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## Sermon Outline

### “The Ten Commandments” EXODUS 20

Introduction: The Ten Commandments set out the logic and preamble to the Law of Moses.

1. OBSERVATION #1
  - a. *There are no commands in the ten commands.*
  - b. None of the statements are offered as imperatives (i.e. “Do this”). They are all statements of fact (“You will do this”). It actually makes them more ominous!
  - c. Certainly they carry the force of commands, but their primary purpose is in defining the sort of people who would be in covenant with God.
2. OBSERVATION #2
  - a. *Think of them as terms, “words” (20:1) not “rules” (21:1).*
  - b. The ten commandments are not the only commands. They are more an introduction to the Law of Moses.
3. OBSERVATION #3
  - a. *The list has a subtle, internal logic.*
  - b. The First Three Relate Man to God
    - i. No other gods – Other beings might exist, but Israel would only treat the LORD as their God and worship none other.
    - ii. No idols – God was never to be confused with any material object.
    - iii. No profaning name – God’s name was not to be treated as any other name.
  - c. The Last Five Relate Man to Man
    - i. No murder – The life of the other person matters.
    - ii. No stealing – The property of the other person matters.
    - iii. No adultery – The relationships of the other person matters.
    - iv. No lying – How I speak to the other person matters.
    - v. No coveting – How I think/feel toward the other person matters.
  - d. Number 4 & 5 Form The Bridge
    - i. Sabbath – The ritual of Sabbath pointed back to God while caring for man.
    - ii. Honor Parents – Care for parents cared for man while pointing back to God.
  - e. The Point: *How we relate to one another is inseparable from how we relate to God.*
  - f. 1 JOHN 4:20 “... for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.”
4. OBSERVATION #4
  - a. The commands work in a sequence.
  - b. If you begin honoring God, you will end by cherishing man.
  - c. If you begin dishonoring God, you will end by harming man.

### THE TWO COMMANDMENTS, MATTHEW 22:36-40

Jesus reaches deeper in his summary of the Law and condenses the principles down to just the two we have discussed: Love God & Love Man.

*As always, feel free to skip any of this you want and just cover the parts you find interesting.*

**Sermon Questions for Classes:**

1. OBSERVATION #1: *There are no commands in the ten commands.*
  - a. The teaching of Jesus also opens with some “statements” for his people.
  - b. The Eight Beatitudes (Matthew 5:2-11) are also not stated as commands, but as simple facts to be heard (“Blessed are ...”). They simply tell us the sort of people whom God will bless in Christ Jesus.
  - c. **Question:** How are the Ten Commands similar to the Eight Beatitudes? How do they differ?
2. OBSERVATION #2: *Think of them as terms, “words” (20:1) not “rules” (21:1).*
  - a. Paul’s epistles often use this same format of stating principles before rules.
  - b. Ephesians talks about the blessings in Christ (ch. 1), salvation by grace (ch. 2), and the glory of God’s will (ch. 3), before beginning a lengthy list of moral rules in ch. 4-6.
  - c. Christ himself also highlights the idea that principles come before rules, though rules should not be ignored (Matthew 23:23-24).
  - d. **Question:** How do principles differ from rules? How can we honor both?<sup>1</sup>
3. OBSERVATION #3: *The list has a subtle, internal logic.*
  - a. Christian doctrine also strongly emphasizes that our love for God and our love for man are related (even besides Christ’s teaching on the two great commandments).
  - b. John says that this doctrine is “from the beginning” (1 John 3:10-11). He says that all love is rooted in God (1 John 4:7-21).
  - c. **Question:** Which is harder for you – loving God or loving your neighbor? How does one help you with the other?
4. OBSERVATION #4: *The commands work in a sequence.*
  - a. Likewise, Christian doctrine holds that moral development is a process. Peter says that Christian virtues begin with faith and grow towards love (2 Peter 1:5-11).
  - b. Paul will claim that evil works in reverse, with a bad view of God leading to evil toward our fellow man (Romans 1:18-32, especially 28-31).
  - c. **Question:** So is it possible to be a good moral person without a reverence toward God? Why or why not? (Hint: It might depend on the definition of the word “good.” It is possible there is some common goodness available to all, but perhaps the highest good comes only from God, Mark 10:18)

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<sup>1</sup> C.S. Lewis: “I think all Christians would agree with me if I said that though Christianity seems at first to be all about morality, all about duties and rules and guilt and virtue, yet it leads you on, out of all that, into something beyond. One has a glimpse of a country where they do not talk of those things, except perhaps as a joke. Everyone there is filled full with what we should call goodness as a mirror is filled with light. But they do not call it goodness. They do not call it anything. They are not thinking of it. They are too busy looking at the source from which it comes. But this is near the stage where the road passes over the rim of our world. No one's eyes can see very far beyond that: lots of people's eyes can see further than mine.”

## And One More Thing ...

It is possible that your class will ask about the Christian's relationship to the Ten Commandments. Here are some thoughts for you.

1. View #1: The Christian is not in any way under the Law.
  - a. This is the view of Alexander Campbell and more recently of Andy Stanley. Stanley recently wrote, "The Ten Commandments have no authority over you. None. To be clear: Thou shalt not obey the Ten Commandments."
  - b. The basic argument comes from Paul saying the Law came to its conclusion in Jesus (Galatians 3:24-26; Ephesians 2:14-16; possibly Colossians 2:13-15).
  - c. This view would say that the Law is for our learning but not binding (Romans 15:4).
  - d. The biggest obstacle to this view is Jesus seems to say otherwise (Matthew 5:17-20). Likewise, Paul himself says the Law is good if used correctly (1 Timothy 1:8-11).
2. View #2: The Christian is under the whole Law.
  - a. This view is probably the more popular view, but it has major dilemmas.
  - b. One concern is that most who keep the Law only keep some parts of it. Few are advocating for animal sacrifice or a Levitical priesthood. Leviticus offers a law for how to cut your hair and trim your beard (Leviticus 19:27). James claims that if you keep the Law, you have to keep it all (James 2:10-11). Paul says something similar (Galatians 3:10).
  - c. Another concern is that Paul specifically forbids anyone from judging another based on some of the Law, such as food laws, festivals, and Sabbaths (Colossians 2:16-17). Paul says that keeping holy days is entirely up to you as long as you honor God (Romans 14:5-8). That doesn't really sound like Paul thinks every Christian is under the Law.
3. View #3: The Christian is under the whole Law unless otherwise noted.
  - a. In this view, the Christian decides just to keep the Law unless something in the New Testament says otherwise. This isn't a bad view as most of the Old Testament laws are pretty good, but it makes no attempt to explain or understand why Jesus and Paul seem to set aside some rules and not others.
  - b. The problem is that there are a LOT of Laws in the Old Testament that are never specifically repealed in the New Testament, like the haircut law mentioned above. There are 613 commands in the Old Testament.<sup>2</sup> Should we assume they all apply unless otherwise noted?! Are we required by God to build a fence on our flat-roofed church building lest anyone fall off (Deuteronomy 22:8)?! Are we forbidden to make loans with interest (Exodus 22:25; Deut. 23:30)?
4. View #4: The Christian is under "some" of the Law.
  - a. This view tries to divide the Law into moral Law and ceremonial Law. Moral Law would apply to Christians, whereas ceremonial Law would not.
  - b. The major problem here is that no verse in the Bible specifically creates these two categories and no one can decide which commandments are which. Is Sabbath keeping ceremonial or moral? It is one of the ten commandments after all and sits right next to the law about murder and such.

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<sup>2</sup> Yes, they counted. <http://www.gods-word-first.org/bible-study/613commandments.html>