My praise to carved images.” He clearly states that He will not share His praise with any other so-called god, as He is the only true God and all the other gods are just idols from the imagination of man. God looks after His own and protects us mightily, all in the best interests of man. That is divine jealousy!

In Matthew 10:37, we read Christ’s words: “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.”

This Christian struggle of choosing God above all else is vividly described in James 4:4–5, where we read: “Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, ‘The Spirit who [or which] dwells in us yearns jealously?’”

We have to live a life worthy of our calling! In 1 John 2:6 we read: “He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.” By following such instruction, we will be able to get our priorities right and God will be first in our lives.

God’s jealousy can be defined as “intolerant of unfaithfulness.” God demands of us, for our own benefit, complete fidelity to Him, as He knows what is best for us, and He guides us down that path through the lead of the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, the jealousy of the carnal human mind is always linked to envy and covetousness, of which we must not be guilty. The difference between God’s jealousy and man’s jealousy is unbridgeable.

### ***Visiting the Iniquity of the Fathers Upon the Children***

The Second Commandment also includes God’s statement that

He will visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Him, but that He will show mercy to thousands, to those who love Him and keep His commandments (Exodus 20:5–6).

What does it mean that God will visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Him (compare Exodus 20:5)?

Doesn't this contradict Scriptures such as Deuteronomy 24:16, stating that children are not to be put to death for their fathers, but that a person "shall be put to death for his own sin"?

This question has puzzled many over the years. To fully understand what God is saying in Exodus 20:5, let us read the entire passage in context, beginning with verse 4:

"(4) You shall not make for yourself a carved image... (5) you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, (6) but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments."

Similar statements can be found in Exodus 34:6–7; Numbers 14:18; and Deuteronomy 5:8–10.

In addition, as mentioned above, passages like Deuteronomy 24:16 state that children are not to be put to death for the sins of their fathers. The same is expressed in 2 Kings 14:6. Also, Ezekiel 18:4, 17, 19–20 tells us, "(4) Behold, all souls are Mine; The soul of the father As well as the soul of the son are Mine; The soul who sins shall die... (17) [The righteous son] shall not die for the iniquity of his father; He shall surely live...(19) Yet you say, 'Why should the son not bear the guilt of his father?' Because the son has done what is lawful and right, and has kept all My statutes and observed them, he shall surely live. (20) The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son." (Compare, too, Exodus 32:31–33.)

### **All of These Passages Complement Each Other**

Notice how some commentaries explain the passages in Exodus 20 and in Ezekiel 18:

sacrifice of a young bull, the priest was to make atonement for the unintentional sin of the congregation, "and it shall be forgiven them." Also, verse 26 says that upon the sacrifice of a young male goat, the ruler's unintentional sin "shall be forgiven him." Also, in regard to an unintentional sin of a common person, we read that upon the sacrifice of a female kid of the goats, "the priest shall make atonement for him, and it shall be forgiven him" (verses 31, 35).

We need to emphasize that the Bible does not contradict itself (compare John 10:35). We also must understand the Old Testament Scriptures in the light of the New Testament, and not *vice versa*. As the New Testament clearly teaches that spiritual forgiveness of sin could NOT be obtained through animal sacrifices, what then is the meaning of the above-quoted passages in Leviticus?

The following statements from selected commentaries shed more light on the issue.

*Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible* states: "...the meaning [of forgiveness through animal sacrifices] is, he shall not be punished for it."

The *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary* concurs, saying this about Leviticus 4:35:

"None of these sacrifices possessed any intrinsic value sufficient to free the conscience of the sinner from the pollution of guilt, or to obtain his pardon from God; but they gave a formal deliverance from a secular penalty (Heb 9:13, 14); and they were figurative representations of the full and perfect sin offering which was to be made by Christ."

The (above-mentioned) passage in Hebrews 9:13–14 shows indeed what kind of "forgiveness" could be obtained through animal sacrifices. It reads: "For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies [sets aside or apart; that is, allowing a relationship between God and man] for the PURIFYING OF THE FLESH, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

Animal sacrifices provided a means of permitting the ancient Israelite who had sinned unintentionally, to *remain in the community of the nation*, under God's rule, and to be *spared from physical punishment*. In case of an unintentional sin by the entire congregation, animal sacrifices prevented that God would turn His back on them and forsake

true sin-offering, whose blood cleanses from all sin, which it was not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away. Now, if any man sin, Christ is the propitiation (1 Jn. 2:1, 2), not for Jews only, but [also] for Gentiles."

*Matthew Henry's Whole Commentary*, in reference to Leviticus 6:7, points out how the animal sacrifices, as a tutor, foreshadowed the all-encompassing Sacrifice of Jesus Christ. He also shows that the spiritual Law of the Ten Commandments and the statutes and judgments, explaining and magnifying the Ten Commandments, were not abolished when the animal sacrifices were superseded by THE Sacrifice of Jesus:

"This trespass-offering could not, of itself, make satisfaction for sin, nor reconciliation between God and the sinner, but as it signified the atonement that was to be made by our Lord Jesus, when he should make his soul an offering of sin, a trespass-offering; it is the same word that is here used, Isa. 53:10. The trespasses here mentioned are trespasses still against the law [of God]... and though now we may have them pardoned without a trespass-offering, yet not without true repentance, [obedience], reformation [that is, a lasting change of our thinking and action], and a humble [obedient] faith in the righteousness of Christ [which we must obtain]: and, if any make the more bold with these sins because they are not now put to the expense of a trespass-offering for them, they turn the grace of God into wantonness, and so bring upon themselves a swift destruction. The Lord is the avenger of all such, 1 Th. 4:6."

*Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible* adds the following, regarding Leviticus 6:7:

"And the priest shall make an atonement for him [the sinner] before the Lord... By offering the ram he brought, by which a typical, but not real atonement was made; for the blood of bulls and goats, of sheep and rams, could not take away sin; but as they were types of Christ, and led to him, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world."

### **Did Animal Sacrifices Forgive Sin?**

In light of these clear teachings of the New Testament, how are we to explain passages in the Old Testament that seem to say that people who were offering animal sacrifices could thereby obtain forgiveness for their sins? For instance, we read in Leviticus 4:20 that upon the

The *Companion Bible* comments on Ezekiel 18:4, 20: "Descendants were not punished for the sins of their ancestors unless they persevered in their ancestors' sins." The same thought is expressed in Exodus 20. Note that Exodus 20:5 speaks of those "who hate Me." *Soncino* points out that the phrase, "of those who hate Me," applies to the children; i.e. God will punish the children if they [the children] hate Him. *Soncino* comments, too, that the punishment will be brought upon the children, "when they retain the evil deeds of their fathers."

Those who hate God will be "visited" by God. Note, though, it does not necessarily say that they will die. Those who love God will receive His mercy. At the same time, the conduct of the parents may have a lot to do with the fact whether their children or grandchildren love or hate God.

The sins of the fathers do affect future generations, and so does the penalty for sin, which is oftentimes automatic. *Soncino* explains that the "effects of the penalty imposed upon a sinner are felt up to and including the fourth generation." The *New Commentary of Holy Scripture*, S.P.C.K., 1951, comments, "It is an everlasting law of human society that children suffer by reason of the sins of their fathers." This shows, then, how parents must consider the consequences of their actions, not just for their own sakes, but also for the sakes of their children, grandchildren, and future generations. A wrong lifestyle might very well affect the parents' offspring, even in physical ways.

For instance, as long as even one parent is in the Church of God, his or her children are sanctified (1 Corinthians 7:14), meaning that they can and do have access to God. If both parents leave the Church, their children's access to God is no longer guaranteed and may in time totally disappear. We note that because of Lot's righteous conduct, God saved his daughters, but David's adultery caused the death of his child (2 Samuel 12:13-14, 19-23). It should be pointed out here, however, that God did not consider David's child to be guilty in any way and worthy of punishment. God punished David. The innocent child will be brought back to life by God at a time of peace and happiness, when prejudice and the hatred toward illegitimate children (compare Judges 11:1-2), who did nothing to deserve their fate, will be a thing of the past.

### ***Sin Separates Us From God***

When Adam and Eve sinned, the penalty imposed on them affected all of mankind. Through their sin, they cut themselves—and man—off from God. Sin separates us from God (Isaiah 59:1–2), and since all have sinned, all have incurred the death penalty for sin (Romans 5:14). One might say that the sin of Adam and Eve affected, at the very least, the third and fourth generation, but since Cain sinned, his sin affected the next four generations, and so on. The effect of sin is cumulative. Finally, sin had become so all-encompassing that God decided to destroy the entire world in a flood.

Christ, in showing the evil influence of their parents and their own culpability in their continued hate of God, pointed out in Matthew 23:31–36, how the principle of Exodus 20:6 was fulfilled in the persons of the scribes and Pharisees at Christ’s time.

The vicious cycle of sin, penalty, and death can be interrupted, however, when a person turns to God, repents, and obtains forgiveness. Noah was found righteous, and because of his righteousness, eight souls were spared from death, and through them, mankind survived. God’s mercy, extended to Noah, affected “thousands.”

Because of the righteousness of Abraham, the father of the faithful, “thousands” experience God’s mercy to Abraham through the unconditional promises given to him of national greatness and spiritual grace. (The modern nations of the United States of America and the United Kingdom have been beneficiaries of these promises. For more information, please read our free booklet, *The Fall and Rise of Britain and America*.)

Then, because of God’s mercy toward obedient David, his offspring were blessed, in that his throne would always be occupied by one of his descendants.

We can also think of the harlot Rahab, who saved her family and offspring by virtue of her righteous deed of saving the spies, and God extending His mercy to her.

### ***God’s Mercy to Mankind***

The most shining and outstanding example of God’s mercy extended to a Man, and through that Man, to “thousands,” is of course Jesus Christ. Through His sacrifice and death, all of us can be saved, if we

### ***Christ Abolished the Entire Sacrificial System***

The sacrificial law could not *forgive* sin, as Paul stresses in Hebrews 10:4: “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.” Paul adds in verse 11: “And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.”

This sacrificial law is not binding for Christians today. It was a law that was added because of sin, until Christ came to forgive sin, upon repentance of sin and belief in His Sacrifice. That is why we read in Hebrews 10:18, “Now where there is remission [forgiveness] of these, there is no longer an offering for sin.”

This sacrificial law that was added and then later taken away did not affect the Ten Commandments. The sacrificial system, which was added **one year after** God spoke the Ten Commandments to the people, did not enact or bring into existence the Ten Commandments. (As we have discussed before, the Ten Commandments were in force and effect since the creation of man.) And since the sacrificial law did not enact the Ten Commandments, it could not void them when the sacrificial system itself became obsolete.

### ***A Shadow***

That sacrificial law is referred to as a shadow in Hebrews 10:1. It was *foreshadowing* the death of Christ.

Hebrews 9:9–10 confirms that the sacrificial system was only of a temporary nature, to be superseded by the death of Jesus Christ: “It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices were offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience—concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation.”

*Matthew Henry’s Whole Commentary*, in his explanations of Leviticus 4:31, points at the temporary meaning and duration of animal sacrifices, and the all-important Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, when stating:

“From all these laws concerning the sin-offerings we may learn, 1. To hate sin, and to watch against it. That is certainly a very bad thing to make atonement for which so many innocent and useful creatures must be slain and mangled thus. 2. To value Christ, the great and

death, we are no longer under (Greek: *hupo*) the “tutor” of that ritual sacrificial law, as referred to in Galatians 3:24–25.

The ritual law was a “tutor” or “schoolmaster” (as the *Authorized Version* translates this term) to bring us to Christ. It was laborious work and the people were motivated through this kind of work to avoid sinning, at least to an extent. The rituals and offerings had dominion over them; they were “under” the strict obligation to fulfill them when they had failed. Peter describes them later as a “yoke” which they were unable to bear (Acts 15:10).

We are no longer bound by the law that was added that dealt with fleshly ordinances and rituals. This temporary law can be summarized as the sacrificial law—it regulated sacrifices, food and drink offerings, certain washings, and other rituals dealing with the flesh. This was the law that was *added* after Israel made a golden calf—after Israel had *sinned* against God’s Ten Commandments and fallen into transgression.

This sacrificial system is clearly referred to as “the law” in the Bible.

The Old Testament applied the words “the law” not only to the Ten Commandments and the statutes and judgments that define and explain the Ten Commandments more, but also to the sacrificial system that pertains to different kinds of offerings and rituals.

Examples are *the law* of the sin offering (Leviticus 6:9, 14, 25); *the law* of the trespass offering; *the law* of the sacrifice of peace offerings; *the law* of the burnt offering, the grain offering, the sin offering, the trespass offering, the consecrations, and the sacrifice of the peace offering (compare Leviticus 7:1, 11, 37–38); *the law* for her who has borne a male or a female (Leviticus 12:6–7); *the law* of leprosy (compare Leviticus 14:2, 32, 54–57); *the law* of jealousy (Numbers 5:29–30); or *the law* when a man dies in a tent (Numbers 19:14, 19).

All of these examples serve to illustrate the point that the words “*the law*” can refer to the sacrificial law.

Acts 13:38–39 explains that those who now believe in Christ are the ones who receive the forgiveness of sins and are justified—made perfect through living as Christ lived. Verse 39 also shows, by contrast, that no one “... could be justified by the law of Moses.” The “law of Moses” *included* the sacrificial system.

respond to God’s call. Although all of mankind became an enemy of God due to the sins of Adam and Eve, the resulting penalty of being cut off from God, and man’s continued disobedience of God’s Law, man can return to God through the deeds of one Man, Jesus Christ—the second Adam. Though only a few people are called today to return to God, all will be given the same opportunity of accepting God’s mercy, in due time (1 Corinthians 15:23–24).

When God tells us that His mercy will extend to “thousands” who love Him, He is really talking about man’s ultimate potential to join His very Family, for all eternity. Notice how the *Jewish Bible* translates Exodus 20:6, “...but showing kindness to the thousandth generation of those who love Me and keep My commandments.”

If you count all generations from the creation of Adam until the time of the end of the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11–12), you will still not have a thousand generations. Therefore, the thought is conveyed here that all who love God and keep His commandments will obtain God’s love and mercy, due to the love and obedience of their forefathers—including Noah, Abraham, David, and of course Jesus Christ. Especially through Christ who kept the Law perfectly, and who loved God the Father perfectly, God’s love and mercy are extended toward all of us, if we too, follow in the footsteps of Christ (1 Peter 2:21). The end result of God’s love—if we abide in it by keeping His Word—is our entrance into the Kingdom and Family of God (2 Peter 1:10–11).

The Second Commandment prohibits the *creation of images* representing God the Father, Jesus Christ, and angels. It also prohibits the *worship of images* representing God or other gods. Idols or “carved images” can be real objects, but they can also be in our minds and become more important to us than the true God. This, too, is prohibited and violates the letter and the spirit of the First and the Second Commandment.

## Chapter 17

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### Does Hebrews 10 Abolish the Ten Commandments?

Hebrews 10:1, 8–9 reads:

“(Verse 1) For **the law**, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never **with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year**, make those who approach perfect... (Verse 8) Previously saying, ‘Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them’ (which are offered according **to the law**), (Verse 9) then He said, ‘Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.’ **He takes away the first** that He may establish the second.”

It is claimed that Paul is stating here that the Law of the Ten Commandments was abolished by these passages. But this is not correct, as the Scripture does not refer to the Ten Commandments.

What then is the law, referred to in Hebrews 10, that was abolished when Christ died for us?

In discussing the “earthly sanctuary” that Moses built according to God’s instructions, Paul explains in Hebrews 9:9–10, “It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices were offered which cannot make him who performed the sacrifice perfect in regard to the conscience—*concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation.*”

#### ***The Temporary Added Law***

Here we find described the “law that was added,” which we discussed in detail in [chapter 15](#) of this booklet, when addressing Galatians 3 and Romans 5.

It was only a temporary ritual law—it was only imposed until the time of reformation, that is, until the time of Jesus Christ’s perfect life without sin (Hebrews 4:15), His sacrificial death and His resurrection to eternal life. Since Christ paid the penalty for our sins through His



# Chapter 6

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## The Third Commandment

*“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain” (Exodus 20:7).*

First of all, we need to define what “taking the name of the LORD your God in vain” really means. We could look at many definitions, but the bottom line is that we simply should not, and must not, use the name of God in any irreverent way because that would be disrespectful. When we look at God’s creative power and the awesome size, beauty and majesty of His creation, it really is something wonderful to behold, so to denigrate the Name of the Creator of it all is simply unacceptable.

Why would God, the greatest Being in the universe, be so concerned about His name? Isn’t He, as some have observed, able to look after Himself? For anyone to make such an observation shows that they have no understanding at all about what is involved.

### ***Is God “Offended” by Blasphemy?***

Some may think that they can hurt God by taking His Name in vain or by rejecting Him. God can certainly be very disappointed when this happens, but we have to remember that He is the Creator of all things; He sustains life; He has provided salvation for us through Jesus Christ.

As mentioned before, God is a Family, consisting of God the Father and Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and they both are God—the only true God beings. Therefore, God deserves our worship, and we are hurting ourselves when we go contrary to His Way and when we blaspheme His Name. It is not about ego and the feeling of importance, but God knows that we lose out when we do not honor His Holy Name. By so dishonoring Him, we are also showing disrespect, and that does not have any rewards attached to it, quite the reverse.

Revelation 4:10–11 is instructive in this regard: “... the twenty-four

elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: 'You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created.'" Honoring God's Name according to the Third Commandment is truly one way of showing our love for our Creator.

To understand properly, when we use God's Name in vain, we are dishonoring God Himself. The same is true when we hallow His Name: When we hallow His Name, we hallow God Himself.

We stated the following in our free booklet, *Teach Us to Pray*:

"God has many names, each of them describing certain aspects of His character and of His being. One of God's names is 'the Almighty'; another one is 'the Eternal'; still another one is 'the God who heals us.' Then there is the 'God of hosts.' Note, however, that Christ did not say, 'hallowed be thy *names*,' but, 'thy name.' He is emphasizing the entirety of God—His entire being—everything He is and stands for.

"We read in Isaiah 29:22–23 that Jacob will hallow God's name and that he will hallow the Holy One of Jacob. God's name is identified here as the Holy One of Jacob. Likewise, Isaiah 8:11–13 identifies God's name, 'the Lord of hosts,' with God Himself. We read in verse 13: 'The LORD of hosts, *Him* you shall hallow.' God's name is identified here as the Lord of hosts. But even though God's name is mentioned, it is obvious that we are to hallow HIM... When we pray, 'Hallowed be thy name,' we are really saying: 'You, Holy Father, are to be hallowed.'

"The *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, by Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, states on page 905: 'God's name means "Himself as revealed and manifested."'"

Like the first two commandments, the Third Commandment describes the proper relationship that man must have with God. One of the distinguishing attributes about this commandment is that it involves how the Name of God is used. The act of speaking or writing His Name is so important to Him that it appears prominently in the Ten Commandments. How can the use of a word be so important? Why does it matter to God how we use His Name? And most importantly, how are we to understand and apply this commandment in our lives today?

To begin with, we must understand that God's Name is holy, as

Himself and paid the penalty for our sins on our behalf. He thereby redeemed us or set us free from the penalty of death, which we brought upon ourselves by sinning—breaking the Law.

### **Under Sin**

In the same way, we are "under" sin (*hupo* in Greek), as *Romans* 3:9 says ("we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin."). When we sin, then we are under the power or influence of sin. Sin has us in its clutches. Rather than ruling over it (Genesis 4:7), it rules over us. And as carnal human beings, we cannot keep the spiritual Law of God (*Romans* 8:7). But even after conversion, a fight of good vs. evil is going on in our minds and in our lives. Paul was still compelled to say, years after his conversion, that he was "sold under sin" (*Romans* 7:14; Greek: *hupo*) and did "evil" (*Romans* 7:19), obeying the "sin that dwells in me" (*Romans* 7:17, 20), and being held in "captivity" to sin (*Romans* 7:23).

When we sin by transgressing the Law (compare *Romans* 4:15), then we are under sin, under the Law, under the curse of the Law, under its penalty. Sin has power over us so long as that penalty is not removed, because the penalty of sin—the wages of sin—is death (*Romans* 6:23). So, death needs to be removed.

Returning to 1 Corinthians 9:20, we see that though Paul was not "under the law," he became as one "under the law," so that he might win those under the Law. The term "under the law" refers to its penalty. When we sin, the penalty of sin—death—is hanging over us like the sword of Damocles. Through the Sacrifice of Christ, our repentance and our belief in and acceptance of His Sacrifice, we can have forgiveness of our sins; that is, we won't have to die anymore. The death penalty is no longer hanging over our heads. In order to win those who had not yet accepted Christ's Sacrifice, Paul became as one of them. He became *as one* under the penalty of the Law [even though he was not], as he understood what it was like to live in sin, being cut off and separated from God.

Paul never taught that any of God's abiding laws could be broken. Those who want to refuse to keep God's spiritual Law twist certain Scriptures and invent arguments to justify their sinful conduct. They do this, however, "to their own destruction" (compare 2 Peter 3:14–16).

are led by the spirit, you are not under (Greek: *hupo*) the law.”

We can choose to walk in the Spirit (verse 16), which will motivate and empower us to KEEP the Law of love, and when we do, we will not fulfill the lust of the flesh which will induce us to sin and to break the Law. But if we choose, instead, to walk in the flesh, we don’t show love, but selfishness, and we will engage in biting and devouring one another (verse 15).

To walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh is a constant struggle, as Paul explains in verse 17. There is a battle going on in our minds between God’s Spirit and our fleshly desires. When we are led by God’s Spirit and do the things which are pleasing in God’s sight, we are no longer “under the law” (verse 18). When we walk after the Spirit and are led by it, we will keep the Law. And since, and as long as we do not break it, we are not under the penalty of the Law.

### ***The Curse of the Law***

When we are under the Law, we are under its penalty for having violated it. The Law has dominion over us in that it can demand our life. The penalty of the Law is also described as the “curse of the law.” We are under that curse when we sin, and nothing that WE might do subsequently can abolish that curse.

*Galatians 3:10, 13* tells us: “For as many as are of the works of the law are under (Greek: *hupo*) the curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them’... Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’)...”

Paul conveys the thought that nobody kept all the physical works of the law, including all of its rituals, washings or sacrifices. In addition, nobody kept all of God’s spiritual commandments of the Ten Commandments and its judgments and statutes. Therefore, everybody is under the curse or penalty of the Law, which is the second death for spiritual sin, or which might be physical death or other physical penalties for civil or criminal infractions.

The curse of the Law is the penalty for breaking or violating the Law. Christ redeemed us from the curse or penalty of the Law—not the Law—as He became a curse for us, in that He took our sins upon

God is holy. He expressed this fact to the nation of Israel as He spoke to them His commandments: “You shall not profane My holy name, but I will be hallowed among the children of Israel. I am the LORD who sanctifies you, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the LORD” (Leviticus 22:32–33). Clearly, God expects man to offer Him reverence, honor, and respect. Not only does respectful behavior involve obedience to His instruction, but also that we acknowledge the holiness of His Name.

Seeing that the Name of God is holy and that it must be hallowed, it is important that we clearly understand what it means to use His Name and refer to Him in the words that we use. Holiness is the distinguishing quality to consider. Holy things are sanctified, special, and distinguished from that which is common or ungodly (compare Deuteronomy 7:6, Ezekiel 22:26, Ezekiel 36:20, Ezekiel 44:23). Therefore, to use the Name of God in a way that does not acknowledge His holiness, or which treats His Name as a common thing, is a violation of the Third Commandment.

Likewise, since there is but one God (that is, one God Family, consisting of God the Father and Jesus Christ, the Son), and since only the God Family is deserving of the Name of God, to exalt another Name above the true God is also a violation of the Third Commandment. The holiness of God requires that we glorify His Name and treat it with the reverence that it requires, and do not offer that same reverence to any other man or thing.

### ***Commonplace Today***

Unfortunately, in our contemporary society, God’s holy Name is widely used in ways that show disrespect rather than the glory and honor that is commanded. It is exceedingly difficult to go through a day without hearing the Name of God the Father or of Jesus Christ used in combination with expletives or as an empty exclamation.

The use of God’s Name in ways that apply it as a common thing, or often much worse than common, is despicable to God. Such wrong use is what it means to use God’s Name in vain. When His Name is used for show, rather than for the purpose of respectfully referring to Him and His righteousness, the Third Commandment is violated. This is the clearest way in which the Commandment is broken.

### ***This Commandment Was to Be Taken Seriously by Israel***

As an example, we can see how an individual of the nation of Israel broke this commandment when he cursed God: “And the Israelite woman’s son blasphemed the name of the LORD and cursed; and so they brought him to Moses. (His mother’s name was Shelomith the daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan.) Then they put him in custody, that the mind of the LORD might be shown to them. And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Take outside the camp him who has cursed; then let all who heard him lay their hands on his head, and let all the congregation stone him” (Leviticus 24:11–14).

The punishment sentenced when the Name of God was used in the context of a curse was extremely serious. This instance of sin resulted in the penalty of death by stoning. Even though uttering words that show disrespect may seem to be a trivial act, we can see how serious God is about this commandment.

The use of God’s Name in the context of a curse is a classic example of using His Name in vain. Far from expressing the glorification that is commanded, the use of God’s Name in the context of an evil sentiment is only for show. When we apply this principle to the use of our own language, any use of God’s Name is in vain when it is used to express anything other than the respect and honor due Him. The most obvious example is when God’s Name is included in a statement with foul language. However, it is also a vain use of God’s Name when used to express surprise or as an exclamation. Such showy use of God’s Name diminishes the reverence and honor due to Him, and is sinful.

### ***Euphemisms to Be Avoided***

Some believe that using a euphemism—a substitute for God’s Name—in vain expressions will prevent one from violating the Third Commandment. However, such euphemisms must be removed from our language as well.

In our booklet, *Teach Us to Pray*, we write the following:

“We also defile God’s name, of course, when we use His name in vain (compare Exodus 20:7; Leviticus 19:12). To casually use expressions such as ‘My God,’ ‘O my Lord,’ or ‘Jesus Christ,’ just to utter surprise or emphasis, is therefore clearly prohibited. So is the casual use of a common German welcome greeting (‘Gruess Gott’ or, ‘Gott zum

that this does not mean that we can now continue to sin; that is, to break God’s Law. Rather, we are now to be “slaves of righteousness” (verse 18), in **keeping** God’s Law.

In Romans 6:14–15, the Greek word for “under” is also *hupo*.

In *Galatians 4:4–5*, we read: “But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born UNDER (Greek: *hupo*) THE LAW, to redeem those who were UNDER (Greek: *hupo*) THE LAW, that we might receive the adoption as sons (better: “sonship”).”

Christ had to be made UNDER the Law—subject to its penalty—as Christ never sinned. He never was under the Law—its penalty—due to His conduct; rather, He had to be *placed or made under* the Law, so that He could pay the penalty of sin for us. We came under the Law—its penalty—through our conduct, so Christ had to be MADE UNDER the Law, in order to redeem us who were under the Law—its penalty.

Another passage, where the term “under the law” is used is in *Galatians 4:21*. It reads: “Tell me, you who desire to be under (Greek: *hupo*) the law, do you not hear the law?”

Paul is not saying here that they desired to be under the Law in the sense that they wanted to be under the penalty of the Law. They did not desire to die because of their sins. But they seemed to desire to live their old way of life again (which brings forth death)—or they desired to follow wrong teachers believing that they must be circumcised in order to be saved.

However, circumcision does not justify us—nor does the Ten Commandments. In violating just one of the Ten Commandments, we have sinned and incurred the death penalty. What saves us is Christ’s Sacrifice, by which God forgives us our sins and removes the penalty—but we cannot keep on sinning so that grace may abound.

To put it differently, if we desire to break God’s Law of the Ten Commandments, we are again under the Law; that is, under or subject to its penalty. Also, if we desire to obtain justification apart from Christ, we are still under or subject to the penalty of the Law, as we can only become justified through Christ.

Furthermore, Paul is using the word “law” in different ways in verse 21. To be “under the law” means, under its penalty; when he then says, “hear the law,” he means the five books of Moses.

A third passage can be found in *Galatians 5:18*. It reads: “But if you

their customs, as long as they were not in contradiction to the spirit or the letter of God's Law. He even circumcised Timothy so as not to offend the Jews (Acts 16:3), but refused to circumcise Titus when this would have given a wrong impression to the Jews who believed that circumcision was necessary for salvation (Galatians 2:3).

In addition, Paul would not keep those customs, of course, when he was with Gentiles, as these customs or ritualistic laws are no longer binding. Paul did make it clear, however, that he did teach and keep the spiritual Law of God (Romans 7:14) that is still binding, including all of the Ten Commandments (Matthew 19:17–19).

Paul never taught others to sin, and he was careful that he did not sin either. He would have never disobeyed God by breaking His Law, only to “win” the Gentiles. He was not without God's Law, although he no longer preached as binding and mandatory physical circumcision or other sacrificial rituals, as those temporary laws had been abolished by God in the New Testament. At the same time, he did not offend his Jewish audience by violating their customs and traditions, as long as he could keep them without sinning against God.

Paul made it clear that he was not without the Law of God. He said in verse 21: “... not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ.” Please note that the word “under” in “under law toward Christ” is *ennomos* in Greek and should be translated as “in” or “within” or “subject to.” Paul said that he did not live without the Law, but within or subject to the Law of the Ten Commandments.

### **“Under the Law”**

Paul also said that in 1 Corinthians 9:20 that he lived *as if* he was “under law,” implying that he was not. How is this to be understood? Note that here in verse 20, a different word is used in Greek (i.e., *hupo*), which is translated as “under.”

In this context, some also quote *Romans 6:14*, stating that we are no longer “under law but under grace,” saying this means we do not have to obey the Law anymore. However, the correct meaning of this passage is that when we violate the Law, we are no longer under the curse of the Law—the death penalty—as the blood of Christ, given to us by grace, has covered and forgiven our sins—has paid the death penalty that we earned. Paul explains in the very next verse (verse 15),

Gruss’—meaning ‘Greet God’ or ‘God as a Greeting’), or the casual use of the French or Spanish farewell expressions, ‘adieu’ or ‘adios’ (both meaning, ‘to God’).

“The same prohibition applies when we use ‘euphemisms.’ A ‘euphemism’ is defined as a substitution of a mild, indirect, or vague expression for another felt to be too blunt or offensive. God instructs us to let ‘no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth’ (Ephesians 4:29). This prohibition applies to careless speaking or using slang expressions or euphemisms, which would profane God's name, such as ‘gosh’ or ‘gosh almighty’ (a substitute for ‘God’ or ‘God almighty’) or ‘gee’ (a substitute for ‘Jesus’). It also applies to the careless use of words describing characteristics or concepts clearly associated with God, such as ‘my goodness’ instead of ‘my God’ (compare Matthew 19:16–17) or ‘by heaven’ or ‘for heaven's sake’ (compare Matthew 5:34; Revelation 13:6).”

### **The Sin of Blasphemy**

In addition to the explicit use of God's Name or a substitute of God's Name, another application of the Third Commandment is the sin of blasphemy. Just as the vain use of God's holy Name is a sin that defiles the glory of God, blasphemous statements or actions do the same thing.

*Wikipedia* gives this definition: “Blasphemy is the act of insulting or showing contempt or lack of reverence to a deity, or sacred things, or toward something considered sacred or inviolable.”

Exalting anyone above God is a blasphemous action, showing disrespect. As an example, the “man of sin” or the “false prophet” mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2:3–4 exalts himself as God.

In Daniel 11:36–37, a future military king, the “beast,” is also described as engaging in acts of blasphemy: “Then the king shall do according to his own will: he shall exalt and magnify himself above every god, shall speak blasphemies against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the wrath has been accomplished; for what has been determined shall be done. He shall regard neither the God [or gods] of his fathers nor the desire of women, nor regard any god; for he shall exalt himself above them all.” Compare Revelation 13:5–6.

Such blatant disrespect toward God is a violation of the Third

Commandment in the way that the Name of God is applied directly or indirectly to someone other than God.

### **Christ Wrongly Accused of Blasphemy**

The Jews at the time of Jesus Christ believed that Jesus blasphemed the Name of God when He referred to Himself in a godly context. Jesus expressed that He was the Son of God, which antagonized the so-called righteous Jews (compare Matthew 26:62–66). While the act of exalting oneself above God is indeed an act of blasphemy, Jesus Christ was speaking the Truth in that He was and is the Son of God. Therefore, His statements were not blasphemous nor sinful.

In our booklet, *God is a Family*, we explain how Jesus Christ is a member of the God Family:

“Reading in Zechariah 4:8–9: ‘Moreover the word of the LORD [in Hebrew, ‘Yahweh’] came to me, saying: The hands of Zerubbabel Have laid the foundation of this temple; His hands shall also finish it. Then you will know That the LORD [in Hebrew, ‘Yahweh’] of hosts has sent Me [‘Yahweh’] to you.’

“We see in this passage that the LORD [‘Yahweh’] sent the LORD [‘Yahweh’]. The expression, ‘Yahweh,’ then is applied to both God beings... both God the Father and Jesus Christ are referred to in Scripture as ‘Yahweh’—the ‘I AM’ (compare Exodus 3:14)—basically meaning, ‘the Eternal,’ or, ‘the Ever-living One.’ This fact alone proves that both the Father and Jesus Christ have always existed—that they are God beings, and that the Old Testament teaches that there is more than just one God being.”

Since Jesus Christ is a member of the God Family, His name must also be treated with the same honor that befits God the Father. The same rules of the Third Commandment apply in using the Name of Jesus Christ because He too is rightfully called “God.”

The way that we behave is an extension of the way that we revere the Name of God as well. When we claim that we are Christians and follow God, our actions become a reflection of God’s Name and all of the righteousness that it stands for. But when our behavior violates His commandments, God’s Name is profaned. Ezekiel 20:39 reads in the *Living Bible*: “O Israel, the Lord God says: If you insist on worshipping your idols, go right ahead, but then don’t bring your gifts to me

## Chapter 16

### Does 1 Corinthians 9:20–21 Abolish the Ten Commandments?

Does *1 Corinthians 9:20–21* teach that we are free from the Law of the Ten Commandments?

1 Corinthians 9:19–23 states:

“(Verse 19) For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; (verse 20) and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; (verse 21) to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; (verse 22) to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. (verse 23) Now this I do for the gospel’s sake, that I may be partaker of it with you.”

#### **Just What Did Paul Mean in 1 Corinthians 9:20–21?**

The New Testament makes it clear that certain sacrificial laws are no longer binding today. Paul calls them “a tutor” in Galatians 3:24. As we explained in the previous chapter, this ritual law, which is referred to as a “law,” “was added because of transgressions” (Galatians 3:19). Sin is the transgression of the Law (1 John 3:4), the Ten Commandments (James 2:8–12). We see, then, that the Ten Commandments—the “Law”—had to be in effect before the sacrificial law system was added, as it was added because of transgression. (For a thorough explanation, please read our free booklet, *Paul’s Letter to the Galatians*.)

While it is no longer necessary to abide by the sacrificial system with its ritualistic rules, it would not be sinful to keep it while in the presence of Jews, as long as it was not kept for wrong motives and with a false understanding that it was still obligatory. Therefore, when Paul was with Jews, he would not offend them by refusing to keep

as well! Such desecration of my holy name must stop!”

In this example, the nation of Israel is chastised because their actions were not obedient to God. As a result, His Name was not venerated with the holiness required.

It is worth mentioning that, while God’s Name is taken in vain by so many people around the world today, other “deities” don’t seem to “suffer” in the same way, and we know how Muslims revere “the prophet Mohammed” who was just a human being anyway. Neither the name of Mohammed nor the names of any other “gods” in non-Christian religions are used as expressions of surprise, frustration or anger as much as the Name of the true God so often is. Satan is doing everything he can to induce many, including professing and sometimes even true Christians, to blaspheme God’s Name, as he knows that he has but a short time left.

### ***Blasphemy Laws Around the World***

An interesting and, it seems, not a very well-known fact is that the blasphemy law in some parts of the UK was abolished a few years ago.

*Wikipedia* notes that in the UK “on 5th March 2008, an amendment was passed to the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008 which abolished the common law offences of blasphemy and blasphemous libel in *England* and *Wales*. The peers also voted for the laws to be abandoned during March. The Act received royal assent on 8 May 2008, and the relevant section came into force on 8 July 2008.”

Equivalent laws remain in *Scotland* and *Northern Ireland* but have not been used for many years. Still, in the state of Ireland, “publication or utterance of a blasphemous matter,” defamatory of any religion, is criminalized.

On the *Humanists UK* website, they state the following: “Outdated and discriminatory blasphemy laws are still far too common all around the world. But the English and Welsh blasphemy laws were abolished in May 2008. The offences of blasphemy and blasphemous libel were common law offences which were contrary to the principle of free speech and probably contrary to human rights laws adopted by the UK, which protect freedom of expression. The law fundamentally protected certain Christian beliefs and made it illegal to question them or deny them.”

In short, the Third of God's Ten Commandments is seen by this world and the carnal human mind as being outdated in today's "more enlightened" society!

In *Canada*, blasphemous libel was an offense under section 296 of the Criminal Code, but it was repealed in December of 2018.

Insofar as the *United States* is concerned, before winning their independence from the British Empire in the late 18th century, some of the British colonies in North America had blasphemy laws. The 1791 First Amendment arguably put an end to them but Massachusetts, Michigan, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Wyoming, and Pennsylvania have laws on the books that make reference to blasphemy. However, they are not enforced in any way.

Blasphemy is not a criminal offence under *Australian* federal law, but the *de jure* situation varies at state and territory level; it is currently not enforced in any Australian jurisdiction.

Blasphemy was abolished or repealed in *Sweden* in 1970, *Norway* with Acts in 2009 and 2015, *the Netherlands* in 2014, *Iceland* in 2015, *France* for its Alsace-Moselle region in 2016, *Malta* in 2016, *Denmark* in 2017, and *New Zealand* in 2019.

On the other hand, in *Germany*, religious defamation is covered by Article 166 of the *Strafgesetzbuch*—the German criminal law. If a deed is capable of disturbing the public peace, defamation is actionable. In *Italy*, blasphemies can be punished with a small fine.

*Israel* has a blasphemy law, which punishes offenders with prison terms.

We should not be surprised to learn that blasphemy laws exist in many non-Christian countries. Thirteen countries with *Islamic* law currently have laws on the books carrying a *penalty of death* for blasphemy or apostasy. They are *Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritania, Nigeria, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, United Arab Emirates* and *Yemen*.

While most Christian countries tolerate blasphemies against the true God, many Islamic countries execute people for "blaspheming" their gods.

As we have seen from the examples and instructions of the Bible, the use of the TRUE God's Name is not to be taken lightly. The way that we use His name expresses our respect for Him, and when we

and that a law "entered" the world after sin and death were already in the world (Romans 5:12–14, 20), refers to that part of the physical law which has to do with sacrifices and other rituals.

Because the people had sinned by transgressing the spiritual Law of the Ten Commandments, as well as those statutes and judgments which embellish those righteous commandments, another "law" was added and came into the world—the temporary physical law dealing with sacrifices and other rituals.

### **Deception**

Professing Christians are largely deceived, as is the rest of the world (Revelation 12:9). If you think you are free to break God's spiritual Law of the Ten Commandments, you are deceived—no matter what Christian group or denomination you may claim to be a member of. "Christian" commentaries of worldly scholars add to the deception, by concocting ridiculous "explanations" in their terrible desperate attempts to contradict the clear and timeless message of Jesus Christ, which is beyond debate for those who are willing to believe and obey their Master. Read for yourself Christ's words in Matthew 19:17: "But if you want to enter into life, keep the Commandments."



law referred to in Galatians 3 was added because people had sinned—because they had transgressed God’s spiritual Law (Romans 7:14) of the Ten Commandments.

Paul’s use of the word “law” in the third chapter of the book of Galatians then does not relate to the Ten Commandments at all, but to an altogether different set of rules—the sacrificial law system which was added some time after Moses had brought the nation of Israel out of Egypt (compare Jeremiah 7:21–23).

### **Two Sets of Law**

Paul uses the same language in Romans 5. A careful analysis shows that he speaks there, again, about two sets of law—the Ten Commandments and the sacrificial system which was added because of sin.

In Romans 5:12–14, Paul says: “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin [death came through sin, because death is the penalty for sin, compare Romans 6:23], and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—(For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses...).”

Notice carefully: Paul says here that all sinned; that all incurred the death penalty because they had sinned; and that there is no penalty if there is no law. Therefore, since there *was* a death penalty, there *had to be* a Law. But then, Paul says that that situation already existed before the “law” was in the world. How clear—he is talking about two different sets of law! The law which came into the world had to be different from the Law which already existed from the time of Adam.

Paul continued in verse 20: “Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound.” What law entered? What law was added? NOT the Law of the Ten Commandments, which was in force and effect since Adam, but the sacrificial law system which “entered” or was “added” more than 430 years after Abraham’s covenant with God.

The Bible does not contradict itself. One Scripture does not “break” or “make of no effect” another Scripture (John 10:35). A law was added because of *transgressions*. This law cannot be the Ten Commandments. Rather, because people had *transgressed* the Law of the Ten Commandments, an additional law was given to the people. Paul’s statement that the law was added because of transgressions (Galatians 3:19),

use His name to express anything less than the glory and honor He is due, we are using His Name in vain.

There are other ways in which the Name of God may be defiled too. When others are exalted above God, His Name is blasphemed. This shows the connection between the first two Commandments with the Third Commandment.

When we use the Name of God to identify ourselves, saying that we are God’s children and Christians, but reject the Way of Life that He commands, His Name is profaned as well. The lesson for us is clear. In all of our words and deeds, the Name of God is to be glorified. The words of David offer us an excellent perspective on this matter: “I will praise You, O LORD my God, with all my heart, And I will glorify Your name forevermore” (Psalm 86:12).

## Chapter 15

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### Does Galatians 3 Abolish the Ten Commandments?

In Galatians 3:17–19, 22, 24–25, Paul states the following:

“And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise. What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator... But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in [of] Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe... Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.”

#### ***What Is Meant by the Law?***

In order to understand this passage properly, we must recognize that the Bible sometimes uses the word “law” for just a portion of the entire law system. We must consider the context of the particular passage in order to ascertain whether the word “law” refers to the entirety of God’s law system, or just a portion, and if just a portion, which portion. We do the same today in human affairs. We might say, “the law requires you to do this or that,” and we may be speaking about a particular provision in the Civil Code, or the Criminal Code, or some administrative law.

We learn from Galatians 3:17 and 19 that “the law” was “added” “four hundred and thirty years” after God’s covenant with Abraham. This “law” was added “because of transgressions.” We also learn in verse 22 that the Scripture confined everybody “under sin.” Sin is the transgression of the Law (1 John 3:4, *Authorized Version*). The physical

his old age; that eye could not wax dim which had seen God, nor that face wrinkle which had shone with his glory.”

Friedman, Commentary on the Torah, writes: “For the rest of the narrative in Exodus (and in the next three books of the Hebrew Bible), he is to be pictured wearing a veil.”

### **No Timing Mentioned**

In fact, Paul does not mention the timing as to when the face of Moses was shining with glory. He does not say that Moses’ face shone only when he returned from the mountain with the tablets of stone, and that therefore, Paul had in verse 7 the tablets of stone with the Ten Commandments in mind. Rather, it appears that Moses’ face still shone when he spoke about the massive stones on which the entire Law of Moses would be engraved. So, Paul’s point is still well taken that when Moses announced that the ministry of death (reduced to writing in the Book of Moses) would be engraved on massive stones, the face of Moses was *still shining*, but that was temporary because Moses would die soon thereafter. In the same way, the ministry of death passed away and ended when Christ died on the cross.

## Chapter 7

### The Fourth Commandment

*“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it” (Exodus 20:8–11).*

The Sabbath commandment is one of the most-misunderstood regulations within the Decalogue. To the carnal human mind, it makes no sense to observe that day. Why not Sunday, Friday or any other day of the week? Why observe it at all?

There is a fundamental reason why the Sabbath commandment has been described as the *test* commandment. It determines our allegiance and shows God whether we are willing to obey Him in everything or not.

We cover this Fourth Commandment in our free booklet *God’s Commanded Holy Days*. We will quote some of the pertinent parts below:

#### ***“The Sabbath Was Made in the Beginning***

“God created Adam and Eve on the sixth day of the week. He finished His work by ‘resting’ on the seventh day. We read in Genesis 2:2–3, ‘And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.’

“The Hebrew word for ‘rested’ is ‘*shabath*.’ It literally means ‘to cease, rest, keep Sabbath’ (*Young’s Analytical Concordance to the Bible*). God rested, or ceased, from His work of creating in the first six days, and He kept the Sabbath on the seventh day. God did not *have* to rest

from His work. He was not tired or weary. God is never weary (Isaiah 40:28). But He did it for us—for mankind—to give us an example to follow in observing the Sabbath. (Similarly, Christ would later allow John the Baptist to baptize Him though He did not *have* to be baptized, since He had not sinned and had nothing to repent of. He did it for us—to give us an example to follow in being baptized—in order to ‘fulfill all righteousness,’ Matthew 3:13–15.) In the same manner, then, God *showed us how* to keep the Sabbath as He did—by resting from our daily work—even though He Himself did not *need* to rest.

“We read in verse 3 of Genesis 2 that God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it. Now, when someone, or something, is ‘sanctified,’ he, or it, is set apart ‘for a holy purpose.’ The Sabbath was set apart as holy time by God at the creation of man, and God intended it to be *kept* holy by man. How can man *keep* it holy unless he learns *how* and *when* to do so?

### **“When the Sabbath Starts and Ends**

“God has revealed in His Word exactly when the Sabbath starts and when it ends. God reckons each day, including the Sabbath, beginning at sunset and continuing through until the following sunset. Today, we would say that the Seventh-Day Sabbath starts Friday evening, when the sun sets, and lasts until Saturday evening, at sunset.

“We know from the Jewish people when to keep the Sabbath. It is the Jews to whom God committed His revelations or His ‘oracles,’ as Paul clearly explains in Romans 3:1–2. These ‘oracles of God’ included the Old Testament Scriptures, as well as the knowledge of the week and of the Sacred Calendar. The Jews preserved the knowledge of which day the seventh day of the week is. Without an understanding of when a week begins and ends, we would not have been able to tell, from the Bible alone, which day the seventh day of the week actually is. Today, the Jews keep the Sabbath on Saturday, beginning Friday evening, at sunset. Nobody questions today that the Sabbath, as preserved by the Jews, is the seventh or last day of the week. All understand that Sunday is the first day of the week—although there have been some attempts in Europe to actually *change* the calendar in order to deceitfully pretend as if Sunday, and not Saturday, was the seventh day of the week.

the Spirit; that is, they must be applied in our lives with their spiritual intent, as Christ clearly explained in Matthew 5–7. In doing so, we can escape death and inherit eternal life. If we refuse to do so, Christ’s warning in John 3:36 is still applicable for us today: “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him” (*Revised Standard Version*).

### **The Shining Face of Moses**

But if 2 Corinthians 3:7 makes reference to the massive stones which were mentioned by Moses and later erected under Joshua, why then do verses 7–8, 11–14 refer to *Moses’ shining face* when he returned from the mountain with the tablets of the Ten Commandments?

The argument is that Moses’ face had a glorious appearance when he returned with the tablets of the Ten Commandments, allegedly proving that Paul is referring here to the tablets with the Ten Commandments and NOT to the massive stones with the entire Law of Moses, including its ritual and sacrificial laws and its penalties.

Let us note that the face of Moses shone with glory *after he saw God in His glory* (Exodus 33:18–23), and after he had been with God a second time, for 40 days and 40 nights, to receive the second set of the tablets of stone containing the Ten Commandments (Exodus 34:29–30). His face did not shine when he received the first tablets with the Ten Commandments, which he broke in anger because the Israelites had built a golden calf and committed idolatry.

The *Soncino* commentary points out that “these rays of glory *originated* with Moses at the time he stood in the *cleft of the rock* and God covered him with His hand.” Most commentaries conclude that his glory continued to shine throughout his life, and that he continued to put a veil on his face when he showed himself to the Israelites (Exodus 34:33–35).

The *Nelson Study Bible* states that Moses’ “glory was *enhanced* on each subsequent encounter with the LORD.”

*Ellicott’s Commentary for English Readers* says: “The brightness of Moses’ face... *remained* henceforth a property of his countenance.”

The *Benson Commentary* states: “He carried his credentials in his very countenance; some think, *as long as he lived* he retained some remainders of this glory, which perhaps contributed to the vigour of

constitute complete stones. But later, all of God's laws—permanent as well as temporary rules—were engraved on complete, massive stones. To reiterate: The Ten Commandments were written on tablets of stone, while the laws of the Book of Moses, including the penalties for sins and crimes, were engraved on complete, massive stones.

The Ten Commandments, as well as other permanent and temporary laws, were written in a book—the Book of the Law of Moses. Verse 7 refers to this fact when it says, "...written and engraved on stones." Quite literally, the meaning is that all of the laws were first "reduced to writing" (*en grammasin* in Greek) and then "engraved" (*entupoo* in Greek) "on stones" (*en lithos* in Greek).

## **2 Corinthians 3:7–8 Paraphrased**

2 Corinthians 3:7–8 could be paraphrased as follows, to clarify the intended meaning:

*But if the ministry of death, which was first written in the Book of the Law of Moses and later engraved on massive stones, was glorious, even though it would cease one day—so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance (after he saw God's form), which glory also passed away—how will the ministry of the Spirit, which will endure forever, not be more glorious?*

God's true ministers today do not administer the death penalty for sin or for any crime—they do not fulfill the ancient Levitical priesthood's role and function of a "ministry of condemnation" (2 Corinthians 3:9). Rather, God's true ministry today teaches that sinning man can receive forgiveness of sin, through the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ. God's ministry today also teaches that man must keep the Ten Commandments. Man can only do this, however, through the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling within him, which is received after repentance, belief, baptism and the laying on of hands. In other words, God's ministry is a "ministry of righteousness" (2 Corinthians 3:9), teaching man how to obtain righteousness and how to live righteously. For further information on this critically important subject, please read our free booklet, *Baptism—A Requirement for Salvation?*

2 Corinthians 3:2–11 does not teach that the Ten Commandments are abolished. Quite the contrary, the passage teaches that the Ten Commandments must be kept today. However, they must be kept in

"The Bible reveals that days start and end at sunset, in the evening. Notice Genesis 1:5: 'God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day.'

"Many Scriptures associate the meaning of the word 'evening' with 'sunset.' For instance, a period of one day regarding a ritualistic, temporary law is noted in Leviticus 22:6–7: "The person who has touched any such thing shall be unclean *until evening*... And when *the sun goes down* he shall be clean.' (Note the same definition in 2 Samuel 3:35.) Further, we are told in Leviticus 23:32 to keep God's Sabbath 'from evening to evening.'"

## **"Sabbath in Effect Before the "Old Covenant"**

"Some would argue that God introduced the Sabbath to the 'Jews' (erroneously believing that the ancient house of Israel was identical with the 'Jews') at the time of the Old Covenant and, since the Old Covenant is no longer binding, neither is the Sabbath. The Bible shows that this is not a valid argument.

"First of all, this argument does not take into account that *a covenant and a law are two different things, and that abolishing a covenant does not automatically annul the law(s) on which the covenant is based* (For an in-depth study of this important question, write for our free booklet, *And Lawlessness Will Abound...*).

"Secondly, the Sabbath command was in effect long before the 'Old Covenant.' We have already seen that God instituted the Sabbath at the time He created man.

"We learn that the Sabbath command was a law that God required to be kept. It had been in force for a long time—in fact, since the creation of man. He asked the people, 'HOW LONG do you refuse to keep it?' (compare Exodus 16:28). We also learn that the Sabbath is *holy* to God. God sanctified the seventh day when He created man. It was set aside for a *holy* purpose. We learn that God *gave* the Sabbath to man—the Sabbath is a gift from God. James 1:17 tells us that God only gives us 'good and perfect gifts.' Finally, we learn that the people rested—'*shabath*'—kept the Sabbath on the seventh day by not going out and engaging in the work of gathering bread (compare Exodus 16:30)...

### **“A Separate Sabbath Contract**

“It is true, of course, that the Fourth Commandment was part of the Old Covenant. But, the *Old Covenant did not bring the Ten Commandments into existence*, since they were in force and effect *since the creation of man*. Rather, the Old Covenant was *based on* the Ten Commandments. To clarify this, we need to first understand that a *covenant is simply a contract that is based on law*—it does not create law—and when a contract is annulled, the law on which it is based is *not* annulled along with it.

“Additionally, we are introduced to a separate contract in Exodus 31. The subject matter of that contract is the Sabbath. We read in Exodus 31:14–17: ‘You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it that person shall be cut off from among his people. Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh is the Sabbath of rest holy to the LORD. Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested [Hebrew, ‘*shabath*’] and was refreshed.”

We should also mention here that Exodus 31 talks not only about the weekly Sabbath, but also God’s annual Holy Days, which are also called “Sabbaths” (compare Leviticus 23:24, 27, 39). Both the weekly Sabbath and the annual Holy Days or Sabbaths are signs that we are God’s people (Ezekiel 20:12). Exodus 31:13 refers to both, using the plural, saying, “Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep...”

The connection between the weekly and the annual Sabbaths is fully explained in our free booklet, *God’s Commanded Holy Days*.

### **The Sabbath—a Day of Joy**

Jesus said that the Sabbath was made for man. It was God’s gift to man. It was to be a blessing, not a burden! As God blessed and sanctified the seventh day for holy use (Genesis 2:3), so man will be blessed when he properly keeps and enjoys the seventh day.

At the time of Jesus Christ, the Pharisees had made a burden of the Sabbath. For example, the disciples of Christ were criticized for plucking the heads of grain on the Sabbath, yet they were only doing so in order to satisfy their hunger (Mark 2:23–24; Matthew 12:1–2).

### **Internalize the Ten Commandments**

It is true that 2 Corinthians 3:3 addresses the Ten Commandments, stating, “... you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart.”

However, this statement merely explains that we are to *internalize* the Ten Commandments. It is not enough to have them in our Bibles or written on posters or on tablets of stone, but they must be part of ourselves. They must be in our hearts, on the tablets of our flesh. This passage does not even remotely suggest that we are no longer obligated to keep the Ten Commandments; just the opposite is the case.

God’s Law must be in our hearts (Isaiah 51:7; Hebrews 10:16). The following passage in Ezekiel 36:26–27 is especially telling: “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a *heart of flesh*. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.”

### **Tablets of Stone and Ministry of Death Engraved on Stones**

However, 2 Corinthians 3:7 does not refer to the Ten Commandments. As stated above, the “ministry of death, written and engraved on stones,” refers to massive stones (compare again Deuteronomy 27:2–3, 8; Joshua 8:30–32, 34), on which ALL of God’s laws were written—not just the Ten Commandments, which are spiritual and eternal, but also temporary ritual laws regarding washing and sacrifices. While the two tablets with the Ten Commandments did not include any penalties, the subsequent massive stones did.

Let us compare the different Greek words that are used in verses 3 and 7 in describing the “tablets of stone” and the “ministry of death... engraved on stones.” The Greek word for “of stone” in verse 3 is, *lithinos* (*Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, No. 3035), and means, literally, “made of stone” or formed out of stones. The word is used in Revelation 9:20, describing idols made out of stone. The Greek word for engraved “on stones,” in verse 7, is, *lithos* (*Strong’s* No. 3037), and it describes complete stones—not something made of stone. It is also rendered as “millstone” in Luke 17:2. The tablets with the Ten Commandments were taken from stones—the tablets did not

the sacrificial system was not a part of the law—those ritual provisions had not been given yet, and they were not written in the Book of the Covenant. The covenant at Horeb did not originally include the sacrificial system. Neither did the Book of the Covenant contain such ritual regulations.

### **Book of the Law**

But as time went on, ritual laws were added, including the laws regarding the Levitical priesthood and penalties or curses for violations of God’s spiritual law, and those did find their way into the Book of the Covenant, which is also called the *Book of the Law of Moses* (Deuteronomy 28:58, 61; 29:20–21, 27, 29; 31:9). This Book of the Law was placed **outside** or beside the ark of the covenant (Deuteronomy 31:24–26). The tablets with the Ten Commandments, however, were placed **inside** the ark (Deuteronomy 10:4–5; Hebrews 9:4).

### **Engraved on Massive Stones**

Later, all the laws that had been written by Moses into the Book of the Law were engraved on *massive stones* (Deuteronomy 27:2–3, 8; Joshua 8:30–32, 34). The laws that were written on the stones included the Ten Commandments, along with the statutes and judgments, and also the rules and regulations regarding sacrifices and other rituals. We find a reference to those stones and the laws that had been engraved on them in 2 Corinthians 3:7–8, “But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious... how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious?”

The reference to the *ministry of death* includes the death penalty for violating God’s spiritual Law and for committing capital crimes according to the letter. The penalties were first written in the Book of the Law of Moses and then engraved on massive stones. Since Christ died for us, we do not have to pay the death penalty, if we repent of our sins and obtain forgiveness. In addition, the ritual sacrificial laws, which were among the laws written on stones, could not forgive sins—they only reminded the sinners of their sins. The Levitical priesthood was, in that sense, a ministry of death, as people would still not be able to obtain eternal life, even though they brought sacrifices.

It was the position of the Pharisees that the disciples should rather go hungry than to pluck a few heads of grain, falsely interpreting such conduct as prohibited “harvesting.”

### **Right and Wrong Kind of Work**

Christ placed mercy over pharisaic restrictions, pointing out that David ate from the showbread of the tabernacle when he was hungry, although it was not “lawful” for him to eat it (Matthew 12:3–4). But Christ did not condemn David for this. He also taught that the priests in the temple had to fulfill their responsibilities on the Sabbath, which—according to pharisaic consequential reasoning—would have been tantamount to “breaking” or “profaning” the Sabbath, but Christ said they were “blameless” in doing so (Matthew 12:5). When God’s ministers today “work” on the Sabbath in preparing and delivering sermons, they are equally blameless and guiltless.

On the other hand, Christ did not teach that we can violate God’s Sabbath by just trampling it under foot—by working on our jobs to earn a living and by pursuing our own pleasures and hobbies. Isaiah 58:13 states (according to the *New International Version*) that you are to “keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day” and to “call the Sabbath a delight and the LORD’s holy day honorable” and to “honor it by not doing as you please or speaking idle words.” The *Living Bible* clarifies that “doing as you please” refers to “your own fun and business.”

### **Keeping the Sabbath Sets God’s People Apart**

When we keep the Sabbath, it will be noticeable to those with whom we have close relationships—our family, friends, neighbors and co-workers. Our lack of participation in sports, school or college events that are scheduled on the Sabbath, as well as not going to theatres or *working on the Sabbath*, will become very obvious, and so these people will come to realize our commitment to God.

God’s people know that the Sabbath is the time span from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset, even though some misguided religious teachers claim erroneously that the biblical Sabbath is “Sunday.” However, “Sunday” has always been described in the Bible as the “first day of the week,” while the Sabbath has always been identified as the

“seventh” or “last day of the week,” when God completed the days of recreation (Genesis 2:2–3; Exodus 20:11).

The Fourth Commandment is very clear—it must be kept by the people of God.

In addition to our booklet on *God’s Commanded Holy Days*, we have prepared further literature covering in detail God’s weekly and annual Sabbaths. One booklet is entitled, *Man’s Holidays and God’s Holy Days*, explaining that while man is willing to keep his human traditions and festivals, he refuses to observe God’s weekly Sabbath and His annual Holy Days. This booklet also explains which human festivals true Christians should not keep.

Another important booklet, *How to Keep the Sabbath*, discusses many examples to show what we can and *should do* on the Sabbath and the annual Holy Days, and what we *must not do*. This booklet has become very handy and helpful for many of our readers, and we trust that it will accomplish the same for you. Further information on correct and incorrect Sabbath observance is also given in chapters 18 and 19 of this booklet.

## Chapter 14

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### Does 2 Corinthians 3:3–11 Abolish the Ten Commandments?

The passage in 2 Corinthians 3:3–18 has been very confusing to many, and most commentaries use it to teach that the Ten Commandments are no longer binding for us today (compare *Ryrie Study Bible*, footnote to 2 Corinthians 3:7). However, this conclusion is clearly erroneous.

Let us review the entire passage of 2 Corinthians 3:3–11, in context:

“(3)... clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart. (4) And we have such trust through Christ toward God. (5) Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, (6) who has also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. (7) But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away, (8) how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? (9) For if the ministry of condemnation had glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory. (10) For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels. (11) For if what is passing away was glorious, what remains is much more glorious.”

#### ***God’s Covenant with Israel***

We need to understand that God made a covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai. We read in Exodus 24 that the covenant was sealed with blood. When that happened, the covenant was final and could not be altered. The law of the covenant was written in a book, the “*Book of the Covenant*” (verse 7; compare Hebrews 9:19–20). At that time,



# Chapter 8

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## The Fifth Commandment

*“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you” (Exodus 20:12).*

The first four Commandments show us that we must love God first and foremost; and the last six Commandments show us that we must have love for other people.

### ***The Fifth Commandment Addresses Family Relationships***

A parent to a small child is almost like God and that is why it is so important for the parent to set the standards and example very early in life. However, it can be disastrous if there is any hint of hypocrisy on the part of the parent as children can quickly pick up on this.

There is no question that children who are trained and disciplined in a godly way will have a good relationship with their parents, and will be much more able and willing to honor their parents.

### ***Correct Authority in the Home Is Essential***

What a person thinks about authority in the home, and in society, starts from an early age when habits and attitudes are formed. As children develop within the right environment in the family, usually the same standards are passed on to their own family. In addition, such children may move on more easily from obeying their parents when they were small to honoring them when they become self-sufficient adults.

They will generally realize how much their parents loved them in giving them such a caring and positive upbringing. Their appreciation will be shown in the same approach they take with their own children, as well as in respecting and honoring their parents for all that they have done for them—the more so as the parents approach old age.

Of course, there is no guarantee for this outcome, and it is most

certainly not true in every case, as Satan, the god of this world, will try to harm and destroy the family relationship by any means. This can happen in the home itself, and it can happen through influences on the child from the “outside,” especially in school, in a God-defying and oftentimes left-liberal agnostic or atheistic society. It can happen through the child’s peers, where little, if any, regard is given to the Ten Commandments, including God’s directive to have respect for authority and to honor their parents.

Parents have to be very aware of this and they must do everything they can to counteract these false teachings and influences by educating their children properly at home.

One writer opined: “A reason for a thorough study of the Fifth Commandment is that our culture most often hinders and opposes our efforts to honor our parents. In the culture of the ancient Near East, there was a much higher regard for those in positions of authority (in general) and for parents in particular.”

In the book of Luke, chapter 2, we see the perfect example of Jesus as a 12-year-old being subject to His parents. In verse 42 we read: “And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast.” As we read this account, we find that He stayed behind to listen and ask questions of the teachers in the Temple. In verse 51 we further read: “Then He went down with them [His parents] and came to Nazareth, and was *subject to them*, but His mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.”

### ***The First Commandment With Promise***

We read in Ephesians 6:1–3: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother,’ which is the first commandment with promise: ‘that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.’”

By so doing, this sets a pattern for life which can only be of great benefit to the growing child.

When we really understand the Fifth Commandment, it becomes clear that it brings into sharp focus how important it is for the family, and society, in that it reflects the true love that children should have for their parents who have spent many years of untold and incalculable sacrifice

### ***Coveting Must Be Repented Of***

Coveting must be repented of—sincerely regretted and made to cease as a factor in one’s life. One must keep his eyes on God at all times. David wrote in Psalm 119:36: “Incline my heart to your testimonies and not to covetousness.”

We are told to put to death and abstain from covetousness and evil desires (Colossians 3:5–7; Titus 2:11–12; 1 Peter 2:11).

This can be done only with God’s help and by prayer and fasting. Galatians 5:16 tells us: “Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” Those who are Christ’s have “crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (verse 24).

Hebrews 13:5 clearly teaches us what our approach should be: “Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’”

We must remember that whatever physical things we accumulate in this life are lost when we die. We should have the approach we read about in 1 Thessalonians 4:11: “... you [must] also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you.” If we are conscientious about minding our own affairs, coveting what others have may never even enter our minds!

Are we content with what we have? If so, then we will not covet or have evil desires or lust for anything. Coveting can lead to much ill will and hard feelings. God tells us to avoid coveting because there is nothing good about it. You shall not covet!

beds! At morning light they practice it, Because it is in the power of their hand. They covet fields and take them by violence, Also houses, and seize them. So they oppress a man and his house, A man and his inheritance.”

Proverbs 6:23–26 speaks of lust for a married woman. Note here that the Hebrew word for “lust” in verse 25 means “covet.”

The New Testament warns repeatedly of the dangers of covetousness. Note James 1:14–15; 4:1–3; Romans 13:14 (“lust” has the meaning of “covetousness” or “evil desire”); Mark 4:18–19; 1 Timothy 6:9–10; 1 Corinthians 10:6 (“lust” or “covet” or “evil desire”); and Titus 3:3.

It is Satan who is the author of evil desires, covetousness and lust (John 8:44). But we should realize that this world, which is ruled by Satan, and its evil desires will soon pass away (1 John 2:15–17).

### ***Coveting Can Lead to Other Sins***

What God tells us in the Tenth Commandment is that we must overcome covetousness by being happy for the other person. Covetousness, if not repented of, may turn into envy and jealousy. Jealousy goes down to the marrow of the bone. This may lead to hatred and the desire to hurt our neighbor who has something we want to have. This attitude has caused a lot of suffering in this world. That is why God gave us His Commandment against covetousness.

Being happy for others removes covetousness and brings joy and peace into our hearts. Envy and jealousy are many times the root cause for life-lasting rivalries, destroying families and friendships. It is almost impossible to deal with someone who is envious and jealous.

The key is to be happy with what we have (or do not have) and not to look lustfully on our neighbor’s wife or covet our neighbor’s servants, nor focus on our neighbor’s animals or his house or dwelling place, his job and other things which our neighbor may have—even if they are nicer, bigger or more expensive than ours. We are to focus on those things that build treasures in heaven. We are not to get caught up in coveting, jealousy and envy, knowing that this life with all its physical blessings is only temporary. In the final analysis, covetousness is idolatry (Colossians 3:5), as we place something else before the true God who told us not to covet, but to love Him first and foremost.

to ensure that they gave their children the best possible start in life.

The Fifth Commandment is the first one with promise because it is the one where the benefit is not just for the individuals at the time, but is something that can be passed on from generation to generation, and it hugely benefits society at large. It has been said that the family structure is one of the building blocks of society.

The Fifth Commandment also reflects the spiritual aspect of God as our Father and the importance of the family now, which further reflects the importance of the future Family of God that will last for eternity.

### ***Reasons for Not Honoring Parents?***

Matthew 15:3–6 is a good example of those who were trying to avoid honoring their parents: “He answered and said to them, ‘Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? For God commanded, saying, “Honor your father and your mother”; and, “He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.” But you say, “Whoever says to his father or mother, ‘Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God’— then he need not honor his father or mother.” Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition.’” Jesus was very straightforward to these “religious men” who tried to opt out of their family responsibilities.

Proverbs 30:11 is a statement along the same lines: “There is a generation that curses its father, And does not bless its mother.”

### ***Dysfunctional Families***

Many in this world have grown up in dysfunctional families and have been subjected to all forms of abuse. Does God expect someone under these circumstances to show honor to a parent? It is easy to show respect and honor to a parent who raised you in a loving home, but did God envision the corruption that has seeped into modern-day families when He commanded mankind to “Honor your father and mother”? Many examples could be given of abusive homes or parents which seemingly justify that children are allowed to dishonor them. Are they still to honor their parents even then? The simple answer is YES, but we must understand what this means. God’s Laws are eternal (see Psalm 119:160) and are not subject to change depending on human condition.

These commands were not established long ago, only to be forgotten or ignored in our modern times. God's laws resonate throughout the New Testament with the same importance given in the earlier books of the Bible. As mentioned, Paul stated, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right" (Ephesians 6:1). Christ even warned us of not honoring our parents, "For God commanded, saying, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death'" (Matthew 15:4).

### **Obey God Rather Than Man**

If a child or a teenager is being drawn by God and understands His Truth, he or *she is not in any way obligated to obey his or her parents when they teach or require ungodly conduct*. God will judge all of us based on what we know and what we do with such knowledge. We are told that we must obey God rather than man, and this also means that we must submit to the penalty that might be inflicted upon us because of our righteousness. We are told that children are to obey their parents "in the Lord"—not contrary to what God commands.

We state the following in our free booklet, *The Keys to Happy Marriages and Families*:

"As children, we are to obey our parents *in the Lord*. This means, we are not to obey them if it would not be in the Lord—that is, if it would be in contradiction to God's commandments—either from a literal or a spiritual standpoint. Once a child is old enough to understand God's way of life, he or she must follow God...

"We must obey our parents in all things, unless the instructions of our parents contradict the letter or the spirit of God's Word. It is *never* well-pleasing to God if we disobey *Him*... wives cannot disobey God by obeying their husbands. In the same way, children must not obey their parents either, if this would violate God's Law. They are not to lie or to steal or to kill or any such thing in 'obedience' to their parents' 'orders.'"

But this does not mean that children are therefore free to dishonor or disrespect their parents. Honoring our parents influences our character, and showing honor is a learned trait. Godly traits begin with the physical and lead to a spiritual understanding. "However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual"

time; do not covet the wife of your neighbor. Proverbs 31:10–12 tells us that a virtuous wife is very precious: "Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies. The heart of her husband safely trusts her; So he will have no lack of gain. She does him good and not evil All the days of her life." If such a wife belongs to our neighbor, it would be a terrible sin to desire her, visualizing adultery in your mind, and then to perhaps even initiate actions to break up such a marriage.

### **Do Not Covet Your Neighbor's Servants**

We are also told in the Tenth Commandment not to covet our neighbor's "male servant, nor his female servant." What this is telling us is to not be envious of and covet the things which our neighbor has, things which makes life easier for him; for instance, a butler and people who come and cut his lawn or take care of his field or his yard, clean his house and do chores around the house for him.

### **Do Not Covet Your Neighbor's Ox, Donkey or Anything Else**

We are finally admonished not to covet our neighbor's "ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is [our] neighbor's."

We are not to become envious of our neighbor's possessions and covet those—be they a nice car and, again, those things that help make work easier for him regarding his yard: Things like a riding lawnmower or a snowblower, which our neighbor may have, while we may have to push our mower and shovel snow by hand.

Sometimes this sin of coveting can manifest itself by someone damaging or destroying something that belongs to someone else simply because they do not have it or cannot afford it, in effect thinking: "If I can't have it, they are not to have it!" It is a sorry, sick, jealous approach! If someone has something that we do not have, we should rejoice for them!

### **Avoid Covetousness**

The Bible includes many examples of people who covet the possessions of others, and they show how detrimental such an attitude is, as it may lead to damaging action.

Note, for example, Micah 2:1–2:

"Woe to those who devise iniquity, And work out evil on their

fellow man. It is one of the last six commandments that defines how to love our neighbor. The first four commandments tell us how to love God.

### ***Do Not Covet Your Neighbor's House***

"You shall not covet [desire] your neighbor's house" tells us that we are not to wrongly desire our neighbor's dwelling place—his house and his field or his possessions. Is it bigger than ours? Is it newer than ours? If it is, then we should be happy for him and follow the admonition of Paul in Philippians 4:11, which tells us: "Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content..." Another admonition worth noting is this: "Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content" (1 Timothy 6:6–8).

Some people are never happy, thinking that more physical possessions and a nicer house are what life is all about, and that those things will give us more happiness in life. But what does the Scripture tell us? "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses" (Luke 12:15).

Many people steal (breaking the Eighth Commandment) because they first covet (eagerly desire) something that someone else has! It all starts with coveting.

The key is to be happy with what we have, or do not have, and to be happy for those who have more than we have. All of this is temporary anyway.

### ***Do Not Covet Your Neighbor's Wife***

The Tenth Commandment goes on to say, in Exodus 20:17: "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife." This, in effect, as discussed before, prevents committing adultery in our minds. Christ told us in Matthew 5:28: "But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

Here again, one must be content with what one has or does not have. If one is married, we are to be content and happy with our wife and don't look for "alternatives." If you are not married and want to be married, then wait for God to provide you with a wife in His due

(1 Corinthians 15:46). Our mother and father gave us life but God, our eternal Father, gives us eternal life.

Learning to express respect for our parents also leads to physical blessings. When Moses reviewed the Ten Commandments, he described the benefits of this command even further: "Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it may be well with you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you" (Deuteronomy 5:16). By observing this principle, we can expect to live longer, better and in peace.

### ***Abuse Suffered as a Child***

That being said, how are we to grapple with ongoing pain from what might have been years of abuse? There is no panacea or a quick snap-of-the-fingers solution to make years of parental neglect or mistreatment go away, but God does give us the ability to change. This might sound overly optimistic, but to change our minds through God's Spirit can be miraculous. Christ stated the first step in this process, "'And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment" (Mark 12:30). Everything begins by turning to God. Once we are willing to submit to God, He will, as David stated, be "A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows..." (Psalm 68:5).

Loving those who do not treat us with kindness and respect is another trait we are familiar with as Christians (see Luke 6:35–36). Showing love and honor can be difficult toward those who do not appreciate it, but as Christians we are to be merciful to others just as God is merciful to us. The apostle Paul also outlines how we should address the world around us, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:21).

### ***Willingness to Forgive Is Fundamental***

Christ states, "But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:15). Setting a godly example might be our only means of eliciting change in others. Our calling did not come to us until God opened our minds and allowed it. That same change can happen, even to the most neglectful or even abusive parents, if God is involved, for "With men it is impossible,

but not with God; for with God all things are possible" (Mark 10:27).

Our need to develop a forgiving attitude can only occur with God's help. The wickedness perpetrated on an entire childhood is difficult to overcome, but we should not allow our hearts to become hardened.

A fundamental trait of all Christians is a willingness to change, to turn away from evil: "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?" (2 Corinthians 6:14).

For some, this might mean physically separating from the ungodliness of their parents. As Christians we understand that we "do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12). It is difficult for abusive parents who have succumbed to this spiritual influence, and without godly intervention, to prevail against it.

But even then, we must have a willing heart to forgive them for their abuse, once they recognize what they have done or are doing, and we should still show honor to them and have a loving contact with them, even if this may have to mean, for the time being, having a long-distance relationship, via phone calls or sending gifts, cards, letters or messages in other ways.

The willingness to forgive must not place us back into an abusive state. Boundaries are acceptable and even necessary in the face of ungodliness. We must not go back into a destructive environment once we have risen out of it. If we do, we are surrounding ourselves with sin. Christ warns, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). We are even warned to remove ourselves from behavior that leads us away from God, "He who walks with wise men will be wise, But the companion of fools will be destroyed" (Proverbs 13:20).

The danger of parental mistreatment is that we can become comfortable with it. The abuse becomes our "norm" and it can be difficult to remove ourselves from the underlying destructiveness. But that is expressly what Christ came to free us from once we have submitted to Him. "For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.' He who

## Chapter 13

### The Tenth Commandment

*"You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's" (Exodus 20:17).*

As we mentioned earlier in this booklet, the wording of the Tenth Commandment in the book of Deuteronomy is slightly different from the wording in Exodus. Deuteronomy 5:21 says: "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife; and you shall not desire your neighbor's house, his field, his male servant, his female servant, his ox, his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's."

We should note that the order of "wife" and "house" is reversed between the two, and that Deuteronomy adds the word "desire" to the word "covet." Also, the word "field" is added in Deuteronomy.

Commentaries are trying to explain the reverse order, but without convincing arguments. It appears that in God's eyes, one is as bad as the other. In addition, the examples are given in Exodus and elaborated in Deuteronomy to make it clear that nothing which belongs to our neighbor is to be coveted or desired by us.

#### **Definitions of Coveting**

The definition of "covet" is helpful. In Hebrew, it can mean "delight," "lust after" and "desire," and it is used in a wrong way in both passages above. (There is a right kind of desire as it pertains to the things of God, but this is not what is addressed in the Ten Commandments.)

The dictionary defines "covet" as "yearn to possess or have (something)." In this respect, something that does not belong to us. When we covet our neighbor's wife or our neighbor's house, we are resentful for what our neighbor has, and we desire to have them instead.

Synonyms for "covet" are "lust, desire, thirst for, fancy" or "want."

The Tenth Commandment is related to man's relationship to his

loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me" (Matthew 10:35–38).

### ***Don't Live in the Past***

Those who submit to God have always and will always face persecutions. Deliverance from the evils perpetuated against us can only be achieved by true submission to God. Christ allowed Himself to be murdered and He depended on the Father who "raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power" (1 Corinthians 6:14). Likewise, Stephen, as he was being murdered, called upon God for deliverance and then, before dying "knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, 'Lord, do not charge them with this sin.' And when he had said this, he fell asleep" (Acts 7:60). This kind of mind-set is only possible when we take on the mind of God through His Holy Spirit.

We must not be defined by our past, no matter how difficult it might have been. If we have accepted God's Spirit, we must focus first on changing our own character. Paul states, "Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection" (Colossians 3:12–14). It is crucial that true Christians "be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness" (Ephesians 4:23–24). No matter what we were, God has a plan for who we will become—members of His holy righteous Family.

### ***Dying Prematurely***

We read in the Fifth Commandment that we will live long on the earth if we honor our parents (compare again Ephesians 6:3). It is indeed correct that God promises long life to those who honor their parents. We must understand, however, the correct meaning of this promise, especially when we might see that a seemingly righteous person dies "prematurely." The three points below will expand on this:

### 1. Keep all of God's Laws

Even though some may appear to live righteously and to keep the Fifth Commandment, they really do not, in God's eyes. The New Testament makes it clear that a believing man or woman should look after and take care of their parents (1 Timothy 5:4, 16; compare Mark 7:10–13).

In addition, some who die without having enjoyed long lives, might have kept the Fifth Commandment in a general way, but they might have violated other commandments of God. But God's Law is a package, and cannot be looked upon in an isolated fashion. James tells us that when we violate one of God's commandments, even though we keep the rest, we have still violated God's entire Law (James 2:8–13). When we do that, we cannot expect God's protection in dangerous situations, or His intervention to save us from premature death.

We must emphasize that God's laws, statutes and judgments are a package, to be kept in their entirety. This is not to say that we will keep them perfectly—we will slip and fall—but we can obtain God's forgiveness upon our repentance, and move on (1 John 1:8–9). The righteous may fall seven times, but he will rise up again every time (Proverbs 24:16).

### 2. Protection from Evil

In properly understanding the Fifth Commandment in Exodus 20:12, we must realize that God may decide to override His general promise of long physical life, under certain circumstances. It was preordained that Christ's life on earth would be short—even though He kept all of God's laws perfectly. Also, God may sometimes decide to let a righteous person die, to save him from the evil to come, as the righteous will be resurrected to eternal life within the next second of his consciousness (compare 1 Corinthians 15:50–54).

### 3. Living Long on the Earth

The fact that the righteous will inherit ETERNAL life provides a third way of looking at God's promise in the Fifth Commandment. When God resurrects a righteous person to eternal life, He will give him the land or the earth to possess forever (compare Matthew 5:5; Psalm 37:11; Isaiah 57:13; 60:21). Please note that both in the Hebrew and in the Greek, the words for "land" and

Our adversary, Satan the devil, is a liar and father of it, and we must resist his influence and temptations at all times.

The value of Truth is generally not a consideration in society today. God is the true God and the God of Truth, and we must follow His example at all times. We must love the Truth and hate the lie (Proverbs 13:5). What we say must be true, because a faithful witness does not lie (Proverbs 14:5).



Word (Proverbs 30:5–6); saying that we have not sinned or do not sin (1 John 1:8, 10); saying that we know God while not keeping His commandments (1 John 2:4); or saying that we love God while hating our brother (1 John 4:20).

Some might say that lying can be justified (for example, when the harlot Rahab lied about the spies she had hidden or the midwives who lied about the new-born Hebrew babies whom Pharaoh wanted to kill), but lies are always wrong. God can help us and others without the need of lies. God did not bless Rahab or the midwives for lying; He blessed them because they saved lives, but He was not happy about their lies. In God's eyes, lying is always an abomination (Proverbs 12:22; 6:16–19).

### **Confidentiality Must Be Honored**

One may still wonder whether concealing or keeping certain information secret constitutes a lie and is deceitful conduct. However, the Bible makes it clear that we are NOT to violate confidentiality. If we were always obligated to tell everything we know when asked, then we could not uphold confidentiality—even though the Bible instructs us to do so.

For instance, we read in Proverbs 11:13: “A talebearer reveals secrets, But he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter.” And Proverbs 25:9 tells us: “... do not disclose the secret to another.”

We are instructed to “conceal knowledge” (Proverbs 12:23), and Proverbs 17:9 reveals: “He who covers a transgression seeks love, But he who repeats a matter separates friends.”

It is important in confidential counseling sessions that the parties clearly understand to whom confidentiality applies (a minister might have to divulge information to other ministers) and when confidentiality ceases, and when the counselor might have a legal duty to divulge certain information.

We also read that Jesus Christ spoke in parables to the public at large, so that they would not understand (Matthew 13:10–15). Christ did not lie or try to deceive—but He did not want to divulge information to the people which they could not properly handle. He warns us not to cast our pearls before swine, so that they don't turn on us and tear us in pieces (Matthew 7:6; compare Proverbs 9:7).

“earth” are the same; i.e., *erets* in Hebrew and *ge* in Greek. When we read in Exodus 20:12 that the one who honors his parents will be living long in the land, it can also be understood to mean that he will live “long” on the earth—as an immortal Spirit being in the Family of God (Christ will rule on earth, and we will rule with and under Him.). The implication is, of course, that if we refuse to keep God's commandments, and especially the one enjoining us to honor our parents, we will not obtain eternal life—we will not live long on the earth or in the land which God has promised to Abraham and his spiritual descendants (compare Romans 4:13–25; Galatians 3:29).

God has indeed promised long life to those who obey Him. A special blessing is expressed for those who honor their parents. It is not an unconditional promise in the physical realm, as God may deem fit to override His promise for special, individual reasons. Barring this, we can rely on God's promise of long life in this flesh—and, more importantly, life everlasting in the Kingdom of God.

Nevertheless, God told Samuel what to do, and he came and sacrificed to God. He did not tell the people the main reason for his coming, though what he did say was true. The *Nelson Study Bible* comments: "God did not instruct Samuel to lie, but instead He provided a legitimate opportunity for Samuel to visit with Jesse and his family. By performing the anointing in Bethlehem while officiating at a sacrifice, Samuel would avoid arousing the suspicions of Saul."

Similarly the *Ryrie Study Bible*: "The Lord did not suggest deception, but simply told Samuel to take care of the anointing while he was in Bethlehem on official business."

*Matthew Henry's Commentary* adds: "God orders him to cover his design with a sacrifice: 'Say, I have come to sacrifice'; and it was true he did, and it was proper that he should, when he came to anoint a king, chapter 11, verse 15."

We should also note that Samuel anointed King Saul in connection with a sacrifice (1 Samuel 9:10–27; 10:1; especially chapter 9, verse 12).

In addition to the fact that Samuel came to offer an actual animal sacrifice, his pronouncement, in following God's injunction, could have also been a reference to David himself—as David would become a living sacrifice with the anointment as king and the receipt of the gift of God's Holy Spirit (compare Romans 12:1; 1 Peter 2:5).

### ***Jeremiah Did Not Lie***

Another example can be found in Jeremiah 38:14–27. When King Zedekiah spoke in secret with Jeremiah who was imprisoned in a dungeon, he told Jeremiah not to reveal the main subject of their conversation, but rather tell those who would come to ask additional aspects which were also included in the conversation. In this, Jeremiah did not lie; what he said was true, but he did not reveal everything that had been discussed.

### ***What Else Constitutes Lying?***

On the other hand, lying can be deceitful, and it might be a fine line between not telling everything we know and lying about what we do know.

Also, lying includes breaking one's promise (Psalm 15:1–5); dishonesty in our business (Proverbs 11:1); adding something to God's

## Chapter 9

### The Sixth Commandment

*“You shall not murder (or kill)” (Exodus 20:13).*

This commandment is variously shown as “You shall not murder” or “You shall not kill,” according to whichever translation you turn to. The *Amplified Version* is “You shall not commit murder (unjustified, deliberate homicide),” making this a more descriptive version. However, replacing the word “kill” with the word “murder” has led to serious misunderstanding.

God values life highly, and He wants us to have that same approach. He is our Creator, as we read in Genesis 2:7: “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.”

He has set out a plan for the whole of mankind, which can be understood through His Holy Days, a plan that will give everyone the opportunity to be in His Kingdom *IF* they take advantage of that offer when they are called to His Way of Life. Life is important to God but can be treated with indifference in many parts of the world where life seems to be “cheap.”

Life can be ended prematurely by killing or murder, which is the unlawful taking of a human life. As we pointed out before, the Ten Commandments have been in force and effect since the creation of man, long before God spoke the Ten Commandments to Israel under Moses, and that included the commandment against killing or murder, showing that “murder” (rightly understood) is wrong (Genesis 4:8–12; 9:4–6, Exodus 1:15–17).

Murder, like all sin, begins in the human mind. It can be motivated for example by greed, envy, evil desire or hate. In James 1:13–15, we read: “Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires

How, then, are we to understand 1 Samuel 16:1–5, where God told Samuel to anoint a son of Jesse as king, but to tell the people that he came to sacrifice to God? Let us read the entire passage in context:

“Now the LORD said to Samuel, ‘How long will you mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go; I am sending you to Jesse the Bethlehemite. For I have provided Myself a king among his sons.’ And Samuel said, ‘How can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me?’ But the LORD said, ‘Take a heifer with you, and say, “I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.” Then invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; you shall anoint for Me the one I name to you.’ So Samuel did what the LORD said, and went to Bethlehem. And the elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, ‘Do you come peaceably?’ and he said, ‘Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice.’ Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons, and invited them to the sacrifice.”

God showed Samuel that He wanted young David—the youngest of Jesse’s eight sons—to be anointed king. “Then Samuel took his horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward” (verse 13).

God did not order Samuel to lie, and Samuel did not say anything that was untrue. However, Samuel did not say everything he knew—he kept part of the reason for his coming to himself. There is a difference to say something that is partly true and partly false, with the intent to deceive someone. As we saw earlier, when Abram told Abimelech that his wife was his sister, for fear that the people might kill him if they knew the Truth, he told a complete lie.

#### **Samuel Did Not Lie**

On the other hand, Samuel did not lie—even though his initial question to God (“How can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me”) shows a human character weakness in Samuel. He should have realized that God would protect him on his mission, since He had ordered him to go.

*Matthew Henry’s Commentary* adds the following thought: “Samuel’s faith was not so strong as one would have expected, else he would not have thus feared the rage of Saul.”

and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.”

There are many ways of killing or murdering others, although, in some cases, man tries to justify such action and we will review some of those areas.

### ***Killing in War?***

Many advocate the “need” for waging war in diverse places, even if this would lead to the death of innocent civilians. The argument has been advanced that true Christians are allowed, if not compelled, to participate in “righteous” wars. One “supporting” concept is that God does not view killing in war as murder. Those who believe this idea refer to the fact that in Exodus 20:13 (“You shall not kill”), the Hebrew word *ratsach* is used for “kill,” and they say that it only means “murder,” and that killing in war is not murder and is therefore allowed.

That conclusion is false. The Hebrew word *ratsach* can even refer to ACCIDENTAL killing. The person who kills accidentally is referred to as a “manslayer” (*ratsach*). He was not worthy of death, but he had to flee to a city of refuge to stay there until the high priest died. If the perpetrator hated the victim in the past, or if he struck him intentionally with a stone, an iron implement or a wooden hand weapon, even though he might not have hated the victim, he was still to be executed (Deuteronomy 19:4, 6, 11; Numbers 35:20–21; 16–18). In all these cases, the Hebrew word for “manslayer” is *ratsach*; i.e., “murderer.”

So, accidental killing (including of innocent civilians in war, so-called casualties) is prohibited and sinful in the eyes of God.

Apart from the fact that many translations (such as the *Authorized Version*, the *Revised Standard Version*, the *New American Bible* and the *New Jerusalem Bible*, as well as virtually *all* German Bibles) render Exodus 20:13 as, “You shall not kill” (not: “You shall not murder”), the argument that the Ten Commandments exclude killing in war is also faulty for the following reason: Those who advocate fighting in war allege that whenever killing in war is described in the Old Testament, the Hebrew word is *harag*, and they say that this word does NOT describe murder. But the truth is that the word *harag* IS very clearly used for “murder.”

Psalm 10:8 speaks of a person who “murders” (*harag*) the innocent

Even before God appeared with two angels to tell Abraham and Sarah that they would have a son within a year, God had already promised descendants to Abraham (Genesis 15:1–5, 18). God had specifically said to Abraham (then called Abram) that “one who will come from your own body shall be your heir” (verse 4).

But as time progressed and Abraham and Sarah remained childless, they began to doubt in God’s promise and reasoned that they had to produce offspring through Abraham and Sarah’s maid, Hagar (Genesis 16:1–2). This episode showed a lack of faith of both Abraham and Sarah. This is perhaps another reason why Sarah later denied that she had laughed when God repeated His promise that they would have a son. She realized that she had again, for a second time, manifested a lack of faith in God’s Word and Power. After all, it was she who persuaded Abraham to bring forth offspring through her maid Hagar.

However, there were other occasions when God told Abraham to listen to the voice of his wife (Genesis 21:8–12). It is always a matter of what God’s Will is in a particular matter.

Generally, Abraham and Sarah obeyed God and kept His commandments, but they were not perfect and did sin on occasion. Every lie is a sin against God and most often also against neighbor. When they realized their sin and repented, God forgave them. They will be in God’s Kingdom and one of God’s born-again sons and daughters, ruling under Christ in the Millennium and beyond (Hebrews 11:39–40).

### ***Did God Tell Samuel to Lie?***

God cannot lie. It is against His very nature and being to lie (Numbers 23:19; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18). God has told us in His Word that it is a sin to lie (Exodus 20:16). God does not tempt us to sin (James 1:13), and He does not tempt us—let alone order us—to lie. On the other hand, God sometimes uses lying people or even lying spirits or demons to carry out His purpose (compare 1 Kings 22). This does not mean that God orders anyone to lie—but since men and demons are free moral agents and may decide to sin, God may use them to accomplish a certain goal—but the decision to sin, including to lie, is still the decision of the man or the spirit involved. (For a better understanding, please read our free booklet, *Angels, Demons and the Spirit World*, especially pages 46–51.)

the fear of God is not in this place; and they will kill me on account of my wife. But indeed she is truly my sister. She is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife. And it came to pass, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said to her, "This is your kindness that you should do for me: *in every place, wherever we go, say of me, 'He is my brother.'*"

Abraham's and Sarah's lies are not justified by the fact that Sarah was Abraham's half-sister. In God's eyes, they were husband and wife, and God calls them consistently that way in His Word. Abraham and Sarah suppressed the Truth that they were married, with the intent to deceive their neighbors. Even though Sarai was his half-sister, she was clearly his wife (Genesis 20:11–13)—and the Bible always refers to Sarai (later Sarah) as his wife. The Bible never calls her his sister (Genesis 12:18–19; 18:9). Further, Abram's bad example apparently prompted Isaac to repeat his father's mistake (compare Genesis 26:6–10).

Abraham had asked Sarah to lie in order to save his life, placing a guilt trip on her by suggesting that she would be unkind to him if she did not tell the lie, and she would be without the protection of her beloved husband if they killed him and let her live. Sarah obeyed her husband and broke one of God's commandments in the process. She should have never done this. Even though we read that wives are to submit to their husbands, we are also told that this must be done "in the Lord" (Ephesians 5:22). That is, they must never violate God's Will, and if a demand or request of their husbands would violate God's Word, they must disobey. We are told that we must obey God, rather than man, in a conflict situation (Acts 5:29).

Of course, Abraham should have never lied, nor asked Sarah to lie for him or to actively or passively participate in or condone his lie. Both showed a lack of faith. They were afraid that if they were to tell the Truth, Abraham would be killed. They did not fully believe that God would be powerful enough to protect them.

But we also read that both Abraham and Sarah grew in faith, as we all must do (Romans 4:19).

Wives are not to obey their husbands when they are asked to do wrong. And husbands must not listen to the voice of their wives when they ask or suggest to them that they do or say something which would violate God's Will.

in secret. Hosea 9:13 states that Ephraim will bring out his children to the "murderer" (*harag*). Jeremiah 4:31 says that Jeremiah's soul is weary because of "murderers" (*harag*). Genesis 4:8 explains that Cain killed (*harag*) his brother Abel, and 1 John 3:12 clearly shows that Cain "murdered" Abel.

That fighting in war is clearly sinful and murder in the eyes of God can be seen in James 4:1–2: "Where do wars and fights come from among you... You MURDER and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war." The Greek word for "war" is *polemeo*, and it is used in Revelation 17:14, referring to people who make war with the Lamb.

So we see that fighting and killing in war is prohibited by the Sixth Commandment. It is sinful and constitutes murder. This means that a true Christian must refuse to participate in war. It means that he must be a conscientious objector and cannot bear arms to be used against humans. He must not voluntarily join the army. If compelled by the government to enlist, a Christian must refuse to serve in any capacity that would violate the spirit of the Sixth Commandment against murder.

It also means that a Christian must refuse to work as a policeman or in any occupation which might require him to kill another human being. A Christian would have to refuse to work for an organization or business which is strictly engaged in producing weapons of war. A Christian would have to refuse to work as a judge or a juror for numerous reasons, including, but not limited to, condemning an alleged criminal to death. A Christian must refuse to vote for someone who advocates and engages in war. An American Christian CANNOT and MUST NOT vote in presidential elections, because the American President is also Commander in Chief of its military. Non-American Christians face the same challenge, as every governmental official, in one way or another, advocates or participates in acts of war when the opportunity arises.

We know that many see it differently. Christians may say that all their fellow citizens and brethren MUST vote in presidential elections, and if need be, even fulfill their "patriotic duties" by joining the military and fighting against their country's enemies.

That kind of thinking would be in DIRECT opposition to one of the most CRITICAL and FOUNDATIONAL areas of CHURCH DOCTRINE!

Mr. Herbert W Armstrong, the late human leader of the (now de-funct) *Worldwide Church of God*, stated the following in his booklet,

*Military Service and War*, copyright 1967 and 1985:

“Military service, bearing arms (for use against humans), killing, war, is directly contrary to God’s Law in principle! It is not the WAY of giving, sharing, helping, serving (page 11)... Actually, reliance on military arms, physical force, and human allies, is SIN. It breaks God’s Commandment, ‘Thou SHALT NOT KILL!’ The fact that ALL nations have chosen the way of SIN does not make it RIGHT! And the individual Christian, today, having God’s Spirit, and in God’s CHURCH, must face this question and decide for himself whether he will go along THE WAY OF SIN, as the overwhelming majority are doing, or whether he will OBEY God, and then TRUST GOD with his life—TRUST GOD alone!” (pages 24–25).

Some have claimed that Israel went to war, pursuant to God’s explicit order, and that therefore killing in war cannot be wrong.

Herbert Armstrong wrote on page 23: “It was altogether unnecessary for these Israelites to arm themselves and wage war. It was WRONG! It was SIN.”

In our free booklet, “*Should YOU Fight in War?*”, we state the following:

“On page 33, Mr. Armstrong begins to address the question why God ordered the Israelites at times to wage war: ‘These descendants of Abraham had *made their decision* to be a fighting, war-waging nation. That decision was theirs to make. And since they had made it..., God gave orders for *them* to do what fighting—and killing—was necessary to accomplish God’s PURPOSE of putting them in the land of Promise! But *that did not make war* RIGHT. Whether to DO right or wrong—that is MAN’S decision! These Israelites did not need to fight! So it was BECAUSE of Israel’s faithlessness and disobedience that God ALLOWED them to SIN by taking up arms. And therefore God used them as His instruments in driving out the nations illegally in their land. Even at that later date the Israelites could have REPENTED, *changed* their decision, and trusted God to fight their battles for them... Having committed the sin of DOUBT, these Israelites proceeded to commit the SIN OF FIGHTING—of WAR!’”

### ***The New Testament’s Teaching on Killing in War***

Romans 12:17–21 tells us that we have to overcome evil with

attempt concealing it from an all-seeing eye; she was told, to her shame, ‘Thou didst laugh...’ It is a shame to do amiss, but a greater shame to deny it; for thereby we add iniquity to our iniquity. Fear of a rebuke often betrays us into this snare. *See Isaiah 57:11*, ‘Whom hast thou feared, that thou hast lied?’ But we deceive ourselves if we think to impose upon God; he can and will bring truth to light, to our shame. ‘He that covers his sin cannot prosper,’ for the day is coming which will discover it.”

### ***Further Deceit and Abraham’s Lie***

The second set of circumstances involving Sarah’s deceitful conduct is described in Genesis 20, when Abraham told the lie that Sarah was his sister, denying the Truth that she was his wife. As a consequence, King Abimelech took Sarah to become his wife. One might ask why Sarah did not speak up and tell Abimelech that she was Abraham’s wife. Why did she keep silent? Why did she cover up Abraham’s lie?

We read of an earlier account in Genesis 12:11–13:

“And it came to pass, when he [Abram, later called Abraham] was close to entering Egypt, that he said to Sarai [later called Sarah] his wife: ‘Indeed I know that you are a woman of beautiful countenance. Therefore it will happen, when the Egyptians see you, that they will say, “This is his wife”; and they will kill me, but they will let you live. Please say you are my sister, that it may be well with you for your sake, and that I may live because of you.’”

God revealed to Pharaoh that Sarai was Abram’s wife. Both Abram and Sarai lied to Pharaoh about this. And later, both repeated the same lie to Abimelech.

As God did in the case of Pharaoh, He revealed the Truth to Abimelech—this time in a dream. We read in Genesis 20:4:

“But Abimelech had not come near her, and he said, ‘Lord, will you slay a righteous nation also? Did he not say to me, “She is my sister”? And she, even she said herself, “He is my brother.” In the integrity of my heart and innocence of my hands I have done this.’”

### ***Why Did Sarah Participate in Abraham’s Lie?***

Why did she even repeat it herself? We read in Genesis 20:10–13:

“Then Abimelech said to Abraham, ‘What did you have in view, that you have done this thing?’ And Abraham said, ‘Because I thought, surely

## **Human Beings Have Been Lying**

Men and women down through the ages have lied. The Bible is full of examples showing how people lied... including righteous people.

We read about Cain's lie to God when He asked him about his brother Abel whom he had murdered; Jacob's lie and deception toward his father Isaac when he pretended to be Esau; Rachel's lie to her father Laban regarding the idol that she had hidden; David's lies about his relationship to Saul when he fled from him and pretended to be on a secret mission; Peter's lies when he denied Christ three times; and Ananias and Sapphira's lie about the proceeds from the sale of their possessions.

Many more examples could be added but we will focus now on Sarah and Abraham.

### **Why Did Sarah Lie?**

Sarah, the wife of Abraham, is described in Scripture as a faithful and righteous woman (Isaiah 51:1–2; Hebrews 11:11; 1 Peter 3:5–6). Still, we read that she broke the Ninth Commandment and lied on several occasions. There were mainly two different sets of circumstances that induced Sarah to lie.

Sarah's first lie is recorded in Genesis 18. God, in the Person of Jesus Christ, appeared with two angels to Abraham and Sarah and promised them that they would have a son within a year. Genesis 18:11–15 states: "Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age; and Sarah had passed the age of childbearing. Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, 'After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?' And the LORD said to Abraham, 'Why did Sarah laugh, saying, "Shall I surely bear a child, since I am old?" Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.' But Sarah denied it, saying, 'I did not laugh,' for she was afraid. And He said, 'No, but you did laugh!'"

Sarah denied—lied against—the Truth because she was afraid to admit that she didn't have enough faith.

*Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible* states:

"She denied, saying, I did not laugh, thinking nobody could contradict her: she told this lie, because she was afraid; but it was in vain to

good; that we are not to avenge ourselves; and that we even give food and drink to our enemies if we find them in need. Matthew 5:44 and Luke 6:27–28 command us to love our enemies. This tells us that we cannot fight or kill our enemies. We are told in Romans 14:19 and in 1 Peter 3:11, to pursue the things which lead to peace. We are called to be peacemakers (Matthew 5:9; James 3:18).

John the Baptist told Roman soldiers to "do violence to no man" (Luke 3:14, *Authorized Version*). He was showing man how to live in peace (Luke 1:79). Jesus Christ came to preach peace (Acts 10:36), as man does not know the way to peace (Luke 19:41–42; Romans 3:17), living, instead, the way that brings about bloodshed and war (Romans 3:10–18). Christ will return to make an end to war (Psalm 46:9). He will scatter all those who delight in war (Psalm 68:28–30). After His return, all will learn how to live in peace, and there will be no more wars (Isaiah 2:2–4). Weapons of war will be destroyed (Hosea 2:18). At that time, there will be no end to the increase of peace (Isaiah 9:7).

Today, as ambassadors of Christ, we are to proclaim peace and reject any kind of war (Isaiah 52:7). We read in James 4:1–4 that wars originate with man's sinful and carnal desires, which MUST be overcome. We must live today the way of peace, the way that all of mankind will learn to live after Christ's return. Christ told Peter to put his sword away (Matthew 26:52). We are warned that all those who use the sword will perish by it (Revelation 13:10; compare 2 Samuel 2:26). Christ told His disciples that they were not following God's instructions when they wanted to destroy their enemies (Luke 9:54–56). Christ told Pilate that His kingdom was not of this world, and therefore, His servants would not fight (John 18:36). Paul confirmed that Christ's followers are not to fight (2 Corinthians 10:3–4; Ephesians 6:12). We find that Satan is the one who deceives man to believe that he should fight in war (Revelation 20:7–10).

### **Self-Defense**

A related question is whether we are allowed to kill another human being in self-defense.

When we find ourselves, or others, in a dangerous, challenging, life-threatening situation, we must PRAY to God, with faith, to HELP us out of that situation. To fight our fight for us! To give us the wisdom and

the power NOT to do the WRONG thing, however tempting it may be!

We must realize that no matter what harm we may WANT to do physically in a given situation, we must not seriously injure or kill the attacker. But unless we understand beforehand, and have in our mind that we are not to do something with the intent to seriously injure or kill the attacker, we might very well do so when the occasion presents itself. If we carry a gun with us or have one handy, say, next to our bed, we will certainly try to use it, but then may be killed in the process.

People who disagree with the foregoing may ask you what you would do if you came home and a robber was in the process of raping your wife or killing your husband. Realistically, how many times does this happen? But if it does happen, do you really think that you can take a gun and shoot the attacker, and that the attacker would let you do it without any resistance? Chances are, he will use his gun first. In any case, to use a gun and shoot the attacker would be against the clear biblical teaching of prohibiting killing. But what about just trying to injure him? In the heat of the moment, you may not be able to do just that, even if you wanted to. And if the attacker would only be injured, he would still have the chance to kill you or others who are with you.

Christ told Peter, when he pulled his sword in defense of Christ and injured the servant, to put his sword away. Christ's protection did not depend on human weapons. It depended on God the Father and His angels. So, too, with us. Our *real protection* comes from the same source!

When we are confronted with aggression, we need to pray to God to give us strength not to violate His Law by killing the aggressors. God will not allow us to be overtaken by a temptation that is too difficult for us to handle (1 Corinthians 10:13). If there is an opportunity, we can hide or escape from our enemies, as Christ did (John 10:39). Christ never fought in war, nor did He ever commit violence to any man. Neither did the early apostles and disciples after their conversion. Neither must we today. God has not changed! God promises us protection from our enemies when we do what He commands (Genesis 35:1–5; Exodus 34:22–24). If God were to choose not to protect us in a given situation, for whatever reason, we must still not violate His Law by killing another human being. Rather, we must have the faith and act as Daniel's three friends did, when Nebuchadnezzar threw

Truth at all times. This is confirmed in James 1:17, where we read: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning."

Psalms 100:5 states: "For the LORD is good His mercy is everlasting, And His truth endures to all generations." Truth is of paramount importance to God, and every generation from Adam until today has been subject to the same Truth from the great God. His character is perfect and His Word is always sure.

John 14:6 reads: "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.'" Again, we read about the importance of Truth.

*Albert Barnes' Notes on the Whole Bible* has these comments to make:

"[God is] the source of truth, or he who originates and communicates truth for the salvation of men. Truth is a representation of things as they are. The life, the purity, and the teaching of Jesus Christ was the most complete and perfect representation of the things of the eternal world that has been or can be presented to man... the life of Jesus was the truth. The opinions of men are fancy, but the doctrines of Jesus were nothing more than a representation of facts as they exist in the government of God. It is implied in this, also, that Jesus was the fountain of all truth; that by his inspiration the prophets spoke, and that by him all truth is communicated to men."

John 18:37 reads: "Pilate therefore said to Him, 'Are You a king then?' Jesus answered, 'You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.'"

*Ellicott's Commentary for English readers* has this to say:

"He came to be a witness—a martyr—to the truth, and to send forth others to be witnesses and martyrs to the same truth, through the Holy Spirit, [which] should guide them into all truth... His kingdom was not of this world [or present age or civilisation]: it possessed [currently] neither land nor treasury, neither senate nor legions, neither consuls nor procurators; but it was to extend its sceptre over all the kingdoms of the earth."

The value of Truth is generally not a consideration in society today. God is the true God, a God of Truth, and our adversary is a liar and father of it.



Wouldn't it be a marvellous world if you could trust anyone and everyone and know that what they said was always the Truth? It will be one day of course, but not at this time.

### **Where Lying Originates**

Jesus made it quite clear, as recorded in John 8:44, that lying and misleading people emanates from Satan the devil: "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it."

What a huge difference it would make in this world if just this one Commandment about not lying, not bearing false witness, was kept by everyone!

### **Where Truth Emanates From**

God is a God of Truth. He clearly shows us in the Scriptures that He wants us to learn to hate lying and dishonesty and to love Truth. In 2 Thessalonians 2 there is a very important lesson for the people of God to learn and remember. Paul was writing about apostasy and the coming of the lawless one in verses 8 and 9, and then gives a reason why some will perish. We read in verse 10: "...and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved." Having a love of the Truth means to value the understanding of the Truth God has given us, and to live our lives accordingly. John 17:17 reads: "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth." The people of God are to be set apart (sanctified) by the Truth of God, which is His Word.

### **Truth Is of Paramount Importance to God**

Below are a few Scriptures, which emphasize this point.

Deuteronomy 32:4 states: "He is the Rock, His work is perfect; For all His ways are justice, A God of truth and without injustice; Righteous and upright is He."

God is ever faithful and will always keep His promises—His Word is completely reliable. He cannot ever be charged with unreliability or unfaithfulness, as He is the perfect God, and part of that perfection is

them into the fiery furnace (Daniel 3:14–18).

Since it is God who commands us not to kill (Exodus 20:13), we must not violate His Law by taking the life of another human being, for ANY reason! We must, therefore, not kill in war, nor enter the military to carry arms, or serve as combatants. We would be able to perform alternate service work under civilian direction, when required by law.

### **Killing Through Abortion?**

The question of abortion has been debated long and hard over many years with many different and varied outcomes. We will cover this subject from a biblical standpoint, but to start with, we will look at the current situation around the world.

Some have put forward the idea of no abortion at all, under any circumstances, while others have suggested that it be allowed up to a certain time.

On the BBC website under "ethics," the following information is available:

"At various times some of the following have been allowed in some societies:

"—abortion for the sake of the mother's health including her mental health and where a pregnancy is the result of a crime such as rape, incest, or child abuse;

"—abortion where the child of the pregnancy would have an 'unacceptable' quality of life such as cases where the child would have serious physical handicaps, serious genetic problems or serious mental defects;

"—abortion for social reasons, including poverty, the mother being unable to cope with a child (or another child), or the mother being too young to cope with a child;

"—abortion as a matter of government policy, as a way of regulating population size, as a way of regulating groups within a population and as a way of improving the population.

"Most opponents of abortion agree that abortion for the sake of the mother's health can be morally acceptable if there is a real risk of serious damage to the mother."

On the *Debatepedia* website under "Debate: Abortion—'Should abortions of any kind be permitted?,'" the following brief excerpts are shown under "background and context":

## Chapter 12

### The Ninth Commandment

*“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor” (Exodus 20:16).*

Lying is endemic in society today. Some people get into such a habit of lying that they may get to the stage where they can't tell fact from fiction. They have become pathological liars.

When we place a call to a large organization, we often hear a message stating that the call will be recorded for staff training and so on. The company can easily refer to such a recorded conversation if there is a difference of opinion on any matter. One would think that this might encourage a truthful response, but it does not necessarily work that way.

#### ***A Man's Word His Bond?***

The day when a man's word was his bond is generally a thing of the past. A handshake on a deal a hundred years ago was sufficient, but it certainly is not so today. It is a great feeling to be able to trust someone and to trust their word, but this rarely seems to be the case in today's society.

The insurance industry is plagued with false claims—lies—where people feign injury, pretending to have whiplash and other assorted problems that they do not have, all with the express intent of gaining financial compensation. But they had better beware because Scripture says that “whatsoever a man sows, that he will also reap” (Galatians 6:7).

When someone sues someone else in court and there are two entirely different stories, then someone is lying—and it could be both of them in different parts of the story. Why is this done? Usually for financial gain but it may be for other reasons—like covering up for someone else. But God is adamant that we must not lie! Lies, half-truths and deviousness for any reason should not be so! Shoddy and misleading advertisements are other ways of lying. Incorrect labelling of goods is also lying.

“The issue of abortion is one of the most contentious, and emotive dilemmas faced by modern societies. The question is whether one should allow the termination of a pregnancy. For some, the question is even more fundamental: at what stage is the embryo or fetus in the uterus to be regarded as a child? At fertilization? At birth? Or, maybe somewhere between? The battle-lines are drawn between strict, religious (‘pro-life’) arguments (that it is never permissible), and those (‘pro-choice’) that emphasise the woman's right to choose as the primary concern. While abortion has been legal in America since the landmark *Roe vs. Wade* case in the early 1970s, this is by no means a reflection of universal agreement—either international or within America itself—as many Western countries still have considerable restrictions on abortion. For example, the Irish position has softened only recently, and the Catholic Church steadfastly refuses to change its resolutely pro-life stance in the face of criticism from Women's and other lobby-groups.

#### ***Whose Rights Are Involved?***

“The abortion debate revolves around a number of questions. Does a woman have a right to her body that the fetus cannot take away? Does this right mean that a woman has a right to ‘unplug’ from the fetus? Or, does the fetus have a right to life that is binding on the woman and her body and that outweighs any rights held by the woman, requiring her to give birth? Is a fetus only a fetus or is it a person that deserves rights and protections? Does ‘human life’ begin at conception or at birth? (*our emphasis*). Is destroying a fetus akin to ‘killing a human’ or murder?

“What about the biological father? What rights does he have over a fetus? If the woman seeks an abortion, can he prevent it? And, what if she wants to give birth to a child, while he does not want it to happen? What say does he have? Is this, therefore, simply a question of the woman's rights, or the man's rights as well? Is a woman responsible for actions and behavior that may lead to an unwanted pregnancy, making her responsible for the fetus even if it is ‘unwanted’? Are there circumstances in which a woman cannot be said to be responsible for her own impregnation, such as failed contraception or rape? Can this justify an abortion?

“Is abortion an issue that is subjectively moral/immoral, so should

others—rather than words that tear down or destroy. We will be kind, tenderhearted and forgiving, realizing that God has forgiven us because of what Christ did for us (Ephesians 4:32).”

[it] be reserved to individual judgement (not law)? Must opponents simply tolerate the practice? Or, is the scale of abortions world-wide too large to ignore, and does this scale give cause to a ban?”

We can see from all of this information that, because God is never mentioned, the musings of man’s mind become the predominant questions to be answered, and there are plenty of questions asked, as we have just seen.

### ***Roe vs. Wade***

The American landmark *Roe vs. Wade* case in the early 1970s is mentioned above. In *Lifenews.com* on January 22, 2013, we read the following:

“As *Roe v. Wade* and its allowance for unlimited abortions throughout pregnancy turns 40 today, the woman behind the infamous Supreme Court case has pledged her life to overturning it.

“Norma McCorvey never wanted an abortion — she was seeking a divorce from her husband — but young, pro-abortion feminist attorney Sarah Weddington used McCorvey’s case as a means of attempting to overturn Texas’ law making most abortions illegal. Weddington took the case all the way to the Supreme Court, which invalidated every pro-life state law in the nation protecting unborn children and the rest is history.

“But most Americans don’t know that McCorvey, who was ‘pro-choice’ on abortion at the time, is now a pro-life advocate. She is now dedicated to reversing the Supreme Court case that bears her fictitious name, Jane Roe.”

It is interesting and encouraging to read that this woman who was involved in this case now feels very differently. She said: “I think it’s safe to say that the entire abortion industry is based on a lie... I am dedicated to spending the rest of my life undoing the law that bears my name.” She concluded the following in a 60-second advertisement: “You read about me in history books, but now I am dedicated to spreading the truth about preserving the dignity of all human life from natural conception to natural death.”

### ***Worrying Statistics***

Statistics of abortions are nothing short of alarming, and we read on

US *Abortions Clock.org*, the following figures as at the end of May 2019:

- Abortions in the USA since 1973 (the time of *Roe v Wade*) are now over 61 million.
- Worldwide abortions for 2019 were 16 million.
- Worldwide abortions since 1980 are over 1.5 billion.

In another report in 2013, Dr. Brian Clowes, director of education and research at Human Life International, investigated the number of worldwide abortions since 1973. The results were staggering! He estimated that there have been more than 1.72 billion abortions over the last 40 years, a trend that is not lessening but growing exponentially.

Whether the figures are 1.5 billion or 1.72 billion, they still represent an enormous number of lives that have been killed before birth.

Over 200,000 abortions are performed each year in Britain. On the *Christian Institute* website, we can read this information: “Unknown thousands of human embryos are frozen, stored and destroyed by assisted reproductive technologies. In addition, human embryos are either specifically created, or obtained as excess ‘spares’ from IVF procedures, for use in destructive experimentation. Embryonic stem cell technology also means that human embryos are routinely destroyed in order to harvest such cells. More and more sophisticated prenatal screening techniques, including pre-implantation genetic diagnosis, have been developed to implement a eugenic ‘search and destroy’ mission against the unborn who are suspected of being disabled.”

According to *worldpopulationreview.org*, “One of the nations with the highest rate of abortion is Russia. According to UN reports, Russia’s abortion rate is 37.4. In other words, for every 1,000 women between 15 to 44, 37.4 had an abortion. Another nation with a high abortion rate is Cuba. According to data from the United Nations, Cuba had an abortion rate of 28.9...”

“The abortion rates of other nations include:

“United States: 19.6; Hungary: 19.4; China: 19.2; New Zealand: 18.2; France: 17.4; Norway: 16.2; Denmark: 15.2; Australia: 14.2; United Kingdom: 4.2; Canada: 13.7; Israel: 12.5 Spain: 11.7 Italy: 10.0; Netherlands: 9.7; Belgium: 9.2; Japan: 9.2; Portugal: 9.0; Greece: 7.2; Switzerland: 7.1; Costa Rica: 6.9; Germany: 6.1.”

wrong, and doing what is right. Rather than taking and stealing, we are to be giving and sharing.

This principle can also be seen in other aspects of life. We are told not to commit adultery, but rather, to love our own mate. Proverbs 5:15–20 tells us:

“(Verse 15) Drink water from your own cistern, And running water from your own well.”

“(Verses 18–20)...rejoice with the wife of your youth. As a loving deer and a graceful doe, Let her breasts satisfy you at all times; And always be enraptured with her love. For why should you, my son, be enraptured by an immoral woman, And be embraced in the arms of a seductress?”

The same principle applies to the commandment against murder. Rather than killing or hating someone, we are to love them. Rather than participating in war, we are to be peacemakers.

Consider also God’s other commandments. Rather than dishonoring our parents, we are to honor them. Rather than violating the Sabbath, we are to keep it holy. Rather than dishonoring God’s Name and using foul language, we are to speak wholesome words and glorify God (Ephesians 4:29). And, as we will see in the [next chapter](#), rather than lying, we are to tell the truth.

We state the following in our free booklet, *Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians—How to Understand It*:

“As Paul points out in Ephesians 4:25, 26, 29 and 31, when we put off the old man, we put away lying and wrath, as well as stealing, bad language and evil speaking, bitterness, anger and malice. Rather than living as this world does, we will be different. We won’t be like those anymore who are ‘lovers of themselves, lovers of money... unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal... headstrong, haughty’ (2 Timothy 3:1–4).

“When we replace the old man with the new man, then there is no room for the devil (Ephesians 4:27). When we obey God, humbly submitting ourselves to Him, the devil must flee from us (James 4:10, 7).

“And as Paul continues to show in Ephesians 4:25, 28 and 29, when we put on the new man, we speak only the truth, and we work willingly and earn money so that we can readily give to others who are in need. We will use words of edification—words that encourage

### ***The Tithe Belongs to God***

There are a number of such financial requirements that God placed on His people and administered through those He had put in positions of service to those whom He is calling. The tithe, however, has always belonged to Him (Leviticus 27:30). It is holy to Him! He did give the tithe for a period of time to the sons of Levi "...as an inheritance in return for the work which they perform[ed], the work of the tabernacle of meeting" (Numbers 18:21).

Yet we see in Hebrews 7:9 that the law of tithing existed long before God made an agreement with the sons of Levi, which agreement gave them the right to collect tithes for a certain time. As we read verses 15–28 of Hebrews 7, we see that this right to receive tithes later reverted back to Jesus Christ, whose right it was from the beginning. Today, Christ collects tithes through His Body, the Church, to be used to carry out the end-time Work of God.

Christ showed that this system of financing the Work of God is definitely applicable today (Matthew 23:23, Luke 11:42, Luke 18:12). And of course, God shows in Malachi 3:8–9 that one thing He is angry about at the time of the end is that His people are failing Him in this requirement!

### ***What to Do?***

In Ezekiel 33:15–16 is the answer to stealing: "If the wicked restores the pledge, gives back what he has stolen, and walks in the statutes of life without committing iniquity, he shall surely live; he shall not die. None of his sins which he has committed shall be remembered against him; he has done what is lawful and right; he shall surely live."

There is hope for those who may have become habitual thieves, but they have to repent of their actions and change their way of life, which includes giving to and sharing with others, rather than taking away from others.

We read earlier: "Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need" (Ephesians 4:28).

### ***The Principle of Repentance***

This describes the principle of repentance—ceasing to do what is

### ***An Oath to Preserve Life***

On the website *medicinenet.com*, several commitments by doctors are listed in "A Modern Version of the Hippocratic Oath":

"I swear to fulfill, to the best of my ability and judgment, this covenant which includes, amongst others, the following commitment:

"I will respect the privacy of my patients, for their problems are not disclosed to me that the world may know. Most especially must I tread with care in matters of life and death. If it is given me to save a life, all thanks. But *it may also be within my power to take a life; this awesome responsibility must be faced with great humbleness and awareness of my own frailty. Above all, I must not play at God.*"

The last italicized phrase is very interesting. Unfortunately, all too often, lives of the unborn are terminated for no reason other than inconvenience and even when there may be supposedly "valid" reasons for termination, this is really nothing more than a doctor "playing God" which they promise not to do. It is a very sad indictment on the medical profession when we read about the number of abortions that have been undertaken worldwide.

### ***Scriptural and Scientific Evidence***

Having given this background, let us review the Scriptural and scientific evidence to see when life begins, while dismissing arbitrary times, depending on thoughts, ideas and assumptions of many different people.

God's commandment in Exodus 20:13 ("You shall not kill") is pretty straightforward, one would think, but something that never seems to enter the equation when discussing abortion. Perhaps some think that a conceived child is not a member of the human race until it is born; perhaps others don't particularly care, while still others may not even think about it too much.

To answer the question as to when human life begins in the eyes of God, let us consider the following:

Numbers 26:59 tells us: "The name of Amram's wife *was* Jochebed the daughter of Levi, who was born to Levi in Egypt; and to Amram she bore Aaron and Moses and their sister Miriam." Levi had a daughter, not listed, who was born in Egypt—Jochebed who was the mother of Moses, Aaron and Miriam. Levi's wife must have been pregnant at the time and wasn't named and yet God made sure that she was

counted as a person making the journey. She was already conceived, but not yet born!

Exodus 21:22–25: “If men fight, and hurt a woman with [an unborn] child, so that she gives birth prematurely, yet no harm [to the woman] follows, he shall surely be punished accordingly as the woman’s husband imposes on him; and he shall pay as the judges determine [This shows that it is wrong in God’s eyes to hurt or kill an unborn child]. But if *any* harm follows, then you shall give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.” If men fight and hurt a pregnant woman and there is lasting harm to the woman (some claim, and/or to the child), then you shall give life for life, that is, a much higher compensation. We see that the life of an unborn child was important to God. (For a thorough discussion of this passage, see our free booklet, *Old Testament Laws—Still Valid Today?*, pages 49–56.)

Psalm 139:15–16 says: “My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, *And* skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When *as yet there were* none of them.” This was obviously in the womb!

Author John R Ling observed as follows: “Human life is a continuum from fertilisation until natural death... In other words, there is a demonstrable continuity throughout each human life. This continuity theme is beautifully expressed in three ways in Psalm 139:13–16. First, King David acknowledges God’s creational oversight of his earliest days: ‘For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb.’ It is God the Creator who directs and purposes the beginning of prenatal life. Second, there is the repetitive use of the personal pronouns, ‘I’ and ‘me’. This usage establishes the continuity of life between the adult David and the just-conceived David, as both the writer and the subject of this Psalm.

“At whatever stage and whatever age, whether in the womb or on the throne, it was always David. In other words, once fertilisation has occurred, there is a real, live human being...”

Isaiah 44:24 talks about God as “your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb.”

On the website “[gotquestions.org](http://gotquestions.org)” we read:

## ***Tithes and Offerings***

Since there does not seem to be any immediate consequences for them in shortchanging God, some Christians conclude that it is somehow all right to pay God less than what is commanded. Others think that when they faithfully tithe a full ten percent of their increase, that is all that is required of them. They overlook that even then, they are still called unprofitable servants because they simply fulfilled their duty to God to tithe (Luke 17:10).

But God says that we rob Him when we do not faithfully tithe or when we do not give Him acceptable offerings. It appears that the people described in the aforementioned book of Malachi were short-changing God in their tithes—giving only “nominal” offerings, or not paying any tithes or offerings at all.

Tithing from the entire amount of our increase is a requirement, and so are giving offerings, which are over and above God’s tithe. When giving an offering, we demonstrate to God where our heart really is. Both Cain and Abel gave offerings, but God rejected the offering of wicked and evil Cain, while accepting the offering of righteous Abel. It is interesting to note that there is no specific instruction as to how much of an offering we need to give—other than the fact that we are to consider and evaluate how much God has blessed us physically and spiritually. When we give an offering, we take advantage of the opportunity to show God how truly we appreciate His involvement in our lives, by giving cheerfully and not grudgingly (Deuteronomy 16:17; 2 Corinthians 9:7).

Our offering on each annual Holy Day should not only be for the purpose of proving to God that we would never want to rob Him, but also to demonstrate to Him our deep appreciation for His blessings and for the privilege to be part of and support the most important Work on the face of the earth today—that of announcing, preaching and publishing the gospel or good news of the soon-coming Kingdom of God to a sick and dying world. God knows and has decreed that His Work will be accomplished with or without our faithful tithes and generous offerings—but God has granted us the opportunity to participate in His great plan and purpose—and what a great privilege it is!

Moses, by the way, did not hesitate to institute the exhortation of God, which He asked of the people, as we can read in Exodus 35:5, 29.

Stealing disturbs the standards and stability that an orderly society seeks, and the results are feelings of fear and insecurity, and may sometimes include a desire for revenge. God's laws are always for our good, and they are not only moral and spiritual, they are always practical.

The commandment, "you shall not steal," has been flagrantly ignored by individuals and nations throughout human history. The consequences have been devastating for mankind as so many examples in the Word of God show. If it were possible to stop all stealing, consider what obeying just that one commandment would mean, and what if all of God's commandments were kept?

Each of us can and must examine our own lives to see if we are guilty of stealing, and a good starting point is to ask ourselves if we are stealing from God.

### **Will a Man Rob God?**

The following requirement of God is a "test" command for all of God's people. Notice this clear admonition found in Malachi, chapter 3:

"Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, For you have robbed Me, Even this whole nation. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house, And try Me now in this,' Says the Lord of hosts, 'If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it'" (verses 8–10).

Would any true Christian walk into a bank with a gun to make a "withdrawal"? He would not do this, since he would not want to blatantly violate God's Law in such a fashion, and he would also be afraid of doing so for fear of being caught, prosecuted and jailed for committing such a terrible crime. In addition, he knows that being caught and punished for committing such an act would ruin his reputation in the community. Yet, why is it that some Christians neglect to tithe altogether, or why do they sit at their office desk at home or at the kitchen table and write a check in support of the Church that does not represent a full tithe, even though they may realize that the tithing commandment is one of the basic requirements for a Christian?

For more information on how to calculate God's tithe, please read our free booklet, *Tithing—Today?*

"Science tells us that human life begins at the time of conception. From the moment fertilization takes place [fertilization, a synonym for conception, is defined as the action or process of fertilizing an egg, female animal, or plant, involving the fusion of male and female gametes to form a zygote. See definition of zygote below], the child's genetic makeup is already complete. Its gender has already been determined, along with its height and hair, eye and skin color. The only thing the embryo needs to become a fully-functioning being is the time to grow and develop."

From the website "*answers in genesis*," we read:

"The initial event along the road of human development is fertilization. Twenty-three chromosomes from the mother and 23 chromosomes from the father are combined at the time of fertilization. At this point, the genetic makeup of the individual is determined. At this time, a unique individual, known as a *zygote*, begins to exist."

### **The Spirit in Man**

In order to determine when in God's eyes, a human being begins to exist and live, we also need to understand the biblical concept of the spirit in man.

Job 32:8 says: "But there is a spirit in man, And the breath of the Almighty gives him understanding."

Zechariah 12:1 tells us: "The burden of the word of the LORD against Israel. Thus says the LORD, who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him."

This spirit in man empowers the human brain with intellect and mind power as we read in 1 Corinthians 2:11: "For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God."

When a person becomes converted, then God gives the person the Holy Spirit, in addition to the human spirit already in him or her. Romans 8:16 tells us: "The [Holy] Spirit [itself] bears witness with our spirit that we are [begotten] children of God."

But when does God give the human spirit to a person?

### **Begotten and Born**

When a person receives the gift of the Holy Spirit, he or she is not

yet born again, but already a begotten child of God and one of His heirs (Romans 8:16–17). This is on the spiritual level and it is exactly the same on the physical level.

The Holy Spirit is imparted at the conception of spiritual life. As we will show, the human spirit is also imparted at the conception of physical life. It is then that he or she becomes a human being.

A correct understanding of the “born again” process can help us understand the physical parallel—begetting, gestation and birth. Please see our free booklet, *Are You Already Born Again?*, for much more information on this matter.

David said that God knew him while still in the womb. Psalm 22:9–10 says: “But You *are* He who took Me out of the womb; You made Me trust *while* on My mother’s breasts. I was cast upon You from birth. From My mother’s womb You *have been* My God.” This passage suggests that God had given him the human spirit while still in the womb.

Isaiah was inspired to write in Isaiah 49:1: “Listen, O coastlands, to Me, And take heed, you peoples from afar! The LORD has called Me from the womb; From the matrix of My mother He has made mention of My name.” The same conclusion applies that God gives the human spirit while the person is still in the womb.

In speaking of Jacob in Hosea 12:3, God says: “He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength he had power with God.” We read in Genesis 25:22 that “the children STRUGGLED TOGETHER within her”; and Genesis 25:26 states that Jacob “took hold on Esau’s heel”—that is, he did not want Esau to come out first. As we saw, Hosea 12:3 clarifies that Jacob had already taken Esau’s heel “in the womb.” It is also interesting that some translations (*Elberfelder Bible; Lamsa; Luther; Zuercher*) render Hosea 12:3 in this way: “He DECEIVED his brother in his mother’s womb...” Others translate this verse as follows: “In the womb he tried to supplant [or, supplanted] his brother...” (*NRSV; REB; NAB; Tanakh; Moffat*).

Regardless of which translation we use, they all seem to indicate motivation through the human spirit. We read that these two brothers are not described as bits of “biological material” as one writer put it; rather, that they already possessed identity and significant purpose—they were to become two great leaders, the progenitors of two vast nations (Genesis 25:23).

emotional distress. The same can be said about despicable unscrupulous criminals who hack into computers with the goal of stealing private information. And then there are swindlers who use deception to deprive especially older people or foreigners of money or possessions.

From the *futurelearn.com* website we learn that “a victim of a crime may possibly experience many different kinds of effects, such as:

- Direct costs and inconvenience due to theft of or damage to property (including time off work).
- The physical effects of injury through violent crime.
- Guilt at having become the victim of crime and feelings one could have prevented it (whether or not this was at all possible).
- Psychological effects such as anger, depression or fear, which, in serious cases, can cause sleeplessness, flashbacks to the offence or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).
- Feelings of anxiety through shock that such a thing has happened and worries about revictimisation, sometimes leading to feelings of loss of trust in one’s community and in society.
- Limiting one’s social life or work life, or changing one’s lifestyle, by not going to places like where the crime occurred or being afraid to go out altogether, because of unease or fears of revictimisation.
- Taking extra crime preventive measures.
- Dealing with insurance claims and, for those for whom the crime is reported to the police, the police and other parts of the criminal justice system.

“It is almost impossible to predict exactly what effects an individual victim will suffer. People react very differently to similar offences and where one person may be seriously affected, another might experience only minor or short-term effects. Those who are more vulnerable (such as people who are poor, live in deprived areas or have other life stressors) and those who have been previously victimised are more likely to find a greater impact on them.”

### **Impact on Society**

Theft can also have a tremendous impact on society as a whole. Many companies usually factor in a percentage of the price of their product or service to cover theft, thus increasing cost for buyers.



One category that we may never think about in this regard is kidnapping, which incurred the death penalty in ancient Israel (see Exodus 21:16). This would include slavery in all its many disgusting forms.

In Proverbs 29:24 we read: “Whoever is a partner with a thief hates his own life.” Being an accomplice to a thief or condoning such illegal actions is to be avoided.

### **Victims of Theft**

Those who have been the victims of theft can usually relate to what an awful feeling it can be. Not stealing is one of the basic concepts of a decent and properly regulated society, and stealing is punishable by law.

A more modern way of stealing is referred to as identity theft, which is when a person pretends to be someone else by using a stolen debit or credit card, a Social Security number or other personally identifiable information. The intended outcome is to access bank accounts, have access to someone’s address, insurance or car details, any of which can cause immense distress to those affected.

The *Equifax* website points out:

“Identity theft is largely an invisible crime; someone quietly steals your identity and uses it for financial gain. Yet, the impact on victims is real. Many lose money and time, but there’s another cost that’s not so easy to quantify—the emotional toll. As identity theft increases — there were 13.1 million victims of identity fraud in the United States in 2013 — psychologists and therapists are beginning to examine the emotional fallout for victims. First, many victims suffer financial stress. Second, identity theft victims may experience similar emotional effects as victims of violent crimes, ranging from anxiety to emotional volatility.

“Every two seconds, someone in America becomes the victim of identity theft, according to Javelin Strategy and Research.”

While the above is about identity theft, the same feelings may be experienced by anyone who falls victim to any type of theft. Surely, those who steal do not give any thought as to how their actions will impact their victims.

For instance, when a thief breaks into one’s house or dwelling place, the owner or occupier feels not only victimized, but also violated, as his or her privacy has been invaded and his or her possessions have been investigated, which can cause serious and lasting feelings of

In reference to John the Baptist, we read in Luke 1:15: “For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb.”

Since he had the Holy Spirit while still in his mother’s womb, he must also have had the human spirit while still in his mother’s womb; that is, prior to his birth. In verses 41–44 of this chapter of Luke, we read in the *Authorized Version*: “And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy [Spirit]: And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.”

Again, there appears to be motivation through the human spirit. John was already a person while in his mother’s womb.

When the angel of the Lord appeared unto Joseph in a dream, he said to him: “... do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 1:20). The angel was giving to Joseph the understanding that the LIFE which was within Mary was of God! Christ already “lived” in His mother’s womb, prior to His human birth. Note how the *Living Bible* renders this verse: “... ‘Joseph, son of David,’ the angel said, ‘don’t hesitate to take Mary as your wife! For the *child* within her has been conceived by the Holy Spirit.”

As with John the Baptist, Jesus Christ had the Holy Spirit from His mother’s womb, beginning with the very moment of His conception. Unlike John, who had only a measure of the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ had the Holy Spirit in its fullness, without measure (compare John 3:34 in the *Authorized Version*). Since He had the Holy Spirit in His mother’s womb, He must have had the human spirit in His mother’s womb as well.

We can see from the Bible that both John and Jesus were real persons in the womb. Would those who advocate abortion really dare to claim that it would have been acceptable for them to be aborted?

Judges 13 relates the birth of Samson. In verse 5 we read: “For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. And no razor shall come

upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.” In verse 7, there are particular instructions to Samson’s mother: “And He said to me, ‘Behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. Now drink no wine or *similar* drink, nor eat anything unclean, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb to the day of his death.’”

This was necessary because, as a Nazirite, Samson was to have a restricted diet, hence the reason why his mother had such limitations so as not to pass on anything to her unborn child, at any time, during her pregnancy. Right from conception, it had to be right!

It is therefore biblically sound to conclude that a human being receives from God the spirit in man at the time of conception within the mother’s womb, thus making him or her a *living* person (compare James 2:26), giving him or her what we understand as human intellect. (Unlike Christ and John, who received the Holy Spirit in the mother’s womb, we receive today the Holy Spirit as adults, after our conversion, repentance, and proper baptism and the laying on of hands by an ordained minister of God.)

Therefore, based on the Scriptures we have examined, we can conclude that a fetus already receives the spirit in man at conception, and is therefore a living HUMAN BEING, and if it is aborted at any time prior to birth, the person is murdered and dies. [As is the case with all humans who die, their human spirit will return to God who gave it in the first place (Ecclesiastes 12:7).]

God’s Word is very clear—“You shall not kill,” as we read in Exodus 20:13, applies to abortion. Abortion is murder; the killing of innocent, as yet unborn children, falls very firmly into that category.

### ***Killing of Self Through Suicide***

In the first chapter of the first book in the Bible, we read that God created man in His own image (Genesis 1:26–27). Man was created for a purpose, and that ultimate purpose is to become an immortal member of the God Family.

In John 10, Jesus talks about Himself as being the good Shepherd and that He had “come that they have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (verse 10). In this day and age, God has only called very few people for salvation, but everyone will receive their

that many forget about. This type of stealing is about a psychological compulsion instead of a desire to profit or gain.

“Some people steal as a means to survive due to economic hardship. Others simply enjoy the rush of stealing, or steal to fill an emotional or physical void in their lives.

“Stealing may be caused by jealousy, low self-esteem, or peer-pressure. Social issues like feeling excluded or overlooked can also cause stealing. People may steal to prove their independence, to act out against family or friends, or because they don’t respect others or themselves.”

Those committing such acts have no understanding of God’s commands on the matter or, if they do, these are just ignored, and this is, quite simply, yet another societal rejection of the Commandments of God. Even though one may have some degree of sympathy for a thief who steals to satisfy his hunger, while totally rejecting any kind of sympathy for adulterous couples, it still remains the truth that thieves are committing sin.

We read in Proverbs 6:30–33: “People do not despise a thief If he steals to satisfy himself when he is starving. Yet when he is found, he must restore sevenfold; He may have to give up all the substance of his house. Whoever commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding; He who does so destroys his own soul. Wounds and dishonor he will get, And his reproach will not be wiped away.”

At least, that should be our approach in regard to adultery (Compare also Psalm 50:18).

### ***Theft in Many Ways***

Let us review this from a personal point of view. Taking or keeping something that is not ours is stealing. That would include borrowing something from someone and never returning it. What about stealing time that we are being paid for, but not working for it? All these may seem minor matters to some but there is a vital principle shown in Luke 17:10: “So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.’”

We are to give full value because it is expected and required of true Christians, and going above and beyond, the extra mile (compare Matthew 5:41), is recommended.

among those who will not enter the Kingdom of God:

“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 6:9–10).

Paul taught that one must repent of stealing:

“Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need” (Ephesians 4:28).

In this regard, we have the example of the rich tax collector who responded to meeting Jesus by renouncing his former practices:

“Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, ‘Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold’” (Luke 19:8).

Stealing brings about penalties, and it is, for instance, an important responsibility for parents of young children to teach them the difference between what is theirs and what belongs to others. Teaching that stealing is wrong is foundational to developing righteous character.

It is also important for all to understand that *we must not steal from God*. Indeed, the actions of Adam and Eve when they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 3:6) included, among other things, an act of stealing from God, since the tree belonged to God and He had forbidden them to eat from it. Because of this disobedience, they incurred the death penalty.

Chapter 7 of the book of Joshua recounts the sin of Achan who stole what God had forbidden to be taken by anyone in Israel (compare Joshua 6:18). Achan was stoned for his disobedience, and so were others in his family who obviously knew about and at least condoned Achan’s conduct. The implication is that they even supported it and were perhaps even actively involved. (God would not have demanded the stoning of innocent and ignorant family members.)

Another aspect of stealing from God is discussed later in this chapter.

### **Why Do People Steal?**

On *healthline.com*, we read the following:

“Kleptomania, or compulsive stealing, is a common cause of theft

opportunity to inherit eternal life when God deems that the time is right. Why would anyone who has received this marvelous calling today want to commit suicide?

The definition of suicide is “the act or an instance of taking one’s own life voluntarily and intentionally.”

There are many “reasons” and “justifications” why even true Christians might erroneously think that this is the best course of action in their particular circumstances.

What circumstances would give rise to such a thought? Perhaps someone has an incurable disease (by man’s reckoning) and is in such severe pain that it seems to be the only way out of a terrible situation? Or someone doesn’t think him or herself worthy of God’s calling and cannot reconcile the fact that he or she is a sinner who doesn’t seem to be making any progress in his or her life, perhaps even going backwards? What about someone who experiences demonic activity in his or her life, which presses that individual to take such action as a way out of this misery? Drug or alcohol addiction, mental illness, depression, family issues, bullying, and marital and financial problems can also be reasons why suicide might seem to be the answer. **But it never is!** When someone commits suicide, he or she will have to give an answer to God for that course of action within his or her very next waking moment.

### **Suicide Statistics**

Taken from “*Key trends from the Samaritans Suicide Statistics Report 2017*,” 6,188 suicides were registered in the UK and 451 in the Republic of Ireland, and the highest suicide rate in the UK was for men aged 40–44. According to “*2016-National-Facts-Figures*,” nearly 43,000 Americans die by suicide every year. Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the United States and the second leading cause of death for ages 44 and under.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that each year approximately one million people die from suicide, which represents a global mortality rate of 16 people per 100,000 or one death every 40 seconds. It is predicted that by 2020 the rate of death will increase to one every 20 seconds. We are informed that Europe is the most suicidal region in the entire world. In absolute terms, Germany and

France were the two EU Member States recording the most suicides in 2015, followed by Poland, the United Kingdom, Italy and Spain. However, for a relevant country comparison, these absolute numbers must be adjusted to the size and structure of the population.

### ***Biblical Examples of Suicide***

There are a number of examples in the Bible where suicide was committed. Ahithophel hanged himself (2 Samuel 17:23). Zimri burned himself (1 Kings 16:18). Saul fell on his sword, as did his armorbearer (1 Samuel 31:4–5). Judas hung himself (Matthew 27:3–5). Samson killed himself while destroying the pagan temple, knowing that his actions would lead to his death (Judges 16:29–30). Abimelech, a son of Gideon, asked his armorbearer to kill him, which he did (Judges 9:54), though some might dispute this as being an example of suicide, as Abimelech died at the hand of someone else. Perhaps “assisted suicide” might be an appropriate term (in legal terms, helping someone to commit suicide might also qualify as “aiding and abetting of murder” or even as “murder” itself), but in any event, the outcome was that Abimelech wanted to die and did so.

We read in 1 Corinthians 6:19–20: “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit [which] is in you, [which] you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.” How could Christians even consider taking such drastic action, irrespective of their individual situation, when the Holy Spirit lives within them? Life belongs to God and the Sixth Commandment tells us: “You shall not kill” (Exodus 20:13). We are not to kill, either someone else or ourselves! *Suicide, the taking of one’s own life, is equal to murder.*

After Job had lost his property and his children, he stated that “The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away” (Job 1:21). When someone takes their own life, it is an ungodly act because it rejects the life that God so graciously gave them in the first place. The meaning of Job 1:21 is that it is God who gives life and it is His prerogative and authority to take life away. It is not within a human being’s right or authority to do so.

King David stated in Psalm 31:15 that “my times are in Your hands.” *Albert Barnes’ Notes of the Bible* observed: “All that pertained to us is

in His teaching (compare Matthew 19:18). Furthermore, He magnified the application of the laws of God. Not only are we to not steal in the literal sense, but we must not even allow ourselves to conceive of such actions:

“But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man...” (Matthew 15:18–20).

Some of the strongest reactions of Jesus during His ministry were against the pollution of the Temple by those who cheated, that is, stole from the people:

“Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He said to them, ‘It is written, “My house shall be called a house of prayer,” but you have made it a “den of thieves”’” (Matthew 21:12–13).

The *Benson commentary* includes the following annotation:

“A harbour of wicked men; a place where traffic is carried on by persons of the most infamous character, who live by deceit and oppression, and practise the vilest extortion, even in the house of the most righteous and blessed God.”

### ***Judas Was a Thief***

Judas, one of the original twelve apostles and the one who betrayed Jesus, was a known thief:

“Then one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, who would betray Him, said, ‘Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?’ This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it” (John 12:4–6).

Interestingly, we note that Judas’ position among the disciples was that of handling the money (John 13:29). Like so many who compromise God’s Law, he corrupted himself in many ways, including being willing to take money to treacherously betray Jesus.

### ***Repentance of Stealing Required***

Paul strongly cautions Christians and includes those who steal

“If a person sins and commits a trespass against the LORD by lying to his neighbor about what was delivered to him for safekeeping, or about a pledge, or about a robbery, or if he has extorted from his neighbor, or if he has found what was lost and lies concerning it, and swears falsely—in any one of these things that a man may do in which he sins: then it shall be, because he has sinned and is guilty, that he shall restore what he has stolen, or the thing which he has extorted, or what was delivered to him for safekeeping, or the lost thing which he found, or all that about which he has sworn falsely. He shall restore its full value, add one-fifth more to it, and give it to whomever it belongs, on the day of his trespass offering.”

That which belongs to another is to be carefully respected, and God’s commandment to not steal has detailed application, even to the point of paying others for their work without delay:

“You shall not cheat your neighbor, nor rob him. The wages of him who is hired shall not remain with you all night until morning” (Leviticus 19:13; compare Deuteronomy 24:14–15; James 5:4).

God’s commandment especially focuses on those who steal as a way of life. Those who use false weights and dishonest scales are condemned as thieves (compare Leviticus 19:35–36; Deuteronomy 25:13–15; Proverbs 11:1; 16:11; 20:10; Hosea 12:7; Amos 8:5; Micah 6:11). Concerning the future government of God during the thousand-year reign of Christ on and over the earth, a prophecy in the book of Ezekiel reveals that “honest scales” will be used (Ezekiel 45:10).

As a prerequisite for baptism, John the Baptist taught that those who have authority over others—especially their livelihood—should only do what was authorized:

“Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, ‘Teacher, what shall we do?’ And he said to them, ‘Collect no more than what is appointed for you.’ Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, ‘And what shall we do?’ So he said to them, ‘Do not intimidate (margin: *shake down for money*) anyone (The Authorized Version says: “Do violence to no man”) or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages” (Luke 3:12–14).

### ***Jesus Magnified the Law on Stealing***

Jesus specifically included the commandment, “you shall not steal,”

under the control and at the disposal of God. We shall live as long as God has appointed; we shall pass through such changes as he directs; we shall die when and where and how he chooses.”

In Deuteronomy 30:19, God told the ancient Israelites to choose life: “I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live.” It was presented to them as either blessings or cursings—blessings for living the life that God would have us lead, or cursings for choosing to disobey God, leading to death.

### ***Suicide Within the Church of God***

What about those who have been baptized in the Church of God and received the Holy Spirit, and who subsequently take their own life? Are they lost forever? They would certainly have known that it was wrong, but we all sin in many different ways, and we do not know another person’s heart or situation. We do read in Psalm 103:11: “For as the heavens are high above the earth, So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him.” In James 2:13, we read: “For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.” God is a merciful God, and He will always make the right decision about everyone. For instance, even though Samson committed suicide, he will be in God’s Kingdom, as Hebrews 11 tells us. On the other hand, it appears that King Saul will not be, but he had lost the Holy Spirit quite a while before his final act. In any event, it is for God to make these kinds of ultimate judgments.

Suicidal thoughts can happen to the best of people. Toward the end of his life, Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 2:17: “Therefore I hated life because the work that was done under the sun was distressing to me, for all is vanity and grasping for the wind.” In Ecclesiastes 12:13, he also wrote: “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man’s all (or: “the whole duty of man”). For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether it is good or whether it is evil.”

Both Elijah and Jonah at one point wanted to die; Jeremiah encountered serious moments of despair; and the apostle Paul and his friends were under significant pressure at times. We read in

2 Corinthians 1:8: “For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life.” Even great men in the Bible had their very difficult moments, and we can have those today as well.

### ***Suicide, For Any Reason, Cannot Be Justified***

But this does not justify suicide, assisted suicide, or aiding and abetting murder by any stretch of the imagination. Taking one’s own life or helping someone else to do so is a sinful act.

Even though there are usually extreme circumstances that may have driven people over the edge to do this, and even though we may have no idea of the pressure that others may be under, nor do we know their hearts, we also know that we must never take such action. God, as a merciful and loving God, will judge them righteously and fairly, something that any man would be incapable of doing.

### ***What About Euthanasia?***

True Christians who obey the Law of God, understand that it is not their right, prerogative or even responsibility to end the life of a human being, including their own.

Euthanasia, in particular, can be defined as an easy or painless death which brings to an end a lingering, hopeless, painful disease or condition. However, to engage in such conduct is not in obedience to God. The Bible clearly tells us that it is God’s prerogative—as the One who created human life—to let a person die, or to prolong his life, when He sees fit. It is GOD who gives us life (Ecclesiastes 5:18; 8:15); and it is GOD who takes it away from us (Deuteronomy 32:39; 1 Samuel 2:6).

Of course, no one can kill a human being without God allowing this to happen; but the fact that He does allow it does not mean that He wants all this world’s killing to continue. This is NOT God’s world, but this world is ruled by Satan the devil (John 14:30)—the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2)—the god of this age (2 Corinthians 4:3). Satan is the destroyer, and he broadcasts his thoughts of destruction, which could include the will to commit suicide.

God allows Satan to rule over this present evil age at this time—but

## Chapter 11

### The Eighth Commandment

*“You shall not steal” (Exodus 20:15).*

The meaning of the word “steal” is “to take (the property of another or others) without permission or right, especially secretly or by force” (*dictionary.com*).

In *Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible*, we read: “Thou shall not steal. Which is to take away another man’s property by force or fraud, without the knowledge, and against the will of the owner thereof. Thefts are of various kinds; there is private theft, picking of pockets, shoplifting, burglary, or breaking into houses in the night, and carrying off goods; public theft, or robbing upon the highways; domestic theft, as when wives take away their husbands’ money or goods, and conceal them, or dispose of them without their knowledge and will, children rob their parents, and servants purloin their masters’ effects; ecclesiastical theft or sacrilege, and personal theft, as stealing of men and making slaves of them...”

Theft can also apply, by extension, to a third party stealing the affections of a married man or woman. This describes an action, which constituted in many parts of the USA a cause of action for alienation of affection against the third party; i.e. the adulterer or adulteress. Even though this kind of conduct may not be punishable or actionable anymore by the laws of the land, it is still abominable and worthy of death in the eyes of God.

### ***Penalties and Restoration***

God instructed Moses on how stealing should be dealt with among the people of Israel. Even though the detailed penalties of restoration, as described in that law, are no longer in force today, the principles most certainly apply.

We read in Leviticus 6:2–5:

only until Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, returns to this earth to displace and banish Satan, and to begin to RULE this earth righteously.

### ***Life Is a Gift from God and Only He Has the Right to Take It***

There is no support in Scripture for humans to prematurely end the life of a sick person. The Church of God has taught this for a very long time. However, it has also taught correctly for a very long time that there IS a difference between cutting short a human life and artificially prolonging it. While euthanasia is not a practice in which a true Christian should engage, it is an altogether different matter to decide NOT to prolong the “life” of a clinically dead or comatose person through machines and other equipment, thereby keeping the comatose person “alive” artificially. The *Worldwide Church of God* explained this in an old letter (L 185):

“... the idea that heroic measures must be taken to keep a terminally ill person alive as long as possible is not biblical either. There is no sense prolonging a person’s dying. Many righteous people in the Bible knew when they were dying, got their affairs in order... and simply died. It is not wrong to ask God in His mercy to allow a suffering person to peacefully die.”

The same would be true if a terminally ill person was facing the possibility of a serious and risky operation which might temporarily prolong his life—and its accompanying painful condition. In such a case, it would certainly not be wrong if the person decided against such an operation. It would also not be wrong for a person to set forth in writing, ahead of time, his or her wish as to how doctors or relatives should proceed in case he or she falls into a coma.

Of course, in all these different scenarios, we are to ask God for His mercy to HEAL us from pain and suffering. But if God should choose not to do so in a particular circumstance, we are still not to engage in “mercy killing” or other practices which would terminate human life.

### ***Jesus Magnified the Law on Murder***

In Matthew 5:21–25, we read the following: “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the

judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire. Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison."

He reveals that to commit murder means more than just killing someone. It includes having an angry, hateful, resentful and unforgiving attitude toward another person. This is bringing the spiritual application into play, rather than just the physical killing of a person.

This is confirmed by the apostle John who writes: "Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him" (1 John 3:15). Here, hatred or the unforgiving, vengeful and hostile attitude are equated with murder.

In Matthew 5:43–48, we are told by Jesus to love our enemies: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more *than others*? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."

This admonition is exactly the opposite of fighting back and trying to take revenge.

The Sixth Commandment is more than not killing or murdering self or others; it also prohibits hating or holding grudges against anyone, while in spiritual extension, it commands us to love others as ourselves.

the very act of adultery, when He saw her humiliation and repentance (compare John 8:1–12). God also requires mercy and compassion. Joseph, being a righteous man, intended to leave Mary secretly when he thought that she, who was betrothed to him, had committed adultery. He just wanted to put her away secretly, "not wanting to make her a public example" (Matthew 1:18–19).

### ***God Is Against Destructive Behavior***

God wants us to have happy and productive marriages, and He is against any conduct which could destroy or jeopardize the success of a present or future marriage. If such conduct occurs, God is willing to forgive, but He still requires appropriate behavior to guarantee the success and endurance of the current or future marriage relationship.



different, as 1 Corinthians 7:39 requires that a marriage in the Church should only occur “in the Lord”—between two believers. In that case, counsel with the ministry should be sought. Our free booklet *God’s Teachings on Sexual Relationships* addresses this matter in detail.

### **Many Warnings against Adultery**

The Bible includes many warnings against the evil of adultery. Proverbs 30:20 states: “This is the way of an adulterous woman; She eats and wipes her mouth, And says, ‘I have done no wickedness.’” You might want to read the entirety of chapters 5, 6 and 7 in the Book of Proverbs, where the dangers stemming from an adulterous married woman are described in vivid terms.

Proverbs 7:25–27 ends with this admonition:

“Do not let your heart turn aside to her ways, Do not stray into her paths; For she has cast down many wounded, And all who were slain by her were strong men. Her house is the way to hell, Descending to the chambers of death.”

### **Jesus Magnified the Law on Adultery**

Christ came to make the Law more honorable—to reveal the spirit of the Law. The commandment prohibiting adultery applies, as we have seen, to all kinds of sexual conduct outside a valid marriage between a man and a woman, and it also applies to conduct and thoughts, preparatory to and leading to the actual act of adultery.

In the New Testament, Christ warned His followers not to look at a married woman with lust or evil thoughts—wanting to commit adultery with her—because such uncontrolled desire already constitutes adultery in the mind and heart (Matthew 5:27–28; compare Proverbs 6:23–35). Please note that Christ did not say that one can look at another man’s wife with evil thoughts, as long as the wife’s husband “consents” to this.

The prohibition applies likewise to a married man looking at another woman with evil thoughts (whether the woman is married or not), and it applies to a married woman looking at another man (married or not) or an unmarried woman looking at another married man.

At the same time, Christ also taught that every sin can be forgiven, upon genuine repentance. He refused to condemn the woman caught in

## Chapter 10

### The Seventh Commandment

*“You shall not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14).*

The *Christian Bible Reference* website states that “Adultery is one of the most frequently and severely condemned sins in the Bible. It is mentioned 52 times, including in the Ten Commandments, all four Gospels and ten other books in the Bible. Only the sins of idolatry, self-righteousness and murder are mentioned more often.”

This site also states that in the “Old Testament, adultery was understood as sexual relations between a married (or betrothed) woman and a man other than her husband.”

However, this description is not all-inclusive, as adultery was also understood as sexual relations between a married (or betrothed) man and an unmarried woman, or sexual relations between two married people who were not married to each other.

In the New Testament Jesus described adultery as sexual relations between a married man and a woman other than his wife, as we read in Mark 10:11–12: “So He said to them, ‘Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.’”

We further read in Luke 16:18: “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery.”

We must understand these passages properly, as they have caused much confusion. Christ spoke in the context of marriages that were joined or bound by God (compare Mark 10:9). In such a case, a divorce and a subsequent remarriage are only permitted for biblical reasons (compare for instance Matthew 19:9 and 1 Corinthians 7:10–15). But Christ’s prohibition does not apply to those who, prior to their conversion, had been married and became divorced, as God never “bound” their marriage in the first place.

We state the following in our free booklet, *The Keys to Happy Marriages and Families*:

“Biblically, divorce with the freedom to subsequently marry someone else is permitted only under very limited circumstances. God created the marriage unit and He intended that it should flourish and endure (Matthew 19:4–6). Two truly converted married *Christians* (as long as both remain alive and converted throughout their marriage to each other) must *never* divorce and subsequently marry somebody else! Their marriage, which has been *bound* by God, is for life (1 Corinthians 7:10–11; Romans 7:1–3; Luke 16:18).

“What about a married couple where one mate is a true Christian, making every effort to apply God’s principles, and the other mate is not? Even in such a case, divorce and subsequent remarriage is not biblically permitted, unless the ‘unbelieving’ mate *departs from the marriage, by not fulfilling his or her marriage duties, and the ‘unbeliever’ is no longer willing to live with the converted Christian mate* (cp. 1 Corinthians 7:12–16). Such total departure from the marriage by the ‘unbeliever’ can be seen in serious continuous violations of his or her marriage duties and responsibilities, such as the sinful *practice* of ‘sexual immorality’ (Matthew 5:31–32; 19:9).”

In other words, if the married mate engages continuously in adultery or sexual immorality with another person who is not his or her mate, he or she is or has become an unbeliever who has departed from the marriage. In such a case, the believer is clearly permitted to divorce the unbelieving mate, even though God might have originally bound that marriage.

But even when God did not bind the marriage, as God was never part of the lives of the two partners, they had exchanged some kind of a promise to stay faithful to each other until death. They were still married in the eyes of the law and before men, and they had still exchanged marriage vows. If one mate or both broke those promises by having sex with a person other than their mate, while still married in the eyes of the law, they became guilty of adultery.

Adultery, then, applies to sexual relationships between a man and a woman where at least one of the two persons is married, but not to the other person. Adultery also applies when at least one of the two persons is “betrothed.” Betrothal in biblical times was a binding

neighbor and kills him, even so is this matter. For he found her in the countryside, and the betrothed young woman cried out, but there was no one to save her.”

In case there were no witnesses to the act of adultery, God had provided for a procedure to determine the guilt or innocence of an accused wife, if the husband so desired (compare Numbers 5:11–31). This was a ritual procedure which is no longer valid today. We explain this fact in our free booklet, *Old Testament Laws—Still Valid Today?*

### **Bride-Price Applications**

In addition, we do find a remarkable difference in the Old Testament in case of fornication between two unmarried young people.

We read in Exodus 22:16–17: “If a man entices a virgin who is NOT betrothed, and lies with her, he shall surely pay the bride-price for her to be his wife. If her father utterly refuses to give her to him, he shall pay money according to the bride-price of virgins.”

Deuteronomy 22:28–29 adds: “If a man finds a young woman who is a virgin, who is NOT betrothed, and he seizes her [this goes beyond mere enticement] and lies with her, and they are found out, then the man who lay with her shall give to the young woman’s father fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife because he had humbled her; he shall not be permitted to divorce her all his days.”

The amount of the bride-price was steep, which was “meant to discourage young men from reckless behavior... This law warned young men that they would be made responsible for their actions” (*Nelson Study Bible*, comments to Exodus 22:16–17 and Deuteronomy 22:28–29).

These *principles* regarding pre-marital sex still apply today in God’s Church. There should not be ANY premarital sex between two unmarried partners. The Bible calls this fornication, and we are told to flee from it. But if two young unmarried people in the Church of God commit fornication (even though they should not do so and are sinning if they do), they should be aware that, excluding extraordinary circumstances (see, for instance in ancient times, the exception mentioned in Exodus 22:17), they have a responsibility, before God, to complete their marriage responsibilities, which they, in effect, already began through their conduct. If one party is not in the Church, then the situation is

*Nelson Study Bible* explains: “Paul strongly urged the Thessalonians not to participate in any sexual activity outside of marriage... Sexual involvement outside of marriage dishonors God, one’s marriage partner or *future spouse*, and even one’s own body.”

### **God’s Stance on Adultery**

As mentioned, the Bible refers to adultery as a sexual sin involving at least one married partner. We read in Leviticus 20:10 that “The man who commits adultery with another man’s wife... the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death.” There is no room for adultery by consent from the non-involved mate. This is the reason why Abram’s and Sarai’s conduct—to bring forth offspring through intercourse between Abram and Sarai’s maid Hagar—constituted adultery in God’s eyes.

### **Punishment for Evil**

We explained earlier that the commandment against adultery included not only a married woman who has had sexual intercourse with her husband, but also a virgin who was “betrothed” to her husband, prior to the consummation of the marriage.

We read in Deuteronomy 22:23–24: “If a young woman who is a virgin is betrothed to a husband, and a man finds her in the city and lies with her, then you shall bring both out to the gate of that city, and you shall stone them to death with stones, the young woman because she did not cry out in the city [thereby consenting to the adulterous conduct], and the man because he humbled his neighbor’s wife [even though she was only “betrothed,” and the marriage had not yet been consummated]; so you shall put away the evil from among you.”

### **Punishment for the Rapist**

On the other hand, as Deuteronomy 22:25–27 continues to point out, “... if a man finds a betrothed young woman in the countryside, and the man forces her and lies with her, then only the man who lay with her [i.e., the rapist] shall die. But you shall do nothing to the young woman; there is in the young woman no sin deserving of death [since the rapist forced himself upon her; there was no consent to this act by the woman], for just as when a man rises against his

and enforceable contract, containing promises to marry each other. The Bible considered betrothed partners as husband and wife, and a betrothal could only be dissolved by a decree of divorce. For instance, we read that Mary and Joseph were “betrothed,” and the Bible refers to them already as husband and wife.

### **Sexual Immorality**

1 Corinthians 7:2–5 reads: “Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband *does*. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife *does*. Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.”

In the above-quoted passage, Paul refers to “sexual immorality.” This term can refer to adultery, but it can also refer to fornication—a sexual relationship between two unmarried people. This, too, is sinful. It also violates the spirit of the commandment against adultery, as pre-marital sex cheapens and can violate the future marriage relationship with a different mate.

As God created marriage between a man and a woman, and only the sexual relationship between a man and a woman who are married to each other is acceptable in God’s eyes, sinful sexual conduct would also apply to any other form of sexual relationship, including homosexuality, bestiality, or polygamy. All these activities are sinful. Please read our free booklet, entitled, *God’s Teachings on Sexual Relationships*, for a detailed in-depth discussion on these widely misunderstood topics.

Paul states in 1 Corinthians 6:15–16:

“Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For ‘the two,’ He says, ‘shall become one flesh.’”

This passage can refer to adultery or sexual immorality, depending on whether or not the man and/or the harlot is married. Regardless, all of it would be sinful!

The *Christian Bible Reference* website continues under the heading “Lasting Damage”: “Even though God will forgive adultery (we would add, subject to full and heartfelt repentance), the damage it causes often cannot be undone. It is extremely hurtful to the spouse. It often leads to divorce and leaves the marriage partners embittered, disillusioned and financially poorer. It robs the children of the love and security of a healthy family and denies them a good role model for their own future marriages. Children from families where there is conflict and/or divorce are more prone to anxiety, poor school performance, drug abuse and delinquent behavior. These problems can persist into adulthood. Adult children of divorced parents tend to have lower educational attainment, lower income, more children out of wedlock, higher rates of divorce themselves, and a lower sense of well-being.”

It really is quite clear-cut, but with an ever increasingly secular society, the Bible is ignored and man goes on his own self-destructive path. An interesting seminary paper, entitled “100 Consequences of Adultery,” was written by a student at Phoenix Seminary in the USA, which revealed that those who are involved in an adulterous relationship rarely seem to think of the consequences and the ways that infidelity can destroy a marriage and the lives and families of those involved. The same can be said about pre-marital sex in view of a future marriage.

### **Devastating Effects**

*TDJ World News* published an article entitled “10 Historic Times That Saw A Rise In Adultery And Why,” stating that “finding accurate statistics on adultery rates is very difficult. The most accurate way to get data is through face to face interviews and most people are unwilling to disclose extramarital affairs when they know their identity will be known. However, throughout history, there have been markers that indicate probable increases in infidelity.”

Starting with ancient Greece and proceeding forward to our present time, the article cited changes in the way people view marriage, and the correlation to a rise in adultery and divorce. Below are some brief comments on the last two periods that were reviewed:

“1960’s and 70’s—During this time of history, society was going through some major changes. This was the era of ‘free love,’ the Vietnam

War was in full swing, Civil Rights and Women’s rights were also being fought for. Once again the divorce rate spiked, this time, it is thought that the advent of no fault divorce played a part in the spike. Even so, history tells us that sexual exploitation was rampant.

“21st Century—Once again, society has gone through some serious changes. People are viewing marriage and relationships differently. Statistically it looks like adultery is still on the rise and the disillusionment of marriage and our disposable mentality seems to be at the root of it.

“Adultery still tears people and families apart and causes damage to the psyche and the emotional wellbeing of those involved. Children are the biggest losers when families disintegrate due to infidelity.”

Even in the world today, there are those who are concerned about the effects of adultery. Had mankind listened to the great Creator God and taken His Seventh Commandment seriously, much unnecessary suffering, heartache and many other problems and difficulties would have been eliminated. However, the history of man over the last 6,000 years has shown us, quite clearly, the general disregard for God and His Word.

### **Premarital Sex Prohibited**

As mentioned, the spirit of the Seventh Commandment also prohibits premarital sex. We read in 1 Corinthians 6:18 that we are to “flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.”

We are also told not to “make provisions for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts” (Romans 13:14).

Further, we are commanded to “abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God” (1 Thessalonians 4:3–5).

Regarding this last passage, the *Ryrie Study Bible* comments that this “means either mastery over one’s own body, keeping it pure (1 Corinthians 9:24–27),” or that it “refers to an honorable marriage (vessel = wife, as 1 Peter 3:7).”

Another possibility is a warning for a man not to try to “obtain” for himself a vessel—that is, a future wife—“in passion of lust.” The