

The Ten Commandments: Living For God Living with Each Other

Summing it All Up

MARCH 9, 2021

Old versus New

Now that we have investigated the context and content of the Ten Commandments as the original covenant between God and the Children of Israel, we must now ask an important question. What does Jesus have to say about the Ten Commandments? As constituents of the new covenant, aren't we just supposed to love each other?

This week, we examine Jesus' teachings. And applying some of the same study principles demonstrated in the previous weeks, we might come away with a clearer picture of Jesus, the new covenant, and Jesus' commandment to "love one another."

The Summary of the Law

Soon after Jesus enters Jerusalem for the final time in his earthly life, just a few days before his crucifixion, Jesus' detractors question him. Jesus is asked about his authority, taxes, and the afterlife. Jesus is also asked about the "great commandment." Mark and Matthew recalls the events. Luke contextualizes Jesus' speech differently, but it might be instructive to look at the three passages in parallel. What follows is a summary of each respective group of verses (hyperlinked for convenience).

	Matthew 22:34-40	Mark 12:28-34	Luke 10:25-28
Who asks?	A lawyer.	A scribe.	A lawyer.
Q:	<i>Which is the great commandment in the Law?</i>	<i>Which commandment is first of all?</i>	<i>What must I do to inherit eternal life?</i>
A:	The great and first commandment: Love God with heart soul and might (cf. Deuteronomy 6:5); the second is like it: love your neighbor as yourself (cf. Leviticus 19:18). Upon these to hang the whole Law and the Prophets.	The first commandment: "Hear Israel! The Lord our God is one, love God with heart, soul, mind, and strength (cf. Deuteronomy 6:4-5); there is no greater commandment.	What is written in the law? What do you read there?

<u>Matthew 22:34-40</u>	<u>Mark 12:28-34</u>	<u>Luke 10:25-28</u>
	Scribe: You are right. And to love one's neighbor as oneself is more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.	Lawyer: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind (cf. Deuteronomy 6:5); and your neighbor as yourself (cf. Leviticus 19:18).
	Jesus: You are not far from the Kingdom of God.	Jesus: That's the right answer. Do this, and you will live.

Note that in Luke's version, the lawyer is trying to establish his own righteousness and asks Jesus, "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus responds with parable about a man who had fell among thieves and when no one would help him, a Samaritan helped (Luke 10:29-37).

What do you notice here? Do you think Jesus is nullifying the Ten Commandments or adapting them? Is Jesus talking about the Ten Commandments at all? Is there any significance in who is asking the question? Do you make anything of Jesus giving a second commandment when he was only asked about one?

Jesus expounds on the Ten Commandments

Jesus often directly or indirectly references individual commandments in his teaching. And almost every time, Jesus is making some sort of clarification or modulation of them. In essence, Jesus seems to say that merely obeying the letter of the words of the commandments simply isn't good enough. Living for God and with each other is not a matter of external moral box-checking. What follows are topical references to each of the Ten Commandments (hyperlinked for convenience).

<u>Commandment</u>	<u>Teaching</u>
You will not have any other gods.	<u>Matthew 22:37</u> ; <u>Mark 12:29</u>
You will not make for yourselves any idols and worship them.	<u>Matthew 6:24</u> ; <u>Luke 20:25</u>
You will not take the Lord's name in vain.	<u>Matthew 5:33-37</u> ; <u>6:9</u> ; <u>23:16-23</u>
Remember the Sabbath say and keep it holy.	<u>Matthew 12:1-13</u> ; <u>John 5:1-18</u>
Honor your father and mother.	<u>Matthew 15:1-9</u> cf. <u>Mark 7:9-13</u> ; <u>Matthew 19:16-22*</u>

Commandment	Teaching
You will not murder.	<u>See * above; Matthew 5:21-24</u>
You will not commit adultery.	<u>Matthew 5:27-30; John 8:1-11</u>
You will not steal.	<u>See * above</u>
You will not give false witness.	<u>Matthew 15:17-19; See * above</u>
You will not covet.	<u>Luke 12:15-34</u>

Moses? Or Jesus?

One of the greatest sources of dialogical tension in the New Testament is what ancient Jews who accepted Jesus as Messiah were to do with the Law of Moses. Ultimately, it comes down to acknowledging that law itself was good, but that human being were incapable of embodying all of its demands, resulting in sin. Jesus Christ would have to become the hope of all who trust in God (cf. Hebrews 3:1-6).

The law of Moses, including the Ten Commandments were a part of a covenant that had been completely fulfilled by God's gift and revelation in Jesus Christ. This necessitated a new and even better covenant, one that did not require ritual sacrifice or biological priesthood. This new covenant would help all of God's people be a nation of priests to God, with Jesus Christ as the Great High Priest. Though the terms have changed, the new covenant community in Christ Jesus are still obligated to worship and serve God and love one another by following Jesus' own example. Jesus is now the the lens through whom we view, interpret, question, and apply the words of the Ten Commandments.

Are there any other New Testament passages that help you think about the new covenant we have with God through Jesus Christ? What other passages help you think about the Ten Commandments?

Is there something about the texts that doesn't sit right with you? Can you name it? What do you think the Holy Spirit may be asking you to do in light of your feelings or questions?

Worship Resources

Consider the words of this canticle, a liturgical song of praise comprised of text that comes from the Holy Scriptures.

Canticle G A Song of Ezekiel *Ezekiel 36:24-28*

I will take you from among all nations; *
 and gather you from all lands to bring you home.
I will sprinkle clean water upon you; *
 and purify you from false gods and uncleanness.
A new heart I will give you *
 and a new spirit put within you.
I will take the stone heart from your chest *
 and give you a heart of flesh.
I will help you walk in my laws *
 and cherish my commandments and do them.
You shall be my people, *
 and I will be your God.

What images resonate with you? Why? Do you see any parallels with the Ten Commandments?

Litany of Penitence

Consider the Litany of Penitence in the Book of Common Prayer. In the liturgy appointed for The First Day of Lent or Ash Wednesday,, it sets forth a corporate admission that even as we have been given God's revelation in Jesus and the Scriptures which attest to him, we fail at embodying the implications of that revelation. You can also see in it a working through of Jesus' summary of the law: to love our God and the love God's people. The litany also says that God has commanded God's ministers to declare and pronounce absolution and remission of sins to those who truly repent (cf. John 20:23).

[Litany of Penitence](#) (Book of Common Prayer pages 267-269)