

**TBC CONNECT is a way for the ministry at Temple Baptist Church to keep in touch with the congregation through meaningful reflection on God's Word.**

**Everyone Monday a new topic is presented and then explored via written devotionals on Wednesday and Friday.**

### **“Thou Shall Not: Exploring the Ten Commandments”**

By Bryce William Klassen

Almost everyone has heard of the Ten Commandments (often called the “Decalogue,” found in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5), but not everyone knows their origin or purpose. Even Christians struggle with understanding what role the Old Testament plays in our New Testament lives and there has always been disagreements amongst theologians as to the meaning of the Law in relation to the New Covenant community. If we are not under the Law, does that mean the Ten Commandments do not apply, considering that the Ten Commandments are the basis of the Law? It’s a great question, but let’s not get ahead of ourselves. First we need to address the origin and content of the Ten Commandments. Today we will focus on commandments 1-4 then, on Friday, we can look at the remaining six and consider more closely what they mean for us today. Bear with me!

Canada has what’s called the Charter of Rights and Freedoms; America has their Constitution. Ancient Israel had the Ten Commandments, which were written on stone by the finger of God Himself (Ex 31:18). Beat that George Washington! Typically, scholars and theologians have noticed that the first four commandments deal with the people’s relationship with God (vertical), while the remaining six pertain to human-to-human relations (horizontal). Of course, the last six do not make sense without the first four which emphasize a rigorous Monotheism (a belief in one god). In other words, how one is to behave towards others has everything to do with one’s relationship to God. Just because someone didn’t steal or commit adultery didn’t mean they could get away with worshiping other gods. Simply put, it was a package deal!

How's that for a brief history? Now let's look at the first four commandments more closely. As you read, consider their relevance and ask yourself: Does this apply to me? If so, how?

1. *You shall have no other gods.* Who brought Israel out of captivity? It was none other than God. Israel was His people whom He chose from all peoples. He had established a covenant with their forefathers, and it was imperative that they honoured this agreement and worship Him exclusively.
2. *You shall not make idols.* This is closely related to the first commandment, reiterating how important it was for God's people to commit themselves to Yahweh alone. Furthermore, idols could not protect the people because idols could not do anything. This prohibited representations of Yaweh as well.
3. *You shall not take the Lord's name in vain.* In short, God's name (Yahweh, meaning "I am that I am" as revealed to Moses in Ex. 3:14) was never to be used in a careless or trivial manner but only with the utmost fear and respect. Anything less was blasphemy..
4. *You shall keep the Sabbath.* Because God created the universe in six days and rested on the seventh, the seventh day was to be set aside as a holy sabbath to the Lord. Furthermore, it was to serve as a reminder of God's freeing them from servitude to Egypt. Which is why everyone, including servants and animals were freed from labour on the Sabbath.

There you have it! The first four of God's great commandments. Unfortunately, we are limited by time and space and can only cover the minimum so I encourage you to explore further. Also, I am beholden to God's Word, so take a look at Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 and see if you think what I am saying is truthful. Like I said, we will continue this discussion on Friday!

In Love,  
Bryce

