

Ex. 20:2 - The Preface to the Ten Commandments

Written by Tim Black
Sunday, 31 August 2008 02:00 -

Note: You may download all study guides in one PDF file [here](#) .

Introduction

Why Study the Ten Commandments?

1.

The Law is Useful!

1.

The Three Uses of the Law

1.

For all men: Reveals God's holiness & man's duty and sin – WLC 95

1.

Lev. 11:44-45: *Be holy as I am holy.*

2.

For the Unregenerate: "Drive them to Christ" - WLC 96

1.

Gal. 3:24: *So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.*

Ex. 20:2 - The Preface to the Ten Commandments

Written by Tim Black

Sunday, 31 August 2008 02:00 -

2.

For the Regenerate: "Rule of their obedience" - WLC 97

1.

Titus 2:11-14: 11 *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, 12 training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, 13 waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14 who gave himself for us* **to redeem us from all lawlessness** *and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.*

2.

James 1:25: *But the one who looks into the* **perfect law, the law of liberty**, *and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.*

3.

Though not useful for us to earn our justification – Law & Gospel

1.

Rom. 3:20-22: "20 *For* **by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight. 21 *But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law* , *although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it-* 22 *the righteousness of God through* **faith in Jesus Christ** *for all who believe.***

"

Ex. 20:2 - The Preface to the Ten Commandments

Written by Tim Black
Sunday, 31 August 2008 02:00 -

2.

The Law is a great blessing – Psalm 19

1.

What words do you associate with the word “law?”

punishment

crime

court

rules

higher authority

discipline

disobedience

police

jail

Ex. 20:2 - The Preface to the Ten Commandments

Written by Tim Black

Sunday, 31 August 2008 02:00 -

2.

David used very different words than these in Psalm 19!

7 The law of the LORD is **perfect, converting the soul;**

The testimony of the LORD is **sure, making wise the simple;**

8 The statutes of the LORD are **right, rejoicing the heart;**

The commandment of the LORD is **pure, enlightening the eyes;**

9 The fear of the LORD is **clean, enduring forever;**

The judgments of the LORD are **true and righteous altogether.**

10 More **to be desired** are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold;

Sweeter also **than honey** and the honeycomb.

11 Moreover by them Your servant is **warned,**

And in keeping them there is **great reward.**

What Are the Ten Commandments?

1.

The Ten Commandments are the Covenant

1.

They are the Mosaic Covenant

1.

Deut. 4:13: “So He declared to you **His covenant** which He commanded you to perform, **that is, the Ten Commandments** ; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone.”

2.

Ex. 20:2 - The Preface to the Ten Commandments

Written by Tim Black
Sunday, 31 August 2008 02:00 -

Deut. 5:2-3, 5ff: 2 The LORD our God made a **covenant** with us at Horeb. 3 The LORD did not make this **covenant** with our fathers, but with us, with all those of us alive here today. 5 ...He said, 6 'I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 7 'You shall have no other gods before Me....

3.

Deut. 9:9 : When I went up to the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, **the tablets of the covenant** which the LORD had made with you....

4.

They are the Covenant of Grace

1.

Because the covenant formula "I am the LORD your God" and "I will be your God, and You will be my people" used to introduce this covenant (Ex. 20:2) is applied equally to the New Covenant.

1.

The formula in God's name Yahweh: Ex. 3:6, 11 (who am I?), 14 (I AM WHO I AM)

2.

The formula is applied equally to the OC & NC people of God, because those two peoples are one and the same: Ex. 19:5-6; Dt. 7:6-11 (1 Pet. 2:9-10); Ex. 20:2

3.

Both forms of the formula are conjoined in scripture; they express the goal of the Exodus:

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Ex. 20:2 - The Preface to the Ten Commandments

Written by Tim Black
Sunday, 31 August 2008 02:00 -

Lev. 26:12-13: *12 I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people . 13 I am the LORD your God*

, who brought you out of the land of Egypt so that you would not be their slaves, and I broke the bars of your yoke and made you walk erect.

-

The Mosaic covenant is God's remembering (and thus the extension of) His covenant with Abraham, which is broadly recognized to be the covenant of grace: Ex. 6:2-7

-

The formula is applied to the New Covenant in Ezek. 36:25-28 and:

-

Jer. 31:33: *But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.*

-

2 Cor. 6:16: *Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.*

-

Rev. 21:3: *And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God*

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Ex. 20:2 - The Preface to the Ten Commandments

Written by Tim Black
Sunday, 31 August 2008 02:00 -

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They are *our* covenant! They follow the pattern of its structure, and define our obligations within it

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Place of the Commandments in History

1.

Given by God

1.

Given to Moses and the people on Mt. Sinai in Horeb (Dt. 1:6; Ex. 20).

2.

Taught by Moses

1.

Moses taught them to the people in Horeb, during their wandering in the desert (Dt. 4:5—happened throughout the text of Numbers), and at the edge of the promised land in the body of Deuteronomy (6-26).

2.

Ex. 20:2 - The Preface to the Ten Commandments

Written by Tim Black
Sunday, 31 August 2008 02:00 -

Written in Scripture

1.

They are the covenant God made in Horeb and reconfirmed in Moab. As such the 10 Commandments are the **central verbal expression of the covenant-relationship** established at the climax of God's deliverance of His people from Egypt, and reconfirmed in preparation for their entrance into the land He had promised. This is why they are placed at the climax of the story in Exodus, and made the principal structure of the torah-teaching of Deuteronomy (cf. Olson, 1994: 6-22). They draw together, then, the main themes of the Pentateuch, and lay the foundation for Israel's life in Canaan under Joshua, the judges, David, and the prophets. This covenant then formed the foundational structure of and pedagogue leading to (Gal. 3:24) the New Covenant under Christ.

2.

Important Distinctions: The Moral Law is Summarized in, but more universal than, the Ten Commandments

1.

This distinction in the Shorter Catechism:

1.

WSC 40: *The rule which God **at first revealed** to man for his obedience was the moral law.*

2.

WSC 41: *The moral law is **summarily comprehended** in the ten commandments.*

3.

In the Westminster Confession: One covenant of grace, the same in substance, in two

Ex. 20:2 - The Preface to the Ten Commandments

Written by Tim Black
Sunday, 31 August 2008 02:00 -

dispensations

1.

7.5: This covenant was differently administered in the time of the law, and in the time of the gospel

2.

*7.8: There are not therefore **two** covenants of grace, differing in **substance**, but **one** and the **same**, under various **dispensations**.*

3.

19.5: The moral law doth forever bind all, as well justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof

4.

19.7: Neither are the forementioned uses of the law contrary to the grace of the gospel, but do sweetly comply with it

5.

Substance & Differentia in the Dispensations of the Moral Law

1.

Moral & Symbolic: Augustine, Theonomy

2.

Moral, Civil, Ceremonial: Thomas Aquinas, Melanchthon, Calvin, WCF 19.3, 19.4

Ex. 20:2 - The Preface to the Ten Commandments

Written by Tim Black
Sunday, 31 August 2008 02:00 -

3.

Constitution (universally applicable) & Case Law (situationally-applied)

4.

Lex Talionis & Pedagogical Delegation of Divine Justice

1.

The death penalties' delegation (Ezekiel 23:24) is pedagogical (Ezek. 23:48-49)

2.

Differentia seen in the Ten Commandments

1.

First Commandment: Context of Polytheism

2.

Second Commandment: Context of Idolatry

3.

Fourth Commandment: Servants, livestock, the exodus

4.

Fifth Commandment: The land of Israel was their inheritance. It expressed the same providential care God shows us & them in giving us the present creation & future new creation.

5.

Ex. 20:2 - The Preface to the Ten Commandments

Written by Tim Black

Sunday, 31 August 2008 02:00 -

Tenth: Servants, ox, donkey; “field” added in Dt. applies specially to Canaan

How Should We Interpret the Ten Commandments?

1.

The Rules for Interpreting the Ten Commandments: WLC 99

Question: *What rules are to be observed for the right understanding of the Ten Commandments?*

Answer: *For the right understanding of the ten commandments, these rules are to be observed:*

1. *That the law is perfect, and bindeth everyone to full conformity in the whole man unto the righteousness thereof, and unto entire obedience for ever; so as to require the utmost perfection of every duty, and to forbid the least degree of every sin.* [1](#)

2. *That it is spiritual, and so reacheth the understanding, will, affections, and all other powers of the soul; as well as words, works, and gestures.* [2](#)

3. *That one and the same thing, in divers respects, is required or forbidden in several commandments.* [3](#)

Ex. 20:2 - The Preface to the Ten Commandments

Written by Tim Black

Sunday, 31 August 2008 02:00 -

4. *That as, where a duty is commanded, the contrary sin is forbidden; [4](#) and, where a sin is forbidden, the contrary duty is commanded:*

[5](#)

so, where a promise is annexed, the contrary threatening is included;

[6](#)

and, where a threatening is annexed, the contrary promise is included.

[7](#)

5. *That what God forbids, is at no time to be done; [8](#) what he commands, is always our duty; [9](#) and yet every particular duty is not to be done at all times.*

[10](#)

6. *That under one sin or duty, all of the same kind are forbidden or commanded; together with all the causes, means, occasions, and appearances thereof, and provocations thereunto. [11](#)*

7. *That what is forbidden or commanded to ourselves, we are bound, according to our places, to endeavour that it may be avoided or performed by others, according to the duty of their places.*

[12](#)

8. *That in what is commanded to others, we are bound, according to our places and callings, to be helpful to them; [13](#) and to take heed of partaking with others in what is forbidden them. [14](#)*

1.

The Two Tables of the Law

1.

Jesus summarized the law in two halves:

1.

Matt. 22:35-40: 35 And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. 36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37 And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great

Ex. 20:2 - The Preface to the Ten Commandments

Written by Tim Black
Sunday, 31 August 2008 02:00 -

*and **first** commandment. 39 And a **second** is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."*

2.

Hence WLC 98 explains, "The four first commandments [contain] our duty to God, and the other six our duty to man."

3.

The Issue & Application of Each Commandment

1.

We need to understand each commandment's central concern—its nucleus—and its correct application

2.

Issue: Henry Krabbendam summarizes the central concern of each commandment this way:

1.

1: Love God for who he is.

2.

2: Love God for what he says.

3.

3: Love God for what he does.

Ex. 20:2 - The Preface to the Ten Commandments

Written by Tim Black
Sunday, 31 August 2008 02:00 -

4.

4: Love God on the day he has set apart.

5.

5: Love our neighbor by honoring his authority.

6.

6: Love our neighbor by honoring his life.

7.

7: Love our neighbor by honoring his wife.

8.

8: Love our neighbor by honoring his property.

9.

9: Love our neighbor by honoring his reputation.

10.

10: Love God and the neighbor from the heart.

11.

Application:

1.

Deuteronomy's Commentary

Ex. 20:2 - The Preface to the Ten Commandments

Written by Tim Black

Sunday, 31 August 2008 02:00 -

1.

Along with a growing line of scholarship, [15](#) and the implication to this effect in Dt. 6:1-3, I believe we must take Dt. 6-26 to be a commentary on the Ten Commandments listed in Dt. 5, such that the order of the Decalogue forms the order of the sections in ch.'s 6-26, and those sections successively explain & apply each commandment.

[16](#)

I consider the divisions suggested by Jordan and Krabbendam to be correct, that ch.'s 6-11 treat the 1

st

commandment, 12-13 the 2

nd

, 14 the 3

rd

, 15-16:17 the 4

th

, 16:18-18 the 5

th

, 19-22:12 the 6

th

, 22:13-23:14 the 7

th

, 23:15-24:16 the 8

th

, 24:17-25 the 9

th

, and 26 the 10

th

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2.

The rest of Scripture and its summary in the WSC & WLC will be brought in to understand each commandment's application.

Ex. 20:2 - The Preface to the Ten Commandments

Written by Tim Black

Sunday, 31 August 2008 02:00 -

The Preface to the Ten Commandments

1.

WLC 101 explains:

1.

Preface

1.

The preface to the Ten Commandments is contained in these words, I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

2.

God in Himself the source of all else

1.

Wherein God manifesteth his sovereignty, as being JEHOVAH, the eternal, immutable, and almighty God; having his being in and of himself, and giving being to all his words and works:

2.

Words: God reveals Himself in His covenant

1.

and that he is a God in covenant, as with Israel of old, so with all his people;

Ex. 20:2 - The Preface to the Ten Commandments

Written by Tim Black
Sunday, 31 August 2008 02:00 -

2.

Works: God saves His people & requires a response of obedience

1.

who, as he brought them out of their bondage in Egypt, so he delivereth us from our spiritual thralldom;

2.

and that therefore we are bound to take him for our God alone, and to keep all his commandments.

[1](#) Ps. 19:7; James 2:10; Matt. 5:21–22.

[2](#) Rom. 7:14; Deut. 6:5; Matt. 22:37–39, 5:21–22, 27–28, 33–34, 37–39, 43–44.

[3](#) Col. 3:5; Amos 8:5; Prov. 1:19; 1 Tim. 6:10.

[4](#) Isa. 58:13; Deut. 6:13; Matt. 4:9–10; 15:4–6.

[5](#) Matt. 5:21–25; Eph. 4:28.

[6](#) Exod. 20:12; Prov. 30:17.

Ex. 20:2 - The Preface to the Ten Commandments

Written by Tim Black
Sunday, 31 August 2008 02:00 -

[7](#) Jer. 18:7–8; Exod. 20:7; Ps. 15:1, 4–5; Ps. 24:4–5.

[8](#) Job 13:7–8; Rom. 3:8; Job 36:21; Heb. 11:25.

[9](#) Deut. 4:8–9.

[10](#) Matt. 12:7.

[11](#) Matt. 5:21–22, 27–28; 15:4–6; Heb. 10:24–25; 1 Thess. 5:22; Jude 23; Gal. 5:26; Col. 3:21.

[12](#) Exod. 20:10; Lev. 19:17; Gen. 18:19; Josh. 24:15; Deut. 6:6–7.

[13](#) 2 Cor. 1:24.

[14](#) 1 Tim. 5:22; Eph. 5:11.

[15](#) Cf. Schultz (1859: 13ff), Schulz (1966: 151-157), Kaufman (1978: 105-158), Braulik (1991), Kaiser (1983: 127-137), Jordan (1984: 199-206), Hill & Walton (1991: 144-149), Millar (1998: 104-108), and Krabbendam (1997: 49, 130-140). None of the others consulted see the case law of Deuteronomy to be structured this way.

[16](#) Merrill (1994) considers this thesis throughout but can perceive only a loose dependence upon the order of the Decalogue.