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Andrew M. Davis

Teaching Notes

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Are the Ten Commandments Still Binding Today?

Exodus 20

Exodus 20:1 And God spoke all these words: 2 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

3 "You shall have no other gods before me.

4 "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. 5 You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, 6 but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

7 "You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

8 "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. 11 For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

12 "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land 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 give false testimony against your neighbor.

17 "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

I. Introduction: Judge Roy Moore's Stand

A. Federal Judge Roy Moore: civil disobedience on displaying the Ten Commandments

Douglas Philips vigorously defended his stand, stating that the Ten Commandments are universally binding and the foundation of our entire legal system

Other evangelicals have kept their distance from Judge Moore's stand, wondering if it was the place to draw a line in the sand, a hill on which to die. *World* magazine raised those questions

These questions thus face us as we come to Mount Sinai and the giving of the Ten Commandments:

- 1) Are these laws still binding on Christians today? Must we obey them or have we been "set free from the law" as some say, such that any attempt to press the Ten Commandments on the conscience of the Christian is seen as "legalism"?
- 2) Are these law binding on non-Jews? Are they worldwide commandments from God to the human race, not just a national covenant with Israel?

B. Understanding the Times: an Age of Lawlessness

1. We do not come to this issue NEUTRALLY or with no history
2. We live in an age characterized by LAWLESSNESS

2 Thessalonians 2:7 For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way.

1 John 3:4 Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.

3. Jesus predicted this would happen

Matthew 24:12 "Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold."

C. Understanding Redemption

1. NEVER: saved by the works of the law!!!!!!!!!!!!

Romans 3:20 Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

2. BUT Saved from sin

Matthew 1:21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

Jesus came to save you COMPLETELY from sin... from everything sin has done to you

Hebrews 7:25 Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

KJV: "save to the uttermost..." right to the end of salvation

3. Sin is lawlessness and was our habitual state

1 John 3:4 Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.

Romans 6:19 I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.

4. Christ hates lawlessness, and came to destroy it... in the end He will condemn lawless people

Hebrews 1:9 "you have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your companions."

Matthew 13:41-42 "The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Matthew 7:23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness.'

5. Christ redeemed us from lawlessness

- a. by covering our lawless deeds with His blood so that we will not be condemned

Romans 4:7 "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, and whose sins have been covered."

- b. by breaking the power of lawlessness over our lives

1 John 3:4-6 Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. 5 But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. 6 No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.

- c. both summed up in Romans 8:1-4

Romans 8:1-4 *Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, 2 because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. 3 For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, 4 in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.*

6. "Kingdom of God" = place where God's law is loved and obeyed

Matthew 6:10 *your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

Matthew 11:28-30 *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."*

7. New Covenant: Law written on our hearts... like it was on Christ's heart!!

Psalm 40:8 *I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart."*

Author to Hebrews ascribed this to Christ in Hebrews 10... God's law was constantly in Christ's heart, and he delighted to do God's will

Hebrews 8:10 *This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.*

8. Measure of love for God: love for and obedience to God's law

John 14:15 *"If you love me, you will obey what I command.*

Psalm 119:97 *Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.*

1 John 2:3-4 *We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*

1 John 5:3 *This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome*

John 14:21 *Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him."*

John 15:10 *If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.*

Summary: Ours is an age of lawlessness, and our hearts were steeped in the principle of lawlessness; the essence of sin is lawlessness—disobedience to God the King. Thus the essence of salvation is forgiveness for all our past rebellions against God's holy law, and a changed heart to live out a lawful and holy life in submission to

God the King. This was Christ's example to us in His life, this was Christ work for us at the cross, and this is Christ's work in us by His Spirit.

D. Understanding The Perpetuity of the Law

Matthew 5:18-20 I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. 19 Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven

Then Jesus UPHOLDS the law of murder, adultery, false witness in the Sermon on the Mount

Clearly He intends that the Ten Commandments still be obeyed now

E. Understanding the Three-Fold Nature of the Old Covenant Laws

1. Moral Law: laws which display God's timeless standards for all peoples at all times
2. Ceremonial Law: laws which helped set apart the Jews as a special people, sacred unto God and distinct for His purposes
3. Civil Law: laws which helped run the Jewish nation as a political and social entity

The Ten Commandments were of the first type: moral laws, timeless and binding on all peoples

F. Are the Ten Commandments for Gentiles?

1. Prologue clearly connected to God's deeds for Israel, and give the special reasons why Israel should obey
2. Humanity's two-fold reasons for obedience:
 - a. by reason of creation and sustenance of life

Catechism question: Why should you glorify God? A: Because He made me and takes care of me.

Acts 14:15-17 "Men, why are you doing this? We too are only men, human like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them. 16 In the past, he let all nations go their own way. 17 Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy."

Clearly Paul believes it is WRONG for these pagans to sacrifice to any idol, including to THEM!!!

But he argues not from special redemption on God's part, but from the fealty they owe God as their creator

b. by reason of redemption (if applicable)

vs. 2 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

By introducing Himself as the God who brought them out of Egypt, He calls Israel to the universal standards through their HIGHER sense of fealty and responsibility: God had REDEEMED them, so they were even more accountable to Him... also God's power would be available to help them obey

3. The Gentiles have God's moral law written in their hearts

Romans 2:14-15 (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, 15 since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.)

God has a universal claim on all peoples all over the earth

Acts 17:29-31 "Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone-- an image made by man's design and skill. 30 In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. 31 For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead."

Can you imagine God saying to anyone, Christian or non-Christian alike: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not murder.' But I now tell you, 'You may murder as often and as viciously as you like, taking anyone's life

II. The Overall Significance of the Ten Commandments

A. They Establish God's Authority as King... His Right to Rule

1. God has always made commands of people...
2. God's very first words in the Bible are a command:

Genesis 1:3 "And God said 'Let there be light!' and there was light.

3. God's first words to humanity were commands as well

Genesis 1:27-28 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

4. God tested Adam by a command

Genesis 2:16-17 And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; 17 but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."

5. Here also at the beginning of Israel's history as a nation, God establishes His sovereign right to rule

Exodus 19:5-6 Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'

B. They Are an Expression of God's Holiness

1. God is light and has no darkness in Him at all
2. God will have Israel to be a holy people
3. These laws set Israel apart as holy and undefiled; they protect Israel from the defilement of sin
4. God's laws reveal something of His heart, of His inner nature... they are a reflection of His own values and heart attitudes; what He loves and what He hates; what He chooses and what He rejects

C. They Are an Expression of God's Love

1. The Law of God is an act of great love and kindness to Israel
2. Walking in the ways of God's laws is a great protection from the defilements of sin
3. Psalms 19 & 119 contains MANY expressions of joyful gratitude for the law of God

Psalm 119:47 I delight in your commands because I love them.

Psalm 119:97 Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.

Psalm 119:159 See how I love your precepts; preserve my life, O LORD, according to your love.

Psalm 119:163 I hate and abhor falsehood but I love your law.

Psalm 19:7-14 The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. 8 The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes. 9 The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous. 10 They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the

comb. 11 By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. 12 Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults. 13 Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. Then will I be blameless, innocent of great transgression. 14 May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.

4. The law of God was a great gift to Israel, enabling them to walk protected in a way of holiness that would have been impossible without it

D. They Are the National Charter of the Nation of Israel

1. *Magna Carta*: charter for modern British nation
2. *Mayflower Compact*: original charter and covenant for the Plymouth Plantation
3. *Declaration of Independence* our founding document
4. The Ten Commandments was the national charter for Israel

Exodus 19:5-6 Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'

E. They Are the Beginning of the Written Word of God

1. These words were inscribed on stone by the finger of God

Exodus 31:18 When the LORD finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of the Testimony, the tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God.

2. From this moment on, the word of God written would play a major role in Israel's life as the people of God
3. Moses wrote down the books of Moses; the historians like Samuel, Nehemiah, Ezra, and others followed suit, as did the prophets
4. The word of God written is the center of our faith

F. They Are Universally Applicable to All Humans at All Times

G. The Sabbath is a Special Case