

GORDON CONWELL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

**THE TEN COMMANDMENTS**

**A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY**

SUBMITTED TO DR. WALTER KAISER  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
NT/OT795 BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

BY  
MARTIN YOUNG  
March 24, 2008

## **THE TEN COMMANDMENTS A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY**

Ever since the Galatian heresy, there has been considerable debate about the role of the Mosaic Law in the Christian life. The task of evaluating the merits of the entire Mosaic Law of some 613 commandments and the various theological positions on the same is beyond the scope of this paper. However, the most prominent portion of the Mosaic Law, the Ten Commandments, deserves our foremost attention. In this paper, we will examine the role of the Ten Commandments within redemptive history. From this survey, we will then construct a biblical theology of the Decalogue and assess its relevance to the Christian in the current era.

### **Primary Theological Positions on the Ten Commandments**

Before progressing much further, it's useful to outline the major theological positions on the Ten Commandments and their role in the Church today. In general, there are five primary theological positions on the Mosaic Law within the confessing church: the Reformed View, Theonomic View, Evangelical View, Dispensationalist View, and the Modified Lutheran View.<sup>1</sup> Although these alternative views do not capture the entirety of scholarly opinion on the Mosaic Law, they do offer appropriate insights towards the topic of the Ten Commandments.

Willem A. VanGemenen's Reformed View of the Ten Commandments is that they express "the moral law of God, whereas most laws in the... [Mosaic Law]... regulate rituals ... ceremonies ... and the civil life of Israel as a nation."<sup>2</sup> Within the Mosaic Law, the Ten Commandments are unique because they have an absolute ethical center, where other laws don't

---

<sup>1</sup> Stanley N. Gundry, editor, *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, (Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 9.

<sup>2</sup> Willem A. VanGemenen, *The Law is the Perfection of Righteousness in Jesus Christ: A Reformed Perspective*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 30.

necessarily transcend all cases and circumstances. The Decalogue prescribes how every human being should relate to the true God and his or her fellow human beings made in the Image of God. God holds all humanity morally accountable for them, whether in covenant with Him or not. As cited, in the Westminster Confession:

Chapter XIX, Article V. The moral law [The Ten Commandments] doth forever bind all, as well justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof; and that not only in regard of the matter contained in it, but also in respect of the authority of God the Creator who gave it. Neither doth Christ in the gospel any way dissolve, but much strengthen, this obligation.<sup>3</sup>

Under the Reformed View, the ceremonial and civil laws of the Old Testament have been abrogated with the first advent of Jesus Christ.<sup>4</sup> However, the moral law of the Ten Commandments will never change and remains in full effect throughout redemptive history. God holds all persons at all times accountable to His moral law.

What is the role of the Church in enforcing God's moral law found in the Ten Commandments? Under the Reformed View, the Church doesn't have the authority to enforce civil punishments against law breakers. God has appointed governments for such tasks [Rom 13:1-2]. True, the Church has the responsibility to administer Church discipline as outlined in Matthew 18. However, the goal of such discipline is to bring forth repentance amongst the members of the visible church, not wield the power of the sword [Rom 13:4].

In contrast to the traditional Reformed View, the Theonomic View argues that not only are the Ten Commandments morally binding, but so also is the entire Mosaic Law! Rather than directly addressing the far reaching implications of this highly controversial view, we should limit our discussion to the Ten Commandments. In general, the Theonomic View confirms the Reformed position that the Ten Commandments constitute the essence of God's moral law.

---

<sup>3</sup> G.I. Williamson, *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2004), 184.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

However, regarding violations of the same, Theonomists argue that human governments should enforce the strict Mosaic punishments against such violators (i.e. – stoning for adultery).

To repudiate the penal sanctions of the Mosaic Law [particularly the Ten Commandments] is to be impaled upon the horns of painful ethical dilemma: one either gives up all civil sanctions against crime, or one settles for civil sanctions that are not just.<sup>5</sup>

Theonomists argue that all governments should mimic the Israelite theocracy and that Christians have a responsibility towards migrating public policy in such a direction. For example, the Theonomic View supports the death penalty not only for murder [Gen 9:6], but also for following other gods [Deut 17:5], breaking Sabbath [Num 15:35], rebelling against parents [Deut 21:18-21], and fornication [Deut 22:21]. Although such a position sounds medieval to modern ears, the Theonomic basis of this extension of God's moral law into secular society isn't entirely illogical if one agrees that 1) the civil commandments in the Law of Moses are inherently just and right; and, 2) all people, whether believing or not, are accountable to God's moral law. The issue that Theonomists must address is the transcendence of the Mosaic Law, meaning its universal and independent relevance to redemptive history. Most scholars do not believe that most of the civil punishments of the Decalogue are in effect today.

The Evangelical View advanced by Walter Kaiser and others would agree civil governments should administrate the death penalty against murderers, based on God's pre-Mosaic commandment found in Gen 9:6: "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image."<sup>6</sup> However, they would argue that one cannot extend the full weight of the Law of Moses into the modern era. Pertaining to the Ten

---

<sup>5</sup> Greg L. Bahnsen, *The Theonomic Reformed Approach to Law and Gospel*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 134.

<sup>6</sup> ESV.

Commandments, the Decalogue contains the “weightier matters of the law” which have priority over the “remaining aspects of the Mosaic laws, whether they be civil or ceremonial law.”<sup>7</sup>

The punishments for violations of the Ten Commandments found in the Decalogue “are but illustrations, applications, or situationally specific implementations of that same permanent moral law.”<sup>8</sup> Consequently, under the Evangelical View, although fornication deserves death, God does not mandate civil governments to administer the death penalty to fornicators, likely as a function God’s patience. Therefore, pertaining to the Christian practice of the Ten Commandments towards holy living, the Reformed and Evangelical Views are very similar.

In contrast to the previous three positions which esteem the Ten Commandments as the fixed center of God’s moral law, Dispensationalists such as Wayne Strickland argue for a “wholesale shift in jurisdictions, from a period where the law had jurisdiction to a new period where the Spirit reigns.”<sup>9</sup> “The age of the Church has rendered the law [including the Ten Commandments] inoperative.”<sup>10</sup> The genesis of this view springs from Dispensationalist theology which believes that God has administered at least two covenants: the Mosaic and the New Covenant. These covenants are not continuous, so members of one are not bound to the covenant (or moral) requirements of the other. Consequently, Dispensationalists do not have a high view of the Ten Commandments, since they argue that the Church isn’t under law but under grace. Through the New Covenant, Christians are no longer bound by the moral law of the Ten Commandments.

---

<sup>7</sup> Walter Kaiser, *The Law as God’s Guidance for the Promotion of Holiness*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 197.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Wayne Strickland, *The Inauguration of the Law of Christ with the Gospel of Christ: A Dispensationalist View*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 259.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

Addressing certain New Testament inconsistencies with the Dispensationalist View, Douglas Moo argues for the Modified Lutheran View which says that “the Mosaic Law in itself is no longer binding on the Christian ... [but] ... individual commandments within the law may not be.”<sup>11</sup> Moo “argues that we are bound only to that which is clearly repeated within New Testament teaching,” rather than “bound to whatever in the Mosaic Law has not been clearly overturned by the New Testament.”<sup>12</sup> So, pertaining to the Ten Commandments, “New Testament authors explicitly ‘reapply’ several mosaic commandments to the Christian... all but one of the Ten Commandments is taken up into ‘the law of Christ’ for which we are responsible.”<sup>13</sup> The one exception is the Fourth Commandment “that Heb 3-4 suggests is filled in the new age as a whole.”<sup>14</sup> Consequently, with the exception of the Sabbath, the Modified Lutheran View would not object to the moral proposition of the Ten Commandments, nor the Christians ethics which should derive from them.

In summary, we can see that the Reformed and Evangelical positions closely agree that the Ten Commandments are the basis for human morality for all humanity and especially for God’s holy community, whether at Sinai or today. Theonomists agree with such a view, but then extend the Mosaic casuistic law and civil punishments for violating the Ten Commandments to all societies, for all times. Dispensationalists are content to use the Ten Commandments as a pointer towards grace, but reject the idea that Christians are accountable to the Mosaic Law, including the Ten Commandments. Moo’s Modified Lutheran View closely relates to the traditional Reformed position, but adjusts the Sabbath provision, based on his exegesis of Hebrews 3-4 and the absence of a command to observe the Sabbath in the New Testament.

---

<sup>11</sup> Douglas Moo, *A Modified Lutheran View*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 376.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 376

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

This paper will develop an abbreviated biblical theology of the Ten Commandments. Since no one disagrees that the Ten Commandments had deep moral relevance for theocratic Israel post-Sinai, this paper will focus on the relevance of the Ten Commandments in two critical eras. The first era is the Post-Law Era defined as the advent of Jesus Christ, where we will examine the Scriptural evidence pertaining to the Ten Commandments within the ministries of Jesus Christ and the Apostle Paul. The second era is the Pre-Law Era, where we will examine the explicit and implicit application of the Ten Commandments before Moses at Sinai. By examining the Scriptural evidence before Sinai and after Christ, we will be able to observe how the Ten Commandments did or did not apply to all peoples in all ages.

### **Post-Law: The Ten Commandments in the Ministry of Jesus**

The most important text pertaining to the Ten Commandments in Jesus' ministry is found in Matthew and Luke's Gospels [Matt 16:16-21 and Luke 18:18-25 respectively]. In these texts, Jesus directly addresses the form and relevance of the Ten Commandments, through His conversation with the unnamed rich, young ruler.

**Matthew 19:16-21** <sup>16</sup> And behold, a man came up to him, saying, "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?" <sup>17</sup> And he said to him, "Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments." <sup>18</sup> He said to him, "Which ones?" And Jesus said, "You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, <sup>19</sup> Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself." <sup>20</sup> The young man said to him, "All these I have kept. What do I still lack?" <sup>21</sup> Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."<sup>15</sup>

In his Gospel, Matthew cites the Sixth through Ninth Commandments in the same order as the Masoretic Text found in Exodus 20:12-16 and Deuteronomy 5:16-20 and then adds the Fifth

---

<sup>15</sup> ESV.

Commandment followed by the Second Greatest Commandment: you shall love neighbor as yourself [Lev 19:18].

Luke, on the other hand, only records the Fifth through Ninth Commandments in no particular order [Luke 18:20], ignoring any and all reference to the Second Greatest Commandment. The differences between the two accounts likely arise from the authors' intentions for their Gospels, particularly Matthew's heavy Judaic focus. For example, Luke doesn't record Jesus' conversations with his Jewish opponents concerning the Greatest Commandment [Matt 22:35-40; Mark 12:28-34].

In any case, we observe that Jesus did not cite the entire Decalogue, rather only 5 of the Ten Commandments. Within the framework of the Two Greatest Commandments, Jesus creates a tension between the cited and un-cited commandments:

	<b>Cited in Matthew's Gospel</b>	<b>Un-Cited in Matthew's Gospel</b>
Greatest Commandments [Matt 22:35-40]	The 2 <sup>nd</sup> Greatest Commandment: You shall love your neighbor as yourself [Lev 19:18]	The 1 <sup>st</sup> Greatest Commandment: You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. [Deut 6:5]
Decalogue Commandments [Matt 16:16-21]	5. Honor your mother and father 6. Do not murder 7. Do not commit adultery 8. Do not steal 9. Do not bear false witness	1. You shall have no other Gods before me [YHWH] 2. Do not commit idolatry 3. Do not blaspheme God's name 4. Observe the Sabbath  10. Do not covet

**Table 1: The Commandments in Matthew 22:35-40**

Addressing the ruler's question, Jesus appeals to the authority of the Ten Commandments as a test for righteousness and criterion for eternal life. Although the rich young ruler's

observance of the cited commandments isn't questioned, the text implies that he is lacking in his obedience to the un-cited commandments. Hence, this "one thing" the rich young ruler lacks can be made up by Jesus' two-fold commandment: 1) sell everything and give it to the poor, and 2) follow Me.

Jesus' instructions likely address the sin which the ruler fell into, namely making wealth his own personal god. Consequently, the young man has fallen into a state of continuous disobedience of the Greatest Commandment and the un-cited Ten Commandments. What can save him from this miserable state? In short, he must repent and follow Jesus. Thus, the Ten Commandments point towards Jesus, as their fulfillment for all righteousness. The discussion also suggests that the greatest commandment is observed by following Jesus Christ, for the results of Jesus' ministry is that all the Elect should pick up their crosses and follow Him [Matt 10:38; 16:24]. In following Jesus to the Cross, one becomes an heir of eternal life, entering into the Sabbath rest of the people of God [Heb 4:9].

Consequently, we can observe that the Ten Commandments have real relevance to the Christian life in several ways. First, they clearly convict us of our sin and show where we are morally lacking [Matt 19:20]. Second, we see that the moral law points towards Jesus Christ [Matt 19:21]. Third, we observe that we cannot save ourselves; we must repent and follow Jesus Christ [Matt 19:21] who alone can save us [Matt 19:17]. Finally, both the rich young ruler and Jesus measure moral perfection and therefore godliness within the context of the Ten Commandments [Mat 19:18-20], suggesting a certain universal and transcendent appeal. This raises the question: after Christ's resurrection, is the moral law still in effect?

### **Post-Law: The Ten Commandments in the Ministry of Paul**

Jesus Christ obeyed the entirety of the Mosaic Law. However, after our Lord's death and resurrection, the Church debated whether or not its members, particularly those called from amongst the Gentiles, were compelled to comply with it. Regardless of one's view of Paul and the Mosaic Law, Paul has a very high view of the Ten Commandments and their relevance to the Christian life. In his various epistles, Paul cites nine of the ten Decalogue commandments, exhorting the Church to observe them towards holy living [See Table 2].

<b>Commandment</b>	<b>Pauline Citation</b>	<b>Pauline Text<sup>16</sup></b>
1 <sup>st</sup>	Rom 1:18-25	... For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him... they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.
2 <sup>nd</sup>	1 Cor 10:7	Do not be idolaters as some of them were...
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Rom 2:17-29	But if you call yourself a Jew [God Praiser] ... "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."
4 <sup>th</sup>	Rom 14:5-6	One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.
5 <sup>th</sup>	Eph 6:1-3	Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land."
6 <sup>th</sup>	Rom 13:9-10	The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."
7 <sup>th</sup>		
8 <sup>th</sup>		
9 <sup>th</sup>	Col 3:9	Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices
10 <sup>th</sup>	Rom 13:9	... You shall not covet...

**Table 2: The Ten Commandments in Paul's Epistles**

Although true that the Christian community ethic may be summed up as "love your neighbor as yourself" [Lev 19:18] and "love one another [the Church] as I [Christ] loved you," [John 15:12] Paul does not dismiss the Ten Commandments as irrelevant to the Christian life

<sup>16</sup> Quotations from the ESV.

under grace. Rather, Christians should not fall into idolatry [1 Cor 10:7], murder [Rom 13:9], bear false witness [Col 3:9], nor covet [Rom 13:9]. In other words, Christians, like their forefathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob should observe the Lord's moral law contained in the Ten Commandments.

The possible exception is Paul's exhortation to believers that they should observe the Sabbath and other special days in deference to the Lord [Rom 14:5-6]. Doubtless, this exhortation helped unify the early Church, as Jewish believers continued to observe the Sabbath (Saturday) while Gentile believers congregated on the first/eighth day of the week (Sunday). Whether called to observe Sabbath on Saturday or Sunday (or even not all since "all days are alike"), falls within the realm of Christian freedom. Christians should worship when they feel called. Does this abolish the unity of the Ten Commandments? No, it's wrong to break the Sabbath if, in good conscience, you feel called to observe it, for Jesus Christ is the Lord of the Sabbath [Mark 2:28]. If a person feels called to rest on the Sabbath, however that may be defined, that person should rest and give glory to God, for God made the Sabbath for humanity (not humanity for the Sabbath) [Mark 2:27]. This is likely the essential essence of the Fourth Commandment: to give thanks to God in response to His work of Creation and Redemption.

### **Pre-Law: The Ten Commandments in Genesis**

Although the common belief is that God instituted the Ten Commandments at Sinai in Exodus 20, Walter Kaiser has observed that all Ten Commandments "in one way or another" appear in the book of Genesis.<sup>17</sup> Although they don't appear in a clear covenantal form, as in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 4, various moral and ethical situations in Genesis clearly allude to

---

<sup>17</sup> Walter Kaiser, **Toward Old Testament Ethics** (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1983), 82.

them towards defining righteousness and identifying wickedness. Dr. Kaiser's citations [adjusted for the ESV text], may be found in Table 3 below:

<b>Commandment</b>	<b>Genesis Citation</b>	<b>Genesis Text<sup>18</sup></b>
1 <sup>st</sup>	Gen 35:2	So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Put away the foreign gods that are among you..."
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Gen 31:30	"Why did you steal my gods?"
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Gen 24:3	"I may make you swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and God of the earth..."
4 <sup>th</sup>	Gen 2:3	So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.
5 <sup>th</sup>	Gen 27:41	Esau said to himself, "The days of mourning for my father are approaching..."
6 <sup>th</sup>	Gen 4:9	The LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?"
7 <sup>th</sup>	Gen 39:9	"... How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"
8 <sup>th</sup>	Gen 44:4-8	"... How then could we steal silver or gold from your lord's house?"
9 <sup>th</sup>	Gen 39:17-18	"The Hebrew servant ... came in to me to laugh at me... But as soon as I lifted up my voice and cried, he left his garment beside me and fled out of the house."
10 <sup>th</sup>	Gen 20:3	But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night and said to him, "Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man's wife."

**Table 3: The Ten Commandments in Genesis [Kaiser]<sup>19</sup>**

From Dr. Kaiser's analysis, we may observe that the Ten Commandments did not only apply to God's covenant people, but also those outside of His holy community as well. For example, Potiphar's wife is guilty of a great sin in bearing false witness against Joseph. Through both special and general revelation, the text implicitly condemns her, without citing the Ninth Commandment. Consequently, Kaiser's argument that God did not establish the basic morality of the Ten Commandments at Sinai has merits. Likely, through general revelation, we should believe that God expects humanity to live within the moral framework of the Ten

<sup>18</sup> Quotations from the ESV.

<sup>19</sup> Walter Kaiser, **Toward Old Testament Ethics**, 82.

Commandments. Their special revelation at Sinai is a blessing, but even without special revelation, our consciences condemn us so we are without excuse [Rom 1:29-32].

The only commandment cited by Dr. Kaiser which bears some scrutiny is the Sabbath Commandment. After the Sixth Day, God instituted the Sabbath. God rests from His work. However, it is not clear that this Sabbath has ended, since unlike the other Six days of Creation which experience “evening and then morning,” the Sabbath is not explicitly ended in the Genesis text. Others have argued for a continued Sabbath into the present era based on their exegesis of certain New Testament texts. In any case, it’s clear that God’s moral law pre-dated the Sinai.

### **Pre-Law: The Ten Commandments in Eden**

In this section, we will examine the Fall narrative through the lens of the Decalogue, arguing that Satan and Adam (collectively Adam and Eve or Humanity) broke the entirety of God’s moral law found in the Ten Commandments. After placing Adam in the Garden of Eden, God commands him that “of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die”<sup>20</sup> [Gen 2:17]. Sadly, Adam and his wife Eve succumb to the Serpent’s temptation and fall from grace by eating the Forbidden Fruit, breaking God’s Original Commandment. Other than disobeying this one commandment, did Satan and Adam also break God’s moral law found in the Ten Commandments? If so, it would suggest that the Ten Commandments not only pre-dated Sinai, but all human history! Let us now examine the Fall Narrative through the moral law of the Ten Commandments.

Satan breaks the First Commandment by setting himself before God. He does this by challenging God’s goodness and offering his own false gospel concerning the Forbidden Fruit. Adam and Eve turn from God to Satan, thus violating the First Commandment themselves.

---

<sup>20</sup> ESV.

As for the Second Commandment, Satan lures Adam and Eve into the sin of idolatry by causing them to believe that they can use the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil to manipulate the divine, becoming like God Himself. This is the essence of idolatry. Instead of turning to the true God, Adam and Eve succumb to the idol the Serpent has made out of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Satan indisputably violates the Third Commandment when he suggests that God is a liar and disparages His holy name [“you shall surely not die...”]. Eve offers a crude defense of God’s holy name, but her understanding of the original commandment of Gen 2:16-17 is flawed. Adam offers no objection, implying complicit agreement with the Serpent. Thus, Adam also breaks the Third Commandment.

As for the Fourth Commandment, the Genesis text isn’t entirely clear. However, the absence of the “evening and then morning” language concerning the Sabbath strongly implies that it has not ended, at least in the Fall Narrative. Satan breaks the Shalom of the Sabbath when he intrudes into the Garden to deceive Adam and Eve. Instead of resting from their works, Adam and Eve work to take Forbidden Fruit, breaking the Sabbath.

Adam is a son of God [Luke 3:38]. Satan causes Adam to dishonor his Father in heaven, thus breaking the Fifth Commandment. Eve also dishonors her Heavenly Father.

As Jesus said, Satan was a murderer from the beginning [John 8:44]. Satan killed Adam through eating the fruit of the Forbidden Tree, because on the day he would eat of it he would surely die [Gen 2:17]. Thus, Satan breaks the Sixth Commandment. By eating of the Forbidden Tree, Adam commits suicide, sharing in Satan’s guilt.

A case for the Seventh Commandment is not obvious. However, the shameful reaction of the human couple’s nakedness suggests violence to their marriage [Gen 3:7] and implies that

some sort of divorce has taken place. If true, then Adam and Eve have become adulterers [Matt 5:32]. All three have transgressed the marriage covenant and are guilty of adultery.

By tempting the woman to steal the fruit of the Forbidden Tree, Satan broke the Eighth Commandment. It was not hers to take and eat. Adam, who is with her, takes some and eats it too [Gen 3:6]. All three are guilty of theft.

The Serpent's false witness against God in Gen 3:1,4-5 clearly violates the Ninth Commandment. Adam's demonic explanation that "the woman WHO YOU GAVE ME..." implies that the whole Temptation is God's fault. God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one [James 1:13]. The man has become as deceitful as the serpent.

Finally, the serpent fooled Eve into coveting the Forbidden Fruit, thus violating the Tenth Commandment. Achan uses the same language concerning his transgression of the Tenth Commandment: both Eve and "Achan 'saw' and 'desired' (or 'coveted') and 'took' what was forbidden to them."<sup>21</sup> Adam also likely coveted the Forbidden Fruit, since he took and ate.

As a result of this exercise, we can see that Satan broke the entirety of the moral law and all Ten Commandments. As for Adam and Eve, they did the same. They became Satan's willing accomplices... "for Adam was not deceived" [1 Tim 2:14]. As a result, Adam became guilty of violating all Ten Commandments as well, the entirety of God's moral law. Thus, the Ten Commandments likely emanated from God in Eden because we can see that the full moral law was contained within God's Original Commandment [Gen 2:17].

What should Adam have done? Well, through the aforementioned analysis, it's clear that Satan violated all Ten Commandments, whether Adam would too is a different issue. Most obviously, Adam should have judged Satan, for God had made Adam the ruler over all the beasts

---

<sup>21</sup> David M. Howard, *Joshua*, The New American Commentary vol 5, (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1998), 197.

of the field (including Satan) [Gen 1:26 and 3:14]. What is the just punishment for violating all Ten Commandments? Perhaps, Adam should have nailed Satan to the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil,<sup>22</sup> for cursed is one hung from a tree [Deut 21:23]. However, Adam does not judge the transgressor and becomes a transgressor himself. Hence, through Adam's sin, sin entered into the world [Rom 5:12]. How will this curse be lifted? Likely, through Jesus Christ, who is himself hung from a tree, which pays Adam's sin in full [John 19:30]. Therefore, not only did the moral law pre-date the Fall, but through God's moral law, the coming glorification of Christ and the coming judgment of Satan did as well.

### **Conclusions**

The Dispensationalist View is completely rejected. The Ten Commandments transcend all the covenants because they date from the Original Covenant with Adam to the New Covenant in Christ. As for the Reformed and Evangelical Views, they are affirmed. The Modified Lutheran View of the Ten Commandments is too. The Ten Commandments still carry the weight of God's moral law. As for the Theonomic View, it is challenged, for although transgressors deserve capital punishment, throughout the Bible, God doesn't necessarily impose the capital punishments given in the Mosaic Law. Cain, Moses, David, and even Paul are striking examples of God's patience and grace. In any case, based on this study, we must confirm the relevance of the Ten Commandments for all peoples, for all times, and most especially for God's Church. God has designed to them us to Christ and instruct us towards holy living.

---

<sup>22</sup> Lecture comment made by Gordon Hugenberger on or about Fall 2002.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Gundry, Stanley. *Five Views on Law and Gospel*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996.

Howard, David M. *Joshua*. The New American Commentary Vol. 5. Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1998.

Kaiser, Walter. *Toward Old Testament Ethics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1983.

Williamson, G.I. *The Westminster Confession of Faith*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2004.