



## Why Only Ten Commandments? by [John T Polk II](#)

*All Scriptures and comments are based on the **New King James Version**, unless otherwise noted.*

**Question: Why are there only Ten Commandments? What is the rest of the Bible for?**

**Answer:** That is a very good question that points to the ignorance and confusion created by those who "keep the Ten commandments" today. **They were not all there was to God's Law then, and neither are they today.**

### THE DECALOG BATTLEGROUND

The "Deca" [=10] "log" [=word or commandment] has represented the conflict between religion and paganism, certainly in our society, and in many others, also. Some impose them to elevate morals, some oppose them to destroy religion, some suppose them over all mankind, some repose on the subject of their influence, but none can dispose of them entirely.

Those who argue from the non-constitutional position of "separation of church and state" [those words never occur in the United States constitution document!] oppose the Decalog probably because the first four of them are purely religious, in that they define man's relation to God; and the last six societal, because they place limitations on man's relation to man.

Those who argue from the unscriptural position that the Decalog is the "perfect moral code" seemingly ignore the fact that society refuses to legislate a weekly "holy day" or that state buildings are covered within and without with idols taken from mythology.

Certainly posting the Decalog on walls will not change society because all people are not raised "in covenant" with Moses' laws like the Israelites were! This religious graffiti whether in the form of billboards or placards is mostly offered like "pearls before swine" (**Matthew 7:6**) because:

To those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure (**Titus 1:15**).

The effectiveness of God's Word is witnessed, not in how many public places it is viewed, but in how completely private hearts are shaped by it (**Deuteronomy 30:6; Romans 2:28- 29; Galatians 5:1-6; 2 Corinthians 3:1-3**).

"Ten Commandments," however, has become a figure of speech for complete mastery of some subjects. There are "Ten Commandment" books for how to succeed in: gambling, business, understanding one's own self, marital and parental relationships, dieting, drinking alcohol, etiquette, emailing, political campaigning, sexual pleasure,

ad infinitum. This, along with the base of 10 in mathematics, has popularized the notion that "10" is a complete presentation of any subject.

Although the first ten amendments to the United States Constitution (a.k.a. "The Bill of Rights") were ratified on December 15, 1791, they certainly are not all the amendments that have been made to that constitution! The first ten commandments in Moses' Law were never intended to be the perfect moral/ religious code of conduct, but occupied a similar place to the "Bill of Rights" in U.S. constitutional law. They are only the introduction to the rest of that law. No one should think that only observing the "Bill of Rights" makes him/ her a law abiding citizen, or that all U.S. law has been fulfilled. If that were so, Congress should disband immediately! Neither should anyone presume that an Israelite would have fulfilled all Mosaic Law by only keeping the first ten. **They were not all there was to God's Law then, and neither are they today.**

### THE DECALOG DOES NOT SAVE ANYONE TODAY BECAUSE:

1. **It is not universal law.** It was never given to *goims* (Gentiles, or non-Israelites), that is, anyone but Israelites. God specifically ordered Noah to "Make yourself an ark" (**Genesis 6:14**) and obedience to that command in Noah's day saved (**Cf. 1 Peter 3:20**), but no one else could be saved by obeying that same command. Just so, the Decalog was the opening part of "the statutes and judgments" God gave to "all Israel" (**Deuteronomy 5:1**). Moses said,

The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us, those who are here today, all of us who are alive (**Deuteronomy 5:2-3**).

Nowhere in the Old Testament are these statutes and judgments enforced upon any other nation than Israel! The outsiders required to keep these ordinances were only those "strangers" sojourning *among the Israelites* (**Numbers 15:13-16**), not strangers living *outside of Israel*. By contrast, however, the law of Christ is for "every creature" (**Mark 16:15-16**) whether Jew or Gentile (**Romans 1:16; Galatians 3:13-14**).

2. **It was to lead to Christ, not supplant Him!** Paul said this in **Galatians 3:19**:

What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator.

"The Seed" who answered God's promise to Abraham was Jesus Christ (**Galatians 3:16**). God's Law through Moses was never intended to do anything except lead those who were following Abraham to Christ (**Galatians 3:15-29**). Jesus' covenant is not like the one God gave to the Israelites when He delivered them from Egypt (**Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:5-13**). Hence, the word "new" is used for Christ's Law (**Matthew 26:28-29; Mark 1:27; John 13:34-35; Acts 17:18-19; 1 Corinthians 5:7; Galatians 6:14-15; Ephesians 2:11-17; Hebrews 8:1-13**). God never planned to use Moses' Law again!

3. **It is not enough.** It is not a "perfect moral code" because God never intended it to be so, the rest of the details were contained in the rest of Moses' Law. One can

observe it but still: hate (Cf. **1 John 3:15**), curse and swear without using God's name (Cf. **James 5:12; Ephesians 4:29; 5:3-4**); beat someone half to death (Cf. **Romans 13:10**); and refuse to: love (**1 Corinthians 16:14**), forgive (**Matthew 6:15**), honor marriage (**Hebrews 13:4**), earn a living (**Ephesians 4:28**). One could ignore what Paul taught in **1 Thessalonians 5:14**:

Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.

The very fact that other Scriptures must be used either to explain in Moses' Law what was meant in the Decalog, or to state the requirements of Jesus' Law proves that **the Decalog by itself was never intended by God to completely cover morals or worship under either Law!** There is no specific worship described in the Decalog.

*If only "the 10" were observed under Moses, Israelites could have been saved with **no**:*

- Creation proof of God's existence
- Law of marriage
- Circumcision
- Worship sacrifices
- Ark of covenant
- Altars of sacrifice or incense
- Menorah
- Tabernacle/ temple
- Priesthood days of Pentecost or Atonement or Passover.

*None of these are mentioned in the Decalog, but since these were required of those living under Moses, it is proof positive that God never intended for the Decalog to be all that was necessary to observe.*

*If only "the 10" can save us today without observing Jesus' Law, then one can be saved and **never**:*

- Love God and Christ
- Believe in Jesus as the Christ the Son of God
- Repent of sins
- Be baptized into Jesus' death for the remission of sins
- Observe the Lord's Supper
- Worship on the first day of the week
- Sing and make melody in the heart
- Give
- [h-m-mmm, no wonder people observe Moses' 10 instead of Jesus' Law!].

4. **Jesus used none of them to summarize obedience to God!** Jesus was asked, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" His answer gave two, neither of which are found in the Decalog.

Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets' (Cf. **Matthew 22:37-40**).

The "first" is from **Deuteronomy 6:5** and the "second" from **Leviticus 19:18**, but the Decalog is only recorded in **Exodus 20:1-17** and **Deuteronomy 5:1-21**.

Since "all the Law and the Prophets" hung on these two commandments, then:

- a) Jesus never believed the "Sabbath day" was an eternal, universal, unchanging command that even Christians would observe. It was one of the details that changed from Moses to Jesus;
- b) The Decalog did not summarize either "the Law and the Prophets" (Moses' Law) or Jesus' Law (**Matthew 5:1-7:29** and the rest of the New Testament);
- c) There was a higher, deeper purpose for observing God's Law through Moses than the mere details contained in that Law. The details were not unimportant but should have reinforced the deeper meaning of God's Law (**Zechariah 7:8-13; Matthew 23:23**). God changed the details ("the law") through Jesus Christ, but the higher, deeper purpose for observance is still the goal (**Hebrews 7:11-12; 1 Timothy 1:3-5; Romans 13:8-10**).

Since Jesus has come, the Old Testament is "for our learning" (**Romans 15:4**), lessons (**1 Corinthians 10:1-11**), and to surround us with "so great a cloud of witnesses" (**Hebrews 11:1-12:2**), but not for our obedience to its details of law (**Romans 3:19-26**). Jesus' law will judge those of us living today, not Moses' (**John 12:44-50**).

—**John T Polk II**

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