

Ten Commandments Today?

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Are we to follow the Ten Commandments? Are they written for us?

Your question really involves two separate questions with which I want to deal with separately. First, let's ask the question, "Were the Ten Commandments originally written for all mankind?" The answer to this question is, "no." The Ten Commandments as originally given are found in Exodus 20:1-17. They are part of the covenant that God made with Israel when they came out of Egyptian bondage. We read in at least two places in the Old Testament that the Mosaic Covenant was not intended for all mankind, but for the nation of Israel alone. In Exodus 34:27, 28 we find this explicitly stated. "And the LORD said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel. And he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments." (KJV). Notice that the covenant was with Moses and with Israel specifically. It was not for any other nations. Notice the content of the covenant in verse 28, "the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments." So the Ten Commandments were only given as a covenant to Moses and to Israel. Let's look at another passage of scripture dealing with this same issue. In fact, this passage is actually a commentary by Moses on Exodus 34:27, 28 because Moses is restating the Ten Commandments for the children of Israel who are about to go into the land of Canaan. We read in Deuteronomy 5:1-3, "And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them. The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day." The covenant was made with Israel. This covenant did not apply to their fathers (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), but to them specifically. Now let's ask some practical questions regarding this first question. If we were to draw up a covenant between two parties today (let's say between Kevin and Tony) and we were to say that this covenant which we have is between Kevin and Tony, then automatically everyone understands that other people are excluded from the covenant. The same common sense applies to the Old Covenant. God made that covenant between him and the children of Israel. That is the entire scope of the Old Covenant and it does not have application to any other party or group of people outside of that nation of Israel.

Your second question is as follows: "Do the principles and content within the Ten Commandments have application for us today?" The answer to that question is a resounding, "Yes!" There are aspects of the Ten Commandments that are still applicable for mankind because these aspects are against man's moral nature. In



Do commandments of the Law of Moses have authority over the Christian?

other words, committing these sins would be acting in a way that is against the way in which God created us. Such is the case with murder, adultery, theft, lying, covetousness, and failing to honor father and mother. The principles under-girding the Ten Commandments themselves will never cease to be applicable as long as man walks upon the face of the earth, because man is who God made him to be. The remainder of the Ten Commandments is applicable in principle as well. Don't worship idols and don't use God's name in vain. The one commandment that most people have questions about today is, "Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy." Here is where we must understand the principle undergirding the commandment. God's principle was for the children of Israel to set aside a day out of the week to rest and to worship. This day was the Sabbath or seventh day; what we today would call Saturday. Is Saturday binding today as the day of God's worship? No. Must we worship God today on Saturday? No. Has God changed the Sabbath so that it is now Sunday? No. Sunday is NOT the Sabbath day. Is the principle of worshipping God at least one day out of the week still in effect? Yes. Absolutely. Today, God commands us that we worship upon the "first day of the week" (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor.16:2) or Sunday.

Now, what is the key to understanding the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament. I would recommend that you study a few passages. First, in Colossians 2:13, 14 Paul writes, "And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." The "handwriting of ordinances" is a reference to the Mosaic covenant. This passage clearly teaches that it was "nailed to the cross" along with our sins. Those who suggest that we need to keep the Old Covenant are, according to this passage, making the equal suggestion that we should remain in our sins. That is just a suggestion that cannot be tolerated. Notice also Hebrews 8:13, "In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away." The first covenant is now the "old" covenant. It has decayed, waxed old, and vanished away in its authority. In contrast, the New Covenant is new, young, and visible—it is the one that contains all authority from God. Notice Hebrews 9:15a, "And for this cause he is the mediator of the New Testament...." Jesus mediates for a new covenant now. To try to place oneself under the Old Covenant now is to reject the mediating power of Jesus Christ. Notice Hebrews 10:9b, "...He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second." The first needed to be done away with in order for the second to contain authority for all mankind.

There are several other passages that one should look at and study: Galatians 4:1-7; Galatians 4:21-31; Romans 7:1-4; Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11; Matthew 5:17, 18; 2 Corinthians 3:11-16. Each of these passages makes it abundantly clear that it was never God's intention for the Old Covenant to be an authority for all mankind. It was a temporary system for a limited amount of time. When Jesus died on the cross, he fulfilled the Old Law and established the New Covenant. Today, we must hear the words of Jesus (Hebrews 1:1-4).

Are the Ten Commandments still in effect? In principle, they are, not as part of the Old Covenant, but rather as part of the New Covenant—the covenant for which Jesus is NOW mediator. Inasmuch as these commandments are restated under the New Covenant, we are to follow them and give our complete allegiance to them, as we would to any part of God's will for man today.

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