

Exodus 20D

- We dive back into the first ten laws called the Ten Commandments
 - We're spending more time on each of these laws than we will on later laws because the ten commandments warrant the attention
 - We want to understand what each commandment meant to Israel, who was bound to this Law by their covenant
 - Secondly, we have spent time with each commandment learning how the Law of Christ incorporates and expands on these same statutes
 - So far, we've covered six of the ten
 - Last week we looked at taking the Lord's name in vain, the Sabbath, honoring parents and murder
 - In each case, we considered how the Lord expanded the intent of the Law to encompass the full spirit of God's intent in these laws
 - Speaking in vain includes all forms of harmful speech
 - Honoring parents includes honoring church family
 - Murder includes hateful thoughts, etc.
 - Frankly, we could teach for a month of Sundays on each commandment, so there are topics we have left unaddressed by necessity
 - But we welcome your questions, just as many have already written with their questions the teaching has raised
- Tonight we cover the final four commandments and then finish out the chapter
 - Let's read the next commandment found in v.14

Ex. 20:14 "You shall not commit adultery.

- First, let's define the word "adultery" as it was commonly understood in Israel
 - Adultery under the Law of Moses is sexual intercourse when one or both partners are married
 - Under Jewish law, to be betrothed was equal to marriage
 - So sexual relations with someone betrothed to another was also adultery
 - The purpose of the Law in Israel is two-fold
 - First, the sanctity of marriage was to be honored and preserved
 - Once a commitment has been made to one person in marriage, that commitment must be honored
 - Do you think the Lord believed that marriage was important?
 - Consider that among the first ten laws, three commandments address the strength and sanctity of the family
 - Honoring parents, honoring your spouse, and honoring other marriages
 - Clearly, maintaining the health of the family was a priority for the Lord
 - Secondly, God has appointed Israel to a people called out from the world, and the people of Israel must protect the family lines God created
 - If marriage were not sacrosanct, then the bloodline of Israel would be at risk
 - More importantly, the seed promise might be corrupted
 - God promised that through Abraham's seed would come the Messiah
 - If the seed line was compromised by infidelity, then the promise couldn't be verified
- It's also important to note what adultery is not
 - First, adultery is not a state of being

- It is a sexual act
- The offense happens in that moment
- Afterward, the person might be labeled an adulterer in the same way that someone can be called a murderer because of a prior act of murder
- But they are not continuing in adultery unless the sexual act is repeated
- Secondly, sexual conduct outside marriage (fornication) is not the same offense
 - Adultery was punishable by death under the Law
 - But fornication was a different crime and carried a different penalty
 - In Exodus 22 we'll learn that the penalty involves restitution
 - And the requirement to marry if her father permits
- While the Law promoted the sanctity of marriage, the Law also made provision for divorce
 - That provision is found in Deut 24

[Deut. 24:1](#) "When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out from his house, [Deut. 24:2](#) and she leaves his house and goes and becomes another man's wife, [Deut. 24:3](#) and if the latter husband turns against her and writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her to be his wife, [Deut. 24:4](#) then her former husband who sent her away is not allowed to take her again to be his wife, since she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the LORD, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance.

- The Law provided for a man to send his wife away with a certificate of divorce if he found some indecency in her
 - With that certificate of divorce in hand, the woman had a chance to remarry

- Without such a certificate, a married woman could never convince another man to marry her
- Because that man would be concerned about violating the law against adultery and face a penalty of death
- Notice also that the Law forbid a woman married a second time from returning to her first husband
 - The reason given is because she has been defiled
 - This is our first clue that God doesn't see a divorce as the clean break we may think it is
- Later in Jeremiah, God draws a lesson from this Law in passing judgment on Israel

Jer. 3:1 God says, "If a husband **divorces** his wife
 And she goes from him
 And belongs to another man,
 Will he still return to her?
 Will not that land be completely polluted?
 But you are a harlot with many lovers;
 Yet you turn to Me," declares the LORD.

- The Lord draws from the Law to make a spiritual point to unfaithful Israel
- The Lord called Himself a Husband to Israel, who He called His wife
- But the nation was unfaithful to the Lord, so the Lord gave the nation a certificate of divorce, spiritually speaking
- Then Israel entered into a new relationship with Baal worship and other idolatry
- So the Lord determines to send the the ten northern tribes into exile
 - And here Lord warns through the nation will call to the Lord and ask to return to Him, He won't listen
 - The Lord asks if it would be right for a Husband to accept His wife back when she finally begs to return to Him after she has married herself to another?

- The Law prohibited this possibility
- Until the Law has been fulfilled, these tribes have no possibility of returning to the Lord
 - You can study more about how that happens in the Revelation study
- Turning to the New Testament and the Law of Christ guiding believers, we see this commandment clearly continued and expanded
 - First, Jesus spoke these words concerning the matter of adultery

[Matt. 5:26](#) “Truly I say to you, you will not come out of there until you have paid up the last cent.

[Matt. 5:27](#) “You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY’;
[Matt. 5:28](#) but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

- Jesus He broadens the law just as He has in previous commandments
- Just as the prohibition against unlawful killing was broadened to include hateful thoughts, now adultery was broadened to include even lustful desires
- Jesus is not saying that lustful thoughts are adultery
 - He’s saying that they are the moral equivalent under God’s law
 - If you’ve never committed adultery but you have entertained lustful thoughts, you are no less guilty before God than the person who acted on their lust
- Our modern world is desperately trying to create lustful thoughts in your head at every turn
 - Advertisers seek your attention with sexy models
 - Entertainers and celebrities provoke lust for attention and profits
 - Young teens seek approval, acceptance and love by dressing provocatively
 - Websites, books, music and movies push the limits and throw away the limits to sell lust to an eager audience

- Everywhere you look, the world is ready to provoke lust in your heart
 - But the upward call of Christ demands that we wouldn't fall for that temptation any more easily than we might commit adultery
 - Some of us may fall to both
 - But most of us treat one very differently than the other, leaving us far more willing to entertain lust than adultery
 - It ought not to be this way
- If that weren't challenging enough, Jesus goes even further in defining what is adultery

[Mark 10:2](#) Some Pharisees came up to Jesus, testing Him, and began to question Him whether it was lawful for a man to divorce a wife.

[Mark 10:3](#) And He answered and said to them, "What did Moses command you?"

[Mark 10:4](#) They said, "Moses permitted a man TO WRITE A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE AND SEND her AWAY."

[Mark 10:5](#) But Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment.

[Mark 10:6](#) "But from the beginning of creation, God MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE.

[Mark 10:7](#) "FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER,

[Mark 10:8](#) AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH; so they are no longer two, but one flesh.

[Mark 10:9](#) "What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."

[Mark 10:10](#) In the house the disciples began questioning Him about this again.

[Mark 10:11](#) And He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her;

[Mark 10:12](#) and if she herself divorces her husband and marries another man, she is committing adultery."

- Secondly, Jesus declares that when we dissolve a marriage through divorce and enter into new marriages, we also commit adultery
 - From God's point of view, a new marriage piles on top of the prior marriage
 - It doesn't replace the first marriage...they coexist

- And therefore, the sexual union that forms that marriage is adultery
- Again, the new marriage begins with an act of adultery, but adultery is an act, not a state of being
- The new marriage isn't a continual act of adultery, but it is founded on a sinful basis
- The Pharisees challenged Jesus on this interpretation by reminding Him that the Law of Moses included a provision for a certificate of divorce
 - But Jesus sets the Pharisees straight concerning how they should have understood that provision
- First, Jesus returns to the origins and definitions of marriage itself
 - Marriage is a union of two into a single flesh
 - And once that union has been created, no man can declare it separated
 - So the Law of Moses couldn't change that reality, coming after the institution of marriage was established by God
- Secondly, even in the Law itself, we see evidence that even though the Law included a provision for divorce, nevertheless God still considered the divorce to be wrong
 - For example, there is no Law that actually authorizes the writing of a certificate of divorce
 - Even in the Law we read in Deuteronomy, chapter 24 never gives permission for a certificate to be written
 - It simply sets rules for what happens to a wife after a husband chooses to divorce her
 - It only deals with the aftermath of divorce
 - Furthermore, the law says that a woman who has remarried after a divorce can't return to her first husband because she has been defiled
 - If God considered a remarried woman to be defiled by that remarriage, then clearly a certificate of divorce didn't permit the woman to remarry

- On the contrary, God states plainly in Malachi 2:16 that He hates divorce
- So if God hates divorce and never permitted divorce in the Law, why does Moses reference such a certificate in Deuteronomy in chapter 24?
 - Jesus explains that this provision was made because of the hardness of men's hearts
 - The Lord knew that sinful men would divorce their wives without God's permission
 - And certainly God never gave men that permission
 - But in that culture, a woman who had been sent away by her husband would be without hope to find support
 - She couldn't work
 - She wouldn't have any possessions or wealth
 - So she would likely starve to death
 - Therefore, God made provision for the woman by making reference to a certificate of divorce
 - He didn't permit it
 - He simply acknowledged it
 - But by that acknowledgment, the Lord ensured that men would give their ex-wives proof that they were no longer married and could find a new source of support
 - But now we learn that those new marriages were created by an act of adultery
 - This is why the first husband could never take his wife back under his roof once she had remarried
 - And likewise today, a man or woman who remarries after leaving a marriage, commits adultery
- Furthermore, the Law of Christ demands patience, love and understanding from both the man and the woman so that marriage may be strong
 - The OT Law offered little in the way of marriage counseling
 - It merely set the expectation that the marriage remain intact

- But the NT writers give considerable advice to both husbands and wives to acts in ways to hold marriages together
- Our relationship with Christ is pictured by marriage in scripture
 - He is called our Groom and the Church is the Bride of Christ
 - Our union is understood to be a betrothal
 - And therefore, if God decided to borrow imagery from human marriage to describe our relationship with Christ, then it tells us how indivisible the marriage covenant must be in reality
 - Just as nothing can separate us from our Groom, Christ
 - Similarly, nothing can separate a marriage
- The Law of Christ raises the bar on the seventh commandment for every Christian
 - Save yourself for marriage
 - Once you marry, see that marriage the way the Lord sees it:
 - You are married until death do you part
 - Work on your marriage, making its preservation your highest goal
 - See it as your witness to the world of the relationship you enjoy in Christ
 - Protect it knowing that as you honor your spouse and your marriage, you reflect your faith
 - Should one member of the marriage give up and leave or even file for a legal divorce, remember you still remain married in God's eyes
 - Remain single forevermore hoping the spouse reconsiders and returns
 - If one remarries, then they commit adultery on the other
 - In summary, there is no going back on any marriage
 - If you have remarried, stay married
 - Adultery is an act, not a state of being

- Just as the Law prevented men from taking back a twice married woman, so are we not to repeat our mistakes
- Moving on to the next commandment

Ex. 20:15 "You shall not steal.

- The very fact that God's law forbid taking another's property teaches us something about God's economic point of view
 - God is not a communist
 - He believes in private property ownership rights
 - A man can possess property and expect that he might never be denied access to it
 - As we'll study more later, the Law expands private property law considerably, establishing tort law for how private property crimes are to be adjudicated
 - If you deprive someone of something, you had an obligation to return it or compensate them for it
 - That our modern civil law is based on God's law will become self-evident as we read through the Law
- How did Jesus carry over this law and it expand for the believer?
 - First, it is restated plainly, both in the Gospels and through the NT Epistles

Eph. 4:28 He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need.

- Secondly, the sin of stealing is also equated with desires heart, particularly greedy gain, fraud, dishonest business dealings, slothful dependence, and the general love of money
 - For example, Jesus says:

Luke 12:15 Then He said to them, "Beware, and be on your guard against every form of **greed**; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions."

- In fact, Paul says greed can lead to idolatry in Colossians 3:5 and denounces sordid gain in 1Tim 3:8
- In other words, the purpose of the eighth commandment was merely to prohibit the active taking of something in another's possession
 - It intended to put to an end any action intended to enrich ourselves in an unloving way at someone else's expense
 - Whether we trick someone into spending too much
 - Or scheme in business or conduct shading business dealings
 - Or misuse our employer's time or misrepresent our goods for sale, etc.
 - Remember, even forms of business that may be legal according to the nations laws can still violate the standards of the NT Law of Christ
 - Just like the laws of our nation may permit remarriage, Jesus says it is adultery
 - Likewise, the laws of our nation may permit some business practices that Jesus has taught are actually sinful acts of stealing
 - In fact, just a greedy desire for possessions is itself a violation of this commandment in the NT Law of Christ

[1Tim. 6:7](#) For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either.

[1Tim. 6:8](#) If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.

[1Tim. 6:9](#) But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction.

[1Tim. 6:10](#) For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

[1Tim. 6:11](#) But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness.

- How does greed qualify as a form of stealing?

- Well, consider that the Lord is the owner of all that the earth contains
 - And scripture teaches that the Lord assigns to each according to His will
 - So that when we allow our greedy hearts to rule over us and drive us to seek after things the Lord has not assign for us, we are stealing from the Lord in a sense
 - We are taking for ourselves something that the Lord, the owner of all things, has not given into our hands
- If you want the best possible perspective on this question, you should consult the man who knew better than anyone how it feels to seek after everything: Solomon
 - Read the second chapter of Ecclesiastes
 - It begins with Solomon saying

[Eccl. 2:3](#) I explored with my mind how to stimulate my body with wine while my mind was guiding me wisely, and how to take hold of folly, until I could see what good there is for the sons of men to do under heaven the few years of their lives.

- And ends this way

[Eccl. 2:26](#) For to a person who is good in His sight He has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, while to the sinner He has given the task of gathering and collecting so that he may give to one who is good in God's sight. This too is vanity and striving after wind.

- Notice that God does believe in the redistribution of wealth
 - He has appointed to the person who is good to have spiritual wisdom, knowledge and joy - things you can't buy
 - But to the sinner, the Lord has appointed the task of working to gather the material of the world
 - Ultimately, the wealth collected by that sinner will find its way to bless the righteous in God's sight
 - Therefore, when a believer tries to gain wealth by imitating the sinner's methods, they circumvent God's purposes
 - And they violate the spirit of the eighth commandment

- Now the ninth commandment

Ex. 20:16 “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

- In strict legal terms, the commandment instructs Israel not to testify falsely against someone else in a matter of justice
 - In broad terms, however, the Law was commanding truth telling in all situations
 - In fact, in Leviticus 19:11, the Law plainly states that no one may lie to another
 - Furthermore, the Law also precluded slandering
 - At the root of this commandment is preservation of truth
 - Truth is an absolute, and all that is true comes from the Lord
 - While all that is false comes from the enemy
 - For example, when we lie even about a little thing, we are showing evidence of sin in us
 - And that sin originated with a lie that Satan told to Woman in the garden
 - In effect, our lies are an ever-present reminder that sin began with a lie, and the effect of that first lie is still playing out in our bodies today
 - This commandment endeavors to promote Truth and to diminish lies in the people of Israel
- In the Law of Christ, we see this commandment represented and expanded once again
 - Beyond lying and false witness, which are specifically prohibited, the NT saint is likewise prohibited from a long list of sins of speech
 - Flattering speech
 - Gossip
 - Slander
 - Deceit

- Abusive speech
- Arrogant speech
- How do these other forms of speech relate to lying?
 - Lying is the simplest description for promoting something that is false, not the truth, and therefore not from God
 - These other forms of prohibited speech are each falsehood in some manner
 - Gossip is taking an unhealthy interest in another's situation or discussing it without their consent
 - But it usually involves passing along information that is wrong or incomplete
 - Slander is fictitious accusations
 - Abusive speech is speaking so as to cause harm, which is not truthful speech
 - Etc.
- The Christian is called to guard our tongues and season our speech to make sure that everything we speak is edifying
 - The standard is not merely to avoid saying the wrong thing
 - But the true test of love for a NT saint is to endeavor to always say an edifying thing
- Finally, the tenth commandment

Ex. 20:17 "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

- To covet can be defined as wanting something we can't (or shouldn't) have, or in some cases, wanting more of something we already have enough of
 - In the Law, the Lord lists six specific examples of coveting and then adds a seventh general prohibition

- Since the Lord includes the seventh general statement, we know that the six earlier things were not intended to be the limit of the Law
- They were merely representative of the things men typically covet
- These six represent the six most valuable items any many would typically possess in Moses' day, listed in descending order of value according to man's standards (not God's)
 - A man's desires usually correspond to the perceived value of things
 - The list includes representations of wealth, power, status, and well-being
- Coveting is a particularly dangerous sin in that it can be experienced inwardly though never expressed outwardly
 - Men secretly (or not so secretly) desire what other men have, and that is a form of selfishness
 - Coveting is an attitude more than an action, though it can certainly lead to sinful actions
 - Coveting can lead to jealousy, lying, stealing, murder and a host of other sinful behaviors
 - For this reason, the Lord prohibited even our desiring for other things
 - There is a difference, however, between wanting something and coveting something
 - A newly married couple can want for a child, while a childless couple covets another's newborn baby
 - One hard working employee can want for a promotion, while his colleague covets his boss' position
 - One man can have desire for a woman, while another covets his roommate's girlfriend
 - A child can want a special toy for his birthday, while another covets his brother's bike

- The point is that coveting isn't defined by the item in question or even the extent of our desire
 - Coveting is wanting for things that already belong to another and have not been appointed for us by God
 - Wanting becomes coveting when our desires turn from things that might become ours to things that shouldn't become ours
- The principle behind this commandment is incredibly important to understanding how the Jew was to live according to it
 - It begins with an understanding of Who owns all things to begin with

[Psa. 24:1](#) The earth is the LORD'S, and all it contains,
The world, and those who dwell in it.

- Everything that exists is property of the Lord
 - And not merely the natural things in the world
 - But also the things men create with their hands still belong to the Lord
- He is the Creator and all that is created traces its origins to Him
 - Furthermore, the Lord designated a portion of creation to each man according to His will

[1Sam. 2:7](#) "The LORD makes poor and rich; He brings low, He also exalts.

[Prov. 22:2](#) The rich and the poor have a common bond, The LORD is the maker of them all.

- This truth is especially evident in the life of the nation of Israel

[Deut. 32:7](#) "Remember the days of old,
Consider the years of all generations.
Ask your father, and he will inform you,
Your elders, and they will tell you.

[Deut. 32:8](#) "When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance,
When He separated the sons of man,
He set the boundaries of the peoples
According to the number of the sons of Israel.

- Moses explains that the Lord had given to each tribe and person within Israel a portion of an inheritance that the Lord designated
- His will is reflected in this allotment, so when a Jew coveted what another had received, he was indirectly challenging God's will
- So coveting wasn't merely a sin because it leads to sinful thoughts or sinful actions against other people
 - It is sin because it indicts God's goodness and His wisdom
 - It suggests that we know better what we should have than does God
 - It repeats the sin of Adam when he chose to eat the fruit that God said wasn't given to Adam
 - Just as lying repeats the sin of Satan, coveting repeats the sin of Woman and Adam
- How does the NT challenge Christians to follow this command?
 - First, the NT writers frequently call Christians to contentment

Heb. 13:5 Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU,"

- Once again, the NT reasoning for calling us to contentment is God's goodness in deciding what we should have
- The writer says be content with what you have, because the Lord has said that He will always be with us
- How does this explain the need for contentment?
 - Because if the Lord is always with us, then we can safely assume He is fully aware of our circumstances and our needs
 - And in light of that knowledge, He has made a certain provision available
 - That provision should not be challenged
- Secondly, the Law of Christ commands us recognize that the Lord controls our possessions and so seek the Lord for everything we desire

- James addresses this problem in particular in his letter

[James 4:1](#) What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?

[James 4:2](#) You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.

[James 4:3](#) You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

[James 4:4](#) You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

[James 4:5](#) Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"?

[James 4:6](#) But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."

[James 4:7](#) Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

[James 4:8](#) Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

- James points out that our desires cross the line and become sinful when they are driven by the lust of the flesh
 - Murder, envy, fights are all the result of a desire that is centered in the flesh
 - This is the opposite of desires of heart that arise out of the Spirit's leading
 - If the Spirit is leading us to a desire, then the natural response should be to pray and ask the Lord to deliver the thing we desire
 - By that prayer, we acknowledge that all good things come from the Lord, as James also teaches
 - And we ask knowing that the Lord will grant it if it is the right thing for us
 - These are the right motives that James says we must have to receive something from the Lord
 - By contrast, wrong motives are desires that originate in our flesh and lead to sinful thoughts and actions
 - We want something we can't have, so we kill for it

- Or we are envious of what another has, so we quarrel with them
- So the Christian's call under the Law of Christ isn't merely not to covet something we shouldn't have
 - It includes commands to ask the Lord for everything we want
 - It isn't merely a matter of guarding against wanting the wrong thing in the wrong way
 - It has become a command to be content, to recognize that the Lord provides us with what He chooses, and to seek Him for anything else we want
 - The annals of the Christian faith are filled with stories of men who sought God for their needs, and then waited to see how God would respond
 - But the best example as usual is Jesus Himself
 - He declared that He had no where to lay His head
 - Jesus was homeless during his adult ministry
 - Never in the three years of His life recorded in the Gospels do we see Jesus ever go to a place considered his home
 - He had no income, He had no possessions from what we can tell
 - And when He was asked to pay tax, this is what He did

[Matt. 17:27](#) "However, so that we do not offend them, go to the sea and throw in a hook, and take the first fish that comes up; and when you open its mouth, you will find a shekel. Take that and give it to them for you and Me."

- Furthermore, the Lord found food by multiplying fish and loaves
- And at other times He depended on the kindness of others
- The point is that Jesus acted as if He owned nothing because He owned everything
 - He had everything at His disposal, so He didn't toil to separate out some for Himself at the expense of others
 - Likewise, our Father in Heaven has ownership of everything

- So we are called to live without undue interest in other's goods and without the distraction of lustful desires leading to greater sin
 - Instead, ask the Lord for what you desire, with a motive to serve Him, knowing that everything in the world is at His disposal
 - And then when you see what comes, be content knowing that this is the Lord's choice for us
- Perhaps this is best summed up in Proverbs

Prov. 30:7 Two things I asked of You, Do not refuse me before I die:

Prov. 30:8 Keep deception and lies far from me, Give me neither poverty nor riches;
Feed me with the food that is my portion,

Prov. 30:9 That I not be full and deny You and say, "Who is the LORD?" Or that I not be in want and steal, And profane the name of my God.