

# An Overview & Hermeneutic Framework for the Ten Commandments

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## **1. The Prelude**

Ex. 20:2  10 Commandments	Deut 5:6 10 Commandments Redux	Deut 6:4 Sh'ma Yisrael	Matt 22:36; ✓Mk 12:29; Lk 10:27 Sh'ma Yisrael noted in NT
I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery	I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery	Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!	Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord

## **2. The Stipulations Themselves**

1. You shall have no other gods before Me
2. You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above....you shall not worship them or serve them...
3. You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain
4. Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy
5. Honor your father and your mother
6. You shall not murder
7. You shall not commit adultery
8. You shall not steal
9. You shall not bear false witness
10. You shall not covet

8 Negative, prohibitive (#1, #2, #3, #6, #7, #8, #9, #10)

2 Positive (#4, #5)

### **3. The revelation of God's character**

A. From the prelude: YHWH

The self-existent, autonomous, self-defined, eternal One

I am the LORD your God who... Ex. 6:7; Ex. 20:2; Lev. 19:36; Lev. 20:24; Lev. 25:38; Lev. 26:13; Num. 15:41; Deut. 5:6;

In personal relationship to Israel: "The LORD **your** God"

The redemptive, compassionate, delivering God.

B. What else does the 10 Commandments reveal about God's character?

He is incomparable and unique – the only Creator-God, Self-Existent One.

He is first. All things begin with Him.

He is the only Lawgiver. All proper authority and regulation ultimately derive from God.

He is a God who owns things.

The concept of private property

He is exemplary: He is the pattern and template for all things. Righteousness, truth, morality, holiness, justice, relationships, honor – all these are built into human awareness (and the fabric of the universe) because of who Jehovah is. He is the origin of all these elements. These concepts exist in the human mind or soul not just because of the Mosaic Law, but because of law – the principles which God has built into the universe (Rom. 1:18-32).

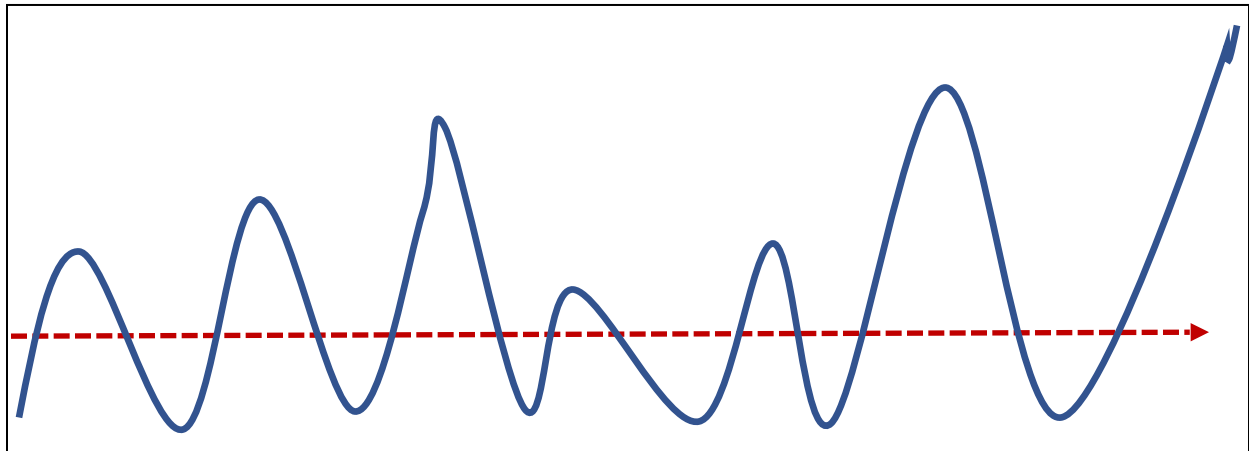
His Name (Yahweh) as the representation of His personality is filled with worth; to empty the Name of the Lord is to denigrate the character of Yahweh Himself. The empty use of God's Name is a first-order failure to distinguish the sacred from the profane.

The concept of a day of rest seems to be a transdispensational idea. There is no Christian sabbath, and there is no church age imperative for sabbath-type regulation, but there might be a

divine endorsement of a day of rest since such a concept is tied to creation and not to Sinai (Gen. 2:1-3). Intriguing is Christ's statement that Sabbath was made for man (Mk. 2:27).

**The History of the Revelation of God's Character**

At & In Creation	The Law	The Incarnation of Christ	Progressive Sanctification of Believers	The Scriptures	Second Coming of Christ/Millen.	The Eternal State
Gen. 1 & 2; Ps. 104; Rom. 1:18ff	Ex. 20; Deut. 5	John 1:14-18	II Cor. 3:18-4:11	II Tim 3:16	Rev. 19:11ff	Rev. 22:4; Eph. 2:7
What is being revealed through these successive points is various salient aspects of God's unchanging, transdispensational Person:						
Creator; Sovereignty	Holiness; Accountability to a perfect standard; Ordering of society	Grace & Truth; The explanation of the Father; Propitiation	Image of Christ through the work of the Spirit	Character; Will	Vengeance; Justice; Righteousness; King	His name on our foreheads; Surpassing riches of His grace in kindness



In the above visual, the red dotted line represents the ongoing flow of dispensations or time periods; the black line represents the unchanging character of God, which manifests itself in various ways (creation, Law, Person of Christ, Scripture, etc [see Heb. 1:1-3]). The character of God is immutable, but the manifestation or revelation of His character is seen protruding above the baseline by salient demonstrations of God to man of His personality and will.

#### **4. The Orientation or Configuration of the Ten Commandments**

##### A) Direct or Face-to-Face Orientation – Man to God (first 4)

These four commands are the duty of the Jews to Jehovah:

Jehovah is incomparable, unique, set apart from all other, and therefore no person, concept, mighty thing or entity (elohim) – whether a human, angelic being, or any other – is to be allowed in front of or prioritized before or in thought of as in comparison to Jehovah.

Any manufactured item is not to be tolerated in the place of Jehovah.

The name of Yahweh, your Elohim, representing His character, is not to be used casually, tritely, or in any manner that would empty the Name of its worth.

The Shabbat is to be recognized as a unique, consecrated day.

##### B) Indirect or Mediated Orientation – Man via man to God (last 6)

But even these “indirect” commands relate to Jehovah:

God is the origin, the Progenitor of all things; He has given the pattern and concept of “fatherhood” to the universe (Eph 3:14,15); therefore to dishonor one’s parents is to dishonor the primacy and dignity of God.

To murder someone is to destroy the image of God (Gen. 9:5,6). As such, the appropriate punishment is the reciprocal taking of the murderer’s life.

To commit adultery is to deface and degrade the first and most significant human relationship instituted by God, to pervert God’s gift of married sexuality, and to mar the picture of Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:22-33).

To steal is to attempt to override God's boundaries of ownership: His provision of goods, etc. to one of His creatures means that person owns those items, and another person does not own them.

To bear false witness is to attempt to destroy another person's reputation, life, testimony, etc. In reality this is another form of murder: destroying the image of God in another human by means of slander, gossip or lying (Note the connection that John draws between "murder" and "hatred" in I Jn. 3:11-18).

To covet is to desire something which God has said is out-of-bounds for you (e.g., your neighbor's wife) or which you desire more of, or which, in the desiring of it, you are placing above your love of God. This command is interesting

## **5. Viewing the Old Covenant from the Perspective of the New Covenant**

### What the Law is:

It is holy Rom. 7:12

It is righteous and good (Rom 7:12)

It is spiritual (Rom 7:14)

It came in so that the transgression would increase (Rom. 5:20)

It is not capable of justifying the sinner (Gal. 2:16; 3:11)

It does not give the Spirit of God to people (Gal. 3:2)

It does address heart issues – but mostly through external regulations and requirements.

### What is the purpose of the Law?

To reveal the character of God

To regulate human behavior

To illumine – and even to spotlight – sin (Rom. 7:7-11)

To set the stage for the coming of Jesus Christ & grace (John 1:17)

The Ten Commandments are holy, but observing them does not produce holiness.

The Ten Commandments are righteous and good, but attempting to keep them or posting them in front of a courthouse does not make people righteous and good.

The Ten Commandments are spiritual, calling attention to God's desire to rule over and be the object of affection of the human heart; but the Law can neither give the Holy Spirit to people nor effect spiritual change in the heart.

New Testament Texts That Illuminate Interpretive Grid for the Use of the 10 Commandments in the Church Age

Matthew 5 – 7

Romans

Galatians

Hebrews

A brief excursus on Matthew 5:21-48

Key Elements in a Proper Interpretation of this passage:

The identity of the kingdom of heaven in 5:3 and throughout this passage

The righteousness that surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees in 5:20

The citations of the Law used by Jesus, the (incorrect) rabbinical interpretations thereof, and the correct interpretations: is Jesus adding New Covenant theology, or merely properly exegesis Old Covenant truth?

Jesus is correcting the superficial, tortured rabbinical hermeneutic and application of the Law, and is giving proper exegesis of those commands.

So is there a church age application of these principles in Matthew 5:21-48? Yes, but not because they are the Law – rather because they are the application of the unchanging character of God.