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## **“THOU SHALT NOT STEAL”**

### **(Exodus 20:15)**

During the last four years of my time pastoring churches, from my age 61 till 65, I pastored a group of about 40 people. To supplement my income I had several part-time jobs including being the cashier in a gas-station. Then B.J., a kind lady in our fellowship who owned a small book publishing company, hired me to pack and mail out her book orders. She trusted me to keep track of my own hours.

After a period of time, I was awakened in the middle of the night with words ringing in my mind: “You have been stealing!” I said, “What? What are you talking about?”

Then a picture of the time-sheets came into my mind. I had gotten into the habit when I worked, say 4-½ hours, of writing down 5 hours. I immediately defended myself: “God, that is too trivial for you to accuse me like this. It’s nothing. It can’t amount to more than \$15.”

But I knew that I had been nailed. I knew that it’s a matter of the heart, not the amount, and that I had offended God. Without confessing to B.J., I started under-reporting my hours and more than made up for the \$15.

Christians are not “Under the law,” but under grace according to the book of Romans. But Paul makes it clear that that doesn’t mean we are free to live lawless lives. We are not just to be honest, we are to be scrupulously honest. We are to be examples to a “crooked” world of what it looks like to be “straight.” And it all starts with our own hearts.

And our world is crooked. A few years ago a lady in the jewelry department at our local Walmart told me that in the previous year her department, jewelry and watches, had reported over \$300,000 in thefts. Note: That was just in

that one department. The large grocery stores allow their customers to keep track of their own purchases, but they figure in the percentage that will be stolen, and it is a lot. They understand that a certain percentage of their customers are dishonest, they are thieves.

I believe that the people who read my monthly messages are serious Christians. Frankly, I believe that you are a special treasure to God and his expectations of you are way higher, more demanding, more stringent, than the norm. He expects you to live lives of excellence and beauty. Your life may be hidden from the world, but it is not hidden from him. His eye is on you, and he is not looking at you with a frown of criticism but with a smile of approval. You are living for his pleasure.

### **POSTSCRIPT:**

When I turned 65 and was eligible for Railroad Retirement (since I had worked for a railroad company prior to becoming a minister), Doris and I moved back to Grand Junction because it was nearer our children and was a much cheaper place to live than the front range. I had been a pastor for 30 years in four different churches and felt that my record ranked somewhere between dismal and pathetic. I told Doris that I had been a failure not only as a pastor but as a husband, father and Christian. (I smell some self-pity in those thoughts.)

I asked God to let me serve him in some way in the remaining years of my life. For the next 25 years, until I was over 90 years old, he graciously gave me opportunities to minister - on the mission field, in prisons, and in my home church. The thing about serving the Lord is that it’s hard work and filled with difficulty, but it’s always an adventure and is deeply satisfying. I continued to struggle with my personal weaknesses and to make many mistakes, but God’s mercy, patience and blessing on my life have been beyond my ability to express.

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## **TATTOOS**

Last month Joyce Meyer said during one of her seminars that many people had told her they felt guilty about getting tattoos during their rebellious years and some of the tattoos were awful. She had assured them that they were OK with God, but some of them continued to feel really bad about themselves.

She and Dave decided they needed to do something more to identify with those “sinners” who had tattoos, so both of them had recently gotten tattoos. She said she had one on her shoulder and one on her right ankle, which she showed to everyone. On her ankle was the word “Love.” She said this was to remind herself to walk in love.

The huge live audience stood and applauded her, and I applauded her also. I thought that was one of the coolest things I ever saw.

But I have already heard about a lady in our church who was deeply offended by what Joyce did. “Joyce has violated a commandment in the Bible. Leviticus 19:28 says: ‘Do not cut your bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on yourselves. I am the Lord.’”

I wonder if that lady has ever read the book of Romans. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul writes about this complex matter of the law of God and how it pertains to believers in Christ. His summary is in two verses. In Romans 6;14, he writes, “For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law but under grace.” And in Romans 13:10, he says, “Love does not harm its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.”

There were 613 laws in the Old Testament, but no one was ever able to keep all those laws except Jesus. In the letter to the Romans Paul explains that the law is good but we are not able to keep the law; therefore, the law brings condemnation to us. We are saved by faith in Jesus, not by keeping the law, and “In Christ there is no condemnation.”

In the same chapter of Leviticus that says don’t get tattoos, here are some other commandments:

“Don’t wear clothing woven of two kinds of

material,” “Don’t cut the hair at the sides of your head or clip off the edges of your beard;” If you have committed a sin, you must sacrifice a lamb without blemish, or if you are a leader you must offer a young bull; You can’t eat pork; You can only eat fish that has scales, that means you can’t eat catfish, shark, lobster, shrimp or crab; You may eat locust, cricket and grasshopper; If you even touch the dead body of an “unclean” animal, fish or insect, you become ceremonially unclean and must go through an elaborate cleansing ritual. Etc, etc.

Do you want to live under the “law”? Jesus “nailed the law to the cross,” according to Colossians 2:14. All those complex food laws have been canceled. Remember that vision that Peter had in Acts 10? A sheet came down from heaven with all kinds of “unclean” animals, reptiles and birds, then a voice spoke to Peter and said, “Kill and eat.” Peter said, “No, I can’t eat all those unclean animals.” But the voice said, “Don’t call anything impure that God has made clean.” This revelation from God also opened the door to “unclean Gentiles” (that’s you and me, brother), to come to God. We are not “saved” by keeping the law but by believing in Jesus Christ.

But does that mean we are free to lie, steal and murder with impunity? Of course not. Paul explains this in Romans chapter 6.

This is how I understand it in a nutshell: We are not made right with God by keeping, obeying, the law. We can’t keep it perfectly. We are broken. We inherited a sin nature and despite our best efforts we fall short. But God loves us so much he gave his Son to die for our sins. When we receive Christ in our hearts by faith, God gives us a new nature. He gives us the desire to obey him and the power to obey him (Philippians 2:12-13), but we will always fall short of perfection.

We still have free will and can still disobey him if we choose to, but now we have an Ally to fight our battles with us if we so choose. We are not free to steal, we are free to give generously. We are not free to commit adultery, we are free to live lives of purity. We are not free to kill, we are free to love.

And please remember that the “ceremonial” laws regarding food and tattoos have been abolished.

So I have decided that I should also get some tattoos. I think that on my back I will have the famous scene of St. George slaying the dragon, and on my stomach, where there is lots of room, I will have the Lord’s Supper with Jesus and the 12 Apostles. If I can just find a painless tattoo artist.

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## **THE RETURN OF THE GODS -**

### **Part 4**

Jonathan Cahn says that from the beginning the “gods” have been in every land and civilization and culture and that both the Old and New Testaments identify these gods as being actual spirits. In other words, they are not just products of superstition, but they are actually evil entities. They are “demonios” or demons.

When ancient Israel turned away from the true God, they turned to a false god, actually three gods that embodied their apostasy. Previously I wrote about the first two gods - Baal and Ashtoreth (or Ishtar). This month I will pinpoint the third major god, Molech (or Chemosh), the Destroyer.

### **Molech/Chemosh**

Molech was associated with the darkest of sins - the sacrifice of human beings and, in particular, the sacrifice of children. Even darker, Molech is associated with the sacrifice of children by their parents. The Bible speaks of this act as an “*abomination*” and as the sign of a nation that has turned entirely against the ways of God and become lost to Him.

An ancient writing describes this horrible practice: “A bronze image was built, extending its hands with its palms up, so that each of the children when placed thereon rolled down into a gaping pit filled with fire.....And the area before the statue was filled with a loud noise of flutes and drums so that the cries of wailing should not reach the ears of the people.”

1 Kings 11:7 tells about King Solomon’s apostasy: “Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab on the hill

that is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the people of Ammon.”

Leviticus 18:11 is an early Scriptural warning about this evil practice: “You shall not let any of your descendants pass through the fire to Molech.”

What would happen if Molech returned to our civilization? He has returned and we can see examples of his brutality in recent history. After Communist Russia officially renounced Christianity, it was the first state to legalize the killing of unborn children, in 1920. The Nazis were obsessed with the slaughter of the sons and daughters of others. They murdered more than 1-½ million Jewish children during their rampage.

And in our country? Since Roe vs. Wade In 1973, more than 60 million babies have been aborted. (That number is hard to fathom.) Although Roe. vs. Wade was overturned in June, 2022, abortion has not stopped in our nation, and that ruling by the Supreme Court is being contested and being called an evil ruling. Feminist authors have spoken of abortion in spiritual terms, calling it “sacred, a sacrament, a great blessing, and a higher form of morality.”

Jonathan also describes how the god Ishtar describes herself as a mixture of male and female, saying these words: “When I sit in the alehouse, I am a woman and I am a young man.” An ancient Sumerian hymn reveals her power to: “Turn a man into a woman and a woman into a man, to change one into the other.” We can see that this was the strategy of an ancient spirit.

And what has been the strategy of this demonic spirit in our time? It would seek to alter the definition of male and female. It would act to transform the nature of man and woman. It would seek to feminize all that was male and masculinize all that was female. It would war against the sanctity of sexual gender by confusing the two. It would seek to destroy marriage and the family and thereby to smash the biblical foundations of Western civilization.

The Defense of Marriage act was overturned on June 26, 2015, On that same night a sign appeared across America. It was the sign of the goddess - the rainbow. That rainbow sign

lit up the Empire State Building, the waters of Niagara Falls, the castle at Disney World, and the White House.

Jonathan believes that a time of persecution is coming to Christians even worse than the Roman persecution. (Yikes!) He encourages us to be faithful unto death and to be assured that Christ will be the victor.

#### **Note from Glenn:**

Jonathan Cahn is a prophet. The emphasis of prophets is to pronounce (scary) warnings about God's judgment on sin and rebellion (individual and national). Their words of advice and encouragement to God's people are usually pretty brief and can be summed up as follows: "God has not forgotten you; He loves you; don't be afraid; trust Him; repent of your sins; be faithful unto death."

Actually, that summarizes the message of the Old Testament prophets; it summarizes Jesus' prophetic warnings in Matthew 24-26 and John 14-17; and Jesus' prophecies in the book of Revelation.

So let me close this review of Jonathan's prophetic words with some really good advice:

**God has not forgotten you; He loves you; don't be afraid; trust Him; repent of your sins; be faithful unto death.**

Those are easy words to write or to read, but it takes a whole bunch of gumption to obey them. Let's pray for more gumption.

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### **JESUS WALKS ON WATER**

Mark 6:45-52 tells the famous story of Jesus walking on water. The disciples were "straining at the oars because the wind was against them. It was the 4th watch of the night, and the disciples were afraid. Then Jesus came to them and spoke these powerful words: **"Take courage. It is I. Don't be afraid."**

Rick Warren has some great insights about this story. Following are some reasons why the disciples, and you and I, might get afraid:

- (1) it was night and dark
- (2) in the middle of the lake, they were insecure and not in control
- (3) they were out of their comfort zone
- (4) they were on their own; Jesus was not in the boat with them

(5) the wind was against them; there was opposition

(6) they were frustrated; their anxiety level was going up

Now let's think about some reasons why we don't need to be afraid:

(1) the story says that Jesus "saw" his disciples out on the lake; He is not unaware, He knows where we are and what we are going through

(2) Jesus cares about our fatigue and our frustration

(3) Jesus came to them "during the 4th watch," the darkest, loneliest time of night

Jesus said to the disciples, to you and me: "Take courage. It is I. Don't be afraid."

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### **PSALMS**

"The Bible was written to us; the Psalms were written for us."

Athanasius

Bishop of Alexandria, Egypt

367 AD

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### **EVERYDAY LIVING**

"When I give you no special guidance, stay where you are. Concentrate on doing your everyday tasks in awareness of my Presence with you.

Be thankful for quiet days, when nothing special seems to be happening. Instead of being bored by the lack of action, use routine times to seek my face."

Jesus Calling, Sarah Young

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God bless,

Glenn

