

SESSION #18 (6 Apr 10); Deut 5:11-33; Decalogue Details, Refutation of Moral Relativism, & Response to the Decalogue

I. INTRODUCTION & REVIEW

1:1-5	Introduction to God's spokesman, the 1 st Prophet Moses
1:6 - 4:40	1 st Exposition of the Torah = <u>motivation</u> to obey from (1) <u>past gracious actions</u> of Yahweh and (2) sovereign <u>destiny</u> of the nation (<u>future gracious actions</u> of Yahweh)
4:41-49	Editorial comment on context of 2 nd Exposition of the Torah
5:1 - 26:19	2 nd Exposition of the Torah = proper response to Yahweh in heart and soul
5:1 - 11:32	Loving Yahweh with all the heart
5:1-33 The Mt. Sinai event & ramifications	

Framework thinking: Mt Sinai event & revelation

The issue of idolatry is CENTRAL to the issue of ethics and political/social relations since every idolatry attempts to give non-biblical answers to the ethical question: “*who are you to tell me how to live?*”

Unbelief has to build upon a [*speculated*] epistemology and metaphysic:

Epistemology: “*How do I know what you are telling me is true?*”

(doesn't have a basis for truth that is independent of how anyone feels or thinks because there is no [*omniscient Mind*] accessible)

Metaphysic: “*What is the meaning and purpose of our existence?*”

(doesn't have an omniscient Mind because there is no Personal Infinite Self-contained Creator)

Therefore unbelief attempts to build some foundation for ethical standards in either Man or Nature in back of Man (both become idolatrous surrogates for God).

PRINCIPLE: Know these basic ideas because they are part of the surrounding cosmos denial of truth—neighbors, fellow-workers, acquaintances—and you need to be able to respond to them in truth and grace that bears witness to our Lord.

Subjectivism (moral relativism):

“Ethical judgments merely express an individual's emotions or attitudes toward an action.”

Arguments:

- (1) Circumstances differ from person to person and from generation to generation – “old school” argument [“dance and clock” theory of truth];
- (2) “Who are we to impose our moral sentiments upon others?” It's intolerance to assume we somehow have a lock on moral truth so we can impose it upon others [notice the epistemological dogma here].
- (3) Contradictory moral standards can both, therefore, be true in that both accurately show the individuals' attitudes [attempted defense against irrationality]

Problems: Consequences in everyday life that follow clash with life as we know it.

- (1) Ethical judgments ultimately then say nothing about actions themselves; they only reveal attitudes of people toward such actions → How can moral outrage exist when there might be other people who see nothing at all wrong with such acts? All that can be said is that attitudes vary toward such acts; it's all a mere matter of personal taste or appeal.

- (2) Subjectivist ethical theory refutes itself since subjectivists can't live without making objective ethical judgments ("should", "ought"), particularly the judgment that others ought not to impose their ethic upon them. Since actions betray real beliefs, that action shows they don't really believe in their own theory.
- (3) Politically it would result in anarchy, so in the end it causes totalitarianism whereby the strong impose their ethic on the weak in order to maintain social order = arbitrary (positivist) law.

Summary:

Mt. Sinai event and the biblical interpretation of this event (God's "show-and-tell") are a piece within a millennia-long cosmic drama THAT ALONE PROVIDES A BASIS FOR ETHICS.

II. THE DECALOGUE (5:6-21)

Point: The 10 commandments "fit" with the imagehood of God in man—everyone recognizes them deep down and from moral tradition.

A. STRUCTURE

The Chiastic structure:

- 5:6-10 God alone is worthy of worship and service
 - 5:11 Accuracy in language about God
 - 5:12-15 Management of labor and property
 - 5:16 Society depends upon functional marriage & family
 - 5:17 Life is to be respected & preserved
 - 5:18 Marriage is to be protected
 - 5:19 Property is to be protected
 - 5:20 Accuracy in language of judicial proceedings
- 5:21 Self is not worthy of worship and service

LIFE (protected)	LIFE (jeopardized)
MARRIAGE & FAMILY (strong & functioning)	MARRIAGE & FAMILY (weak & dysfunctional)
LABOR & PROPERTY (respected & productive)	LABOR & PROPERTY (demeaned & wasted)
INTEGRITY of PERSONAL COMMUNICATION (really embraces truth)	INTEGRITY of PERSONAL COMMUNICATION (deceitfully professes "truth")
HEART ALLEGIANCE (to God)	HEART ALLEGIANCE (to self)

This is the divine design of society according to God Himself!!

B. STATEMENTS

5:6-10 Insure the foundation of Israel's existence and functioning.

FIRST MAJOR CLARIFICATION OF "SOCIAL JUSTICE":

It and "lordship" are NOT part of the gospel of grace (Exodus preceded Mt. Sinai)
 March 2010 NYT Op-Ed by Gore: "From the standpoint of governance, what is at stake is our ability to use the rule of law as *an instrument of human redemption.*"

5:11-21

5:11 do not lift up the name of Yahweh your God onto vanity

- Attaching God's name to something that isn't His character cf. **Lev 19:12; Deut 5:20** Perjury is claiming that a statement is true before God when it is a lie → denial of the existence [*of the God of Truth*].
- Quaker oath objection: see **Deut 6:13; 10:20**
- Integrity of language = without an objective standard of truth, knowledge and ethics collapse.
- Pagan opposite: Sophistry (Greeks who despaired of truth and therefore training youth to use language for manipulating people—rhetoric); “semantic mysticism” using “connotation words” (Francis Schaeffer)
- Application to Christian organizations and activities: don't associate Jesus' name with terrorism, phony religion, hucksterism, and heretical teaching.

5:12-15 keep the Sabbath (Heb verb = “cease”)

- Human labor is the most dominating human activity so it must be “marked” as a testimony to God's relationship to it.
- Testifies to God's labor to which our labor corresponds: (1) creation week (**Exod 20:11**); and (2) creation of Israel (here)—both FINISHED and can't be ADDED to; looks forward to the ultimate end of history, the end of the work of redemption.
- Only one of 10 commandments NOT repeated in the NT due to dispensational distinction between the nation Israel and the transnational Church.
- Israelites were to break any tendency toward self-sufficiency by having to stop ALL labor comprehensively; God wants us to rest and learn to trust Him for providing sufficiently.
- It fits with how man is designed physiologically. J Edwin Orr in Does Faith Make Sense noted that France and Russia in the midst of their revolutions tried a 1:10 ratio instead of 1:7 and failed; we need rest-periods.
- It also testifies to the humane treatment of domesticated animals (animal humanitarianism started by William Wilberforce).
- It shows that Yahweh's “yoke” is lighter than that of Gentile totalitarian kings and Pharaohs.

5:16 honor. . .father. . .mother. . .that your days may be long. . .

Eph 6:2 “1st commandment with promise” in Paul's discourse about what families should look like under the filling of the Holy Spirit; also, this is the 2nd commandment that is positive—closely linked to Sabbath-keeping (note **Lev. 19:3**). Why? Because labor supports and is interactive with the family.

honor

Focuses on respect for the position, not on whether or not we “like” our parents or whether we agree with them in everything.

Primary training ground for authority, respect, honor in a society. From the family it extends to others who edify, such as the prophets and teachers.

that your days may be long. .

The fate of the nation lay in the health of the family!!! Not the government or church.

5:17 not murder

Core of the chiasm = protection of life. Why? Because of the image of God in man. Jesus clarified that these commands—ALL go back to the inward heart attitude in the 2nd sermon on the mount: **Matt. 5:21-26**. Mental attitude hatred, but hatred toward what? See 1st murder in history: Cain/Abel commentary in **1 John 3:12** shows the motive to murder derives from an anger toward God's inflexible character and design of our existence.

Not all taking of life is murder.

- (1) accidental homicide (**Deut 4:41-42**);
- (2) legitimate use of the sword of state (**Gen. 9:5-7; Luke 22:40-41; Acts 25:11; Rom 13:4-6**) because these are divine judgments to honor the life murdered and to thereby deter further demeaning of life.

5:18 not adultery

Not the word here for "fornication" so emphasis is upon protecting the marriage/family unit, answering to **5:16** as protection for life itself. Jesus' sermon on the mount also noted that this command includes, and starts with, inner mental attitude.

5:19 not steal

Answers to **5:12-15** as protection on labor production to support the family to support life.

5:20 false witness

Perjury answering to **5:11** with integrity of language and communication based upon truth to support labor to support family to support life.

5:21 not covet

Self-worship with attendant false claims on others' possessions—that the world "owes you". See **Romans 7:7** "*I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, 'you shall not covet.'*" Mental attitude of the heart again. Opposite to **5:6-10**.

III. CONCLUSION

1. The Decalogue summarizes in 10 sayings the entire structure of a properly-functioning human society.
2. Addressed to the peoples' hearts → every culture has a religious root or mixture of roots.
3. A proper heart-orientation toward God → at ease with submitting to divine truth as a control in all communication, i.e. that words must correspond with reality.
4. Integrity of communication provides for labor, business, and production of wealth.
5. Productive labor provides for marriage and family.
6. Marriage and family provide for life by creating it, nourishing it, and building a culture.

ADDED SECTION (when Session 18 was presented, there was time to cover the rest of Deuteronomy chapter 5 which was not included in the original handout)

5:22-33 Israel's Response to the Decalogue

Here is another example of how the Old Testament narrative gives us simple-to-understand pictures of the central doctrines of the Christian faith.

5:22 added no more

End of direct revelation; the statutes and judgments come through Moses indirectly.

two tablets

In the ancient suzerainty vassal treaties, two copies of the treaty were made—one for each party. Each copy was kept in the party's temple with the priests. The two tablets here probably contained all 10 commandments. They were God's copy and Israel's copy. Both were kept in the center of the Tabernacle in the Ark because that was the location of God's Temple and Israel's temple!

5:23-27

have seen that God speaks with man.

This is what condemns all non-biblical epistemology: verbal revelation has actually happened in public history.

we shall die.

Whenever God shows Himself in all His holiness, the immediate response is a cry for a mediator.

In His Presence as fallen beings we sense our filthiness, so on one hand we want to have fellowship as believers but on the other hand we fear His judgment.

you go near. . .and tell us

Here's the cry for a mediator between God and man.

5:28-31 God's Counter Response to Israel's Response

They are right in all they have spoken. . .Oh, that they had such a heart in them. . .

God reminds Moses that a right heart is required for right conformity to the "contract." It all goes back to the inward mental attitude!

stand here by Me

This is the biblical picture of a mediator. Sets up our understanding of Jesus' role as our Mediator.

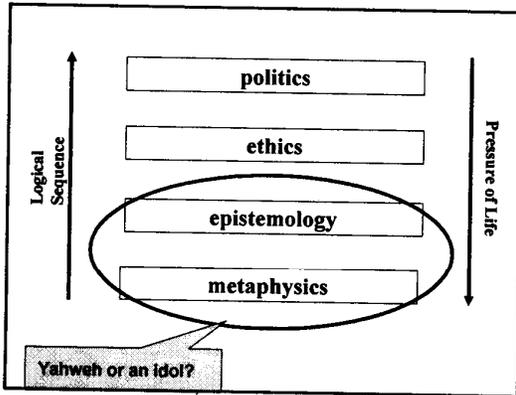
statutes and judgments. . .

The standards of behavior for various circumstances ("statutes") and what sort of judicial application these standards require ("judgments").

5:32-33

that you may live. . .prolong your days in the land. . .

Testimony to the moral "cause-effect" / "choice and consequences" in Israel's subsequent history under the Mosaic Covenant. Goes back to the heart of a servant, or the heart of a rebel.



**Non-Biblical Answers to:
"Who are you to tell me how to live?"**

1. Subjectivism (moral relativism): *"Ethical judgments merely express an individual's emotions or attitudes toward an action."*

Arguments for:

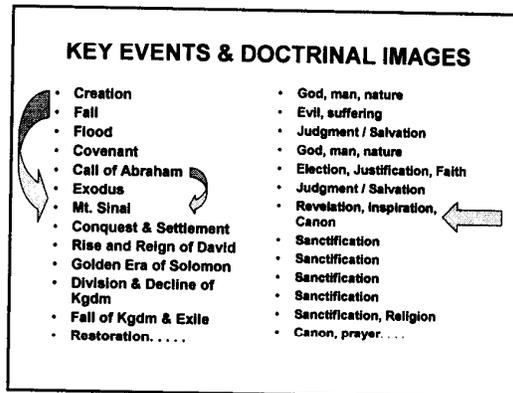
- Circumstances & generation differ from person to person
- Intolerant to impose one's values on others
- Two persons' conflicting judgments can both be true because they both accurately reflect the individual attitudes

**Non-Biblical Answers to:
"Who are you to tell me how to live?"**

1. Subjectivism (moral relativism): *"Ethical judgments merely express an individual's emotions or attitudes toward an action."*

Problems with:

- Says nothing about actions themselves, only autobiographical expressions lacking basis for moral outrage over evil actions
- Self-refuting since every person inevitably judges others' actions (especially toward himself or herself)
- Resulting anarchy leads to totalitarian imposition of the judgments of the stronger against the weaker to avoid social chaos



Chiastic Structure (X)

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5:11 Accuracy in language about God

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