

EXODUS 20: 12 – 17

THE HEART OF A HOLY GOD

Mt. 22: 34 - 40

34 But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. 35 Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, 36 “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?”

37 Jesus said to him, “ ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

Last week: The first four commandments. The progression of the commandments after God made the foundational statement that it was He who delivered Israel from bondage.

Daddy's cap guns and my new knives. What came out of the attic was valued and then given to beloved child.

Relevance? We are valued by God who wants what is best for us. A civil society, mimicking Heaven is what is best for everyone.

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

13 "You shall not murder.

14 "You shall not commit adultery.

15 "You shall not steal.

16 "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

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

There is a great deal of family language in this section of the text.

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

- Honor defined: Revere, respect, obey, take care of in their old age.
- This word is used to show the proper relationship between God and us, as well as between us, and our parents.
- The same language is used in reference to blaspheming God and not honoring our parents. The offense is similar.
- **Exodus 21:15; Lev. 20:9; Dt. 27:16.**
- These verses show the severity of breaking this commandment.
- The word “cursed” in these verses means to demean, humiliate, despise or bring shame to.
- Shame and honor culture. We are to reverence them as we would God.
- **Mt. 15: 3 – 9**
- **3 He answered and said to them, “Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? 4 For God commanded, saying, “Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘He who curses**

- father or mother, let him be put to death.’**
- 5 But you say, “Whoever says to his father or mother, ‘Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God’— 6 then he need not honor his father or mother.’ Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition. 7 Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying:**
- **8 ‘These people draw near to Me with their mouth,**
 - **And honor Me with their lips,**
 - **But their heart is far from Me.**
 - **9 And in vain they worship Me,**
 - **Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’ ”**
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- “That your days may be long in the land.” Not a promise of long life for respecting your parents, but a promise of remaining in the land because of following the commandment. (Not being exiled.)

13 “You shall not murder.

- The difference between murder and killing.
- Hebrew verb rawtsakh – murder, the taking of an innocent life; never used in the administration of justice or war, never used of God or angels. The death penalty is given in the next chapter.
- It is therefore an illegitimate use of this commandment to argue for pacifism or the abolition of the death penalty. You can't make those arguments from this verse.
- Numbers 35:31 – you can't take anything less than the death penalty for murder.
- All human life has innate value and therefore justice must be sought. By taking an innocent life, a human being, an imager/ potential imager of God has been taken from the planet and humans are the image of God. Therefore God is wronged also.

14 "You shall not commit adultery.

Adultery is defined biblically, in the OT as a married person having sex with a married woman/ man; a betrothed person, or a single person, voluntarily. (Rape laws come later in the Law.)

- Abraham and Sarah and the levirate marriage not considered adultery. This is taking another wife for purposes of surrogacy or the welfare of the woman. This was a legal arrangement for surrogacy and was part of the social welfare system. (A way to keep the land in the family and provide for a widow. A different culture.)

15 “You shall not steal.

- Property rights were important in Israel. This applied to property and all things on the property, chattel, kidnapping of servants. What a person acquired morally and legally is his/ hers and not anyone else’s.

Ephesians 4:28

28 Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.

This verse teaches that there are three ways to acquire things: work for it, it can be given to you or you can steal it. Stealing is wrong.

16 “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

- Legal language. All “court cases in Israel were based upon eyewitness testimony that wasn’t given under oath. If the witness was found to be lying, then he got the same sentence as the accused.
- Being truthful is of the utmost importance. But this verse can’t be used to bring harm to anyone. No commandment is to be used to bring harm to the innocent. (Fat in a dress and Nazis.)

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

Coveting is defined as an unhealthy/ sinful desire for something or someone who belongs to someone else. We can all admire what others have, but the desire to have what they have can take on dark motives. In fact this, the last of the

commandments, is a summation of all the others. Coveting the worship of others or the gold of the sanctuary can lead to idolatry and stealing. Coveting another man's wife can lead to adultery.

Mt. 19: 16 - 22

16 Now behold, one came and said to Him, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?"

17 So He said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments."

18 He said to Him, "Which ones?" Jesus said, "'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 19 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' "

20 The young man said to Him, "All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?"

21 Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and

come, follow Me.”

22 But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

Many of us can say we haven't physically violated these commandments, but who among us can say we haven't thought about any of these things? It is not just our actions but the very intent of our hearts that concerns God and should concern us.

Why is coveting so deadly? Because it can never be satiated. Coveting relentlessly craves more of this world; and a person's thoughts, affections, and heart occupied with the world will cease seeking heaven. It forsakes love for God and disposes one to hate their neighbor. Coveting pulls the heart down into the pit of self-seeking and the muck and mire of envy, slander, adultery, pride, dishonor, murder, thievery, and idolatry. It has rightly been said that when we break any of the first nine commandments, we also break the tenth commandment.

In the end, it comes down to the heart of the matter.

And the heart is what concerns God. This is why God gives us a new heart, and His laws are written on/ in our hearts and not just on a tablet. It is more than just the legal end of things. It comes down to the intent of the heart. A new heart, a heart given to God, which in return is made new and given to us by God, is able to combat these things.

If coveting is the summation of the commandments, then what is the remedy? The answer is contentment.

Contentment is not something we chase after, but rest in. The Apostle Paul said, "I have learned in whatever situation to be content" ([Philippians 4:11b](#)). He said to Timothy, "Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment" ([1 Timothy 6:6](#)). The Apostle Paul believed in a sovereign God and trusted in this God, who reigns over heaven and earth. He knew God's providence provided what he needed. Whatever he possessed, it was sufficient, so he could rest content. If God thought it was good for us to have more, he would have given us more. Every Christian rightly seeks to

maintain this mindset. And when this is the case, contentment brings joy to the Christian life.

And this brings us full circle. The only way the people of Israel stand a chance of being content and avoid coveting, which is the gateway sin that leads to the breaking of all the commandments, is to remember the foundational statement God made in the beginning of this chapter. And that is:

Exodus 20:2

2 “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

God delivered Israel from bondage. He was the only power in Heaven and earth capable of doing that. And since that is so, only He could be worshipped. He is so far above His creation that He is “unrepresentable” by any image pertaining to or made by His creation. Therefore all faith, loyalty and allegiance and worship is to be given to Him.

Because He is the creator of all mankind, made in

His image, the way we treat each other is of utmost importance to Him. To steal from another person is akin to stealing from God. To commit adultery is akin to idolatry. To bear false witness is to misrepresent the holiness of God.

And since Jesus has purchased the salvation of all who seek Him, then we are to worship Him also! To wrong anyone else is to wrong Jesus, because we are made in His image. To be anything less than content is to question the goodness and sovereignty of God.

When my daddy brought those knives down from the attic, he gave something of great value to him, to a child who was worth even more to him. This is what happened when Jesus came “out of the attic” and was given to us as a sacrifice. These aren’t just rules, they are the character of a holy God who is to be worshipped and mimicked by His children. Look past the legalities and into the heart of a loving Father. And there you will find contentment and peace.