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THE TEN COMMANDMENTS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT (NT):
OLD TESTAMENT (OT) BACKGROUND FOR
A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF THE LAW

Preaching Schedule

May 30	Psalm 1	The Blessed Way
June 06	Rom. 3:19-31	The Law in the Christian Life
June 13	Rom. 7:7-25	The Purpose of the Law
June 20	<i>Mark Hewitt Preaching</i>	
June 27	Acts 14:8-23	1. Sanctity of God's Exclusivity
July 04	1 Cor. 10:1-22	2. Sanctity of God's Form
July 11	Ex. 3:1-15	3. Sanctity of God's Name
July 18	Heb. 4:1-11	4. Sanctity of God's Worship
July 25	Eph. 6:1-4	5. Sanctity of Family
Aug. 01	Matt. 5:21-26	6. Sanctity of Life
Aug. 08	1 Cor. 5:1-8	7. Sanctity of Sex
Aug. 15	Luke 12:13-21	8. Sanctity of Property
Aug. 22	Acts 4:32-5:11	9. Sanctity of Truth
Aug. 29	Gal. 5:16-24	10. Sanctity of Desire
Sept. 05	Rom. 13:8-14	The Law Summed Up
Sept. 12	Rev. 21:1-6; 22:1-5	From Eden to New Jerusalem: More like the Real Thing

Introduction - Heidelberg Catechism

Q 114. Can those converted to God obey these commandments perfectly?

A 114. No. In this life even the holiest have only a small beginning of this obedience. Nevertheless, with all seriousness of purpose, they do begin to live according to all, not only some, of God commandments.

Q 115. Since no one in this life can obey the Ten Commandments perfectly, why does God want them preached so pointedly?

A 115. First, so that the longer we live the more we may come to know our sinfulness and the more eagerly look to Christ for forgiveness of sins and righteousness. Second, so that we may never stop striving, and never stop praying to God for the grace of the Holy Spirit, to be renewed more and more after God's image, until after this life we reach our goal: perfection.

Musings on the Contemporary Application of the OT Law

Jesus summarizes the Law and Prophets as commands to love God and love our neighbors (Matt. 22:37-40). All of the OT laws are case-laws flowing out of the *values* communicated in the Ten Commandments. The OT Law did not establish Jewish society, but rather regulated Jewish identity within their covenant relationship to YHWH in accordance with these values.¹ As such, there are certain laws that contemporary Christians simply cannot follow verbatim due to circumstantial differences; nevertheless, they require our study for they inform our understanding of the underlying values of YHWH. Moreover, while those ceremonial laws that found their fulfillment in the atonement of Christ need not be replicated (Heb. 10:1-18), they also require our study to inform our understanding of the underlying values of YHWH and a fuller picture of what they typologically shadowed and prefigured. Yet, since our *telos* is of an eschatological nature, beyond merely positive ethics, obedience to the Law ought to always be in view of our eschatological *telos* of life in the presence of YHWH forever.

While applying all of the laws verbatim may not be possible, applying them nonetheless is possible. The Ten Commandments are apodictic laws, meaning they are formulated as absolutes. Most laws outside of the Ten Commandments are in a casuistic (if...then) formulation, in which case they are circumstantial and assume already existing societal practices.² The casuistic laws in the OT regulate existing societal practices in such a way that incrementally moves in a redemptive trajectory.³ In most cases, casuistic laws are introduced with one of two critical words: *kee* or *im*. Laws beginning with a *kee* “when” statements establish major case-law whereas the subsequent *im* “if” statements further elaborate on the major case-law through minor case-law.⁴ RSV, ESV, and CSB are the only major, modern English translations that adequately capture this distinction in the Hebrew between *kee* and *im* case-law.

Understanding the Law can be intimidating because of the extreme penalties attached, most notably death. Helpful background for this, though, is Rom. 3:20; 7:7-25; and Gal. 3:19. The Law convicts us of our moral violations. The Law does not provide a moral remedy for violations, even if it provides immediate tangible/material remedies for interpersonal reconciliation. For Israel, keeping the Law was a consequence of their covenant with YHWH, *not a precondition of it*. The prologue of the Ten Commandments established what work was a condition for the covenant and it was *the work of YHWH freeing them from slavery*. The Pharisees and *Mishnah* get this wrong by instituting legalism as if the Law could save them by means of remedying moral violations. They insisted on interpreting the Law on a case by case nature; however, Jesus’ approach to interpreting individual laws was never out of sight of the entire Law. While many laws are formulated as negative commands, implicit in them are positive values. When the Pharisees insisted in engaging Jesus about the specifics of an individual divorce law formulated as a negative response, Jesus engaged by bringing into the discussion God’s overarching *positive* intention for marriage as a whole, recognizing the fallen state yet still

¹ Roy Gane, *Old Testament Law for Christians: Original Context and Enduring Application*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017.

² R.K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969. Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology: Volume 1*. London: SCM Press, 1973.

³ Joe Sprinkle, *The Book of the Covenant: A Literary Approach*. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994. William Webb, *Slaves, Women, and Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis*. Downers Grove: IV Press, 2001.

⁴ Jan Verbruggen. Personal Notes from Course OT 670, “The Christian and the Old Testament Law.” *Western Seminary*, Spring 2021.

appealing to the creation account as the basis for what marriage ought to be, not merely what divorce ought to be (Matt. 19:3-10).

As such, the death penalties, while seemingly extreme, show the *deserved* penalty for these violations in light of the spirit of the whole Law. But what kind of death do they deserve? We commonly read these death sentences as physical death, which certainly happened, but not as often as we may think. In the OT, on a thematic level, exile is death. When Adam and Eve violated God's one Law, the stated punishment was death that very day, yet they do not physically die for many centuries. This has led to a number of biblical scholars to concede that the serpent was technically correct.⁵ Yet, in his punishment *after* the violation, God *also* tells Adam he will return to the dust, an idiom for physical death. So while all humanity experiences physical and spiritual death, *the threat of spiritual death is what is attached to the Law*, and it is spiritual death (or exile) that is clearly worse than physical death (cf. Cain's response to his impending exile in Gen. 4). Just like with Adam, when physical death is in view, it is spelled out more clearly and distinct from spiritual death, or what I will hereafter call estrangement.

There is *some* overlap between *muth* "death" and *kareth* "cut off," although these are ultimately distinct concepts; in some cases, violation includes penalties of both. Death is more appropriately understood as primarily a spiritual estrangement from the covenant community in the present life. Occasionally physical death is prescribed, in which case more specifics are given as to the manner, such as by stoning. The complexities of these overlapping terms can be seen in Lev. 20:1-6. To be cut off from one's own people sometimes refers to a punishment in this life, such as dying young or childless, but is more appropriately understood as an eschatological loss of spiritual inheritance. The opposite of being cut off from one's people is to be gathered to one's own people, such as how the deaths of major patriarchs and good kings of Israel are described. The penalty of being cut off results from exclusively willful violations of certain egregious laws without any future repentance. *Mishnah* applies the penalty of being cut off to only 36 violations, most of which deal with sexual immorality and improper eating. The penalty of being cut off is clearly more severe than physical death.

To be sure, physical death was a penalty for egregious crime, but they didn't have a prison system as we do, so physical death was the only way to provide a total exile from the covenant community.⁶ In our society, violators of certain crimes are exiled from the community behind bars either for a time or even life without necessarily ending their physical life. Interestingly, Paul in 1 Cor. 5:1-5 rebukes a special form of sexual perversion, for which OT Law prescribes a penalty of death; yet, Paul "changes" the penalty to *disfellowship* from the church community. Disfellowship is the NT form of covenant exile; therefore, I suggest that Paul's "change" in penalty is not an actually change. This backs up my assertion that the sentence of death for the guilty thematically established the *deserved* penalty of spiritual estrangement as a result of violating the Law.

Finally on penalties, it has been clearly demonstrated in the scholarly literature that *lex talionis* (retaliatory) laws of eye for eye, tooth for tooth, etc. were not literal physical retribution but rather spoke of a monetary/financial restitution equal to the value of the physical loss.⁷

⁵ Dru Johnson, *The Universal Story: Genesis 1-11*. Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2018. Arthur Pink, *Gleanings in Genesis*. Watchmaker Publishing, 1951. Pg. 44. R.W.L. Moberly, "Did the Serpent Get it Right?" *JETS*, Vol. 39, 1988.

⁶ Daniel Bediako, "Sabbath Worship and 'Sinning Willfully' in Hebrews 10:26-31. *Valley View University Journal of Theology*, Vol. 5, 2018.

⁷ Raymond Westbrook and Bruce Wells, *Everyday Law in Biblical Israel: An Introduction*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009. Maimonides cited in Stuart West, "The Lex Talionis in the Torah." *Jewish Bible Quarterly*,

Interestingly, in one of the *lex talionis* passages, where “life for life” is explicitly provided, the punishment of physical death is also mentioned in the same context, clearly differentiated from “life for life” (Lev. 24:17-21). If “life for life” meant physical retribution, then there would be no need for the differentiation. The differentiation shows that “life for life” was understood as transcending physical retribution.

In addition to Deut. 19:15-21, *lex talionis* is established also in Ex. 21:23-25 and Lev. 24:17-21, meaning each of the three major OT Law codes (Covenant, Holiness, and Deuteronomic) establish *lex talionis*. The following is a brief exposition of these other two:

In the casuistic laws laid out in Ex. 21:22-27, a hypothetical scenario is presented about two men who are fighting. While the pregnant woman who loses her baby appears to be the primary subject due to her prominence in the passage, it is nevertheless the fighting men who are the actual subjects. There are many open-ended questions relating to this law, such as why the woman was there in the first place and what level her participation in the matter actually was? Considering it is multiple *men* who are fighting, but *one* who pays according to the *husband* of the struck, pregnant woman, it is likely that the woman was an *innocent bystander*.⁸ I disagree with Bruce Waltke, who sees a differentiation between the life of a fetus and the life of a born person. The text speaks of a pregnant woman whose child is brought forth or born *without injury*.⁹ This suggests that the birth—albeit premature—of the woman who was struck resulted in no injury for her or her child, and a husband—mediated through a judicial body—may impose necessary compensation for such a premature birth.¹⁰ However, if there is an injury—with the presumption that this possibility applies to the woman and/or her prematurely born child—then the *lex talionis* enters the picture.

As is noted above, *lex talionis* laws did not refer to physical mutilation but rather to compensation of a proportional level. Each ANE society established its own criteria for compensation levels.¹¹ Num. 35 forbids, though, the payment of compensation for two specific purposes: compensation to offset the death penalty for murder; and compensation to return to one’s land and possession from a city of refuge prior to the high priest’s death. That these exceptions are provided suggests retaliatory compensation was a normal judicial assessment. The final verses of the Exodus passage provide a glimpse into the numeration of certain defects. For a slave, both his eye and tooth carry the same retaliatory compensation from a master who has harmed them: their freedom. Considering the slave in YHWH’s economy was working toward freedom in the Sabbath year, an injury sustained by a master would expedite their freedom. This is one example of how *freedom* is the *telos* of slavery in the Bible.

Vol. 21, 1993. Robert Alter, *The Hebrew Bible: Volume 1: The Five Books of Moses: Torah: A Translation with Commentary*. London: Norton & Co., 2019. See also Sprinkle; Gane; Verbruggen (2021).

⁸ Jacques Koppel Mikliszanski, “The Law of Retaliation and the Pentateuch.” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 66, 1947. Pg. 296.

⁹ Bruce Waltke, “Old Testament Texts Bearing on Abortion.” *Christianity Today*, Vol. 13, 1968.

¹⁰ Meredith Kline, “Les Talionis and the Human Fetus.” *JETS*, Vol. 20, 1977.

¹¹ Charles Cruise, “A Methodology for Detecting and Mitigating Hyperbole in Matthew 5:38-42.” *JETS*, Vol. 61, 2018.

Lev. 24:17-21 is presented in a chiasm, seen below:¹²

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A1 But whoever kills a person shall be put to death
    B1 and he who kills the life of an animal is to make it right, creature for creature
        C1 If a man causes his neighbor's defect, as he has done so shall it be done to him
            D1 Fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth
                C2 as he has caused a man's defect so shall it be done to him
            B2 and whoever kills an animal shall make it right
        A2 But whoever kills a person shall be put to death.

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The *lex talionis* is situated at the most prominent position in this chiasm, setting the standard for the rest of the passage, which is inherently proportional. The one who kills shall be killed. The one who takes the life of an animal is to make it right *with another animal*. The one who causes a defect shall have it done to him. The outer edge of this chiasm sets this passage in step with the other passages we have thus far evaluated in that it establishes the death penalty for the taking of life. There is one omission and one vocabulary shift in the second half of the chiasm: B2 provides no addition of “creature for creature” and C2 is a simplified, single-clause version of C1. Neither of these changes holds any significance to the structure of the chiasm.

The prescription of death for anyone who kills another from the outer edge cannot be meted out as precisely as black-and-white as the passage would suggest, or there would not be a need in Deut. 19 to differentiate between the *intentional* and the *unintentional* taking of life. Nevertheless, this law provides a level of proportional reciprocity in judicial assessment of penalties emphasized in chiastic form in order to “make it right” in B1 and B2, both derived from the root *shalom*.

Jesus only utilizes two of the *lex talionis* examples: eye and tooth. These two are the only examples that appear in all three OT passages, making it improbable to pinpoint which of the three passages he is referencing; however, that may not be relevant considering *lex talionis* was established in all three major Law collections, and his introductions of *lex talionis* was for the purpose of taking it in a different direction altogether. By citing the two examples that appear in all three Law codes, Jesus makes clear that this new direction is a rebuttal to *lex talionis* altogether, rather than one specific law.

In Jesus’ change of direction for *lex talionis*, he provides five illustrations of what it means not to resist the wicked.¹³ The first example deals with physical harm, the third deals with physical activity and time, and the second, fourth, and fifth deal with financial matters. That a majority of Jesus’ illustrations for his change to *lex talionis* still nonetheless deal with matters of financial compensation is significant and telling of what normal judicial assessment was. The

¹² W. Justin Iboudo, “The Lex Talionis in the Hebrew Bible and the Jewish Tradition.” *Boston College School of Theology and Ministry*.

¹³ Although I am arguing that Jesus changes the direction but nonetheless keeps it in effect, David Van Drunen states that “Jesus abolishes the lex talionis...” “Bearing the Swird in the State, Turning Cheek in the Church: A Reformed Two-Kingdoms Interpretation of Matthew 5:38-42.” *Themelios*, Vol. 34, 2009. Pg. 325. In agreement with Van Drunen is Charles Erdman, *The Book of Deuteronomy*. London: Fleming Revell Company, 1951. Pg. 126. I am not willing to make that jump and am in agreement with J. Daryl Charles who states “Jesus does not question the legitimacy of moral retribution as a principle of justice...” “Do Not Suppose That I Have Come: The Ethic of the Sermon on the Mount Reconsidered.” *Southwestern Journal of Theology*, Vol. 46, 2004. Pg. 62. In agreement with Charles is Craig Blomberg, “Matthew” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G.K. Beale and D.A. Carson. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007. Pg. 27.

core principle of *lex talionis* was that if person-A has harmed person-B in a non-murderous way, then person-B is entitled to a proportionally fair level of compensation. The change Jesus introduced is not dismantling this proportional compensation; rather instead of the harmed party receiving the compensation, it is the harming party that receives compensation for their own harm. If person-A has harmed person-B, then instead of person-B being entitled to proportional compensation, person-B ought to provide their due compensation to person-A, or in other words, to “resolve to revoke revenge,” by which Sam Storms defines forgiveness.¹⁴

Jesus takes *lex talionis* in a different direction of providing compensation payment from the harmed to the harmer, rather than the harmer to the harmed. Just as the application of *lex talionis* in the OT ultimately pointed toward God’s desire for his people to be free (cf. Jubilee), the application of Jesus’ reworking of *lex talionis* ultimately points toward God’s desire for his people to suffer on the earth through forgiving their enemies for the sake of glorifying him.

YHWH’s redemptive plan for the ethics of his people has not changed. The Ten Commandments were given in response to his redemption of them from Egypt. Despite their sinfulness and grumblings, YHWH’s redemption of them was motivated by his own remembrance of his own previous covenant. Lev. 26:12-13 supplies a helpful summary of this dynamic: “I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people. I am YHWH your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, so that you would no longer be their slaves. I broke the bars of your yoke and *enabled you to live in freedom*.” Legalism states that one must change their behavior before they can be redeemed. YHWH’s redemptive plan in Israel’s exodus from Egypt, Israel’s exodus from Babylon, and True Israel’s exodus from the dominion of sin through Christ is that one must be redeemed *as the basis for their change in behavior*. A person must *belong* before they can *behave*. Redemption precedes transformation. I have identified no fewer than 97 times in the OT when YHWH or his prophets explicitly and verbally remind Israel that YHWH redeemed them from Egypt in connection with an expectation of them. This excludes mention of the exodus for purposes of marking time, general narration, instances when Israel or their representatives mention the exodus, or when foreign kingdoms/officials are quoted as mentioning the exodus; otherwise, the number would be well over 200. An example of this is Deut. 24:21-22, a law about leaving the excess crop for the resident alien. The reason is given in vs. 22: “Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt. *Therefore* I am commanding you to do this.” Their redemption from Egypt was the *basis for their expected behavior*.

NT epistolary ethics are saturated with direct connections to the Gospel, specifically ethics inaugurated and rooted in Christ’s resurrection. Getting the order wrong will lead to the incorrect application of the enduring values of YHWH’s Law. Getting the order right will allow YHWH’s people to not just *be* free but to *live* free. In other words, (and in general agreement with the New Perspective on Paul) obedience to the Law is not to join the covenant community, but rather to live as one *already part* of the covenant community.¹⁵ The legitimate appropriation of the OT Law, therefore, must always be framed with *obedience as a response to YHWH’s redemption of us through the Gospel*.

The Gospel is the person and work of Jesus Christ, the specifics of which the People of God need to be constantly reminded, just as the nation of Israel needed to be constantly reminded. Contemporary Christians are no less forgetful than the generation of Israel who crossed the Sea of Reeds. A critical messianic theme in Isaiah emphasized in John is of Jesus as

¹⁴ Sam Storms, “Forgiveness: What Is It and What is It Not?” *Acts* 29, 2011.

¹⁵ E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2017. James D.G. Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.

the sent one. To separate the one who is sent from that which he is sent to do is a non-sequitur. Or in other words, to separate the person of Jesus from the work of Jesus is to misunderstand the Gospel altogether. Although further clarification should be given of each of the below points, especially point two, the Gospel can be summarized and alliteratively memorized in seven points:

1. Virgin Birth
2. Virtuous Life
3. Vicarious Death
4. Victorious Resurrection
5. Visible Ascension
6. Vindicating Exaltation
7. Vowed Return

In a recent book, Andy Stanley makes his position on the “relevancy” and applicability of the OT Law abundantly clear when he boldly asserts: “The Ten Commandments have no authority over you. None. To be clear: Thou shalt not obey the Ten Commandments.”¹⁶ I reject Stanley’s view and think all Christians should too. To be clear, there is a tension in the NT on defining the applicability of the OT Law for Christians, especially Gentile Christians.¹⁷ In some passages, the Law is depicted negatively but in others continued obedience is expected. Paul’s words on the OT Law are therefore complicated, considering the OT Law forms a major backdrop for the ethical teachings throughout his writings, Ephesians especially.¹⁸ Moreover, James has been identified as the “Proverbs” of the NT, yet so much of James is reliant upon the values of the OT Law.¹⁹ Therefore, reading the OT Law allows us to evaluate the values YHWH wishes his covenant people to live by and it leads us to understand our spiritual estrangement from YHWH’s holiness, while also providing us opportunities to obey through applying those values to our lives. By reading the OT Law in this manner, I believe we strike the appropriate balance of the continuity-discontinuity tension of the purpose of the OT Law, specifically the Ten Commandments, for Christians today.

To summarize, the OT Law is good, because it...

1. Reveals YHWH’s character
2. Reveals the values by which YHWH wants his people to live
3. Objectively establishes a standard of what is sin without the possibility of us self-justifying sinful behavior outside an intentional twisting of Scripture
4. Convicts us, therefore, of sin with the purpose of leading us to repentance
5. Provides the People of God with opportunities to willingly obey him as a result of his redemption of them
6. Tells of the ethical reality of the eschatological Day to come
7. Enables the People of God to start living now the ethics of the eschatological Day

Specific to the Ten Commandments, some explanation of its form is warranted. What is clear is that there are *ten words*; however, there are some issues with numbering them. The commands: “do not have any gods besides me” and “do not make an idol for yourself... [and] do

¹⁶ Andy Stanley, *Irresistible: Reclaiming the New that Jesus Unleashed for the World*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020. Pg. 136.

¹⁷ Some examples include: Matt. 5:17-19; Rom. 6:14; 7:7-15, 22-25; 10:4; 1 Cor. 7:19; Gal. 3; 5:18; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 1 John 1:8-10; 5:3; Rev. 12:17; 14:12.

¹⁸ Gane, chapter one.

¹⁹ Tim Mackie, “Overview: James.” *The Bible Project*, published on YouTube, 2016.

not bow in worship to them” are written in Hebrew as two separate commands. Likewise, the commands: “do not covet your neighbor’s house” and “do not covet your neighbor’s wife” are written in Hebrew as two separate commands. What is clear from the text is that there are *ten words*; however, various theological traditions have clashed over the numbering trying to resolve the apparent eleven commands. Some theological traditions combine the first two into one, thus keeping the distinction between the two types of coveting; yet, other theological traditions combine the latter two into one, thus keeping the distinction between worshipping other gods and making idols of the true God. I find the latter more convincing, as the underlying *value* motivating the two covet commands is identical and superfluously duplicated if separate, whereas the former two may overlap a little but ultimately have different underlying values.

There are some differences between the two versions of the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20; Deut. 5) that will be noted in the appropriate sections. Interestingly, there are some LXX manuscripts of the Deuteronomy version that switch the order of murder and adultery, which has led some to speculate if a faulty version was in wide circulation in the first century considering Paul and James both flip the order in Rom. 13:9 and Jas. 2:11. Contrary to this, though, Jesus interacts with both of these commands in the otherwise normal order in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:21-30). Therefore, I find the argument for a widely circulated faulty manuscript in the first century to be weak and primarily fueled by conjecture, and offer no theory for why Paul flipped those two commands.

The First Word: The Sanctity of God's Exclusivity

The Command - Ex. 20:2-3

"I am YHWH your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the place of slavery. Do not have any gods besides me."

There are no major or minor differences with the second version in Deut. 5:6-7.

Heidelberg Catechism

Q. 94 - What does the Lord require in the first commandment?

A. 94 - That I, not wanting to endanger my own salvation, avoid and shun all idolatry, sorcery, superstitious rites, and prayer to saints or to other creatures. That I rightly know the only true God, trust him alone, and look to God for every good thing humbly and patiently, and love, fear, and honor God with all my heart. In short, that I give up anything rather than go against God's will in any way.

Summary

The beginning of the Ten Commandments is critical to understanding all of them. Obedience to the commands that follow is expected by the covenant community on the grounds of YHWH's redemption of them from Egypt. The only work the Israelites did toward their redemption from Egypt was following Moses after YHWH directed them. Redemption precedes transformation.

Roy Gane offers helpful insight for this redemption-then-transformation dynamic, and also helpful background on the type of covenant the people and YHWH enter into in Ex. 19. "Like the historical prologue of an ANE treaty formulation, this introduction identifies the superior party to the covenant (YHWH) and what he has graciously done for the lesser party (the Israelites). His merciful and miraculous deliverance was to call forth their profound gratitude, from which their loyal obedience to his covenant stipulations/commandments could be expected to naturally flow."²⁰ While this prologue is not actually part of the "command," it nevertheless sets the tone and answers the "why?" from the start.

The first commandment itself is very simple: do not have any gods besides me. Their worship was to be exclusive to one deity. This is in sharp contrast with every other ANE religion that surrounded them that had gods galore. Ex. 20:23 reflects this call for exclusivity when it commands not to make gods that *rival* YHWH. The value of the exclusivity of YHWH is reflected in other laws dealing with worshipping or sacrificing to other gods (Ex. 22:20; 23:24; 34:14). Even to set up an Asherah (a worship tool for the female deity who supposedly mothered Baal) *in proximity to YHWH's altar* was a violation of this exclusivity (Deut. 16:21). In fact, to worship other gods was to profane the name of YHWH (Lev. 18:21; more on this later). Moreover, intermarriage was prohibited not because of racial or ethnic discrimination but in order for Israel not to be persuaded to worship other gods (Deut. 7:3-4).

The exclusivity of YHWH is perhaps most clearly and famously articulated in the *Shema* prayer: "Hear, O Israel: YHWH is our God, YHWH *alone*. You shall love YHWH your God

²⁰ Gane, 241.

with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart..." (Deut. 6:4-15).

The value of the sanctity of God's exclusivity pops up all around the Bible. Deutero-Isaiah records in direct connection with the Servant, who would bring forth a second exodus, the exclusivity of YHWH. YHWH alone declares and saves; no gods were before YHWH and there will be none after (Isa. 43:10-12). And again, YHWH is the first and the last, beside which there are no other gods (Isa. 44:6). And again, YHWH is the one who created everything, therefore he is the only God; there are none besides him (Isa. 45:5-6; 18-21).

In Num. 25:1-15, many Israelites were enticed by Moabite women to worship other gods, exactly as was warned in the prohibition against intermarriage. Phinehas, however, acted in accordance with the YHWH's righteous *jealousy* by piercing two of the violators dead. In describing him, YHWH said "Phinehas...was jealous with my jealousy among them, so that I did not consume the people of Israel in my jealousy" (vs. 11). As a result, Phinehas was awarded a covenant of peace and a perpetual priestly family line.

In regards to Hezekiah's goodness, Isaiah describes his reign as one that destroyed the idols and worship of other gods that had plagued Judah. When Sennacherib of Assyria came against Judah, his pre-war speech castigated Hezekiah for relying on one God. Assyria recounts all the nations whose gods failed them, insisting that Judah would need *more* gods than any of the others if they wanted to defeat him (Isa. 36:4-20). Hezekiah did not budge, though, and relied on YHWH alone. Isaiah 37:36-38 records the result: the angel of the Lord wiped out 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night, and when the king of Assyria went home to worship his gods, while worshipping, he was assassinated by his own sons. A similar showdown takes place between Elijah and the prophets of Baal to prove to Israel that they must choose between YHWH or Baal, not both (1 Kings 18:21). As a result of Elijah calling on YHWH alone, the prophets of Baal were humiliated and killed by Israel who were left awestruck by the manifestation of YHWH's sheer power (1 Kings 18:22-40).

In the NT, the exclusivity of YHWH gets complicated with a more thorough explanation of the complexities of what has historically been termed the Trinity. But the doctrine of the Trinity does not contradict YHWH's exclusivity.²¹ In the NT, the exclusivity of YHWH continues. When tempted by Satan to worship Satan, Jesus responds by quoting Deut. 6:13 (part of the *Shema*), which emphasizes the worship of YHWH *alone* (Matt. 4:10; Luke 4:8). Jesus continues this in another context when he says nobody can serve two masters (Matt. 6:24). Paul, likewise, acknowledges the reality of other gods but insists that Christians submit to one God, the Father, and the one Lord, Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 8:4-6; cf. Gal. 3:20). In other words, Jesus and Paul are representing the sanctity of YHWH's exclusivity embraced by Elijah and Hezekiah above: one cannot worship both; one must choose between YHWH or (fill in the blank).

It is this exclusivity that led to such a sharp reaction by Barnabas and Paul when they were mistaken for gods after healing a man at Lystra (Acts 14:8-17). The two apostles healed a man of faith and then were mistaken for Zeus and Hermes, so much so that the priests at the temple of Zeus are confused and join in on bringing sacrifices to Barnabas and Paul. The two apostles respond to this pluralistic confusion by rebuking them and calling on them to believe in the one God who is distinguished from all other gods in that their God created everything. While vs. 18 (cf. vs. 15) states that Barnabas and Paul's preaching of the Gospel "scarcely restrained" the people from worshipping them, vs. 21-22 suggest their preaching was not in vain because there were disciples at Lystra who later needed strengthening in the faith.

²¹ For the sake of simplicity, we will not delve into these complexities in this present study.

The Second Word: The Sanctity of God's Form

The Command - Ex. 20:4-6

“Do not make an idol for yourself, whether in the shape of anything in the heavens above or on the earth below or in the waters under the earth. Do not bow in worship to them, and do not serve them; for I, YHWH your God, am a jealous God, bringing the consequences of the father’s iniquities on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing faithful love to [the thousandth generation] of those who love me and keep my commands.”

There are no major or minor differences with the second version in Deut. 5:8-10.

Heidelberg Catechism

Q. 95 - What is idolatry?

A. 95 - Idolatry is having or inventing something in which one trusts in place of or alongside the only true God who has revealed Himself in the word.

Q. 96 - What is God's will for us in the second commandment?

A. 96 - That we in no way make any image of God nor worship him in any other way than has been commanded in God's Word.

Q. 97 - May we then not make any image at all?

A. 97 - God cannot and may not be visibly portrayed in any way. Although creatures may be portrayed, yet God forbids making or having such images if one's intention is to worship them or to serve God through them.

Q. 98 - But may not images be permitted in churches in place of books for the unlearned?

A. 98 - No, we should not try to be wiser than God. God wants the Christian community instructed by the living preaching of his Word—not by idols that cannot even talk.

Summary

It is helpful to begin discussion of this command with the first instance of idols in the Bible: Genesis 1:26-28. God made mankind in his own image. While the Hebrew words are different, the function is identical. Idols in ANE culture represented the representational presence of the deity, so much so that to worship the idol was identical with worshipping the deity. Humans are the idol/image of God's throne on earth. Similar to this, YHWH created the glorious Cosmic Temple and placed his image in the holiest of holies, the Garden of Eden. In contrast to this, YHWH prohibited the worship of idols/images, as the other nations did (Deut. 12:2-4). What is prohibited in the second commandment, therefore, is twofold: for an image of God to “create” another image; and for anything but YHWH receiving worship.

The second commandment naturally flows out of the first commandment, particularly in terms of the jealousy violation provokes. Throughout the Bible, YHWH's covenant relationship

is described in terms of a marriage. And so when Israel worships other gods or worships idols, naturally YHWH's wrath is described in terms of jealousy as a result of Israel's marital unfaithfulness (Deut. 32:16; Song 8:6; Ezek. 16:38; Zech. 1:14; 8:2-3; among others). And Israel certainly had an extensive idol problem. David Baker writes that "archaeological evidence to support the existence of idolatry in Israel has been adduced in the discovery of almost a thousand small terracotta figures in Judah dated from the late monarchy period. Most take the form of a woman with large breasts, [representing] the Canaanite goddess Asherah. Israelites were tempted to worship her, as we know from frequent references in the Old Testament (e.g. 1 Kings 14:15, 23; 15:13; 2 Kings 17:10; 21:7)...together with the god Baal."²² It is no surprise that along with pride, the sin most handled by the prophets was idolatry.

The prophets waste no time when it comes to idolatry. They follow their lead from Lev. 19:4; 26:1; and Deut. 32:21 in rebuking the *worthlessness* of idols and idolatry, using the same word *shav* respectively rendered "vain" or "false" in the third and ninth commandments. Isaiah describes the worthlessness of idols in that they are unable to move (Isa. 40:19-20). He describes the worthlessness of idols in that man created them with their own hands so at most they are not even images of God but rather images of man (Isa. 2:8, 18; 44:9-20). Moreover, Jer. 51:17-18 calls those who worship idols stupid for doing so, defining their worthlessness on the basis of the lack of breath in them (cf. Hab. 2:18-19). This is perfectly in line with what I have suggested above: that humanity are the idols God has made of himself for the cosmic temple, within whom he has breathed the breath of life (Gen. 2:7); living idols worthy of reflecting the true God.

The most infamous example of idolatry is the Golden Calf in Ex. 32. It is popularly believed that this incident violated the first and second commandment. However, this conclusion is incorrect, and shows, through careful nuance, the distinction between the underlying values represented by the first and second commandments. When Israel lost track of Moses, Aaron took their gold and crafted a golden image of a calf, and in his dedication, identified it as YHWH, who brought them out of Egypt (vs. 4-5). They had not violated the exclusivity of YHWH, but instead worshipped YHWH in an expressly prohibited way. This same dynamic is present with Jeroboam who crafted two golden calves as images of YHWH who freed Israel from Egypt. Here also is a violation of the second commandment, but not the first.

Another example is the strange tale of the bronze serpent in Num. 21:4-9. In their wilderness wanderings, Israel grumbled against YHWH, actually desiring to go back to slavery in Egypt. YHWH responded by sending fiery serpents among them to bite them. As a result many Israelites died which prompted Israel to rapid repentance and asked Moses to intercede for them. YHWH's response was to instruct Moses to craft a bronze image of a serpent and whoever was bitten but looked at the bronze serpent would be healed. Its purpose was not to be an image of YHWH but to be a source of healing for those who repented of their grumbling and obeyed the command of YHWH in response to their affliction. But this clearly didn't last long, for an interesting detail is added among Hezekiah's early idolatry reforms. Hezekiah "did what was right in the eyes of YHWH, according to all that David his father had done. He removed the high places and broke the pillars and cut down the Asherah. And he broke to pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the people of Israel had made offerings to it" (2 Kings 18:3-4). Israel had made this thing into an image of worship—on the same level as those who worshipped the Canaanite goddess Asherah—that it needed to be destroyed to purify Judah.

One more example of this is the imagery of the potter and the clay. Isaiah rebukes the people who are clay yet say to God the potter that he did not make, form, or understand them

²² David Baker, *The Decalogue: Living as the People of God*. Downers Grove: IV Press, 2017. Pg. 55.

(Isa. 29:16). Again, Isaiah rebukes those who argue against their maker, illustrated as clay arguing with the potter that the potter has no hands to make them. Yet, it was YHWH, Israel's maker, who also made the earth with his hands (Isa. 45:8-12). However, in Isaiah's eschatological vision, the remnant of YHWH declares the opposite: "But now, O YHWH, you are our father; we are the clay, and you are the potter; we are all the work of your hands" (Isa. 64:8). The connection between the potter-clay imagery with idolatry is made clearer in Jeremiah 18-19. Jeremiah is told to go to the potter's wheel to hear a word from YHWH about YHWH's right to do as he wants with his own creation, *because he created them*. Why he makes some vessels for destruction/shattering and others for honorable purposes following their repentance from idolatry is his own doing and right as the potter (Jer. 18:1-11; 19:1-12; cf. Rom. 9:19-24). Making and worshipping idols requires clay to take the place of the potter and also to question the creative work of the potter, because the potter has already made sufficient idols/images of himself in humanity, within whom he has already given the breath of life. By crafting further images of God, humanity demonstrates its stupidity in that it renders what God has made insufficient and directs worship away from the potter instead toward the clay. This is why idolatry is an affront to God.

The NT writers did not forget about idolatry, which is described as among the works of the flesh *opposed* to the Spirit (Gal. 5:19-20). After writing extensively on love and obedience to the commands of God, John concludes his first epistle with the call to guard ourselves from idols (1 John 5:21). In the introduction to Romans, Paul writes that God's wrath is revealed against those who suppress the truth about the immortal God, exchanging him for idols; therefore, God will hand such people over to sexual immorality since they worship the created rather than the Creator (Rom. 1:18-25). When the early church was figuring out how to incorporate Gentile believers alongside the Jewish believers, the Council decided not to overburden the Gentile converts and instead to place, initially, just three expectations on them: avoid idols, avoid sexual immorality, and do not eat bloody food, which in some practices was a combination of the first two (Acts 15:20). These three items constitute the gravest threat to Gentile Christians.

This is most clearly articulated by Paul in 1 Cor. 10:1-22, when Paul instructs the Corinthian Christians not to provoke the Lord to *jealousy* by turning to *idolatry*. Instead, we should learn from Israel's failure with idolatry. Several examples from Israel's history are given, including their response to the golden calf (vs. 7; cf. Ex. 32:6), the sexual immorality of intermarriage ended by Phinehas (vs. 8; Num. 25:1-18; Ps. 106:29-31), the fiery snakes (vs. 9; cf. Num. 21:4-9), and the rebellion of Korah (vs. 10; cf. Num. 16). Paul talks about these examples in Israel's history to make a point that no temptation has come except what is common to all humanity and that he will always provide a way of escape. Paul also connects idolatry to the right practice of the Lord's Supper by stating that one cannot partake of the one bread and one cup of Christ if they are also eating food sacrificed to an idol, for such food is actually sacrificed to demons. When we eat food of idols and food of Christ, we provoke the YHWH's *jealousy*.

The Third Word: The Sanctity of God's Name

The Command - Ex. 20:7

"Do not use the name of YHWH your God in vain, because YHWH will not leave anyone who uses his name in vain unpunished."

There are no major or minor differences with the second version in Deut. 5:11.

Heidelberg Catechism

Q. 99 - What is the aim of the third commandment?

A. 99 - That we neither blaspheme nor misuse the name of God by cursing, perjury, or unnecessary oaths, nor share in such horrible sins by being silent bystanders. In summary, we should use the holy name of God only with reverence and awe, so that we may properly confess God, pray to God, and glorify God in all our words and works.

Q. 100 - Is blasphemy of God's name by swearing and cursing really such serious sin that God is angry also with those who do not do all they can to help prevent and forbid it?

A. 100 - Yes, indeed. No sin is greater or provokes God's wrath more than blaspheming his name. That is why God commanded it to be punished with death.

Q. 101 - But may we swear an oath in God's name if we do it reverently?

A. 101 - Yes, when the government demands it, or when necessity requires it, in order to maintain and promote truth and trustworthiness for God's glory and our neighbor's good. Such oaths are grounded in God's Word and were rightly used by the People of God in the Old and New Testaments.

Q. 102 - May we also swear by saints or other creatures?

A. 102 - No. A legitimate oath means calling upon God as the only one who knows my heart to witness to my truthfulness and to punish me if I swear falsely. No creature is worthy of such honor.

Summary

To introduce this command, David Baker provides helpful background to ANE culture when he writes that "the introduction to the Babylonian Epic of Creation elevates the importance of names to such an extent that someone or something not yet named can hardly be considered to exist. At the end, the divine assembly bestows fifty names on Marduk, thereby giving him the roles and authority required to act as king of the gods. The significance of a god's name is also evident in Egyptian writings, [sic] In the Legend of Isis and the Name of Re, a wise woman called Isis sets out to discover the secret name of the 'noble god' Re. He is very reluctant to reveal it because knowledge of the name could give others power over him. The story illustrates

the ancient Near Eastern belief that a name does not simply identify a person but also defines who one *is*.²³ Therefore, in following Baker's lead, exploring the name of God must be a quest to define who God is.

Gen. 1:1 begins to unfold who the God of the Bible is: he is *Elohim*, a title for the deity who created everything. The stories of the Bible clarify the identity and character of this Creator. Ex. 2:23 is the beginning of the next big stage of the Bible's revealing who the Creator is. After centuries of slavery in Egypt, the cries of the Israelites went up to the *Elohim* who heard his people who turned to him in their distress and acts in accordance with his covenant to Abraham. Thus the passion of *Elohim* toward Abraham is extended here to the Israelite slaves in Egypt. In Ex. 3:2ff, when the angel of YHWH appeared from within the burning bush, the voice identified itself as the *Elohim* of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; or in other words, this deity is identifying itself with the unfolding story.

Moses objects to his proposed commissioning, and in response, the *Elohim* says "I will be with you" (vs. 12). The Hebrew for "I will be" is *ehweh*. Moses objects a second time, and in response, *Elohim* says *ehweh asher ehweh* "I will be what I will be" (vs. 14). This big "I AM THAT I AM" verse does not use the name of the *Elohim*, but instead uses the same word as in verse 12 speaking of what the *Elohim* does. This is when the Hebrew gets fun. The *Elohim* calls itself *ehweh*; but, when it puts its name in the mouth of Moses to speak, Moses is to call it *Yahweh* (I use the more simple 'YHWH' throughout this document). Not just is Moses to call the *Elohim* "Yahweh" but that is to be the name of the *Elohim* for all generations. In Hebrew, the *eh* prefix means "I" and the *ya* prefix means "he." When God says his own name, it is *ehweh* "I will be," and when Moses and anyone says God's name, it is *Yahweh* "He will be."²⁴

This is further elaborated in Ex. 34:6-7 when YHWH revealed more of his character in connection with his name. "YHWH passed before him and proclaimed, 'YHWH of YHWHS.' When the Bible repeats the same word twice in a row it is especially emphasizing it to the utmost degree. Just like "holy of holies" and "lord of lords," YHWH of YHWHS speaks of God as the one who "will be" par excellence. YHWH is the one who will be a merciful and gracious God. YHWH is the one who will be slow to anger. YHWH is the one who will be abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, who keeps steadfast love to the thousandth generation. YHWH is the one who will forgive iniquity, transgression, and sin. YHWH is the one who will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and fourth generation. The defining characteristic of *who God is* is revealed in his name, which from the get go connects the nature and work of God with our trust in God's faithfulness to his own promises. He will be. In the LXX, these words are the Greek *ego eimi*, which Jesus uses particularly in the Gospel of John to very clearly identify himself as God. Jesus did not say "He is" as we are all supposed to say. No, instead, Jesus said "I am." This is why Jesus' use of this event to define *who Jesus is* drew immediate calls of blasphemy.

A farmer will oftentimes brand his cattle with a permanent marking to clearly demarcate that a cow belongs to him. When YHWH places his name on these locations and people, what Scripture is getting at is that YHWH is actively and verbally branding those locations and people.²⁵ This is why the profaning of the name of YHWH by using it vainly results in such drastic punishments throughout the Biblical narrative. One huge example is in Ezekiel 36 when the prophet outright says the exile is due to the Jews' profaning of the name of YHWH; clearly,

²³ Baker, 61.

²⁴ Tim Mackie, "I AM Who I Am: Yahweh is our God." Published on YouTube, 2017.

²⁵ Carmen Imes, *Bearing God's Name: Why Sinai Still Matters*. Downers Grove: IV Press, 2019.

transcendent of a word that identifies/labels someone, what is in view is the *reputation* of YHWH that his people carry with them, of which wisdom agrees (Prov. 22:1; Eccles. 7:1).

The most misunderstood feature of the third commandment is that it includes no terminology regarding speech. The typical, erroneous interpretation of this commandment is that phrases such as “Oh my God” are violations. The extreme of this error is evidenced by Jews ancient and modern who refuse to say or write the name of YHWH. Instead, if they have to, they write G-d or say *hashem* “the name.” The verb in question is *nasa* “carry” or “to lift up” which should be easy enough to remember through the mnemonic device of a rocket ship. This certainly could involve speech, but more often referred to the outward behavior of one who represents the reputation of another or a thing; *it is the manner in which one carries their allegiance*. In Ex. 28-29, Aaron in his priestly role was to be dressed with twelve stones. As a result, Aaron will *nasa* “carry” the *shem* “name” of the twelve tribes of Israel. In other words, Aaron’s ministry was representational of the tribes. The gold medallion on Aaron’s forehead, inscribed with “YHWH” meant that the twelve tribes were a holy people belonging to YHWH. By carrying the tribes and by carrying the name “YHWH,” Aaron is a walking example of what the whole nation of Israel was intended to be: a holy kingdom of priests (Ex. 19).

John Sailhamer says it well when he writes that “God had revealed to Israel his name (Yahweh) and had given to them the corresponding privilege of calling on that name in worship and in time of need. Along with this privilege came the responsibility of honor and respect. Israel was not to call on God’s name ‘for no good purpose,’ that is, they were not to presume upon their relationship with God and think that he was merely at their beck and call. The whole of the instructions regarding the nature of Israel’s worship and the building of the tabernacle (Ex 25-31) was intended to teach Israel the proper way to call on God’s name.”²⁶

Yet, Scripture does not leave us guessing in regards to how to avoid profaning the name. Instead, Jesus tells us to pray “*hallowed* be your name;” hallowed, or more simply, “Make holy” (Matt. 6:9). “Hallowing” the name of God is the opposite of “profaning” the name of God. Swearing an oath to the Lord or to your neighbors *falsely* brings guilt (Lev. 6:2-5). Swearing anything falsely while invoking the name of YHWH profanes his name (Lev. 19:12). Prophets who falsely invoke the name of YHWH must die (Deut. 18:20). These commands formulated in the negative clearly reveal that hallowing the name is achieved by swearing *truthfully* to the Lord, or *truthfully* to your neighbors, or invoking the name of YHWH for the sake of *truthfulness*. In fact, the People of God are required to take oaths in the name of YHWH to ensure their *truthfulness* (Deut. 6:13). Obedience to the governing authorities is to prevent the name of YHWH from being profaned (1 Tim. 6:1). The reason for the Aaronic blessing is provided in the verse that immediately follows: they shall put the name of YHWH on the people of Israel to *bless* them (Num. 6:27). Calling on the name of YHWH for the right reasons results in praise (Ps. 8:1; 66:1-3; 75:1). Even God protects the hallowedness of his own name by promising not to abandon his people *because* of his name (1 Sam. 12:22); or in Ezek. 20:5-10 when the prophet says that God rescued Israel in the exodus from Egypt *for the sake of his name*, that the other nations would not profane it.

In several places throughout the OT, YHWH says he has placed his name on certain things. YHWH placed his name on his people Israel (Num. 6:27). YHWH placed his name on his city Jerusalem/Zion (Deut. 12:11, 21; 2 Kings 21:4). YHWH placed his name on his sanctuary (Lev. 24:10-16, 23; Deut. 12:5). YHWH placed his name on the Promised Land (Deut. 14:23-

²⁶ John Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008. Pg. 286.

24). And interestingly, in Amos 9:11-15, the final words of this minor prophet announcing the coming day when YHWH will raise up a new David who will restore all things and gather the remnant *from the nations who are called by the name of YHWH*.

There will come a day when the mark of our allegiance will be made abundantly clear when all will either carry the mark of the Lamb, which is the name of YHWH branded on their foreheads, or the mark of the beast (Rev. 14:1-12). Considering Revelation is a combination of the apocalyptic and poetic genres, we should not assume that this is a literal branding of the letters YHWH on our foreheads like a tattoo, but rather through its intricacies typically conflating a variety of OT images, refers to a clear, outward, verbal allegiance to either Christ or the Anti-Christ. Similarly, Paul writes in Gal. 6:17 that he bears the marks of Christ on his body by his being persecuted for the Gospel. Peter writes similarly that when we suffer for the sake of Christ we are blessed and ought to glorify God *for his name*. Subsequently, he continues, let nobody who claims to be a Christian suffer for doing evil (1 Pet. 4:14-19).

The most significant example, though, of the need for continued obedience to this command, and in light of Amos 9:11-15 above (as well as Joel 2:28-32), comes from Isaiah. 45:17-25, for it is quoted in several NT passages. In sharp contrast with the worthless idols, YHWH is the only God; the exclusive source for salvation. As such, peoples who call upon these worthless gods who cannot save must repent and turn to the exclusive YHWH who can, does, and *will* save. YHWH has sworn by his own name—meaning he says “I will do this...”—that this word will not return in vain: every knee will bow and every tongue will swear allegiance or confess to the God who justifies his people for his glory. First, Rom. 14:11 and Phil. 2:5-11 have the clearest quotations of this passage, with the “every knee will bow and tongue will confess...” clause, but what the tongues confess (in Phil. 2) is that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Second, Acts 2:14-39, Acts 4:7-12, and Rom. 10:1-17 are filled with references to Isaiah 45, Amos 9, and Joel 2 in their calls for salvation as a result of calling on the name of the Lord, which they all develop Christological arguments for calling on the name of *Jesus* as Lord to be saved.

Obedience to this command requires first YHWH placing his name on someone, in a sense marking them through the branding of their verbal confession of Christ in allegiance to him alone. Those given the name are marked, then, for salvation. Those marked for salvation through the placement of YHWH’s name on them (the mark of the Lamb) are then expected to *carry* that name and represent it in ways that do not profane it but make it holy. Christians who engage in sinful activities represent the family in vain, but Christians who stand up for justice, protect the vulnerable, live lives distinguished by truthfulness, and suffer for the sake of the Gospel carry their cross, bearing the marks of Christ like Paul, to the glory of YHWH.

The Fourth Word: The Sanctity of God's Worship

The Command - Ex. 20:8-11

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. You are to labor six days and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath day to YHWH your God. You must not do any work—you, your son or daughter, your male or female servant, your livestock, or the resident alien who is within your city gates. For YHWH made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and everything in them in six days; then he rested on the seventh day. Therefore, YHWH blessed the Sabbath day and declared it holy."

There are some differences with the second version in Deut. 5:12-15. The first difference is the Exodus version begins with Zakar "remember" while the Deuteronomy version begins with Shamar "keep." The second difference is the Deuteronomy version adds a clause "as YHWH your God has commanded you." The third difference is the Exodus version prohibits work of your livestock on the seventh day, whereas the Deuteronomy version also prohibits work of ox and donkeys along with the livestock on the seventh day. The forth, and most significant difference, is the basis for the command; in Exodus the command is grounded in creation at the beginning while in Deuteronomy the command is grounded in redemption from Egypt.

Heidelberg Catechism

Q. 103 - What is God's will for you in the fourth commandment?

A. 103 - First, that the gospel ministry and education for it be maintained, and that, especially on the festive day of rest, I diligently attend the assembly of God's people to learn what God's Word teaches, to participate in the sacraments, to pray to God publicly, and to bring Christian offerings for the poor. Second, that every day of my life I rest from my evil ways, let the Lord work in me through his Spirit, and so begin in this life the eternal Sabbath.

Summary

The fourth commandment has the most differences between the two versions. While the third difference listed above is minor, the other three are significant. The Deuteronomy version distinctly recalls the first version as the authoritative command. Or in other words, the Deuteronomy version is not a replacement but a reinforcement of the Exodus version. This is furthered by the addition of the clause "as YHWH your God has commanded you," referring to the Exodus version. The most significant difference is the fourth one listed above, the reason for the command in the first place. In the premier version, the basis for Sabbath rest goes back to creation, while the reinforcement of the command goes back to their exodus from Egypt. Roy Gane helpfully points out that "the Sabbath...signifies [God's] unique activity in the history of planet Earth for the benefit of human beings: creation (Ex. 20:11) and deliverance of Israel from Egypt (Deut. 5:15). These unique acts demonstrate his unique nature and holiness."²⁷ That said, by shifting the initial verb from *zakar* to *shamar*, Moses is intricately connecting Deuteronomy's reinforcement of the Sabbath rest to creation in a different manner through life in the garden of which Adam was commanded to *abad* "work" and *shamar* "keep."

²⁷ Gane, 248.

The significance of the creational element is for understanding the spirit of the fourth commandment. Gen. 1-2 presents Sabbath as the consummation of creation and “demonstrates consecration in an ascending order.”²⁸ That the Sabbath day is more than merely a twilight-dusk day is evident by the lack of morning and evening, which Beale suggests is a reference to an eschatological nature to the Sabbath.²⁹ Hauck goes on to say that “within the framework of the narrative in Genesis 1:1-2:2, there is an ascending order of hierarchy culminating in Sabbath which demonstrates its ultimate supremacy.”³⁰ Humanity preceded the Sabbath, and so “the Sabbath came into being to serve man’s needs to be like God and enjoy him.”³¹ Ex. 31:12-17 further reinforces this concept of Sabbath’s purpose being *for* humanity, thus, as Jesus says in Mark 2:27-28, man was not made for the Sabbath but Sabbath for man.

What is its purpose *for* man, but for imitation of God? The People of God are to rest *just as God rested*. God’s rest was not due to his own exhaustion but rather to give humanity a template to satisfy their own exhaustion and to ensure a clear time that was holy, or set apart, for the purpose of *worshipping* God and enjoying the fruits of their own work. While God certainly could have created everything in a moment, he chose to take six days to create. The seventh consummative day of creation, as well as the fourth commandment’s commentary on creation, allow us to answer the question, “Why did God take six days to create?” with the answer: to establish a pattern for the way his people are to live. A second purpose is for humanity to fulfill God’s creational task. This is why the Deuteronomy version’s slight changes are so critical. In the garden, Adam was commanded to *abad* and *shamar* the land. The Deuteronomy version begins *shamor yom hashabat* “keep the Sabbath day” using that key word *shamar* and connecting *shamar* to the Sabbath rest. Six days you shall *abad* “work.” So in the fourth commandment (according to Deuteronomy), working six days then resting for Sabbath is fulfilling the command to *abad* and *shamar*. This further reinforces that Sabbath was made for humanity: not just for the sake of reducing exhaustion from work but in order to imitate, worship, and obey YHWH.

The command also extends to those living in one’s household: people and animals; in fact, not just those people and things that are living within one’s household, but even the land. The Israelites were to let the land rest every seventh year, allowing all of its produce to be for the poor and animals (Ex. 23:10-11; Lev. 25:1-7). Moreover, the Sabbath value was the basis for the Jubilee, which was the total repayment of debts and the realignment of the land that the Israelites lived on back to their tribal allotments (Lev. 25:8-12). It is telling that there is not one mention of Jubilee actually occurring in the Bible until Jesus opened the Isaiah scroll and declared it fulfilled (Luke 4).

Sabbath was intended as a universal command, regardless of where they happened to live (Lev. 23:3), regardless of whether it was harvest time (Ex. 34:21), and even if they were a Gentile (Isa. 56:2-3). Not even could they light a fire in their homes on the Sabbath day because their rest was to be total (Ex. 23:3). This likely referred to candles. The modern equivalent would be to refrain from turning on your house lights on the Sabbath. When the sun rose, so did you.

²⁸ Kyle Hauck, “The Beginning and the Sabbath: Indicators for the Perpetuity of the Sabbath.” *PRJ*, Vol. 9, 2017. Pg. 36.

²⁹ G.K. Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011. Pg. 777.

³⁰ Hauck, 45.

³¹ Richard Barcellos, *Better than the Beginning: Creation in Biblical Perspective*. Palmdale: RBAP, 2013. Pg. 33.

When the sun set, so did you. In our modern age, this would result in much more sleep for the typical person—hardly a coincidence.

The command does not mean they did nothing on the Sabbath. For instance, setting out the offering for YHWH on the Sabbath doesn't violate the command (Lev. 24:7-8), suggesting that services to YHWH or expressions of worship did not count as "work." This would involve potentially the "work" of presenting two unblemished lambs, fine flour, oil, and a drink offering (Num. 28:9-10). This is furthered by the fact that keeping the Sabbath and revering the house of YHWH are intrinsically connected (Lev. 26:2). Profaning, therefore, the Sabbath day is evil (Neh. 13:17). Isaiah 58:13-14 further states that doing what you want on the Sabbath is how you dishonor the Sabbath; instead, spending the Sabbath day doing what pleases YHWH or doing things that enable you to delight in YHWH is how you obey this command.

While the Sabbath command is the only one of the Ten Commandments not explicitly quoted in the NT, the concept of Sabbath makes frequent appearances. For one, the Book of Acts frequently records Paul's interactions with Jews and Gentiles as happening at the synagogues on the Sabbath (Acts 13:42-44; 17:1-3; 18:4). One of the pulsating cries against Jesus was that he healed on the Sabbath day, but Jesus used such an event to critique the Pharisees' extreme form of micro-interpretation, picking apart one individual law absent the spirit of the entire Law. Thus, because Jesus *did good* on the Sabbath, what he did does not qualify as work (Matt. 12:1-14; John 7:22-24). Moreover, Luke honors the women who anointed the tomb of Jesus by his editorial comment that they rested on the Sabbath *according to the commandment* (Luke 23:56).

There is one more noteworthy change between Exodus 20's interpretation of day seven of creation with Genesis's depiction of day seven.³² In Gen. 2:2, the rest that the Elohim entered was *shabath*. "On the seventh day, *Elohim* finished that which he had done, and he *shabath'd* on the seventh day from all the work that he had done." Yet, in the fourth commandment in Ex. 20:11, Moses changes the word to describe the rest from *shabath* to *nuach*. "For YHWH made...and *nuach'd* the seventh day." This word is derived from the word *menuchah*, which is a significant type of rest in the OT, a rest that is described as royal enthronement, typically used to describe the *resting place* of YHWH's sanctuary (Num. 10:33; Deut. 12:9; Ps. 132:7-8; Isa. 66:1), a sacred place that is *permanent* rather than mobile (1 Chron. 28:2; Ps. 132:13-14). The messianic David is prophesied to be the one to bring this permanent sanctuary of YHWH to the earth (Isa. 11:10). And yet, this permanent, sacred space for YHWH is not for YHWH alone but is the consummation of life for the People of God; Psalm 95:11 describes those who are not the People of God as those will not enter YHWH's permanent, resting place. The command's interpretation of the seventh day from Genesis in order to establish the pattern by which the People of God are to now live is to prepare us for the royal enthronement of YHWH in the new cosmic holy of holies called New Jerusalem, where we will live with him for all eternity.

Ex. 31:12-17 clearly elevates the Sabbath from a commandment to an eternal covenant. It is true that Col. 2:16-17 relegates the Sabbath to those things of the OT to be seen as shadows or prefigurations of Christ; yet, Ex. 31:12-17 makes the rest which shadows Christ eternal. Just as the eternal covenant of Sabbath enables all people to participate in imitating God, worshipping God, and obeying God, since it merely shadowed Christ, the promise of entering Christ's eschatological rest for those burdened and heavy-laden still stands (Heb. 4:1ff; Matt. 11:28-30). As such, this command applies to those who are in Christ even to this day. In our age of immediacy, to practice Sabbath is counter-cultural. God did not want his people to penny-pinching, but to trust that he would provide all that they needed. If all Christians held true to this command

³² Barcellos, 138-139.

to keep the Sabbath; if the millions of Christians around the world changed their lifestyle in this direction, the rest of the world would know we are Christians by how we are positively affected by the regular rhythms of rest through which we worship YHWH. This does not mean that Christians get out of work—work was designed by God and is viewed by God as something that is very good—but it does mean that we work differently than the rest of the world. The world generally works with their pockets prioritized above all else, but the Christian ought to work with glorifying God prioritized above all else, and God has set forth how we can glorify him in this way: by working well at our jobs, by resting intentionally and regularly, and by trusting him to provide what we need.

The Fifth Word: The Sanctity of Family

The Command - Ex. 20:12

“Honor your father and your mother so that you may have a long life in the land that YHWH your God is giving you.”

There are only two differences in the second version in Deut. 5:16. The first difference is the addition of the clause “as YHWH your God has commanded you.” The second difference is the addition of the clause “and so you may prosper” after the promise of a long life in the land YHWH is giving the nation.

Heidelberg Catechism

Q. 104 - What is God’s will for you in the fifth commandment?

A. 104 - That I honor, love, and be loyal to my father and mother and all those in authority over me; that I submit myself with proper obedience to all their good teaching and discipline; and also that I be patient with their failures—for through them God chooses to rule us.

Summary

With each command, we have begun with the necessary background-context to best frame our understanding. In each of the first four commands, this has taken us back to Eden. Certainly the institution of the family has foundation in Eden; yet, for this command, it is necessary to remember to whom the Ten Commandments were given. John Sailhamer helpfully points out that the command is given primarily to adult males who are independent from their father and mother, or in other words men who leave their father and mother to cleave to a wife in marriage.³³ Certainly, the command would be extended to all the People of God, including women and children (Lev. 19:3; Deut. 4:10; 6:2), but the initial audience were independent, adult males. Our youth program for many years has held an event called the Fifth Commandment where the students serve dessert to their parents, and this is a great tool to instill this truth. But this command is not just for children. You do not graduate or age out of the fifth commandment. Those who care for their elderly fathers and/or mothers are obeying this command. Those who mourn and remember their deceased fathers and mothers obey this command, even though they have died. Are Christian men, in particular, doing this?

The Bible has strong feelings about the strength of the family unit, because the family unit is the first layer in the authority God delegates over us (Eph. 6:1-4). Those who strike or curse their father or mother are deserving of death (Ex. 21:15, 17; Lev. 20:9). Yet, the family is only as strong as it is grounded in the Lord, for if a family member entices you to worship other gods they too are deserving of death (Deut. 13:6-11). Moreover, parents are to bring their rebellious sons to the elders to be put to death (Deut. 21:18-21). But the Bible is not doom and gloom when it comes to this command, for as Paul points out this is the first command with a promise (Eph. 6:1-4). Obedience, Moses writes, leads to offspring who are blessed and prosper (Deut. 5:29; 28:4).

³³ Sailhamer, 286.

The Bible stresses the protection of the vulnerable, among whom are the fatherless. James famously writes that pure religion takes care of the fatherless (Jas. 1:27), taking his cue from Isaiah 1:17 and Psalm 82:3, which both say that it is right and good to defend the fatherless. On what basis ought the People of God to take care of the fatherless? Because ultimately, God is Father. God defends the fatherless (Deut. 10:18). In God, the fatherless find compassion (Hos. 14:3). Even if father and mother abandon you, the psalmist declares that YHWH will not (Ps. 27:10). When the People of God participate in defending the fatherless, they inherently point the fatherless to their true Father, YHWH, who *will be* their compassionate Father (Ps. 68:5; cf. Hos. 14:3).

This is not new, though. Jesus confronted the Pharisees who through some hermeneutical maneuvering had devised a way for people to get out of honoring their elderly parents by giving the money that otherwise would have gone toward taking care of them to give to the synagogue instead (Matt. 15:1-9; cf. Mark 7:9-13). Notice Jesus quotes from one of the laws referenced above prescribing death for those who curse father and mother. Jesus is rebuking them for effectively accepting bribes to justify cursing father and mother through mal-care. Even in his final moments before being crucified, Jesus saw his mother and (presumably) John and joined them together in a pseudo-adoption. Jesus instructed John to take his mother in to care for her as if she were his own mother in Jesus' absence (John 19:25-27).

The outworking of the fifth commandment is a subject Solomon writes much about in the Book of Proverbs. Consider this sampling:

6:20-22 - "Keep your father's commandment, and do not forsake your mother's teaching. Bind them on your heart always; tie them around your neck. When you walk, they will lead you; when you lie down, they will watch over you; and when you awake, they will talk with you."

13:1 - "A wise son hears his father's instruction, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke."

15:5 - "A fool despises his father's instruction, but whoever heeds a rebuke is wise."

19:26-27 - "He who does violence to his father and chases away his mother is a son who brings shame and reproach. Cease to hear instruction, my son, and you will stray from the words of knowledge."

23:22-25 - "Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old... The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice; he who fathers a wise son will be glad in him. Let your father and mother be glad; let her who bore you rejoice."

31:26-29 - [about the excellent wife] "She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all."

As you can see from the above quotations, there is a theme here for how Proverbs works out what it means to honor father and mother. It is primarily by listening, obeying, and holding onto the instructions and way of life passed down from father and mother for the sake of good living among the child. The secondary concept in Proverbs is that the result of one who listens, obeys, and holds onto is a wise child who brings joy and gladness to both father and mother (10:1; 15:20; 17:21, 25, among others).

This means that parents do not just sit back and insist on being honored; they participate in raising up the children in the instruction of the Lord. A specific example of this is in the *Shema*: "...love YHWH your God with all your heart, soul, and might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them [the words] diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and

when you lie down, and when you rise” (Deut. 6:5-7). In other words, raising your children in the way of YHWH is a full-time gig, not something reserved for Sunday mornings. This is why in Eph. 6:1-4, after telling children to obey their parents, Paul commands fathers “not to provoke your children to anger, but to bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” This is why in Col. 3:20-21, after telling children to obey their parents, Paul commands fathers “not to provoke your children, at the risk of them becoming discouraged.” In Prov. 31 it is the excellent woman who raises up her children in the instruction of the Lord and in Eph. 6 it is the excellent man who raises up his children in the instruction of the Lord. If your wife is doing all of the Bible teaching at home, then you are not fulfilling your fatherly duty to your children. If your husband is doing all of the Bible teaching at home, then you are not fulfilling your motherly duty to your children. This is the task Scripture gives to parents over their children. If you’re expecting honor from your children when you’ve neglected teaching the way of the Lord then there is something missing from the equation.

The Sixth Word: The Sanctity of Life

The Command - Ex. 20:13

“Do not murder.”

There are no major or minor differences with the second version in Deut. 5:17.

Heidelberg Catechism

Q. 105 - What is God’s will for you in the sixth commandment?

A. 105 - I am not to belittle, hate, insult, or kill my neighbor—not by my thoughts, my words, my look or gesture, and certainly not by actual deeds—and I am not to be party to this in others; rather, I am to put away all desire for revenge. I am not to harm or recklessly endanger myself either. Prevention of murder is also why government is armed with the sword.

Q. 106 - Does this commandment refer only to murder?

A. 106 - By forbidding murder God teaches us that he hates the root of murder: envy, hatred, anger, vindictiveness. In God’s sight all such are disguised forms of murder.

Q. 107 - Is it enough then that we do not murder our neighbor in any such way?

A. 107 - No. By condemning envy, hatred, and anger God wants us to love our neighbors as ourselves, to be patient, peace-loving, gentle, merciful, and friendly toward them, to protect them from harm as much as we can, and to do good even to our enemies.

Summary

To disconnect the significance of this command from the possession of the image of God is to misunderstand the commandment not to murder. While there was no written law prohibiting murder at the time, the punishment for Cain murdering his brother was estrangement from God, so much so that Cain *desired* death. Fast forward a few chapters and after the flood has abated, upon which God gave the earth *noach* “rest,” God acknowledges that the inclination of humanity’s heart is still corrupt and gives *Noah* the command not to shed the blood of humanity for the blood of whoever does will itself be shed. The reason for this command is that God made humanity in his image (Gen. 9:5-7).³⁴

The KJV has muddied the waters by rendering the command: thou shalt not kill, which is much broader than the actual Hebrew word *ratsach* “murder.” In fact, according to the Law there was a sharp distinction between killing and murder, divided at whether there was intent. This is evident also in the penalties for violation. Those who murder a fellow person intentionally are themselves to be put to death; however, if a person takes the life of another person unintentionally then they are to go to one of the cities of refuge (Ex. 21:12-15). This is spelled out more specifically in Num. 35 (cf. Deut. 19:1-13). The cities of refuge were for those who unintentionally took the life of another, or what we would call guilty of manslaughter (vs. 10-

³⁴ These Hebrew words *noah* and *noach* are also related to the *nuach* translated “rest” in the fourth commandment.

15). However, taking life out of *hatred* or with the intent to take life equated to murder (vs. 16-23; cf. Deut. 19:4). So long as the manslaughterer stayed in the city of refuge, then he was protected from any party that would seek revenge by avenging his blood; however, if the manslaughterer took even one step outside the city of refuge, then if an avenging party took his life they would be innocent of taking his life (vs. 24-31). The cities of refuge were actually for the protection of the manslaughterer who was guilty of taking life but not guilty of murder.

A great deal of the OT case-law was the working out of the various kinds of situations where the intentional-accidental line was ambiguous. For instance, if men are fighting and one is seriously injured but not killed, the other is to pay the man's lost wages as punishment. However, if men are fighting and one accidentally strikes a pregnant woman, the penalty is determined by the effect such a strike had on the baby (Ex. 21:22-25). If someone is defending their house in the middle of the night from a burglar and kills the robber, they are actually innocent—not even guilty of manslaughter. However, if they kill a burglar during the daytime then they are guilty (Ex. 22:2-3). Moreover, mere neglect or oversight was considered intentional. The people of Israel were commanded to have proper roofing on their houses so if someone happened to fall from their roof, their entire household would not be guilty or murder (Deut. 22:8). If a man's ox gores another man to death then the ox must be killed but its owner is innocent; however, if the ox has a history of goring and then gores a man to death, then the owner's *neglect* makes him guilty of *intentional* murder (Ex. 21:28-32).

The OT features what is called the *lex talionis* “law of retaliation.” This is more recognizable as eye for eye, tooth for tooth, life for life. *Lex talionis* was not a literal physical retribution but spoke of a monetary/financial restitution equal to the value of the physical loss. Interestingly, in one of the *lex talionis* passages, where “life for life” is explicitly commanded, the punishment of physical death is also mentioned in the same context, but clearly differentiated from “life for life” (Lev. 24:17-21). If “life for life” meant physical retribution, then there would be no need for the differentiation. The differentiation shows that “life for life” was understood as transcending physical retribution, as restitution through equitable financial compensation.

Lex talionis was present in other ANE law codes as well, most notably the Codex of Hammurabi. However, the OT iterations of *lex talionis* are markedly different from other ANE versions, in that the Biblical version applies the standard of equity even to slaves. For example, if a master strikes his slave but does not take the slave's life, then the slave's compensation was their freedom (Ex. 21:26-27). However, if a master strikes his slave and in so doing takes the slave's life, then the master must be punished (Ex. 21:20-21). Now we read this and squirm because we interpret slavery in the Bible through our American lens. The Bible does not endorse slavery but rather regulates it in a redemptive trajectory. Slavery in the Bible was not due to ethnic discrimination; it was due to financial debt. In the regulated system, the Israelites were never to hold onto an indentured servant for more than six years and were intended to be treated well during those six years; they were always to be freed on the seventh year with their debts paid, in stark contrast to their ANE neighbors who oppressed slaves for life without any regard for their actual wellbeing. The sanctity of life presented in the OT Law that extended even to slaves who were only temporary and to the unborn was revolutionary in its time for the cause of civil rights. This all means we shouldn't return to this by reinstating slavery but should instead keep on that redemptive trajectory toward establishing God's total and universal justice for all.

The sanctity of human life had a priestly function as well, reflected partly in the thrice repeated law not to boil a young goat in its mother's milk (Ex. 23:19; 34:26; Deut. 14:21). To do so would take milk (the source of life for a young goat) and mix it with a dead young goat, and

so the mixing of life and death is an abomination. In the priestly dietary code, it is quite explicit that life is in the blood, and so Israelites *and their resident aliens* are not to eat any meat with blood in it (Lev. 17:10-14). And this is not just another “thou shalt not...” Deut. 12:21-25 tells us that when we abstain from eating meat with the blood still in it we are doing what is right in the eyes of YHWH.

Yet despite all these things, we return again to God’s words to Noah, that the heart of man is still inherently corrupt, out of which come evil words and deeds. Solomon says as much when he writes that the mouth of the foolish destroys but the mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life (Prov. 10:10-11); that those who speak rashly kill but the tongue of the wise heals (Prov. 12:18). There are famous words from Lev. 19: “love your neighbor as yourself” (vs. 18b). However, this clause is in direct contrast with the preceding verse and the first half. “Do not harbor hatred against your brother. Rebuke your neighbor directly [instead of spreading slander, cf. vs. 16], and you will not incur guilt because of him. Do not take revenge or bear a grudge against members of your community, but love your neighbor as yourself; I am YHWH.” These are monumental words showing that the sinful inclination of the heart toward your neighbor is in contrast with loving your neighbor.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus does not reinterpret the command not to murder; he is simply connecting the law against murder with the totality of the Law and the purpose of the second half of the Ten Commandments, to love your neighbor as yourself (Matt. 5:21-24; cf. 22:34-40). It is the heart that defiles a person, resulting in (among other things) murder (Matt. 15:18-20; Mark 7:21-23). Whoever is angry with his brother has violated the command not to murder because his evil heart has preventing him from loving his neighbor. This is ultimately why it is the heart that needs to be changed by being born again (John 3:3-8). John says as much when he writes that everyone who hates his brother is a murderer and has no eternal life residing in him (1 John 3:15). Paul, too, suggests that our anger with others will leave room for God’s wrath to rage against us (Rom. 12:17-21). Lastly, James says that our passions within us cause us to murder in order to satisfy our pleasures; that when our inner motives cause us to do this our prayers are left unheard (Jas. 4:1-3). Therefore, since the murder that first takes place in our hearts leads to the murder that takes place from our words and our deeds, then it is the evil inclinations of our heart that must be changed so we can truly love our neighbor as ourselves. Valuing the sanctity of all life means protecting the vulnerable wherever, whenever, and however they are oppressed; protecting in ways that exceed the corrupt culture in which we live by continuing to move along God’s redemptive trajectory until we reach his perfect justice.

The Seventh Word: The Sanctity of Sex

The Command - Ex. 20:14

“Do not commit adultery.”

There are not major or minor differences with the second version in Deut. 5:18

Heidelberg Catechism

Q. 108 - What does the seventh commandment teach us?

A. 108 - That God condemns all unchastity, and that therefore we should thoroughly detest it and live decent and chaste lives, within or outside of the holy state of marriage.

Q. 109 - Does God, in this commandment, forbid only such scandalous sins as adultery?

A. 109 - We are temples of the Holy Spirit, body and soul, and God wants both to be clean and holy. That is why God forbids all unchaste actions, looks, talk, thoughts, or desires, and whatever may incite someone to them.

Summary

Of all the commandments, the heading “The Sanctity of Sex” may be the largest leap, for it would appear the commandment is more so reflecting the value of the sanctity of *marriage*. Certainly marriage is included; however, I believe the underlying value for the command is broader. The command is not about broad marital practices, but about a specific sexual practice. The command is formulated in the negative “Do not have sex in a specific way,” with the positive inverse being “do have sex in a specific way.” And so the focus of the command is not on marriage ethics per se but on sexual ethics. The command does not speak about how to be married or what the value of marriage is; it instead speaks of sex. Moreover, if the command is specific to marriage, then there is no fundamental command-value on which the non-marital sexual prohibitions stand, such as fornication, homosexuality, incest, bestiality, etc. For this reason, the underlying value to the seventh commandment is the Sanctity of Sex.

The Bible is clear that sex is a physical exchange reserved exclusively for marriage, in which a husband and his own wife explore and experience each other’s bodies without shame. The OT makes a fair number of references to virgins. In the OT, there are two words used to describe virgins, both of which more accurately meant maiden or young woman rather than sexually untouched as in our own culture. *Almah* (7 times) refers to a highly restricted period in a female’s life: post-puberty but pre-marriage. Thus, sexual virginity is implied in such a woman, such as in Isa. 7:14 with the mother of Emmanuel, but not explicit. *Bethulah* (50 times), on the other hand, has no sexual connotation whatsoever, and simply means a woman of marriageable age.³⁵ The distinction between these two words and their collective distinction with our own culture’s definition of virgin is key to know before diving into OT laws on sexuality as reserved for marriage, which begin with Ex. 22:16. Sex is so clearly reserved for marriage that if a man

³⁵ Alfred Sauer, “The Almah Translation in Is. 7:14.” *Concordia Theological Monthly*, VOL. 24, 1953. Pg. 558.

seduces/has sex with a virgin (marriageable woman), then he must pay the bride price to make her his wife, and if her father will not allow it then the seducer must pay the bride price anyway.

The horror that sexual immorality does to the body is clearly shown in two OT narratives: Bathsheba and Tamar. In 2 Sam. 11-12, we read the infamous tale of David lustng after a woman while she was bathing, having sex with her and getting her pregnant, then sending her husband to die in war to cover it up. This leads to David's famous prayer of repentance in Psalm 51; however, the baby that Bathsheba birthed then became ill by the hand of YHWH and died after which David had sex with her again now as his wife and she gave birth to a son named Solomon. Immediately following this passage, in 2 Sam. 13, there is a horrifying account given where David's son Amnon rapes his sister Tamar. Their brother Absalom found out and gave her terrible advice: do not tell anyone, and as a result she kept this secret to herself and died a desolate woman. Meanwhile, Absalom murdered Amnon to get revenge. A whole family torn apart because of sexual immorality that ultimately never came to light until it was too late to get true justice.

Most of the NT discussions about sexuality involve prohibitions against sexual immorality as among the behaviors of those who will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-10; Rev. 21:8). There is a fair amount of discussion on the topic of divorce and remarriage as well (Matt. 19:3-9; Mark 10:6-12; Luke 16:18; Rom. 7:2-3). When the early church was figuring out how to incorporate Gentile believers alongside the Jewish believers, the Council decided not to overburden the Gentile converts and instead to place, initially, just three expectations on them: avoid idols, avoid sexual immorality, and do not eat bloody food, which in some practices was a combination of the first two (Acts 15:20). These three items constitute the gravest threat to Gentile Christians (Acts 15:20-29; cf. comments on the second commandment above).

One final point can be made and comes from what I have argued elsewhere in a discussion on 1 Cor. 7. What is clear across the Canon is that there are two expressions of sinful sexuality: celibacy within marriage or genital passion without marriage. In contrast, there are two expressions of holy sexuality: celibacy without marriage or genital passion within marriage. I differentiate between “genital passion” and “physical affection,” for the latter is healthy in all types of relationships, but does not necessarily constitute an expression of sinful sexuality. Physical affections are expressions of sexuality because they are passions of embodied persons in relation to other embodied persons. Stanley Grenz similarly distinguishes between genital sexuality and “affective sexuality” signaling that celibates are able to express their inherent sexuality in a concrete way through physical affection.³⁶ Along these lines, Steinmann laments the church has often treated celibates as asexual, denying the very catalyst of their gift to the church.³⁷ The celibate who withdraws from or transcends expressions of sinful sexuality through abstention from genital passion has done so only by self-control. Therefore, for the celibate, self-control is the vehicle through which holy sexuality is expressed.

Leviticus 18 is an infamous passage for dealing with sexual ethics because it is where one of the homosexuality verses is located. But in fact, the whole chapter and part of the next chapter deal with a wide variety of sexual ethics for the People of God. Before Moses gets into these ethics, the passage begins with an exhortation to be distinct from the Egyptians and the Canaanites. “You shall not do as they do... you shall not walk in their statutes. You shall follow my just decrees... I am YHWH your God. You shall therefore keep my statutes... if a person

³⁶ Stanley Grenz, *Sexual Ethics: An Evangelical Perspective*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1990. Pg. 188.

³⁷ Pauline Steinmann, “Singleness and Sexuality.” *Vision*, 2008. Pg. 68.

does them, he shall live by them: I am YHWH” (vs. 3-5). And so, prior to this long list of sexual ethics, reasons for Israel’s need to follow YHWH statutes and just ordinances are given, one broad and one specific. The specific reason that Israel needs to follow YHWH’s statutes and just ordinances is because he is YHWH their God, thrice repeated (vs. 2, 4, and 5). This is the foundation of YHWH’s expectations for them that follow.³⁸ The broad reason is for Israel to distinguish themselves from their geographic and cultural neighbors. Interestingly, the name of God, YHWH, is used in every verse in this introductory paragraph with the exception to the third verse, which describes whom Israel must avoid. This broad reason is then repeated later in the chapter, when Moses commands the people not to engage in these various sexual activities like and of “the nations YHWH is driving out...therefore keep my charge never to practice any of these...that were practiced before you...I am YHWH your God (Lev. 18:24, 30). As their God, YHWH has the authority to set the bodily behavioral standards for his people, and that standard is specific and exhaustive in the realm of sexuality to distinguish them from the other nations.³⁹

It can be easy to pinpoint certain laws that we do not like or that are offensive to our culture, particularly homosexuality, and therefore write off this chapter or skim through it. However, there is a subtle basis provided in this long list of laws that needs to be highlighted. Here are a few examples.

“You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father, *which is the nakedness of your mother*” (vs. 7).

“You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father’s wife; *it is your father’s nakedness*” (vs. 8).

“You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father’s brother, that is, *you shall not approach his wife; she is your aunt* (vs. 14).

“You shall not uncover the nakedness of your brother’s wife; *it is your brother’s nakedness* (vs. 16).

“If a man has sex with a woman who is a slave, *and assigned to another man...*” (19:20).

³⁸ Etienne Jodar, “Leviticus 18:5 and the Law’s Call to Faith: A Positive Reassessment of Paul’s View of the Law.” *Themelios*, Vol. 45, 2020, especially pgs. 52-56.

³⁹ “If a person does them, he shall live by them” is the way of life given by YHWH for Israel to separate or make themselves holy in contrast with the nations’ way of life. This phrase is quoted in Ezek. 20:11-13, Luke 10:28, Rom. 10:5, and Gal. 3:12, which deal with justification by faith. I have briefly commented elsewhere that contrary to much of the scholarly literature there is continuity between these various quotations because Paul pushes back against the pervading error of his day by stating there is only one way to life; the continuity is with justification by faith without discontinuity between the old and new covenant eras. Paul’s exposition of faith in the context of Gal. 3:10-12 shows that Abraham believed God’s promise (cf. Gen. 12:4) and God credited that faith to him as righteousness (cf. Gen. 15:6). While these Genesis references occur in opposite order, the basis of Abraham’s faith explained in Gal. 3:6 was the prior promise explained in Gal. 3:9. In other words, receiving a promise from God and believing that promise is justifying faith (cf. the introduction to the third commandment above). This was true for Abraham before the Law was given, and this was true for the Israelites when the Law was given. In Lev. 18, God told the Israelites if they followed his statutes and just decrees then they will live—this is a promise because the statutes and ordinances were not given until after this statement. Paul’s use of Lev. 18:5 in Gal. 3:12 reminds his readers of this promise. If a person does them, he shall live by them. Justification is by faith in the promise of life. Paul is thus rebuking those who rely on the works of the Law (Gal. 3:10) *rather than relying on the promise that preceded the Law* (Gal. 3:11-12). In Lev. 18:5, the doing of “them” flows from trusting the promise, and the doing of “them” is for their holiness or sanctification, which itself cannot take place until they are clearly identified as belonging to YHWH. So Paul is not setting aside the Law as obsolete but rather correcting the mistaken order by which the foolish Galatians were living. Faith in the promise (justification) leads to obedient-holiness (sanctification). The one way to get *into* the family of Abraham (Gal. 3:7) is by faith in the promise. The way to *endure* in the family of Abraham is by obedient-holiness.

There is a theme here. All of these sexual practices are perverted because they involve sexuality that *belongs to someone else*. Leviticus 18:24 records that to do any of these things makes a person unclean (distinct from sinful), and that those who do any of these things must be cut off from among the people (18:29; cf. musings above). That said, these would all fall under the category of sexual immorality, which carried the death penalty (cf. Lev. 20; Deut. 21-23). This is important because Paul uses the specific prohibition in Lev. 18:8 (repeated in Lev. 20:11; Deut. 22:30; 27:20), and applies the NT version of cutting off/exile-death, which is disfellowship from the congregation (1 Cor. 5:1-8). Paul rebukes a special form of sexual perversion, for which OT Law prescribes a penalty of death; yet, Paul “changes” the penalty to *disfellowship* from the church community. Disfellowship is the NT form of covenant exile; and so Paul’s “change” in penalty is not actually a change. The guilty deserve death, which is best understood as spiritual estrangement as a result of sin, which in the OT was exile from the community of Israel in this life, and in the NT is disfellowship from the community of believers. This exile-disfellowship dynamic is the earthly experience of being cut off from one’s eschatological inheritance.

The Eighth Word: The Sanctity of Property

The Command - Ex. 20:15

“Do not steal.”

There are no major or minor differences with the second version in Deut. 5:19.

Heidelberg Catechism

Q. 110 - What does God forbid in the eighth commandment?

A. 110 - God forbids not only outright theft and robbery, punishable by law. But in God’s sight theft also includes all scheming and swindling in order to get our neighbor’s goods for ourselves, whether by force or means that appear legitimate, such as inaccurate measurements of weight, size, or volume; fraudulent merchandising; counterfeit money; excessive interest; or any other means forbidden by God. In addition God forbids all greed and pointless squandering of his gifts.

Q. 111 - But what does God require of you in this commandment?

A. 111 - That I do whatever I can for my neighbor’s good, that I treat others as I would like them to treat me, and that I work faithfully so that I may share with those in need.

Summary

While it is true that this command is formulated in a rather straightforward manner, as it is worked out in the case-law, we can see that it is not as simple as it first appears. First of all, this Hebrew word *ganab* “steal” is used in obviously negative ways but also obviously positive ways. David Baker helpfully writes that “The Hebrew verb translated ‘steal’ is generally concerned with material things or animals, but it can also refer [negative] to stealing a person in the sense of kidnapping (Ex 21:16; Deut 24:17; cf. Gen 40:15) or [positively] taking someone away for their own safety (2 Sam 19:41; 2 Kings 11:2; 2 Chron 22:11). There are also various figurative senses, such as to steal someone’s heart (2 Sam 15:6; cf. 2 Sam 19:3; Job 4:12; 21:18; 27:20; Jer. 23:20).”⁴⁰ Kidnapping, for example, carried with it the death penalty (Deut. 24:7). And so there is a distinction between taking something that does not belong to you for *good* reasons, and taking something that does not belong to you for *bad* reasons. Sailhamer is helpful to point out that the working out of this law in the case-law shows the dividing factor between *good* and *bad* “stealing” is whether *deception* is involved.⁴¹

This is particularly true because a great majority of the case-law that flows from this command deals with deceptive thievery in the *financial* realm. Whether individual or systemic, fraud of any kind, because of its inherently deceptive nature, is a violation of this command (Lev. 6:1-5); economic injustice is a violation of this command (Lev. 19:35-36). Proverbs as well sets the tone: dishonest scales are detestable to YHWH and those who take advantage of the poor will face YHWH as a victorious adversary on behalf of the poor (Prov. 11:1; 22:22-23; 30:9). This was a guiding principle for those who grew crops. While the poor had free access to their

⁴⁰ Baker, 133.

⁴¹ Sailhamer, 287.

fields every seventh year, in the other six, the edge of your crop *belongs* to the poor (Ex. 23:10-11; Lev. 19:9-13; 25:1-12). It is a violation to exploit your brother's poverty for your own financial gain; at the very least no interest should be charged to such a person (Lev. 25:35-37). It was also a violation to move the boundary markers for the land because it is stealing what belongs to your brother (Deut. 19:14; cf. Job 24:2). This was also a guiding principle for those impoverished who needed to take a loan; to protect them from being exploited. Typically, a loan was agreed upon with the exchange of someone's clothing; yet for the poor, this was likely the only piece of clothing they had with the ability to keep them warm at night. It was a violation of this command to hold the cloak as collateral from such an individual after agreeing to a loan; instead, you should accept the cloak as a symbol of the agreement, and then give it right back (Ex. 22:26-27; Deut. 24:12-17).

This command even extends to livestock. If you see the livestock of your neighbor straying away and they don't see it but you do, you have a duty to go after it and retrieve it, otherwise you are guilty (Ex. 23:4-5; Deut. 22:1-4). Due to your neglect, you enabled the property that belonged to your neighbor to fall into other hands. Moreover, even the livestock who work your fields are owed something that belongs to them in exchange for their work: their food/livelihood. Paul typologically applies this to the work of preachers and elders. Many scholars have concluded that Paul allegorizes Deut. 25:4 in 1 Cor. 9:9 and 1 Tim. 5:18.⁴² They reach this conclusion because they find discontinuity between Deut. 25:4 and its immediate context. Contrary to this, I suggest with Kaiser that there is continuity between Deut. 25:4 and its surrounding context in Deut. 24-25 and Paul utilizes the uniting principle in his application.⁴³

There is no financial incentive for someone to muzzle their own ox because the animal is inherently more valuable than the grain it works. Disallowing the ox to eat while it threshes may maximize your harvest but will weaken your even more valuable animal. Muzzling one's own ox is likely not what the command is getting at, for such a command would be unnecessary. This command must instead be for a person other than the owner of the ox. This command is directed at a field owner who is *borrowing/using another's ox* for his own land. Only then would an incentive to muzzle the ox exist, for it would maximize the harvest for the field owner without any responsibility of caring for the weakened animal.⁴⁴ With this understanding the command does have continuity with Deut. 24-25, which contains a series of commands that emphasize one person or thing. While the commands sometimes paint the emphasized one negatively, the commands share a common theme of *protecting the emphasized one, even though the commands are directed at someone else* (cf. Deut. 24:1-4; 5; 7; 10-15; 25:1-3; 5-10). In Deut. 25:4, the emphasized one—the ox—is who the command is meant to protect *for the sake of the owner of the ox*, even though it is directed at the *land-owner borrowing/using the ox*. The shared continuity revolves around protecting those who are vulnerable to exploitation in the realms of home, work, judicial, financial, etc. In this case, the one vulnerable to exploitation is the owner

⁴² James Moffat, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1938. Charles Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*. New York: Harper and Row, 1968. William Arndt, "The Meaning of 1 or. 9:9, 10." *CTM*, Vol. 3, 1932. Richard Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975. J. Gordon McConville, *Deuteronomy*. Downers Grove: IV Press, 2002. Pg. 369.

⁴³ Walter Kaiser, "The Current Crisis in Exegesis and the Apostolic Use of Deuteronomy 25:4 in 1 Corinthians 9:8-10." *JETS*, Vol. 21, 1978. Pg. 16.

⁴⁴ Jan Verbruggen, "Of Muzzles and Oxen: Deuteronomy 25:4 and 1 Corinthians 9:9." *JETS*, Vol. 49, 2006. Especially pgs. 705-706.

of the ox. This further coincides with the civil and social laws presented in Deut. 19-26 that emphasize the protection of the vulnerable.⁴⁵

In addition to Deut. 25:4, Paul also quotes the words of Jesus as they appear verbatim in Luke 10:7. This account is also recorded in Matt. 10:10 with a slight variation of the worker being worthy of *food* rather than *wages*. Nevertheless, the context to both Deut. 25:4 and Luke 10:7 are agricultural. “The workman is worthy of his wages” is that they not go from house to house but rather accept the “food and drink” they receive. Paul writes in 1 Tim. 5:18 that elders who are good leaders—an umbrella term for those who work hard in teaching and preaching—are worthy of double honor or an ample honorarium/remuneration. Commentators debate whether the honor is financial or status, but it appears to be a little of both.⁴⁶ The dual quote of Moses and Jesus suggests it is financial; however, the elder is afforded an extra layer of protection against accusations due to his status, which lends itself to the argument for status.

It is difficult to consider Paul’s use of Deut. 25:4 in 1 Tim. 5:18 without also considering 1 Cor. 9:9. It is clear from how Deut. 25:4 fits into its context that Paul is not allegorizing an otherwise random command. It is also clear from the context of both 1 Cor. 9:9 and 1 Tim. 5:18 that Paul is not seeking to provide a *meaning* for Deut. 25:4; rather, Paul is using the *principle* of Deut. 25:4 and applying it to his own circumstance. If utilizing Beale’s categories for NT use of OT, this would be a combination of the analogical/illustrative use with the use of abiding authority.⁴⁷ Paul does not *interpret*, but *applies* Deut. 25:4.⁴⁸ Paul does not allegorize due to a lack of context but rather identifies the underlying principle *in the context*.⁴⁹

Just as the ox is protected from being exploited by those with an incentive to maximize their own benefit, so also are ministers. Ox and ministers alike are exploited when their material needs are deprived. What is it that the ox and the minister need? What wage is the workman worthy of receiving? Food and drink. Moreover, just as the landowner is borrowing the ox from another, so also are congregations borrowing their under-shepherds from Another. A landowner who muzzles a borrowed ox uses the ox to exhaustion without taking the responsibility to restore the weakened ox. Likewise, congregations who muzzle their minister(s) use(s) their minister(s) to exhaustion without taking responsibility for restoring their weakened minister. The owner (God) from whom the congregation borrowed the minister suffers because of their exploitation.

And so we have seen that this command primarily deals with the sanctity of property belonging to whom it belongs, and that the accumulation of property is righteously deserved through honest work without deception, fraud, or exploitation of other people or creatures. This is particularly the case with Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5 when they withhold their offering in a deceptive way, and as a result also violate the ninth commandment by lying to the Holy Spirit. They attempted to procure financial gain through deceptive measures, a case and point of what this command was expressly prohibiting. Specific to the case of thievery, Paul makes this point clear again when he says the thief should stop stealing and instead do honest work in order to participate in the generosity of the Church Body (Eph. 4:28). Again, financial gain through deceptive measures is what makes someone a thief/stealer.

⁴⁵ D. Instone Brewer, “1 Corinthians 9:9-11: A Literal Interpretation of ‘Do Not Muzzle the Ox.’” *NST*, Vol. 38, 1992. Pg. 563.

⁴⁶ Gordon Fee, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989. Pg. 128-129. George Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990. Pg. 232. William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974. Pg. 180.

⁴⁷ G.K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012.

⁴⁸ Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987. Pg. 16-17.

⁴⁹ Verbruggen (2006).

Paul also uses thievery as a case study for defining hypocrisy: those who obtain financial gain through deceptive or fraudulent means and then teach others not to do what they do (Rom. 2:17-24). Interestingly, Paul also draws on a central debt-property case-law in his first letter to Timothy. In Ex. 21:1-4, when a debt-slave is freed, he is to leave in the exact state he arrived in. If he arrived with a wife then he is to leave with a wife; if he gained a wife while in service, then he is to leave without his wife. The same is true of children. The only exception to this is the debt-slave is to leave without the debt he arrived with. This is because his work for those six years (if his master was an obedient Israelite) *was only to pay off his debt*. As it pertains to possessions, Paul calls Timothy to godliness through contentment with what he has “for we have brought nothing into the world, and so we cannot take anything out of it either” (1 Tim. 6:6-7). Like the Israelite, we too are slaves in debt because of our sin. When we physically die, we leave this world with nothing more or less than we had when we entered the world, with one exception for the Christian: our debt due to our sin has been paid/forgiven.

And so in Luke 12:13-34, greed, thievery, and misplaced priority of property is on full display through the parable of the rich fool. The parable is in response to a man hoping Jesus would pressure his brother to split his inheritance. The theme of the parable that follows is captured in verse 15: Watch out and be on guard against all greed, because one’s life is not in the abundance of his possessions. The parable details the inner dialogue of a rich man who is trying to maximize his accumulation of wealth, not knowing that he would die that night. The man dies and leaves the world *just as he entered: with nothing*. His wealth is then certainly distributed among the living family members. The immediate use of this parable is to respond to the *greedy brother* who wanted part of his brother’s inheritance. Essentially, when the brother dies, you will get it anyway; but if you die then your brother will get it back, so why are you worrying about this now? This then leads directly into the following verses that revolve around not worrying, for the Lord will provide what we need. All of this, to reinforce in verse 21 (cf. vs. 15) that it is useless to store up treasures from the earth but rather treasures in heaven *because one’s life is not in the abundance of his possessions*.

The Ninth Word: The Sanctity of Truth

The Command - Ex. 20:16

“Do not give false testimony against your neighbor.”

*The only difference is the second version in Deut. 5:20 uses the word *Shav* “in vain” instead of *false*. This word is the same word as is used twice in the third commandment, as well as in the prophets to describe the worthlessness of idols.*

Heidelberg Catechism

Q. 112 - What is the aim of the ninth commandment?

A. 112 - That I never give false testimony against anyone, twist no one's words, not gossip or slander, nor join in condemning anyone rashly or without a hearing. Rather, in course and everywhere else, I should avoid lying and deceit of every kind; these are the very devices the devil uses, and they would call down on me God's intense wrath. I should love the truth, speak it candidly, and openly acknowledge it. And I should do what I can to guard and advance my neighbor's good name.

Summary

David Baker has a great comment as we kick off discussion about the sanctity of truth. “The Old Testament affirms the importance of truth in public life, with particular condemnation of religious leaders who use their positions to propagate lies...and pander to their audiences with smooth talk... Another kind of untruth that is pervasive today is the use of moral euphemisms designed to make what is wrong appear right or at least unobjectionable. Instead of committing adultery, people have an affair. Instead of having an abortion, they terminate a pregnancy. Instead of killing innocent citizens, there is collateral damage. Instead of unemployment, there is downsizing. Instead of lying, there are ‘terminological inexactitudes.’”⁵⁰ In the Bible, truth is of utmost importance because we worship the God of truth (Isa. 65:16; John 14:6; 16:13). The core of the deception in the garden from the serpent who is the father of lies (John 8:44) was that God was lying when he told Adam and Eve that they would die if they ate of the forbidden tree. Biblical truth is unconcerned with who the recipient is, and is opposed to withholding truth at risk of offending others or because the recipient is of wealth or renown. Granted, the Bible tells us how to speak the truth, namely in love (Eph. 4:15-16); but the truth nonetheless.

Now there are a fair number of OT laws and examples of this command working itself out with truth in a broad sense. Israelites are not to swear by YHWH’s name *falsely* or spread slander, which is by definition a twisting of the truth under deceptive guises (Lev. 19:11-18). Those who slander with their tongue will not be among those who dwell in Zion (Ps. 15:1-5; cf. Eph. 4:25; Col. 3:9-10). A lying tongue and a lying witness are both things that God hates (Prov. 6:16-23). Slander and gossip are among the characteristics that Paul hopes he doesn’t discover among the Corinthian Christians upon his imminent third visit, with these three visits framed as fulfilling the requirement for two or three witnesses to establish guilt (see below; 2 Cor. 12:20). Moreover, the gossip’s words are like eating choice food (Prov. 18:8; cf. 1 Tim. 5:13). Such a

⁵⁰ Baker, 141.

flattering tongue is in rebellion against God (Ps. 5:8-10). This is ultimately what lying is: *a flattering tongue mixed with a deceptive heart* (Ps. 12:2).

However, more often than just false words, the Bible is far more concerned with false *testimony* or false *witnesses* as the command explicitly highlights. This was of great importance in their day, not just because our God is a God of truth, but because they had no videos, pictures, DNA, or any other type of forensic evidence. *The only evidence they had was eyewitness testimony.* This is why if you are called upon to give testimony to something you witnessed, it is a sin to remain silent (Lev. 5:1). False testimony had damning effects, literally, on the individuals involved and the community by perverting justice on the same level as bribes and favoritism (Ex. 23:1-8). The most premier passage reflecting this is Deut. 19. I have written elsewhere on this passage that the context demonstrates that Deut. 19:15-21 is primarily concerned with determining the guilt of those who flee to cities of refuge. Two important principles guide this determination. The first is there must be a plurality of witnesses to establish the truthfulness of a claim. The second is that the punishment for a false witness should be proportionally assessed by a judicial determination, in accordance with *lex talionis*. The establishment of proportional judicial assessment is specific in this passage to those guilty of perjury. The intended purpose of the penalty is to dissuade false testimony. Deut. 19:15-21 is also limited to accusations against someone for something they have *not* done. This reinforces the dynamic of someone fleeing to a city of refuge after taking the life of another. If they are not proven guilty of murder then they stay in the city of refuge, protected from being avenged. This suggests that someone who has fled to a city of refuge for manslaughter may face accusations of murder. The absence of litigating false testimony of *innocent* behavior reflects the specific situational context of our passage to cities of refuge where a crime has in fact been committed, but determining whether the crime was intentional (murder) or unintentional (manslaughter)—and therefore the severity of the punishment—remains in question.

Beyond Deut. 19:15-21, the OT contains two other laws requiring a plurality of witnesses to establish guilt. Similar to Deut. 19:15-21, Num. 35:26-32 also speaks of the need for a plurality of witnesses in the context of the cities of refuge. A person who has killed a person and has not been determined guilty by judicial assessment must stay in the city of refuge until the high priest dies, at which point the one who committed manslaughter may return to his land and possession. Num. 35:30 seems to interrupt the passage's primary topic of the cities of refuge; however, it functions as a necessary introduction to the subject of ransom payments relative to the cities of refuge. If someone is guilty of murder, *lex talionis* compensation *cannot* be paid; they must be put to physical death (vs. 31). How is guilt to be determined in such a case? By the mouth of two or three witnesses is someone determined guilty, and thus condemned to be killed and forbidden from compensatory redemption. Moreover, if someone has killed someone but is not guilty of murder and therefore contained in a city of refuge, *lex talionis* compensation also cannot be paid for them to return to their land/possession *prior* to the death of the high priest (vs. 32). In Num. 35, as in Deut. 19, guilt is determined by a plurality of witnesses, and the death penalty may not be carried out in any case lacking a plurality of witnesses.

Contrary to Num. 35 and Deut. 19, Deut. 17:2-7 is more open-ended about which guilt is to be established; the requirement for a plurality of witnesses extends beyond differentiating between manslaughter and murder. It is open-ended in that it refers to *any evil YHWH has forbidden*, but specifically mentions violation of the first and second commandments by worshipping other gods or bowing down to created things (i.e. sun, moon, stars). Similar to Num. 35 and Deut. 19, this passage describes death for those guilty of violation, with guilt determined

by the testimony of a plurality of witnesses. While the course of action taken against those guilty of perjury is spelled out primarily in Deut. 19, Deut. 17:7 provides an interesting caveat *with the purpose of deterring violation of the ninth commandment*. An individual determined to be guilty and deserving of death was to be stoned first by those who gave testimony against the individual and then by the rest of the people. This would place an extra weight on those testifying, knowing that their words could lead to *them* stoning the culprit. The need for a plurality of witnesses to establish guilt and truth is a critical piece of background to understand a great number of passages in the NT. I have written elsewhere on the use of the plurality of witnesses as essential background for twelve passages in the NT. There are others as well, but my paper keyed in on twelve. For the sake of space, I will not rehash all twelve here but will comment on a few.

One such example is Jesus' instructions about correcting a brother who is in the wrong (Matt. 18:15-20). The multiple layers of confrontation establish the two or three levels of witness against an individual before they are sentenced to death through exile/disfellowship. A second, more obscure example often forgotten among the scholarly literature is in 2 Cor. 12:20-13:3 where I argued that Paul's multiple visits themselves established adequate testimony against the Corinthian Christians, even though the two or three testimonies came from the same individual. The passage of time demonstrates a sufficient testimony of a rebukable trend. Contrary to Rosner, Paul's reference of his *second* visit and the threat of an imminent *third* visit in relation to his quote of the law about *two or three* witnesses is unmistakably an application of the law, not merely rhetoric.⁵¹ The plurality of witnesses can be satisfied by a lone individual who can provide testimony about two or three separate occasions of similar behavior separated by time long enough to reasonably expect an outward show of repentance.

Another example is 1 John 5:6-9, which further establishes that witnesses are not required to be three separate humans, or in this case humans at all. The testimony discussed in the context is about the mission of Jesus. The water by which Jesus came is a witness to Jesus' mission. In the literature the witness of water is debated as to whether it is Jesus' baptism or his birth. I agree with Witherington that it is his birth.⁵² The blood by which Jesus departed is a witness to Jesus' mission, referring to the death of Christ. The Spirit is a witness to Jesus' mission, referring to his ascension, at which point the Spirit was given to the followers of Jesus. These three witnesses, abstract concepts representing certain aspects of Jesus' life, provide satisfactory testimony about the mission of Jesus, revealed in vs. 11: that God has given eternal life to us. The collective witness of Jesus' birth, death, and ascension sufficiently establish the testimony of Jesus' mission: to bring eternal life to the People of God.

The Bible also records the downside to needing a plurality of witnesses, particularly through the conspiracy to provide false testimony in order to have others killed. One example is 1 Kings 21:10-12, in which Naboth, an innocent man, was accused of cursing God and the king by two wicked men at the direction of Jezebel. Upon their corroborating testimony, Naboth was declared guilty and *they* stoned him to death. The "they" refers to the two wicked men who made the testimony, thus fulfilling what Deut. 17:7 prescribed. This example highlights how the law meant to protect the innocent could be intentionally manipulated to condemn the innocent. This all leads to our two potential passages: John 8:2-11 and Matt. 26:59-67, in which there are also attempts to violate the ninth commandment by manipulating the requirement for a plurality of witnesses through putting an innocent person to death.

⁵¹ Brian Rosner, "Deuteronomy in 1 and 2 Corinthians" in *Deuteronomy in the New Testament*, ed. Maarten Menken and Steve Moyise. New York: T&T Clark, 2008.

⁵² Ben Witherington III, "The Waters of Birth: John 3, 5 and 1 John 5, 6-8." *NTS*, Vol. 35, 1989.

While the placement of John 8:2-11 in the canon is legitimately questioned, it's authenticity as canonical is not. In other words, the manuscript evidence does not agree on *where* in the canon to place this text, with it appearing also occasionally in Luke. Nevertheless, what has been popularly deemed the story of the woman caught in adultery is a favorite among Christians because it highlights the mercy of Christ in a powerful way. Unfortunately, this popular view misses the mark on several points. There are several intensely Jewish allusions in the pericope that are lost without a careful eye. First, Jesus is teaching in his rabbinical role at the temple when scribes and Pharisees bring a woman they have caught in adultery and force him into the role as judge, yet they do not bring the man despite the law stating that *both* must be killed (Lev. 20:10). Nevertheless, they question Jesus what to do about her in light of the Law of Moses that prescribed death by stoning. It is important to note, though, that in 30 AD the courts that had official jurisdiction in accordance with Jewish Law were abolished.⁵³ And so, these scribes and Pharisees have pinned Jesus between the Law of Moses, which required execution for her crime, and the Law of Rome, which abolished Jewish executions. This was their intent: for they said this to test him. Jesus' response was to write with his finger on the ground. The popular, yet erroneous view speculates what Jesus wrote, which is a nonstarter because the text gives no hints. However, in Jewish culture, God is the only one who writes with his finger. In Ex. 8:16-20, when they were first unable to replicate them, we are told the magicians recognized the power manifested in the plagues against Egypt as none other than the finger of God. In Ex. 31:18 and Deut. 9:10, we are told that the Ten Commandments were specifically written by the finger of God. Jesus writing in the dust of the earth with his finger communicates without words in as Jewish a way as possible that he is God.

Showing his superior knowledge of the OT by which they were intending to trap him, Jesus cited an obscure law never outright stated but is reached by combining several other laws that precluded anyone who is currently engaged in a crime or law violation from being a witness against Person-A for the same crime or violation, even if such a person really did see Person-A commit that offense. Through the required due diligence of the judicial official, such a person would be deemed a non-credible witness and be asked to walk away from the judicial hearing. This obscure law thus requiring two or three *credible* witnesses, coupled with the OT law mentioned above that required the witnesses to be the first to stone a convicted person, makes for the scenario in John 8 where Jesus tells her accusers that those who are without sin may cast the first stone. The first stone would have been by the witnesses, so he is directing this to her witnesses who caught her in the act, but caveats it with those who are without sin, specifically the sin under accusation—adultery; and they all walk away! They forced Jesus into the role as judge in their quasi-court and he deemed her witnesses not-credible due to their current adulterous behavior. Not one remained. Jesus deemed the woman not-guilty on account of no longer having two or three credible witnesses. What is commonly called the story of the woman caught in adultery is actually about men caught in adultery; a story of false witnesses caught holding stones. Jesus' verdict of “not guilty / neither do I condemn you” does not mean she was innocent. The passage begins by establishing the woman was caught (vs. 3), so Jesus finished off his “not guilty” verdict with “now go and sin no more.” The lawyers tried to trap him between two conflicting law codes, not realizing it was by his very finger that the Law was written.

Matt. 26:59-67 is among the most significant uses of the law for the plurality of witnesses without a direct quote of the law itself. First, Matthew records that the Council was *seeking* false testimony in order to put Jesus to death. This is an important allusion to what was clearly shown

⁵³ J. Duncan Derritt, “Law in the New Testament: The Story of the Woman Taken in Adultery,” *NTS*, Vol. 10, pg. 9.

in a previous section: no one should be put to death on the testimony of a single witness. Second, Matthew records that they found *no* false testimony despite many false witnesses coming forward. This appears at face value to be a contradiction; however, this is an important allusion to the law for it demonstrates that the word of individual witnesses does not establish truthful testimony unless there is agreement among two or three. Third, only after Matthew records that two of the many false witnesses finally agreed that the trial proceeded beyond the accusation stage. The high priest provided Jesus an opportunity to answer to what “these,” presumably the two who were in agreement, had testified against him. Fourth, following Jesus’ initial silence and then his answer, the high priest gave an opportunity to Jesus that was typically used in situations of “he said-she said,” where witnesses did not agree: making an oath before YHWH (Deut. 19:16-17). At this, Jesus did answer, agreeing with their assessment of his identity as the messianic Son of God. This was perhaps an extra layer afforded to the accused to protect the innocent, but could also perhaps speak to the fact that so many false witnesses in disagreement with one another came forward. Fifth, after this exchange the high priest asked the question: Why have we any further need for witnesses? This question is an important allusion to the law for it demonstrates that they had achieved the two or three witnesses required to establish truth or guilt: the two false witnesses who ironically and inadvertently told the truth, but out of context, and Jesus who affirmed his identity as the Son of God. These “three” witnesses satisfied the requirement, and provide another example of the law’s potential for manipulation by the wicked, as with Jezebel against Naboth (1 Kings 21).

The Tenth Word: The Sanctity of Attraction

The Command - Ex. 20:17

"Do not covet your neighbor's house. Do not covet your neighbor's wife, his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

There are three differences with the second version in Deut. 5:21. The first difference is the flipping of the order of the first two items: house then wife in Exodus; wife then house in Deuteronomy. The second difference is the Exodus version uses the Hebrew word Chamad "covet" twice, whereas the Deuteronomy version uses Chamad then uses Avah "desire." The third difference is the Deuteronomy version also adds your neighbor's field in the list of things you are prohibited from coveting.

Heidelberg Catechism

Q. 113 - What is the aim of the tenth commandment?

A. 113 - That not even the slightest desire or thought contrary to any one of God's commandments should ever arise in our heart. Rather, with all our hearts we should always hate sin and take pleasure in whatever is right.

Summary

In the process of simplifying the command in order to teach it to others, the tenth commandment has been relegated to "do not covet" however, this is an oversimplification because coveting can be good. The word *chamad* for covet is also the word for desire or attraction. This word appears first in the Garden of Eden *prior* to the Fall, and again with a different connotation *after* the Fall. In Gen. 2:9, YHWH describes the trees that he caused to grow from the ground as *chamad* "pleasing" in appearance and *tov* "good" for food. Yet, after being tempted by the serpent, in Gen. 3:6, Eve sees that the tree was *tov* "good" for food, *taavah* "delightful" in appearance, and *chamad* "pleasing" or "desirable" for obtaining wisdom, so she *laqach* "took" what did not belong to her, namely the forbidden fruit. There is a distinction, then, between good desire and sinful desire, and at least in Genesis the sinful manifestation of desire involves a redirection inward with the result of taking something. Eve shifted her admiration. Instead of the tree being *chamad* in appearance, it had shifted to *taavah* in appearance; her response to what YHWH gave her shifted to her response to what she could get from YHWH.

I put forth that this distinction is not an obscure, single occurrence but represents an overarching theme of desire in the Bible. Desire is not sinful in and of itself, *but what or how we desire can be*. Elsewhere on the topic of theological sexuality I have defined this distinction as such: Attraction is the recognition of the God-created-good in another person or thing; Lust is the covetousness of that good. Perhaps for our present discussion on the covet command, the terminology of those definitions may not be helpful because the Bible is essentially using my terms of attraction and covetousness synonymously, but they ultimately get at the distinction in the two types of desires that pop up throughout the Bible: good desire and sinful desire.

Several times in the OT, desire/covetousness is referred to positively. In 2 Chron. 20:25, the plunder from war is described as *chamad* "precious." Ps. 19:10 describes the statutes/rules of

YHWH as more *chamad* “desirable” than gold. Ps. 68:15-16 rebukes the other mountains for their jealousy over the one mountain that YHWH *chamad* “desired” more than them. Prov. 21:20 advises that those who are wise have *chamad* “precious” treasurers *in their own home*. In Song 2:3, the Eve-figure takes great *chamad* “delight” in sitting in the shade of her husband’s protection. Isa. 53:2 describes the suffering servant whose appearance has been marred so much to prevent us from being *chamad* “attracted” to him. Daniel is thrice called a man *chamad* “treasured” by God (9:23; 10:11; 10:19). And so we see that *a person who desires what belongs to them desires in a Godly way*.

Coveting is also spoken of in negative ways throughout the Bible, but always attached to interesting caveats. Take the following as some examples. In Deut. 7:25, Moses commands the people to burn the idols of the other nations, and not to *chamad* “covet” the silver and gold the idols are made with or they may *take* the silver and gold into their house at risk of sharing in their idolatry. In Josh. 7:20-21, the spy Achan admitted to Joshua that he sinned against YHWH by *chamad* “coveting” the silver and gold from the spoils of Shinar and *taking* it; he was subsequently stoned. Prov. 6:24-25 advises not to *chamad* “desire” the beauty of an evil woman in your heart. Prov. 12:12 advises that whoever is wicked *chamad* “covets” the spoil of evildoers. Isaiah twice condemns those who *chamad* “desire” “precious” idols instead of YHWH (1:29; 44:9). Lastly, Micah 2:1-2 calls those who *chamad* “covet” fields in order to *seize* or *take* them wicked. And so we can see that the second half of the tenth commandment is almost more important than the first half. It is not *that* we desire but *what* we desire. See above for the slight differences between the Exodus and Deuteronomy versions, but they both end with the same catch-all conclusion: “Do not covet...*anything that belongs to your neighbor*.”

By definition, desire is internal. This is emphasized in Prov. 6:25 above that desire is *in your heart*. Before presenting the law about opening up your crops to the poor in the seventh year, Moses begins with a warning against having wicked thoughts in order to deprive the poor of what belongs to them (Deut. 15:9-10). Yet, YHWH himself is sovereign enough to even search our innermost thoughts (Ps. 139:1-4, 23-24). YHWH, therefore, longs for us to desire the gifts he has given us rather than the gifts he has given our neighbor. Likewise, attraction, or the recognition of the God-created-good in a thing is not sinful, as long as it is in the realm of what belongs to us. When it comes to doing this with people, one should always be mindful of who that person is to you. A man desiring his wife, especially sexually, is a good desire.

There is a similar dynamic in play with *epithumeo*, the Greek word corresponding to the Hebrew *chamad*. Jesus tells us that the prophets *coveted* to see what they see with their own eyes (Matt. 13:17), and that there will come a day when we will *covet* to see the Son of Man as they did at that time (Luke 17:22). Twice in Luke 22:15, we are told that Jesus *coveted* to eat the Passover before he suffered. Paul tells us in his discussion on spiritual gifts that we are to *covet* the greater gifts (1 Cor. 12:31), and that those who aspire to the office of elder *covet* a good thing (1 Tim. 3:1). Moreover, the writer of Hebrews *covets* that his readers would endure with the assurance of hope until the end (Heb. 6:11) and Peter tells us that angels *covet* to look into the things about Christ as we do (1 Pet. 1:12).

In all of these usages, coveting is used positively. And yet, depending on *what* we covet, coveting can be sinful. For instance, the prodigal son *coveted* the food of the pigs (Luke 15:16) and the poor man *coveted* the food of the rich man (Luke 16:21); the food both of them coveted belonged to someone or something else. James tells us that sin comes after temptation, and temptation comes after we are enticed by an evil *covetousness* (Jas. 1:14-17). This suggests that there is a distinction between the two desires (cf. see above). Moreover, he writes that instead of

asking God for what we want, we allow *covetousness* to control us that we may *seize* or *take* what we want ourselves (Jas. 4:1-3). In the NT, just as in the OT, sinful coveting involves a taking of what belongs to another, and this is precisely what Jesus keys in on in Matt. 5:21-30 when he pinpoints the inner thoughts that bring guilt before an action, using adultery as an example. Coveting a woman who is not your wife is *already* adultery, because in your mind you have already taken what belongs to another; by mindfully uncovering someone whose nakedness belongs to another (cf. see discussion in seventh commandment above).

All this leads to Gal. 5:16-24, in which we are told the Spirit and the Flesh both covet (vs. 17 specifically). A similar word, *epithumia*, also appears in the passage multiple times. The two desires, good and sinful, are most clearly shown in the cosmic battle between the way of the flesh and the way of the Spirit that are in staunch opposition through and through, *to prevent you from doing what you want to do*. This is true in both cases. When we want to do good, the flesh sticks its head in the way to redirect our desire inward. When we want to sin, the Spirit sticks his head in the way to redirect our desire Godward. To covet, desire, long, or be attracted to the gifts God has given to us is a Godly covetousness; to covet, desire, long, or be attracted to the gifts God has given to others instead of us is a sinful covetousness. Paul tells us that Israel's history is an example to Gentile Christians so that we will not *covet* evil things (1 Cor. 10:6). Instead the People of God are to put to death *evil* desire (Col. 3:5) and be content with the gifts God has given us (1 Tim. 6:6-10), in sharp contrast to the wicked who in the final days will *covet* death in order to flee judgment, yet will be prevented by God from finding it (Rev. 9:6).

Is the Garden of Eden a Precedent for the Ten Commandments?

Romans 2:12-15 tells us, among other things, that the Law of God is revealed implicitly through nature. What is meant by this? Philosophers have spilled much ink pontificating on such a phenomenon. I put forth that nature/creation, specifically the text of the Garden of Eden, is what implicitly teaches the values expressed in the Ten Commandments.

The Sanctity of God's Exclusivity is revealed in Eden in that in the beginning it was the God of the Bible who created everything. God's existence is assumed in Gen. 1:1. Who God is, is directly connected to his role as Creator, and therefore portrays God as the sovereign ruler who can make the rules for his creation.

The Sanctity of God's Form is revealed in Eden in that when the sovereign ruler created this space as his first earthly temple, he established idols through his creation of men and women. Much like the pagan, ANE religions/myths that followed, an idol was a physical item, or in this case person, who served as the representational presence of the corresponding deity. For idols to make other idols (and certainly for idols to worship other idols instead of the idol maker) is an affront to the idol maker. Moreover, men and women are more than merely the physical, representational presence of God because we also possess the breath of God.

The Sanctity of God's Name is revealed in Eden in that the name of God is first used in Gen. 2:4 in conjunction with his personal relationship with his first people. In the temptation to Eve (and Adam), the serpent removed their personal connection with God by referring to the deity as just God rather than YHWH-God, a designation Eve continued in her conversation. Immediately following their transgression, though, they heard the sound of YHWH-God. Throughout Gen. 2-3, God is always referred to with his personal name-except in the temptation pericope of Gen. 3:1b-5.

The Sanctity of God's Worship is revealed in Eden through the clear quotation and interpretation of the seventh day directly in the command to keep the Sabbath Day. Additionally, the creation by God of the sun, moon, and stars were for the purpose of establishing the seasons and festivals, alluding to the regularity of what would eventually become the Sabbath. Much like God worked then rested, so is humanity to work then rest in order to regularly enjoy the work they have done as well as the work God has done.

The Sanctity of Family is revealed in Eden in that marriage is instituted by the coming together of Adam and Eve into one, although she was unnamed at that point. Moreover, Adam named his wife "Eve," which means the mother of all the living, despite her still being childless at that point. The increase in painful labor for the man with his work and the woman with her childbearing connected to the punishments is also attached to the promise of a seed of the woman. Upon birth to their firstborn, Eve cried out that she delivered Cain with YHWH's help, and after Cain murdered Abel and was subsequently exiled, Adam comforted his wife who then conceived and birthed Seth to ultimately replace both of her first two sons.

The Sanctity of Life is revealed in Eden in that God threatens spiritual estrangement as a result of disobedience (the day you will eat of it you will die), and when disobedience happens, the threat was fulfilled and additionally the punishment of physical death was added (to the dust you will return). This shows that spiritual death and physical death are in opposition to the value of life as idealized by God. Additionally, as a result of murdering his brother, Cain is exiled (spiritual estrangement), which Cain acknowledges is *worse* than physical death. Separation from God is therefore worse than separation from physical life, neither of which God wants for his people.

The Sanctity of Sex is revealed in Eden in that the poetry of YHWH fashioning or constructing the woman from the man and bringing her to him, along with his exclamation of ontological equality, leads into the *reason* a man leaves his father and mother to cleave to his wife. Adam had no mother or father, yet this event serves as the functional origin of marriage, defined as the point when they came together in proper sexual intimacy; nakedness entirely foreign to shame.

The Sanctity of Property is revealed in Eden in that by eating the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve took what did not belong to them, namely the wisdom belonging to God. Additionally, after cursing the ground and punishing the man and woman, God sets up cherubim to block access to the tree of life so that Adam and Eve will not again *take* what does not belong to them and as a result live forever. God gave Adam and Eve a plethora of gifts, but they shifted their focus to take what was not theirs to take.

The Sanctity of Truth is revealed in Eden in that the core of God's instruction to Adam and Eve to eat every tree in the garden is rooted in a trust in God's allowance and trust that God would be faithful to his threat of death in the event of disobedience. The core of the serpent's deception was that God was lying about these things. By suggesting God was lying, the serpent revealed itself as a liar in contrast to God whose truthfulness was confirmed by Adam and Eve's spiritual and eventually physical death.

The Sanctity of Desire is revealed in Eden in that the moment immediately preceding the transgression, Eve saw that the forbidden tree was desirable for obtaining wisdom, a redirection of the desire that (per 2:9) should have been towards the great volume of gifts God gave to them. Her desire was redirected inward instead of Godward. What Eve desired was not what God gave her but instead the wisdom that belonged to God.