

# THE TEN COMMANDMENTS (PART 1): THE LAWS GOVERNING MAN'S DUTY TO GOD DEUTERONOMY 05:07–15

## *Introduction: Morality, Society, Solution to Problems*

What is the basis of morality? Who can be absolutely sure what is right or wrong? The world offers various opinions. But is it left up to man to formulate his own values, his own system of morality and ethics? Unfortunately, there are many voices in the world today who believe anything goes, ideas that encourage...

- taking what a person wants
- saying what a person wants
- doing what a person wants
- believing what a person wants

The result has been tragic: man is losing control of society and the world; sin and evil are sweeping the world, running rampant, out of control, the sin and evil of...

- lawlessness
- violence
- abuse
- immorality
- war
- alcohol
- drugs
- murder

At times, the problems of sin and evil seem insurmountable. Humanly there seems to be no answer to the problems of society; the situation seems almost hopeless. But note: there is good news. The solution for a world that has gone berserk does not lie with man. Thousands of years ago, God gave man a plan for order within society, a plan that was to guide man down through the centuries, a plan that will work today as much as it would have worked in ancient history. What is that plan? The *Ten Commandments*. The Ten Commandments will work within any generation — if man will just institute and enforce them. God's Ten Commandments can bring order to the world. How can we say this? Because the Ten Commandments were given by God Himself. The Ten Commandments are not based upon...

- the prejudices and morality of men
- the worldly desires of people
- the latest popularity polls
- the purposes of government

The basis of the Ten Commandments has been set in stone, in the Rock of Ages, in the One who is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last. The basis of the Ten Commandments is God Himself. Therefore, the Ten Commandments work. They work because God knows man knows exactly what man needs to live a fulfilled and orderly life. The Ten Commandments are based upon God Himself, upon His person and work, upon His knowledge of what man needs, upon His understanding and wisdom. This is now the great focus of our study: the Ten Commandments. Note that the commandments fall into two very natural studies:

Part 1: Man's duty to God (vv. 7-15, commandments one to four).

Part 2: Man's duty to others (vv. 16-21, commandments five to ten).

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The present study covers the first four commandments: *The Ten Commandments (Part I): The Laws Governing Man's Duty to God*, Deuteronomy 5:7-15.

- I. Commandment 1 concerns God's being: have no other gods whatsoever (v. 7).
- II. Commandment 2 concerns God's worship: do not make, worship or serve any idol whatsoever (vv. 8-10).
- III. Commandment 3 concerns God's name: never misuse the LORD's name (v. 11).
- IV. Commandment 4 concerns God's day: observe and keep the Sabbath day holy (vv. 12-15).

**I. *Deuteronomy 5:07 Commandment One Concerns God's Being:  
"You are to have no other gods before me."***

What is forbidden by this commandment? How is this commandment broken, violated?

God is declaring that He alone is the *Supreme Being*, the absolute authority of the universe. There is no other supreme being, no other god who created and who rules and reigns over the universe. He alone is the LORD, the only living and true God, the only living and true Creator. Note that God makes three stringent demands, three clear requirements in this commandment.

- 1. Man is to have no other gods, none whatsoever (v. 7).
  - a. Man is not to set himself up as a god. Man is not to believe that he himself nor any other being or energy in the universe is the ultimate source of the universe.
    - => Man is not to deny God, declaring there is no God (atheism).
    - => Man is not to question God, saying God may exist but He also may not exist (agnosticism).
    - => Man is not to declare that man himself is the supreme being, the ultimate authority of his world (humanism).
    - => Man is not to look to science and technology as the ultimate power in life (secularism).
    - => Man is not to hold that his own knowledge and reasoning ability are the ultimate control of the universe.
    - => Man is not to believe that the spirit of man (the combined spirit of all men) is the ultimate energy of the universe.
    - => Man is not to proclaim some impersonal mass, energy or gas in the universe as the *force* behind all things.
  - b. Man is not to believe that other beings, animals or material things are God. Man is not to look in the sky above nor in the earth below nor in the sea and its depths and declare that something therein is God.
    - => Man is not to look at the sky and declare the heavenly bodies and beings to be the supreme force of the universe: not the sun, moon, stars, angels, principalities, powers nor any other creature of any world or any dimension of being.

- => Man is not to look at the earth nor at some material substance of the earth and declare it to be God.
- => Man is not to look upon animals as some god, no matter what the animal is.
- => Man is not to consider the physical mass nor energy nor gases that comprise the basic substance of things as a god: not the atoms, protons, neutrons nor whatever the most minute building-block of existence may be.
- c. Man is not to believe in many gods (polytheism). There is only one living and true God, only one true Creator, only one LORD and Majesty of the universe (monotheism). Therefore, man is to have no other gods whatsoever. All other so-called gods are nothing more than...
- things created by the imaginations and thoughts of people
  - things called gods by people
  - things that are lifeless and powerless
  - things that are only images made out of metal, wood, stone, chemicals or dirt
2. God also makes a second demand of man: "You shall have no other gods *before me*" (v. 7). The words *before me* (alpamaya) mean literally *before my face, against my face, in hostility toward me, in my presence, in my sight*. It means that man...
- is to set no god *before* the LORD God
  - is to set no god *beside* the LORD God
  - is to set no god *in the presence* of the LORD God
  - is to set no god *in the face* of the LORD God

The great nineteenth century commentator George Bush makes several excellent statements that tell us exactly what the first commandment means:

=> *[Creating idols] may be done mentally as well as manually. There may be idolatry without idols.*

=> *[This commandment] forbids the making of any other objects [as gods] whether persons or things, real or imaginary.*

=> *[Our] supreme regard, reverence, esteem, affection and obedience [is due] God alone.*

=> *God is the fountain of happiness, and no intelligent being can be happy but through him...[consequently] whoever seeks for supreme happiness in the creature instead of the Creator is guilty of a violation of this command. (George Bush. Exodus. (Minneapolis, MN: Klock & Klock Christian Publishers. Inc. 1981), p. 260).*

If we set up anything that is a rival interest in our hearts and minds, anything that absorbs the love and service which belong only to the true God, then that thing becomes another god. Whatever the heart clings to, that becomes our god. Consequently...

- the proud man who idolizes himself makes himself a god.
  - the ambitious man who pays homage to popular applause makes his ambition and the praise of men his god.
  - the covetous person who craves money and things makes a god out of money and things.
  - the greedy person who hoards possessions makes possessions his god.
  - the immoral person who craves sex makes sex his god.
  - the glutton who craves food makes eating his god.
  - the doting lover — whether husband, wife, mother or father — who sets his supreme affection on the person loved instead of upon God makes that person his god.
3. God also makes a third demand of us: man is to know and acknowledge the only true and living God — the LORD God Himself.

a. God declares that people who think there is no God (atheists) are wrong. I AM the LORD God, the true and living God. *Atheists* may deny God, and *agnostics* may question if God really exists, but God is forceful in His declaration.

=> "I AM — I AM the LORD Your God" (Exo 20:2).

*Psa 14:1* *The fool says in his heart, "There is no God."*

b. No other object and no other being are ever to be set up as so-called "gods." Taking ideas or objects and beings and calling them God is forbidden, absolutely forbidden.

=> The LORD Himself (Jehovah, Yahweh) emphatically declares:

*Isa 42:8* *"I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not yield my glory to another or my praise to idols."*

=> The great apostle Paul declared:

*1 Cor 8:5* *For even if there are [many] so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth, (as indeed there are many gods and many Lords), Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live.*

We make a god out of anything that we esteem or love, fear or serve more than God. Again, whatever the heart clings to, that is a person's god. It may be oneself. Frankly, many people focus upon pleasing and satisfying themselves. They live by their own values and are concerned primarily with their own feelings, comfort, desires and pleasures. They simply live like they want and do their own thing. They have exalted themselves to be their own god. Other people make gods out of...

- |                   |            |               |              |          |
|-------------------|------------|---------------|--------------|----------|
| • heavenly bodies | • images   | • recognition | • family     | • sex    |
| • force, energy   | • science  | • money       | • fame       | • sports |
| • cars, trucks    | • property | • career      | • food       | • power  |
| • animals         | • position | • pleasure    | • recreation |          |

A god can be anything or any person. Man's first allegiance, first loyalty, first devotion is to be to the LORD God. The LORD God is to be first in a man's life; He is to be enthroned in the heart of man. Man is to know and acknowledge that there is one God and one God alone. The first commandment of the LORD is to be obeyed:

*"You shall have no other gods before me." (v. 7)*

**Thought 1.** Note several points.

(1) The so-called gods of heaven and earth are nothing more than the creation of man's imagination and hands.

*Psa 115:4-8 But their idols are silver and gold, made by human hands. They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes, but cannot see. They have ears, but cannot hear, noses, but cannot smell. They have hands, but cannot feel, feet, but cannot walk, nor can they utter a sound with their throats. Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them.*

*Isa 40:18 With whom, then, will you compare God? To what image will you liken him? As for an idol, a metalworker casts it, and a goldsmith overlays it with gold and fashions silver chains for it. A person too poor to present such an offering selects wood that will not rot; they look for a skilled worker to set up an idol that will not topple.*

*Isa 45:20 Gather together and come; assemble you fugitives from the nations. Ignorant are those who carry about idols of wood, who pray to gods that cannot save.*

*Jer 10:2-5 This is what the LORD says: "Do not learn the ways of the nations or be terrified by signs in the heavens, though the nations are terrified by them. For the practices of the peoples are worthless; they cut a tree out of the forest, and a craftsman shapes it with his chisel. They adorn it with silver and gold; they fasten it with hammer and nails so it will not totter. Like a scarecrow in a cucumber field, their idols cannot speak; they must be carried because they cannot walk. Do not fear them; they can do no harm nor can they do any good."*

*Rom 1:22-23 Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.*

*1 Cor 12:2 You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols.*

(2) There is only one true and living God, the LORD Himself (Jehovah, Yahweh).

*Deut 4:35 You were shown these things so that you might know that the LORD is God; besides him there is no other.*

*Deut 6:4-5 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.*

*2 Sam 7:22 "How great you are, Sovereign LORD! There is no one like you, and there is no God but you, as we have heard with our own ears."*

**1 Chr 17:20** *There is no one like you, LORD, and there is no God but you, as we have heard with our own ears.*

**Psa 83:18** *Let them know that you, whose name is the LORD — that you alone are the Most High over all the earth.*

**Psa 86:10** *For you are great and do marvellous deeds; you alone are God.*

**Isa 43:10-11** *“You are my witnesses,” declares the LORD, “and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me.” “I, even I, am the LORD, and apart from me there is no saviour.*

**Isa 44:6** *“This is what the LORD says — Israel’s King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God.*

**Isa 45:18** *For this is what the LORD says — he who created the heavens, he is God; he who fashioned and made the earth, he founded it; he did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited — he says: “I am the LORD, and there is no other.”*

**Isa 45:22** *“Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other.”*

**Mark 12:32** *“Well said, teacher,” the man replied. “You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him.”*

**Mark 12:29** *“The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.’”*

**1 Cor 8:4-6** *So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world and that there is no God but one. For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth, (as indeed there are many gods and many lords), Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one LORD, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.*

**Eph 4:6** *One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*

**1 Tim 2:5** *For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*

(3) There is only one sovereign Creator who meets the needs of man.

**Gen 1:1** *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*

**Neh 9:6** *You alone are the LORD. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you.*

**Job 26:7** *He spreads out the northern skies over empty space; he suspends the earth over nothing.*

**Psa 33:6** *By the word of the LORD were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth.*

**Psa 102:25** *In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands.*

**Acts 17:23-31** *For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: To an Unknown God. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you. "The God who made the world and everything in it is the LORD of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.' "Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone — an image made by man's design and skill. In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead."*

**Heb 11:3** *By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.*

**Thought 2.** The very first commandment says, "You shall have no other gods *before me*" (v. 7). Note the words *before me*. This suggests at least two facts:

- (1) If we set some so-called god *before God*, He knows it. We cannot hide the fact from Him.
- (2) If we set a god *before Him*, His anger is aroused.

**Psa 44:20-21** *If we had forgotten the name of our God or spread out our hands to a foreign god, would not God have discovered it, since he knows the secrets of the heart?*

**Isa 42:8** *"I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not yield my glory to another or my praise to idols."*

**Rom 1:18** *The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness.*

## II. **Deuteronomy 05:08–10** *Commandment Two Concerns the Worship of God*

Commandment two concerns the worship of God: "You shall not make any idol nor worship or serve any false god — none whatsoever."

1. How is this commandment broken? How is it violated? Scripture says that this commandment forbids at least three things. First, this commandment prohibits the *making* of any idol whatsoever; therefore, the commandment is broken and violated by making idols (v. 8).

a. To make an image of anything for worship is wrong. Note the verse: We must not build an image of anything for worship, not an image of anything in the sky above nor that is in the earth beneath nor that is in the water upon the earth. Nothing in the universe is ever to have an image made of it, not for worship.

Note that the entire universe is covered; even the unseen world of heaven is covered. No idol of anything is ever to be made for worship...

- not heavenly creatures: angels, demons, devils or imaginary gods
- not heavenly bodies such as the sun, moon or stars
- not earthly creatures such as cows, elephants or man
- not water creatures such as fish, crocodiles or sea animals

The making of any idol whatsoever is forbidden — absolutely forbidden. God emphatically declares, “You shall never make an idol of anything, not ever — not of anything.”

b. This commandment also forbids the making of an image of God Himself, for He is a spiritual being (v. 8). Note that “no image or form or likeness of anything in heaven is to be made” (v. 8). God is in heaven, in the spiritual world or dimension of being; therefore, no image is to be made of God.

c. A question needs to be asked at this point: What about images such as pictures, crucifixes, statues and other symbols that are used to stir our memories to pray and worship? Is this commandment speaking against such images? There is a tendency within human nature to focus upon that which is seen instead of upon the unseen, a tendency to fix our attention upon the seen object (the picture, the crucifix, etc.) instead of upon God. Reason and *honesty* — especially honesty — demand that we acknowledge this fact. Consequently, if we use visible objects to arouse us to pray and worship, there is great danger...

- that a pure and spiritual worship of God will fade, deteriorate and be degraded.
- that the physical object will become more valued and receive more of our attention than God. Why? Because God is spiritual and unseen, and the physical object is seen.

William Barclay has an excellent statement on idolatry. Note carefully what he says:

*[Idolatry] began because men found it difficult to worship a god they could not see. So they said to themselves, “We will make something which will represent the god and that will make it easier to think of the god.” In the first instance the idol was never meant to be the god; it was meant only to stand for the god.*

*We can perhaps understand it, if we think of it this way. Suppose we have a friend whom we have not seen for a very long time, and suppose we sit down to write a letter to that friend, and suppose we find the letter hard to write, because we have been separated for so long. In such a situation it might well help if we took a photograph of the friend and put it where we could see it, and wrote, as it were, looking at the photograph. The photograph would bring our friend nearer to our mind. At first that is what an idol was meant to do.*

*The trouble was that men began to worship the idol instead of the god it stood for: men began to worship the symbol instead of the reality it was supposed to represent. It is not really difficult to see how idolatry began, and it is not really so silly as it looks. For all that, we may well be saying, "I am not likely to do a thing like that." But perhaps we are more likely to do it than we think.*

*Take a very small thing first of all. Quite a lot of people carry some kind of lucky mascot, some kind of charm. Some carry a lucky penny or a lucky sign of the zodiac or, for instance, if they go on a journey, they take a St. Christopher sign to avoid accidents. That is really idolatry, for it is believing that in some way the carrying of a little bit of metal or plastic can have an effect on their lives.*

*But there is something much more serious than that. The real essence of idolatry is that a man worships a thing instead of God.*

*There is no doubt at all that there is a great deal of that today. People assess their success in life by the number of things which they possess....*

*This is obviously wrong. (William Barclay. *The Old Law and the New Law*. (Edinburgh, Scotland: The Saint Andrew Press, 1972), pp. 11-13).*

**Thought 1.** There is only one true image of God, only one image that is acceptable to God.

(1) Jesus Christ is the visible image of the invisible God.

*Col 1:1-15* For he [God] has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves. In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born over all creation.

(2) Jesus Christ is the express image, the exact representation, of God's person.

*Heb 1:1-3* In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, But in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

(3) Jesus Christ is the very form, the very nature, of God.

**Phil 2:6** *Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage.*

(4) Jesus Christ is the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

**Col 2:9-10** *For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form. And you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.*

(5) Jesus Christ is the image to whom we are to be conformed.

**Rom 8:29** *For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brothers.*

(6) Jesus Christ is the image to which we shall be gloriously and eternally made (transformed).

**1 John 3:2** *Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.*

(7) Jesus Christ is the very nature and revelation of God Himself.

**John 14:7-10** *“If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.” Philip said, “LORD, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.” Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.”*

Second, this commandment prohibits the *worship* of any false god whatsoever, prohibits the worship of anything other than God Himself (v. 9).

- 1) This strikes a death blow against one of the most common ideas and claims of people: that all religions worship the same god, that no matter what we may call god and no matter what religion we follow, we all worship the same *supreme being*.

Remember the first commandment: there are no other gods; there is only one true and living God (v. 9). Therefore, if we create a god within our own minds — if we worship something else, some other so-called god, if we treat something else as a god — we misrepresent the truth. No matter how large our religion may become, even if billions of people followed, our worship would be a lie. It would be wrong; it would be sinful behaviour. Our idea of God would be inaccurate, incomplete and false. And false worship is a gross insult to the *only* living and true God, to the *only* Sovereign LORD and Majesty of the universe.

- => It is wrong to worship things in the sky such as the sun, moon and stars; wrong to trust and use the zodiac and other so-called *fortune-tellers* to guide one's life.
- => It is wrong to worship things in the earth such as man, cows, elephants and other animals.

**Rom 1:20-25** *For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator — who is forever praised. Amen.*

**1 John 5:21** *Dear children, keep yourselves from idols.*

**Lev 26:1** *Do not make idols or set up an image or a sacred stone for yourselves, and do not place a carved stone in your land to bow down before it. I am the LORD your God.*

**Deut 4:15-19** *You saw no form of any kind the day the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the fire. Therefore watch yourselves very carefully, so that you do not become corrupt and make for yourselves an idol, an image of any shape, whether formed like a man or a woman, or like any animal on earth or any bird that flies in the air, or like any creature that moves along the ground or any fish in the waters below. And when you look up to the sky and see the sun, the moon and the stars — all the heavenly array — do not be enticed into bowing down to them and worshipping things the LORD your God has apportioned to all the nations under heaven.*

**Deut 11:16** *Be careful, or you will be enticed to turn away and worship other gods and bow down to them.*

Third, this commandment prohibits *covetousness*, prohibits craving after and seeking anything more than one craves after and seeks God (v. 9, see Col 3:5). Scripture emphatically declares...

- “Covetousness...is idolatry” (Col 3:5).

Covetousness is craving and desiring something so much that a person makes it the primary thing in his life. The object becomes the first thing in a person's life, the major craving, the longing desire of the person's heart and life. A person can covet and make an idol out of anything:

=> sex            => girlfriend       => money       => position       => ritual  
=> drugs        => boyfriend       => fame        => business       => ceremony  
=> alcohol      => recreation      => power       => job            => pornography  
=> family       => sports           => country

A person's god or idol is that which he puts first in his life, that which he desires and craves the most, that to which he gives his life: his primary thoughts, energy, time and money. Note what God said about man during the last days of human history:

- => they would be lovers of self (2 Tim 3:2)
- => they would be lovers of pleasure (2 Tim 3:4)
- => their god would be their stomachs (Phil 3:19)

**Phil 3:18-19** *For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things.*

**2 Tim 3:1-5** *But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy; without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God — having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.*

**Thought 1.** Maxie Dunnam has a practical comment on this commandment that is well worth quoting at length:

*God is unseen, a Spirit and Power invisible to our eyes. So, we need settings, symbols, places of worship to be vivid reminders of God. The problem comes when the symbol, the reminder, becomes a substitute, when it becomes an idol and takes the place of God.*

*There's a dramatic story of this in Numbers 21. In their wandering through the wilderness, the people of Israel were attacked and tortured by fiery serpents. Moses, on the instruction of God, made a bronze serpent and set it up on a pole. Those who had been bitten looked at the bronze serpent and were healed. Not much is made of that story as it is found in Numbers 21:6-9, but centuries later we find that bronze serpent making another brief appearance. This time, we find King Hezekiah breaking the serpent in pieces, because the people had been burning incense to it (2 Kings 18:4). What had happened? What Moses had used as a reminder of God's power prevailing over the poison of the serpents, bit by bit, had become a god itself.*

*The core lesson is this: whenever anyone or anything usurps the place that God should have in our lives, we are guilty of idolatry.*

*For most of us, money can easily become an idol. We allow money — how we get it and how we use it — to edge God out of the number one place in our lives.*

*I've seen love in marriage distorted to the point that it usurps God's place in our lives. I've certainly seen love of country distorted to the point that it blinds people to God's call to justice and righteousness.*

*The making of idols usually means making the means an end. This happens all the time in the church. I know some people who do that with the Bible. The Bible itself becomes an idol. Listen carefully to people who passionately crusade, in their words, to "save the*

*Bible.” Look at their lives. We can angrily wage a war to protect the inerrancy of the Bible, and appear to be righteous in the cause, and still lose our souls. That’s the problem Jesus was addressing when He said, “Not everyone who says to Me, LORD, LORD, will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but those who do the will of My heavenly Father.”*

*In all sorts of ways, we have committed the sin of idolatry by making the means an end. Even in our worship, we turn the liturgy, our means of worshipping God, into an end itself so that the means and methods of worship become more important than the worship itself. We need to even look at...our spiritual disciplines. Spiritual discipline is for the purpose of facilitating our relationship to God. We pray and worship and study Scripture, sometimes we fast, to be open to God, to cultivate Christ’s presence. But to make these disciplines ends in themselves, to make them the measurement of how holy we are, is making discipline a fetish. Not only are we in danger of turning others off when we zealously exaggerate these disciplines, they become idols. (Maxie Dunnam. *The Preacher’s Commentary on Exodus*. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1987, 2003), pp. 255-256).*

**Thought 2.** J. Vernon McGee also has an excellent application on this commandment.

*Some people may feel that this passage does not apply to us today. Colossians 3:5 tells us that “...covetousness...is idolatry.” Anything that you give yourself to, especially in abandonment, becomes your “god.” Many people do not worship Bacchus, the cloven-footed Greek and Roman god of wine and revelry of long ago, but they worship the bottle just the same. There are millions of alcoholics in our country right now. The liquor interests like to tell us about how much of the tax burden they carry, when actually they do not pay a fraction of the bill for the casualties they cause by their product. A lot of propaganda is being fed to this generation and large groups of people are being brainwashed. Whether or not folk recognize it, they worship the god Bacchus.*

*Other people worship Aphrodite, that is, the goddess of sex. Some people worship money. Anything to which you give your time, heart and soul, becomes your god. God says that we are not to have any gods before Him. (Vernon McGee. *Thru The Bible*. Vol. 1. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1951), p. 267).*

**Psa 115:2-8** *Why do the nations say, “Where is their God?” Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him. But their idols are silver and gold, made by human hands. They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes, but cannot see. They have ears, but cannot hear, noses, but cannot smell. They have hands, but cannot feel, feet, but cannot walk, nor can they utter a sound with their throats. Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them.*

**Jer 10:5** *Like a scarecrow in a cucumber field, their idols cannot speak; they must be carried because they cannot walk. Do not fear them; they can do no harm nor can they do any good.*

2. Why did God give this commandment? God gave this commandment for at least three reasons. (See *The Ten Commandments*, Exo 20:4-6.)
- a. First, God prohibits the worship of idols because He is a jealous God. The Hebrew word for *jealous* means to be red in the face. God loves and cares for man. God does not want people living in error and following false gods that can do absolutely nothing to help them throughout life. Therefore, God is jealous — hot in the face — against anything that turns people away from the truth and from God Himself.

Note this fact: Scripture declares that idolatry is *spiritual adultery*; therefore, the displeasure of God against idolatry is rightly called jealousy. (Mathew Henry. *Mathew Henry's Commentary*, Vol. 1. p. 359). Jealousy means that God has a sensitive nature, a nature of love. God is jealous of anything or anyone who threatens to take away the honour, recognition or reverence that is due Him. Therefore, if a person gives his primary devotion, his primary attention, honour, time, energy, effort or money to anything other than God Himself, he commits spiritual adultery against God. He turns away from God to something else. The result: God becomes jealous, red-hot against any person who is unfaithful to Him. Man must never forget: God does not tolerate unfaithfulness; He will never allow a rival to replace Him. Note what Scripture says:

⇒ God's jealousy will not allow His glory and honour ever to be transferred to another.

**Isa 42:8** *"I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not yield my glory to another or my praise to idols."*

**Isa 48:11** *For my own sake, for my own sake, I do this. How can I let myself be defamed? I will not yield my glory to another.*

⇒ God declares that His very name is Jealous; therefore, He absolutely will not tolerate the worship of any other god.

**Exo 34:13-14** *Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones and cut down their Asherah poles. Do not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.*

⇒ God's jealousy arouses His anger against those who deny and hate Him.

**Deut 6:15** *for the LORD your God, who is among you, is a jealous God and his anger will burn against you, and he will destroy you from the face of the land.*

⇒ God's jealousy will judge all those who oppose Him.

**Deut 29:20** *The LORD will never be willing to forgive them; his wrath and zeal will burn against them. All the curses written in this book will fall on them, and the LORD will blot out their names from under heaven.*

(see 1 Kng14:22; Psa 79:5; Isa 42:13; Isa 59:17; Eze 5:13; 16:38; 23:25; 36:5).

**Nahum 1:2** *The LORD is a jealous and avenging God: the LORD takes vengeance and is filled with wrath. The LORD takes vengeance on his foes and maintains his wrath against his enemies.*

**Zep 1:18** *Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to save them on the day of the LORD's wrath." In the fire of his jealousy the whole earth will be consumed, for he will make a sudden end of all who live on the earth. (see Zep 3:8)*

**Rev 21:7-8** *Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children. But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars — their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death.*

=> God's jealousy, His zeal, will vindicate His true people, His true followers.

**2 Kng 19:31** *For out of Jerusalem will come a remnant, and out of Mount Zion a band of survivors. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.*

**Isa 9:7** *Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this. (see Isa 26:11)*

**Eze 39:25** *Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: "I will now restore the fortunes of Jacob and will have compassion on all the people of Israel, and I will be zealous for my holy name."*

**Joel 2:18** *Then the LORD was jealous for his land and took pity on his people.*

**Zec 2:8** *For this is what the LORD Almighty says, "After the Glorious One has sent me against the nations that have plundered you — for whoever touches you touches the apple of his eye."*

=> God's jealousy demands total allegiance, loyalty and devotion.

**Exo 34:14** *Do not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.*

**Jos 24:19** *Joshua said to the people, "You are not able to serve the LORD. He is a holy God; he is a jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins."*

- b. Second, God prohibits the worship of idols because the influence of idolatry is passed down from the parents to their children. If a person's worship is false, he leads his children and grandchildren into false worship. What he does greatly influences and affects his family.

We must never forget this one fact: the human race is a living organism. What one person does affects other persons. This is clearly seen in acts of love, care, benevolence, war, lawlessness, drunkenness, drugs, immorality — in all the acts of behaviour. The closer a person is to others, the more the person's actions affect them.

People influence people, and the point of this verse is that parents influence children, greatly influence them. A mother who is a drug addict is likely to lead her children to use drugs. A father who loves and puts sports before God leads his children to love and put things before God.

Note that Scripture uses the word *hate* (v. 9). If parents deny and *hate* God and worship idols, the children will be greatly influenced to deny and hate God and worship idols. Consequently, God's judgment falls upon the children for generations. The result and consequences of idolatry are terrible. The worship of idols, just like all other behaviour, influences the children of a family. Children are conditioned, heavily influenced by the behaviour of their parents and their surroundings. Therefore, if a parent worships idols, most likely the children will worship idols. And all idolaters shall be judged by God. Therefore, the sin of idolatry and the judgment upon idolatry are passed down from generation to generation. Terrible consequences! All due to the *sins of the fathers and mothers*, especially the evil sin of idolatry.

This is what is known as the *judicial judgment of God*, a judgment that is justly deserved. (See *Unbelief*, John 12:39-41; note, Rom 1:24.) If a parent sows the seed of idolatry, he is usually going to bear children who will be greatly influenced by his behaviour. The children will deny and hate God and worship the idols of man. But note: this does not mean that God holds a child guilty for the sins of his parents. God is not talking about the guilt of sin. He is talking about the results, the consequences of sin. Every person shall bear the judgment and punishment for his own sin. No person will ever be judged and punished for the sins of others.

**Deut 24:16** *Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor children put to death for their fathers; each is to die for his own sin.*

**Thought 1.** God punishes sin, the sins of all people for all generations. God executes justice upon the sins of the fathers and the sins of the children. No generation of sin ever escapes the judgment of God.

**Acts 17:30-31** *In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.*

**2 Th 1:7-9** *And give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power.*

**Jude 1:14-15** *Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone,*

*and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”*

**Isa 65:6-7** *“See, it stands written before me: I will not keep silent but will pay back in full; I will pay it back into their laps — both your sins and the sins of your ancestors,” says the LORD. “Because they burned sacrifices on the mountains and defied me on the hills, I will measure into their laps the full payment for their former deeds.”*

**Jer 16:11-13** *Then say to them, ‘It is because your ancestors forsook me,’ declares the LORD, ‘and followed other gods and served and worshipped them. They forsook me and did not keep my law. But you have behaved more wickedly than your ancestors. See how all of you are following the stubbornness of your evil hearts instead of obeying me. So I will throw you out of this land into a land neither you nor your ancestors have known, and there you will serve other gods day and night, for I will show you no favour.’*

**Jer 17:10** *“I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve.”*

**Ezek 18:4** *For every living soul belongs to me, the father as well as the son — both alike belong to me. The soul who sins is the one who will die.*

- c. Third, God prohibits the worship of idols because the influence of a loving and obedient parent lasts forever, for a thousand generations. Note that the sin and punishment of idolatry is passed down for three or four generations, but the love and obedience of parents is passed down to their children for *thousands of generations*. This is what is known as Hebrew parallelism: it does not mean thousands of people, but thousands of generations. Note exactly what the verse says: God's mercy is shown to thousands of those who love and obey Him, shown for thousands of generations. Parents who love God and keep God's commandments...
- will influence their children for thousands of generations
  - will have the mercy of God showered upon thousands of their children for thousands of generations

This shows the awesome influence of parents upon their children and the absolute necessity for loving and obeying God. Judgment will fall upon those who disobey this commandment — fall upon both the parents and their children for three or four generations. But God's mercy will be showered upon those who obey this commandment, be showered upon thousands of children for thousands of generations.

However, note a most significant fact: God's mercy is showered only upon the obedient, only upon those who love God and keep His commandments, the very commandments He is spelling out in this passage.

**2 Chr 17:3** *The LORD was with Jehoshaphat because in his early years he walked in the ways his father David had followed. He did not consult the Baals.*

*2 Chr 26:4 He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father Amaziah had done.*

*Prov 22:6 Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.*

*2 Tim 1:5 I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.*

### **III. Deuteronomy 05:11 Commandment Three Concerns God's Name: "Never Misuse the LORD's Name."**

What is forbidden by this commandment: "You shall never misuse, never take the name of the LORD God in vain"?

1. How is this Scripture broken or violated? The Hebrew word *vain* or *misuse* (lassaw) means empty, meaningless, thoughtless, senseless, frivolous, worthless, groundless. It means using God's name in a thoughtless and insincere way. The root of the word (shawu) has the idea of a vapour that fades and vanishes away, a vapour that is meaningless and worthless. (William Wilson. *Wilson's Old Testament Word Studies*. (McLean, VA: MacDonald Publishing Company, n.d.), p. 465). It also has the idea of a tempest, a storm, a tornado that is erratic, that jumps here and there, that causes destruction and devastation, that is totally senseless and destructive. (James Strong. *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. #7723).
2. Why did God give this commandment? Why does God forbid vulgarity? Why must we never misuse God's name, never swear, curse, nor damn anything upon earth, never damn anything in creation? Two reasons are given within the commandment itself.
  - a. First, you must not use vulgarity or misuse God's name for a very clear reason: because the LORD is *your* God (vv. 11). If you have accepted Christ as your Saviour, then the LORD has saved you from Egypt, from the enslavements and bondages of this earth. He has saved you from sin, shame and death. He has saved you from the bondages of the flesh, from...
    - adultery and immorality
    - drunkenness and carousing
    - false worship and idolatry
    - hatred and strife
    - jealousy and envy
    - wild living and sensuality
    - cursing and lying
    - sorcery and witchcraft
    - anger and division
    - selfish ambition and greed

And on and on. God has saved you from all this to a life of love, joy and peace. Moreover, He has saved you from death and the judgment to come. He has saved you from hell itself. You are going to live forever, eternally with Him. The LORD is now your God. How could you ever misuse His name?

Now note: if you have never accepted Christ, then all the above can be yours. God will save you from the enslavements and bondages of this earth and give you life eternal. The point is this: the drive and energy of your heart must be not to misuse the name of the LORD God, the Saviour of the world. The drive and energy of your life must be to stand in awe of His name: to praise, worship, serve and bear testimony to His name.

***Psa 100:4*** Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.

***Isa 8:13*** The LORD Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy, he is the one you are to fear, he is the one you are to dread.

***Isa 57:15*** For this is what the high and lofty One says — he who lives forever, whose name is holy: “I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.”

***Phil 2:8-11*** And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death — even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is LORD, to the glory of God the Father.

***Heb 13:15*** Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise the fruit of lips that confess his name.

***1 Pet 2:9*** But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

- b. Second, you must not use vulgarity, must not misuse God's name for a terrifying reason: because the LORD holds you accountable if you misuse His name. The word *guiltless* (waqah) means that God will not count us clear or free from blame. He will not count us clean or pure, innocent or guiltless. God will not acquit us, not let us go unpunished.

A man may curse God or swear falsely to his wife or neighbour or even to some jury, and he may not be corrected or punished. But God knows that the man cursed His name or lied, and Scripture is clear: God will punish him. God will avenge the person who insulted His great and glorious name. In fact, note what Scripture says: the person who curses and misuses God's name stands as an *enemy of God*.

***Psa 139:20*** Your adversaries misuse your name.

- => The person who uses profanity openly declares that he is the sworn enemy of the high and holy God. This person is condemned; God will avenge His name and judge the *curser*.

- => The person who swears falsely deliberately declares that he is the sworn enemy of the true and righteous God. The person is condemned; God will avenge His name and judge the *false swearer*.
- => The person who uses God's name in an irreverent way, who is careless and thoughtless in the use of God's name, will not be guiltless. He will be condemned. God will avenge His name and judge the *irreverent person*.
- => The person who uses God's name hypocritically stands as the sworn enemy of God. The hypocrite is condemned. God will avenge His name and severely judge the *hypocrite*.
- => The person who misuses God's name — the bold sinner — must appear before God and give an account for his cursing and lying and for his irreverent use of God's holy name. If a person curses God, he curses the name of the high and lofty One, the name of the LORD God Himself, the only living and true God, the only holy name that could have saved him from death and judgment to come. God will avenge His name and judge the *bold sinner*.

*Psa 109:17 He loved to pronounce a curse — may it come on him; he found no pleasure in blessing — may it be far from him.*

*Mal 3:5 “So I will come near to you for judgment. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud labourers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive aliens of justice, but do not fear me,” says the LORD Almighty.*

*2 Th 1:7-8 And give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.*

*Heb 9:27 Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.*

*2 Pet 3:7 By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.*

*Jude 1:14-15 Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: “See, the LORD is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”*

*Rev 21:8 But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars — their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death.*

#### **IV. Deuteronomy 05:12–15 Commandment Four Concerns God's Day: “Observe and Keep the Sabbath Day Holy.”**

What is the charge of the fourth commandment? “Observe and keep the Sabbath day holy.” Several preliminary facts need to be noted.

First, the word *keep* or *observe* (shamar or samar) means to hedge about; to guard, protect, keep, observe, preserve, obey, watch over, maintain, keep secure, defend. It has the idea of building a guard to protect the Sabbath. The command is imperative, a strong, strong imperative: "You must observe and keep the Sabbath; guard and protect the Sabbath. You must obey the Sabbath day and keep it holy."

Second, the Hebrew word "Sabbath does not mean the seventh day (Saturday) as so many people think. The word *Sabbath* (shabbath) means to rest, to repose, to cease. It means to cease from work, to rest from work.

This is significant, for God is charging us to keep the Sabbath, the day of rest and worship. He is not specifying a particular day of the week when man is to worship and rest. God simply says, work six days and then rest on the seventh day. This fact is important for industrialized and technological societies. Why? Because so many people have to work on Saturday or on Sunday, on the day set aside by their religion as the day of worship and rest. In many cases, factories cannot shut down their huge furnaces, boilers and machines without damaging them mechanically. They have to be operated continually; therefore, thousands upon thousands of people have to work on Saturday and Sunday. The same is true with many service industries and other businesses.

**Thought 1.** When businesses have to operate seven days a week, what are the employees of these businesses to do about worship and rest? Two very practical things must be done throughout the remaining generations of history:

- => The church must provide other services through the week for worship and rest, provide them for people who have to work on Saturday or Sunday.
- => People who work on the regular day of worship and rest must still worship God and rest at the alternate services and days scheduled by the church.

**Heb 10:25** *25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

**Mark 1:21** *They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach.*

**Luke 4:16** *He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read.*

**Acts 13:14** *From Perga they [Paul and his companions] went on to Pisidian Antioch. On the Sabbath they entered the synagogue and sat down.*

When the law was given by Moses, the Jews set aside the seventh day, Saturday, as their day of worship and rest. Today, others follow their practice. But the largest body of Christian believers have switched their day of worship and rest from the last day of the week to the first day of the week, from Saturday to Sunday. Why?

=> Because Jesus Christ burst loose from the bonds of death on the first day of the week. Believers wish to celebrate His glorious resurrection and the great hope of their salvation on the very day He arose.

=> Because the first day of the week is called "the LORD's day" (Rev 1:10). Believers wish to worship on the LORD's day.

=> Because the early followers of Christ switched their day of worship and rest to the first day of the week. The tradition has continued down through the centuries.

*Acts 20:7* On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until mid-night.

*1 Chr 16:2* On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.

Third, the Sabbath, the day of rest and worship, is to be kept "holy" (see *Holy*, Deut 5:12-15).

1. This commandment includes three clear instructions. God issues three demands, three *you shalls* concerning the Sabbath commandment:

=> (You *shall*) observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy (v. 12).

=> Six days you *shall* labour and do all your work (v. 13).

=> The seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you *shall* not do any work (v. 14).

a. You shall work six days but *only* six days a week (v. 13). This commandment declares that man is to work, to work diligently. From the very beginning of creation, God commanded man to work.

=> God told Adam (man) to dress and keep the Garden of Eden, to develop and maintain it.

*Gen 2:15* The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

=> Scripture clearly says that a man must work if he is to eat and meet his needs.

*2 Thes 3:10-12* For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat." We hear that some among you are idle and disruptive. They are not busy; they are busybodies. Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the food they eat.

=> Scripture also says that a person should look after his own affairs and work with his own hands.

*1 Th 4:11-12* Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you.

What about people who have enough money, so much that they do not have to work? They have worked hard and earned huge amounts of money or have inherited large

estates or won a large sum. Does this commandment apply to them? Yes. No person is ever to sit idle nor live an extravagant lifestyle, wasting and hoarding wealth. Scripture warns us: we are responsible to meet the needs of the world. Every person is to work as long as he lives, helping to conquer the evils of this earth — all the ravaging and destructive forces that bring suffering and destruction to man:

- hunger
- loneliness
- thirst
- emptiness
- disease
- death, both physical and spiritual

**Mat 19:21-24** *Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth. Then Jesus said to his disciples, "I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."*

**Luke 12 16-21** *And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.' Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry." But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God."*

What about the people who are lazy and slothful, people who do not give an honest day's work or else shun work altogether? Again, Scripture warns the lazy and slothful.

**Prov 6:10-11** *A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest — and poverty will come on you like a thief and scarcity like an armed man.*

**Prov 23:21** *For drunkards and gluttons become poor, and drowsiness clothes them in rags.*

**Prov 28:19** *Those who work their land will have abundant food, but those who chase fantasies will have their fill of poverty.*

Man is to work six days a week. God created man with a nature that must work. There is within man a restlessness, a drive, an energy to be active, to work and achieve and conquer. Man never experiences complete fulfilment and satisfaction unless he works and senses that he achieves something worthwhile. If man does not direct his energy into profitable work, then he directs it to worthless or even destructive activities: to lawlessness, gangs, mobs, war, sex, alcohol, drugs, over-eating — all to the damage of others or himself. It is this — a lack of work and a lack of sensing fulfilment and satisfaction — that causes so much lawlessness and problems for society.

But note this fact: man is to work six days a week, but *only* six days a week.

- b. You shall set apart the Sabbath day to the LORD: you are to worship on the Sabbath day (v. 12). It is His day...
- a day of special worship
  - a day of extended worship and praise
  - a day of concentration and focus upon God
  - a day of special, very special holiness (See *Holy*, Deut 5:12-15.)
- c. You shall not do any work on the Sabbath day, none whatsoever (v. 14). Note how strongly God expects this commandment to be obeyed: no person is to work seven days a week...
- not you (male or female)
  - not your son or daughter
  - not your slaves (employees)
  - not your animals
  - not even a stranger

**Thought 1.** The fourth commandment was given for our good. Without the Sabbath rest, we would soon break our bodies down. We would be constantly weary, worn out and burned out. Productivity would soon decline. This has been proven time and again in dictatorial nations and slave markets that have demanded constant, unbroken work with no rest for its labour force. Productivity declined sharply, as well as health, physical strength and mental alertness and ability.

Resting one day a week is an absolute essential for the human body. Business and labour, individuals and groups — we all must protect our bodies and the productivity of our society and economies. How? By obeying God's fourth commandment: Remember the Sabbath day; keep it holy — do not work on the Sabbath. Allow our bodies and minds to rest one day a week.

*Exo 20:11* For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them is, but rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

*Exo 23:12* Six days do your work, but on the seventh day do not work, so that your ox and your donkey may rest, and so that the slave born in your household and the foreigner living among you may be refreshed.

*Exo 31:14* Observe the Sabbath, because it is holy to you.

2. Why did God give this commandment? God gives two strong reasons why the Sabbath is to be observed and kept holy (v. 15).
- a. Man is to remember the redemption of God, the mighty hand of His salvation (v. 15). God had delivered His people from Egyptian slavery, saved them from the most horrible and terrible fate imaginable. He was therefore worthy of worship and praise. This was the first purpose of the Sabbath day: to remember and never forget the redemption of God. Man is to take one day a week and focus upon the mighty hand of God's glorious salvation.

**Luke 1:68** *“Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed them.”*

**Eph 1:7** *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.*

**1 Pet 1:18** *For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors.*

**Psa 111:9** *He provided redemption for his people; he ordained his covenant forever — holy and awesome is his name.*

**Psa 130:7** *O Israel, put your hope in the LORD, for with the LORD is unfailing love and with him is full redemption.*

- b. Man is to remember the Sabbath for another very clear reason: because the LORD your God commands you to keep the Sabbath day (v. 15). He is “your God.” You belong to Him. You are expected, obligated to keep the Sabbath, responsible to worship Him and to rest one day a week.

**Mat 12:8** *For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.*

**Mark 2:28** *So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.*

**Exo 23:8** *“Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds those who see and twists the words of the innocent.”*

**Exo 31:13** *“Say to the Israelites, ‘You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a sign between me and you for the generations to come, so you may know that I am the LORD, who makes you holy.’*

**Isa 58:13-14** *If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and the LORD's holy day honourable, and if you honour it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words. ■*

### DEUTERONOMY 05: 12-15 HOLY (QADOS)

Holy (qados) means sanctified, separated, set apart, devoted, dedicated, consecrated, hallowed, honoured, made sacred. It means to be pure, clean, and free from all pollution and defilement, from all sin and evil. It means to be totally different and distinct from anything else, from all the corruption that is in the world.

- The Sabbath is to be a day set apart, devoted and dedicated to God, a day for worship and rest.
- The Sabbath is to be a day hallowed, honoured and made sacred in obedience to God and His command.

- The Sabbath is to be a day that *focuses our minds* upon living pure and clean lives, lives free from all pollution and defilement, sin and evil.
- The Sabbath is to be a day that is totally different and distinct from all other days of the week with their busy schedules that pull our thoughts away from God.

***Psa 99:9*** *Exalt the LORD our God and worship at his holy mountain, for the LORD our God is holy.*

***2 Cor 6:17-7:1*** *“Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters,” says the Lord Almighty. Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.*

***Heb 12:14*** *Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.*

***1 Pet 1:16*** *for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”*

***Rev 15:4*** *“Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.”* □