

More Evidence that the Ten Commandments Apply to All and Remain Unchanged

This study begins in the book of Exodus at chapter 25. The context is chapter 24 where God ratifies a covenant with Israel and Moses goes up the mountain to receive instruction from God, including some written on tablets of stone (as will be shown later this was the ten commandments). The first text is Exodus 25:1-9 (with verse 9, cf. Exod 25:40; all texts are from the NKJV of the Bible).

- 1) And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying:
- 2) Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring Me an offering. From everyone that gives it willingly with his heart you shall take My offering.
- 3) And this [is] the offering which you shall take from them: gold, and silver, and bronze;
- 4) blue and purple and scarlet [yarn], fine linen [thread], and goats' [hair],
- 5) rams' skins dyed red, badgers' skins, and acacia wood;
- 6) oil for the light, and spices for the anointing oil and for the sweet incense;
- 7) onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod and in the breastplate.
- 8) And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.
- 9) According to all that I show you, [that is], the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make [it].

God's instructions to Moses concern the building of an earthly tabernacle. Here Moses learns about gathering the materials for it and the purpose for the sanctuary. He is also told that it is to be based upon a revealed pattern. The Hebrew word for "pattern" in this context suggests that there is an original sanctuary to which this earthly sanctuary will correspond. That there is an original sanctuary and that it is a heavenly one is suggested by related texts in the Old Testament and by Ancient Near Eastern parallels to the Hebrew tabernacle. This earthly/heavenly sanctuary correspondence finds confirmation in the next text, Hebrews 8:1-7 (cf. 9:23-26, especially verse 24).

- 1) Now [this is] the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,
- 2) a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man.
- 3) For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore [it is] necessary that this One also have something to offer.
- 4) For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law;
- 5) who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, "See [that] you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain."
- 6) But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also the Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.
- 7) For if that first [covenant] had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second.

This text discusses Jesus as a high priest within a heavenly sanctuary in contrast to the earthly tabernacle. In so doing, the author of Hebrews interprets the text of Exodus 25:40 (related to 25:9) as saying that the earthly was based upon the heavenly. Now one can return to chapter 25 of Exodus. Verses 20-16 describe the ark and verses 17-22 discuss the special cover to go upon it. It is interesting to note that the first items shown to Moses appear to be these. The text is as follows:

- 10) And they shall make an ark of acacia wood; two and a half cubits [shall be] its length, and a cubit and a half its width, and a cubit and a half its height.
- 11) And you shall overlay it with pure gold, inside and out you shall overlay it, and shall make upon it a molding of gold all around.
- 12) You shall cast four rings of gold for it, and put [them] in its four corners; two rings [shall be] on the one side, and two rings on the other side.
- 13) And you shall make poles [of] acacia wood, and overlay them with gold.
- 14) You shall put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark, that the ark may be carried by them.

- 15) The poles shall be in the rings of the ark; they shall not be taken from it.
- 16) And you shall put into the ark the Testimony which I will give you.
- 17) You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold; two and a half cubits [shall be] its length and a cubit and a half its width.
- 18) And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work you shall make them at the two ends of the mercy seat.
- 19) Make one cherub at one end, and the other cherub at the other end; you shall make the cherubim at the two ends of it [of one piece] with the mercy seat.
- 20) And the cherubims shall stretch out [their] wings above, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and they shall face one another; the faces of the cherubim [shall be] toward the mercy seat.
- 21) You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark; and in the ark you shall put the Testimony that I will give you.
- 22) And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which [are] on the ark of the Testimony, of all [things] which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel.

The next text is in the book of Revelation. This book contains various elements of sanctuary imagery. A portion of that imagery is placed in the context of heaven. Some of the items that are shown in heaven correspond to those items known to have existed in the earthly tabernacle. As to whether what John saw in his vision of heaven are exactly how things exist in the heavenly sanctuary is open to discussion. Since some of the images are typical of the symbolism of the book (such as the lamb that is slain that has seven horns and seven eyes), it may be that John sees the heavenly realities in terms of the earthly copies. Nevertheless, heavenly realities are in view to the reader of Revelation. Given this and what has been mentioned above about the earthly tabernacle and the ark, note Revelation 11:19.

- 19) Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

Here John is drawn to the heavenly original of the ark and cover of Exodus 25. Now note that Exodus 25 mentions in both verse 16 and 21 that Moses was to put the testimony given by God into the ark such that it came to be called the ark of the testimony (or covenant in some translations) or in other texts just the testimony (e.g. Lev 16:13). What was the testimony? For that, one must go to the last part of Exodus 31. The rest of Exodus 25 and the text after that up to Exodus 31:17 give the plans for the rest of the tabernacle with a few directions related to its operation, set up, and building. Interestingly enough this section ends with a reemphasis of the Sabbath law and its designation as a "perpetual covenant". After this, a connection is made between the testimony of 25:16, 21 and the two tablets mentioned in Exodus 24:12. Look at Exodus 31:18.

- 18) When he had made an end of speaking with him on Mount Sinai, He gave Moses two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.

Moses had been on the mountain for forty days and nights. While gone, the Israelites committed the sin of idolatry. Moses, after pleading with God on the people's behalf, went down to the camp with the two tablets of testimony in his hands. Exodus 32:15, 16 mentions this and emphasizes God's role in the tablets' creation. Moses then smashed the tablets upon coming to the camp (Exod 32:19). Later, after interceding with God concerning His going with them to the promised land, Moses is commanded concerning some new tablets, which will contain the things written on the former. The text for this is Exodus 34:1-4.

- 1) And the LORD said to Moses, "Cut two tablets of stone like the first [ones], and I will write on [these] tablets the words that were on the first tablets which you broke.
- 2) "So be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present yourself to Me there on the top of the mountain.
- 3) "And no man shall come up with you, and let no man be seen throughout all the mountain; let neither flocks nor herds feed before that mountain."

4) So he cut two tablets of stone like the first [ones]. Then Moses rose early in the morning and went up Mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him; and he took in his hand the two tablets of stone.

Again Moses is upon the mountain for forty days and nights. This time he receives the promised vision of God's glory, and the covenant is renewed. At the end of this time on the mount he goes back down with the two new tablets and his face aglow. Note Exodus 34:28, 29 (the "he" in verse 28 in both phrases seems to be Moses, but the Lord may be the assumed subject of the last phrase since 34:1 points out God as the writer).

28) So he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread, nor drank water. And He wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.

29) Now it was so, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the Testimony [were] in Moses' hand when he came down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him.

This is the first text that calls what is written "the ten commandments" and directly relates these words to the technical term for "covenant" (a different Hebrew word from the word translated "testimony" in the KJV and NKJV and translated as "covenant" in other versions). Now one may ask what the "ten commandments" are. Apparently, they are not the commands given in Exodus 34:10-26, since more than ten may be discerned. The other alternative is a list of ten commandments pronounced by God from the mountain in Exodus 20. Deuteronomy 4:13 and 5:2-22 confirm that this is so. Next one may note that the naming of these tablets as "the words of the covenant" suggests the origin for the phrase "the ark of the covenant" used in Numbers, Deuteronomy, and elsewhere in the Old Testament. This information, along with the fact that the tablets being called "testimony" led to the ark being called "the ark of testimony" or just "testimony", suggests that these tablets are the items that give significance to the ark. The tablets are seen again in Exodus 40:20 as "the testimony". With the tabernacle having been constructed, Moses fulfills the original command concerning the ark, mercy seat, and testimony given in Exodus 25. The information examined above with regard to the testimony is repeated within Deuteronomy. The texts of 4:13; 5:22; 9:9-11 speak to the giving of the first set of tablets. The text of 9:15-17 speaks of Moses' coming down from the mountain the first time and his breaking of the first set. The text of 10:1-5 relates the creation of the second set of tablets and the placing of them in the ark. This last text portrays a somewhat different sequence of events from Exodus. This may be accounted for by seeing Deuteronomy 10:1-5 as a telescoping of more than one event. Nevertheless, Deuteronomy confirms that the testimony placed into the ark was the ten commandments spoken forth to the people upon mount Sinai and that they constituted the words of the covenant.

To draw together what has been mentioned so far and then to build upon it, note the following: the scriptures speak of an earthly sanctuary and a heavenly original; the ark of the covenant is part of both the earthly and, in some way, the heavenly tabernacle; the ten commandments were given to Moses by God on two tablets to be placed within the earthly ark; Moses was instructed to do this within the context of receiving information about how to build the earthly tabernacle; and, the ark apparently derives its primary significance from the testimony placed within it. Given all of this information, one may infer that the ten commandments of the earthly tabernacle had a heavenly original. Further support for this comes from the texts of Revelation 11:19 and 15:5. Revelation 11:19 was quoted earlier as showing the ark in the heavenly temple. What is significant at this point is that it is called "the ark of His covenant". The word "covenant" is the Greek word that corresponds to the Hebrew word for "covenant" (as opposed to "testimony"). As was seen earlier, this term appears to have been attached to the term ark since the testimony within it was the words of the covenant. As such, the phrase "the ark of His covenant" suggests that the ark in heaven contains a corresponding ten commandment testimony. The next text is Revelation 15:5.

5) After these things I looked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened.

First, one may note that the construction of the phrase "the temple of the tabernacle" might be a further pointer to the earthly/heavenly correspondence. But the main point for now is that the phrase "the tabernacle of the testimony" is used. A phrase like this is used in the Old Testament as a designation for the sanctuary in Exodus 38:21 and Numbers 1:50, 53; 9:15; 10:11; 17: 7, 8; 18:2 and 2 Chronicles 24:6. Such a phrase may have its origin in the fact that the tabernacle housed the testimony in the ark. If this is the case, then this phrase being used in

conjunction with the temple in heaven acts as a further evidence for a ten commandment testimony existing in the heavenly ark.

The main point to this whole discussion so far has been to show that the ten commandment law as it exists on earth is a copy of a ten commandment law within heaven. This leads in turn to several inferences. First, the earthly ten commandments given to the Jews were copied from an original that existed prior to the Jews meeting with God on Sinai. This in turn suggests that the heavenly ten commandments are not strictly Jewish commandments, but have a validity beyond the Jewish people. Second, given that John sees this heavenly ark with its corresponding testimony in a post-resurrection context, the heavenly testimony appears to be still present and in turn still valid in the post-resurrection period. Such validity is also suggested by the fact that the events seen by John correspond to future events from his own day.

The question to be asked now is what does the still valid heavenly original say? Most likely, Christians will not come to much dispute over the essential content of nine out of the ten original commandments, but they will probably have some controversy over the content of the fourth commandment. Surely, it must have some correspondence to the one given on Mount Sinai. How deep though is the correspondence? Does the original just say to hallow one day in seven? Is the correspondence possibly so lacking that it refers to hallowing all seven days? Scripture would seem to give us a clue, however, as to the depth of the correspondence and the content of the divine original to the fourth commandment. Note Genesis 2:1-3 (KJV):

- (1) Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.
- (2) And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.
- (3) And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.

Here before the entrance of sin into the world and before the distinction between Jew and Gentile existed, God set apart one particular day in seven. Also of interest is that this act is recalled in the announcement of the earthly fourth commandment in Exodus 20.

These considerations lead to the suggestion that all ten commandments have a validity for all humanity from creation onward and any notion of a change of that commandment is contrary to scripture. This conclusion also meshes with the witness of the rest of the scriptures, which offers other evidences of continuing and universal validity.

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