

The 10 Words

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[0 : 00] Now, we're going to return to our theme for our morning service. We missed out last week. We skipped a week. And we're going back to the story of the Old Testament.

And today we're looking at the Ten Words, or the Ten Commandments, as we know them more commonly from Exodus chapter 19. And we'll maybe look at them in a slightly different way, because we're looking at them in the theme, in light of the theme, which is the story of the Old Testament.

And so we're looking at where they fit in to the Old Testament story, and how they point to Jesus, because that's really what we've been finding, and that's what we're looking to bring out of the series, is how the Bible comes together.

It is one book, and the Old Testament points forward to Jesus Christ. But it's a huge topic, and it's a hugely significant chapter. And for me, it feels like I'm taking that theme, and it's like a 27-course meal, and I'm only giving you a toothpick to eat it with.

So we're really only just beginning to touch on the significance of this chapter, and understand it because there's many things, generally about the Old Testament that are difficult, to fully understand, and to put it in the context of the Bible.

[1 : 29] But by way of introduction, can we be reminded that the Old Testament, and I'm doing this and leading up to looking at the Ten Commandments, the Old Testament is a shadow.

We saw that a few weeks ago when we were looking at Hebrews chapter 10, and the first verse it tells us that the Old Testament and the Law is a shadow of what is to come.

And we saw that for a shadow to exist, there must be something real to cast a shadow. If there's a shadow of this lectern, which is down there, it's because this lectern is real and because there's light from up here that's causing the shadow to be cast.

And so we've seen and we know and we believe that the New Testament sheds light on the Old Testament with the light of revelation, and the Old Testament therefore is Christ-shaped because the light of the New Testament, it shines from behind as it were, the person of Jesus Christ.

So it's a shadow of what is revealed in the New Testament. It is not the fullness of the revelation itself. The Old Testament is pointing forward as a shadow to the real thing, to what is causing the shadow to be cast.

[2 : 52] But it does teach us about God and it does teach us about ourselves very much so. But let's not be or let's be careful not to rip it from its context.

Never to place it in its rightful place in the Bible where God was progressively revealing Himself to His people and place it in its culture and in its time.

That's important. It has its place in God's economy. We can never ignore it or just write it off. But neither are we Old Testament believers because our experience of Christ and our understanding of Christ has taken us out of the shadows into the reality of a relationship with Jesus.

So what realities do we share with Old Testament believers? And then we'll look at maybe what makes us different. And I promise I will come around to this chapter.

What realities do we share with Old Testament believers? Well, you know, it seems that when we read much of the Old Testament and even the commandments, it seems so far from our understanding, from our lives, from our culture, from our experience.

[4 : 10] Yet there's threads that run all the way through the Old Testament that are vital to grasp because it's common to all humanity. So we recognize from our understanding and reading of the Old Testament that without God we are lost.

We've seen that in the expulsion from the Garden, from the slavery in Egypt, and to the brokenness of loveless, hateful behavior that has been introduced into humanity since the breaking of the covenant, since the turn from God.

So without God, every human being is lost eternally and spiritually. We've also seen and we recognize that God makes the first move in redeeming us as a humanity and bringing us back.

We've seen that He's chosen Abraham to live by faith, and the New Testament goes on to say that we are children of Abraham. He rescues us.

He rescues his people, as we've seen already from slavery, by his grace and power. We saw that in Exodus, chapter 14, that it was God who did this, you know, fear not, stand firm, said, all you need to do is be silent because it was God who was going to take them out of slavery.

[5 : 27] And the brilliant words in Exodus 19, you yourselves have seen what I did in Egypt, how I carried you on eagle's wings and brought you to myself. So there's that sense in which is God who makes the first move, it's God who rescues them and who rescues us, we as Christians have been carried on eagle's wings.

We also see that God was with them and is with us. He is with his Old Testament people and his New Testament people. Then I will dwell among the Israelites and be their God.

He tabernacled among them. He dwell with them, particularly in the holy of holies in the temple and the tabernacle.

And we've recognized therefore that they are God's people and the commandments were given to a people who were already redeemed and saved by God.

And they reveal more of himself and what it means to love him and to love like him in community, in the community of the Old Testament.

[6 : 38] The commandments were never given as a means to reach God, do these things and then I'll accept you. Remember the first verse he says, I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt out of the house of slavery.

There was already a relationship with them. They were already God's people. And so the order, this is very important, the order in the Old Testament is grace, God's grace first, God's redemption first, then obedience, 10 commandments, then blessing, grace, obedience and blessing.

And that order is the same for us. We're saved by God's grace. We have new hearts to follow him and obey him and when we do so there's blessing.

And I think the other reality among many that we share with the Old Testament is the recognition that in the Old and the New Testament God is teaching that forgiveness is costly.

Very much so in the Old Testament, not just with the sacrificial system but with this reality of His holiness and the rules they needed to keep to recognize His holiness and His hatred of sin and this life for life without shedding of blood and giving the best and not the worst from their offering and this recognition of the need to love Him in their hearts.

[7 : 59] Forgiveness is costly and that is something we share and not even far more in the New Testament where it isn't the blood of bulls and of goats but the blood of God, the Son Himself.

So we do share realities. There is a common thread that runs through the Old Testament but there's also something that makes us different from them that leaves them in the shadows and reminds us that we are different from Old Testament believers and the way that they understood.

It's a bit like, and this is difficult, I think this is difficult but what we have is shadows in the Old Testament. It's a little bit like, the Old Testament is in black and white, the New Testament is full technicolor or it's a bit like, I think this is a helpful illustration you might know, it's a bit like driving a car with the spare saver wheel that you get in a space saver wheel.

You know, you used to be able to change a tyre and it would be fine that you could use a spare tyre for ages but now in cars you quite often get a space-saving spare tyre which is very thin and which you're only supposed to drive the car when you've changed the wheel at 40 miles an hour until you can get it back to the garage and get the proper wheel back on it that's the proper size.

And it's a little bit sometimes like that, is that in the Old Testament you feel that it's not at full power and they're waiting for something better, something to be revealed.

[9 : 41] It's preparatory, it's not the real thing. Hope makes them different and we'll see this as we unfold. Well it's an ethnic family grouping that became a theocratic state that God was the leader of that state for at least part of that time without kings and the laws were given, the Ten Commandments and all the subsidiary laws around them were given in that context.

So there was civil laws, there was ceremonial laws and there was this moral law as well. They had a geographical homeland, a physical homeland. Sometimes they were used as instruments of God's judgment in a very special way.

The religion was different, it was very much a religion of the senses in the Old Testament. God had saved them, God was with them, but differently.

He was with them in a physical temple. He lived in the Holy of Holies, but there was strict visual separators, there was that big heavy curtain between them.

They only had the shadow of the Spirit, the Spirit didn't indwell all the believers in the Old Testament, there were exceptions, kings, people with special gifting, prophets.

[11 : 00] But it was an external, many ways an external religion, a smells and bells religion, something that appealed to their senses. It was limited at that level, even though they were saved by grace and clearly they were.

We recognize that the core of their faith was grace, even though very often they didn't see it due to runomy 4, that verse that we began the service with, here is real, the Lord your God is one, love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength.

These commandments that I give you today are to be in your hearts. So they did know grace and they had the foretaste and the hint of grace and they had grace example to them, but still they were waiting for something better.

They were waiting for fulfillment themselves. We see that even with Simeon, that prophet, right, when Jesus was born, who was longing for the Messiah to come.

But I doubt nearly any of them would have had a proper idea of what that reality would have been like. So there was a waiting, and sometimes it was a really desperately bad waiting.

[12 : 15] It's a mash the Old Testament of repetitive failure, legalism, pride, misunderstanding, sacrifice, ritual, sometimes expectation and also sometimes faith.

So it is very different. Where do the ten words or the ten commandments, where do they fit into that? Old Testament story. Well, we said they're given as a framework for dependence.

They were given by God to reveal Himself to them, both for them and for us. They were rescued by God His way, and now they were to obey Him and obey His commandments to offer sacrifices when they failed and to know blessing when they followed Him whole heartedly.

So they were given for the people. And I think for them and for us, the ten commandments, ten words point back to Eden. They point back to God's ideal for how He wanted us in the beginning to live, but they're kind of expressed in the reality of a sinful and broken world.

So they're framed negatively because of our sinful hearts and because we're prone to need the commands at that level, certainly in the Old Testament.

[13 : 46] They were to see the holiness of God and not to do things that were against His holiness. Point back to Eden in some way.

They also point forward very much for us to Christ, who is the Word. The ten words here are fulfilled in the Word, Christ.

Points forward to this Messiah who Himself, even if they didn't really understand what that meant, would fulfill these words. So Jesus in Matthew 5 says, Do not think I've come to abolish the law, and the prophets I have come not to abolish them, but to fulfill them.

And so there's this pointing forward that as they saw the commands and their inability to fulfill them, they needed a Savior because the laws convicted them, drove them to sacrifice for their sins, and it was pointing forward to this hope of a Messiah who would somehow redeem them finally, whatever that looked like.

And of course we see that, that these laws, that these revelations of God's will for us and revelation of His own character are fulfilled by Jesus, who was perfectly obedient.

[15 : 12] So how do we fulfill or apply these ten words, these ten commandments, as New Testament believers? Do we just ignore them because Paul in Romans 6 says we're not under law, we're under grace?

I think that's very simplistic. It's true we're no longer under law. We are under grace. Does that mean that we just ignore the Old Testament? No, we need to be much more nuanced, and we need to think much more and use our minds much more as we try and fit the two together and understand their place in God's revelation.

All of the Bible reveals Himself, and it's important to understand how it fits together. I do believe that takes a lifetime of learning.

I don't think it's good enough just to read bits of the Old Testament and shrug our shoulders and say, well, I don't understand that, or it doesn't apply anymore, it can't be relevant. Because as we delve into it, we find why and where it's relevant, and why it's important and why God put it there.

So how do the ten words apply to us as New Testament believers? Well, broadly, within the Old Testament, the Old Testament itself and the Ten Commandments in their rightful place, they serve as a warning, 1 Corinthians 10 says that, these things happen to them, Old Testament believers' stories from the Old Testament, as examples, and were written down as warnings for us on whom the culmination of the ages has come.

[16 : 56] So we recognize the Old Testament, and much of that is recorded for us is there, both as examples and warnings, we're to remember what they had, and we're to remember what we have and where to be warned by them, but we're not to live in the shadows.

We're not to live as if Christ hasn't come. We're not to take the commandments and try, as some of the people in the Old Testament did, to try and obey them as a means of being accepted by God, to live by the commands in order to be accepted by God, as if Christ hasn't come.

We're not to be content as some in the Old Testament were with a loose connection to God through our family or through our upbringing. We're not to be legalistic as some in the Old Testament were, saying like that rich man, all these I have kept since my youth.

We're not to use them to compare ourselves with others and to be morally superior to others as often was the case in the Old Testament. And worst of all, we're not to live in the shadows.

Live near the light of Jesus Christ as many of them did, but never really trusting by faith in the God of the Word.

[18 : 17] They had a warning to us, so many of them didn't believe, so many of them didn't trust, so many of them thought they could. They were so privileged that God chose them because they were good, because they were better than others and they didn't need to rely on God's grace, or they were content with the family they belonged to, the tribe they belonged to.

Never be content with these things, because they are a warning to us that we need to be redeemed and saved and rescued from the inside out.

So we learn from the Old Testament and from the way they responded to the commands. But also to learn from the Ten Commandments as believers that part of their value to us is to lead us to Christ.

Galatians 4 speaks about the law being our guardian schoolteacher in some other versions. Until Christ came, sometimes the verses say that they'll lead us to Christ so that we might be justified by faith.

Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. So there's a sense in which the Ten Commandments point us to our need.

[19 : 34] They convict us. They convict us of our need. They show us how much we fall short of God's standards. They show us that His way is perfect love, and both for Him and for one another.

And we can't do that, but they point us to the one who can, to Jesus Christ Himself, the God-man, the Word made flesh who fulfilled the Ten Commandments perfectly as a person.

So we look at the Ten Commandments and we see their principal truth, and we see them fulfill Jesus as the only one who has never broken any of the commands, who is perfect in every way.

So they both convict us about our failure and they lead us to Christ. So we see then, as we've seen in Matthew 5, 17, the Ten Commandments are fulfilled in Christ, the moral of God is fulfilled, as indeed is the sacrificial law, fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

He lives in perfect love for God and for one another, for others. And that's not sentimental and it's not soft.

[20 : 49] So He fulfills the commands and He fulfills the need for sacrifice. Now, I don't believe for a moment that was ever in the psyche of the average Old Testament believer that God, the Son, God would come in the flesh and God would both fulfill the law and would be the Lamb of God without the shedding of blood.

He's the perfect sacrifice. He's the best sacrifice and He comes, He Himself, as He rescued them from Egypt. He rescues us by being the one who dies in our place.

And if they were beginning to understand the cost of God's love, the cost of being God's people, the cost that was involved, how much more do we, how much more, if we think they understand the seriousness of sin, how much more should we recognize that the relentless justice and holiness of God to get rid of sin in humanity because it's a dangerous and brutal cancer and knowing they can't do anything themselves to make that right.

He takes Himself on Himself our sin and becomes the Lamb of God, the sacrifice on the cross for our sins. It's fulfilled in Christ, marvelously.

All of the Old Testament pointing forward sacrifices and commandments pointing forward to Jesus. And therefore, as New Testament believers, we become, when we trust in God, new creations.

[22 : 37] We are new creations. So we're not living in shadows anymore. We're living in the presence of a risen and ascended Christ. We have, remember what happened when Jesus went across that great, thick, heavy curtain was ripped, 70 foot curtain was ripped from top to bottom so that the holy of holies, the access was made open.

The shadows were broken by Christ, a light of the world who comes in and gives us access fully and freely to God, not just in prayer, but in a more remarkable way with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

So instead of God living in a temple made by human hands, God's Spirit comes and lives in our hearts and we become the temple of the Holy Spirit. So it's not just like in the Old Testament where God was with His people, He was with them and He was with them in the tabernacle and the tent and in the temple.

But it is God in us, in the person of His Holy Spirit, every that we will know Christ in our hearts. That is something that the average Old Testament believer did not know and did not have.

We have Christ in reality, the finished work that risen, ascended Savior who sends out the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost to New Testament believers.

[24 : 00] They only had Christ in shadow in the Old Testament. We have new hearts, new love, new power, and therefore we have a new obedience.

The pattern is the same. God's grace rescues us, therefore we obey, then there's blessings. The same pattern but the emphasis has changed and we see that when Christ restates the law and summarizes it and adds a different perspective.

So it's the ten words of the Old Testament and God, Jesus shrinks it down in summary to two and then adds one. So it shrinks it to three and it's all the same principle but it's restated like it was stated in the Shema in the prayer that we read from Deuteronomy that was there in the Old Testament.

So we have that in Matthew 22. And Jesus replied when he was asked the question about the commandments, I love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind.

This is the first and greatest commandment, the second is love your neighbor as yourself. All the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments. So there we have the whole of the Old Testament commandments summarized in these two.

[25 : 27] And then of course he adds another one, a new commandment he says, I give to you. Love one another which is already stated but as I have loved you so you must love one another.

By this everyone will know that you are my Old Testament believers, no disciples if you love one another. So we have in the New Testament a different perspective on these commands that is stated positively, it's no different and we need both but the reality is there and it's an important change of perspective because we are no longer Old Testament believers.

So we recognize that both, what we call both tables of the law, both elements, the first four and the last six, the first four relating to God, the last ones relating to each other are stated positively by Jesus.

So as Christians we are new creations. We have the Holy Spirit in us and we have a new heart, a heart that can love the Lord our God.

And we recognize Him as we go back to the commands as the only God. We're not to replace Him with anyone or anything else and make them idols. We're not to use His name cheaply, not just in blasphemy, not just as a swear word but just generally not to use His word cheaply to get our own way or whatever.

[26 : 55] And we have entered His rest, His Sabbath rest and we recognize that every day, every moment, every second is holy to Him but that He's still giving us a day that we can worship the Lord's day, a day of rest and blessing which we miss so much being together in these days.

So we love the Lord our God and we recognize the commandments help to express that but we also love our neighbor.

We love our neighbor. We recognize as it's unfolded in the Ten Commandments that the family unit is sacred, that we value the sanctity of life, that it's absolutely precious, that we are image bearers and we will respect others because of that.

So we're not to lie about them and steal from them or be envious of them or of their partner or of their possessions. We're to recognize the sanctity of sex within the relationship of committed marriage and we're to see our need for God's wisdom to carry out His commandments among our neighbors and in society which is a pluralistic secular society.

But we recognize that the commands as new creations for us are to love the Lord our God and to love our neighbor. And this new emphasis to love one another as Christ's love does.

[28 : 26] So let's remember that new society, the unique mark of the church, that's the unique mark of the church. It's the ultimate orthodoxy is Christ-flavored love.

Love because we love as Christ's love does. We've tasted that love, we haven't deserved it, we didn't earn it. It's not a love of equals.

And we are to love others the same way with the love that Christ has put in our hearts. And that, the way we love one another as a church is a window into our corporate heart and is a window into our understanding of grace.

And what you think and what I think of other Christians and how we love them and react to them will be the way that probably more than any other way will make disciples.

It's the greatest evangelistic tool we have is making known the love of Christ in the way we respond to one another.

[29 : 34] So I wonder what your view is of God. And I wonder if you're still consciously or unconsciously or I am still living in the shadows. Is everything black and white?

Is it like you're running on a narrow wheel that secretly we're trying to be, to fulfill and please God by obeying His commands rather than trusting in His grace and in the Holy Spirit to enable us to change?

Are you holding on to that incomplete Old Testament revelation? Or are you trying to misrepresent it because it suits you? You know, say, oh, I can't really understand it, I'm just going to ignore it.

That's very harsh and God is a very harsh God there and it's all very legalistic. Or sometimes we like the legalism that makes us think we're better than others that we can earn our favor.

Let's come out of that. And let's see is that we are more wicked and deprived than we could ever imagine but more loved than we could ever dream or hope of in Christ.

[30 : 39] It's all about Him. It's all about Him. He is the one from which the light of the Father shines and casts a shadow that is Christ-shaped into the Old Testament and is revealed in the gospels and made known in the epistles.

Can I ask you if you're not a Christian, you're watching today, to examine Jesus and put your trust in Christ and know that He has fulfilled God's law.

He has taken away your guilt for not being able to fulfill God's law and He has been punished for it on the cross so that you can know freedom and hope and light and forgiveness and joy.

May that be your truth. I mean, just finish with one verse which kind of, I think, puts the contrast well. From Hebrews 12, you have not come when you talk about coming to Christ, you've not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire, to darkness, gloom and storm, to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them because they could not bear what was commanded.

If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned to death. The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, I'm trembling with fear. But you've come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.

[32 : 02] You've come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly to the church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

Amen. Lord God, we thank You for Your Word, and we thank You that You are the Word, and we thank You for grace, and we ask that we would just luxuriate in that grace.

Obey Your commandments by the new heart of love and desire that we've been given, and still come to You for forgiveness when we fail, and that we would know blessing of being wholehearted, and we pray for people who don't know You, that they would not have a wrong idea of You, or of themselves, but would come to know Jesus.

Amen.