

CONCLUSION

I would like to remind you again about the circumstances and reasoning behind this study. We started this study in the Ten Commandments because we have seen a tremendous moral decline in our nation; and we can trace the root of this decline to successful attempts to do away with God's Standard: The Ten Commandments. We also looked at the decline within the Christian Church; a decline resulting in the fact that far too many converts have no "staying" power. We looked at an alarming statistic: "At best only 20% of modern-day converts persevere." We came to realize that compared to 100 years ago, for the most part, the content of the Gospel message has been watered down. Rarely do Churches take the high road against sin, and when ministries do seek to hold people accountable and warn of coming judgment, they are criticized as being unloving and not presenting the full picture of the Gospel.

During the beginning of our study, we looked at two Scriptures that I would like us to consider again. First, God spoke to the nation Israel through Hosea and stated, "My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. 'Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests; because you have ignored the law of your God, I also will ignore your children.'" (Hosea 4:6). The word "destroyed," as we have seen, means *to fail or perish*. Many, too many, today are failing in their walk! But the failing is not just in the area of our walk; it is a failing, according to Hosea, in our *knowledge*! God gets very specific when He talks about this failing. The people of God were failing because *knowledge* was failing.

According to Hosea 4:6 two reasons are given for this failure; First, we have *rejected* knowledge. This word "rejected" means *to refuse*, or *to despise*. This rejection can be either deliberate, because we do not want to have to deal with "learning" the things of God; or an oversight brought about by wrong theology. Regardless of the motivation in our rejection, it *must* be corrected by re-structuring our thoughts concerning the Law of God. Hopefully, this study has helped us along the road to doing just that. Remember the Scripture that says, His Commandments are not grievous? In the natural realm, we say that ignorance of the Law is no excuse, so, too, in the Spiritual realm. We are responsible for the truths in God's Word. We should no longer be ignorant concerning God's Commandments! We also need to consider that mere knowledge is not the answer. The Bible says, "that knowledge puffs up" (1 Corinthians 8:1 -KJV), so there must also be a commitment to *do* what we have learned!

The second reason Hosea gives for our failure is that we have not *remembered* or have ignored God's Law. Psychologists tell us that our brains record everything – every thought, everything we see, everything we touch or smell, everything we hear; it's all recorded. Our brains hold an incredible amount of data. Considering that, we don't "forget"; we just fail to remember. That is not an exercise in semantics. God instructed His people to put "reminders" in place so that they would not fail to remember His Law (see Deuteronomy 6:6-8). We do much the same thing today. We use post-it notes or there's even wrist watches that will beep or vibrate to remind ourselves of appointments or things we want to do. What have we done to remind ourselves of God's Law? Lord willing, this study has helped to remind us of the fact of God's Law.

We embarked on this study so that we could restore God's Word to its proper place in our lives and, perhaps, be instrumental in God restoring His people.

Commandments 1-3: Center on the vertical and have to do with our relationship with God. He is to be Number One. There is to be nothing and no one else in that position. *You shall have no other gods before me.* For us to keep Him in that position in our thinking, *we cannot make idols* whether in our minds or with our hands. We must also determine that *His name will be revered* both in our lives and on our lips.

Significance for the Sinner:

Sinners are seeking a reality that is greater than their experience. When the sinner acknowledges that the LORD, He is God, and desires to enter a relationship with Him, he will be led, by the Holy Spirit to the Lord Jesus Christ. In all probability, most people do not consider themselves idolatrous; but the fact remains that "belief in God" does not nullify idolatry. The Apostle James stated, "You say you believe in God, you do well, even the devils believe and tremble." (James 2:19). The meaning here is that there must be some corresponding action that arises out of our belief. If we truly believe in the God of the Bible, then there will be no idolatry. If, on the other hand, our belief is perfunctory, we will still feel comfortable with this Commandment *and* our idols. When sinners are confronted by the harmony of life and reverence for God's name by God's people, they will once again be brought into contact with God's Law concerning His name. The statement has been made that all that is necessary for evil to flourish is for good men to do nothing. We have seen the results of that in the profane use of the Lord's name.

Significance for the Saint:

Saints should be living proof of these Commandments! We claim to serve and love the one true God. We state along with scripture, that there is no other God. Our lives must be in harmony with our lips. He is our God! We must spend more time with our Lord so that we can come to know His voice! David Wilkerson has a masterful sermon: "*The Stumbling Block of Iniquity*": February 24, 1997. In that message he states: "A stumbling block of iniquity is any evil thing that hinders your spiritual progress – Anything that stands between you and God! Any believer who clings to a secret sin, or anything contrary to God's Word, cannot hear the true voice of God." I pray that the following verses are not descriptive of modern-day Christians, but I fear they are,

Isaiah 56:10-12 Israel's watchmen are blind, they all lack knowledge; they are all mute dogs, they cannot bark; they lie around and dream, they love to sleep. ¹¹ They are dogs with mighty appetites; they never have enough. They are shepherds who lack understanding; they all turn to their own way, each seeks his own gain. ¹² "Come," each one cries, "let me get wine! Let us drink our fill of beer! And tomorrow will be like today, or even far better." (NIV)

This moral decline in our society happened on our watch!

When Jesus spoke of the Law, He summed up these first Three Commandments with these words recorded in Mark 12:29-30, "And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: ³⁰ And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first

commandment.” When His saints love God to that degree, there will be no other gods, there will be no idolatry, there will be no using His name in vain. End of discussion, beginning of life.

Significance for Society:

Society is but a reflection of the desires and dictates of its people. Society will only come to see the reality of these Commandments as the lives of God’s saints bring holy conviction to the lifestyle of sinners and those sinners are brought to repentance through His Holy Law. Society is but the ebb and flow of the tide of its saints and sinners. Our society is in the business of making idols! Whether it be the gods of fashion, sports, prestige, or power; whether our gods be manufactured by Wall Street, industry, or Hollywood — the attempt is to make God in our image. This image making business is nowhere more prevalent than in the icons (both pictures and actors) produced by Hollywood. Consider the kinds of movies that are “commonplace” now. Many “R” ratings are *not* because of the blasphemous use of Jesus’ name but because of explosive violence, explicit sex, or extreme language. TV characters are now using the name of Jesus in vain! It is ironical to me that the derogatory term for manure gets bleeped from our airwaves while the Holy name of Almighty God is freely used as a common expression. Society has become de-sensitized to the Holiness of God’s name and as a result has ushered in evil that would make our parents blush with shame.

Many Bible scholars believe that Revelation 18, the prophecy against Babylon, is a portrayal of the coming judgment on this nation. Whether or not that is true, the descriptions of that society strike uncomfortably close to home. I have included the whole of Revelation 18 here because of its striking parallels.

Revelation 18:1-24 After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven. He had great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his splendor. ² With a mighty voice he shouted: "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great! She has become a home for demons and a haunt for every evil spirit, a haunt for every unclean and detestable bird. ³ For all the nations have drunk the maddening wine of her adulteries. The kings of the earth committed adultery with her, and the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries." ⁴ Then I heard another voice from heaven say: "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues; ⁵ for her sins are piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes. ⁶ Give back to her as she has given; pay her back double for what she has done. Mix her a double portion from her own cup. ⁷ Give her as much torture and grief as the glory and luxury she gave herself. In her heart she boasts, 'I sit as queen; I am not a widow, and I will never mourn.' ⁸ Therefore in one day her plagues will overtake her: death, mourning and famine. She will be consumed by fire, for mighty is the Lord God who judges her. ⁹ "When the kings of the earth who committed adultery with her and shared her luxury see the smoke of her burning, they will weep and mourn over her. ¹⁰ Terrified at her torment, they will stand far off and cry: "'Woe! Woe, O great city, O Babylon, city of power! In one hour your doom has come!' ¹¹ "The merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her because no one buys their cargoes any more ¹² cargoes of gold, silver, precious stones and pearls; fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet cloth; every sort of citron wood, and articles of every kind made of ivory, costly wood, bronze, iron

and marble; ¹³ cargoes of cinnamon and spice, of incense, myrrh and frankincense, of wine and olive oil, of fine flour and wheat; cattle and sheep; horses and carriages; and bodies and souls of men. ¹⁴ "They will say, 'The fruit you longed for is gone from you. All your riches and splendor have vanished, never to be recovered.' ¹⁵ The merchants who sold these things and gained their wealth from her will stand far off, terrified at her torment. They will weep and mourn ¹⁶ and cry out: "'Woe! Woe, O great city, dressed in fine linen, purple and scarlet, and glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls! ¹⁷ In one hour such great wealth has been brought to ruin!' "Every sea captain, and all who travel by ship, the sailors, and all who earn their living from the sea, will stand far off. ¹⁸ When they see the smoke of her burning, they will exclaim, 'Was there ever a city like this great city?' ¹⁹ They will throw dust on their heads, and with weeping and mourning cry out: "'Woe! Woe, O great city, where all who had ships on the sea became rich through her wealth! In one hour she has been brought to ruin! ²⁰ Rejoice over her, O heaven! Rejoice, saints and apostles and prophets! God has judged her for the way she treated you.'" ²¹ Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a large millstone and threw it into the sea and said: "With such violence the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, never to be found again. ²² The music of harpists and musicians, flute players and trumpeters, will never be heard in you again. No workman of any trade will ever be found in you again. The sound of a millstone will never be heard in you again. ²³ The light of a lamp will never shine in you again. The voice of the bridegroom and bride will never be heard in you again. Your merchants were the world's great men. By your magic spell all the nations were led astray. ²⁴ In her was found the blood of prophets and of the saints, and of all who have been killed on the earth." (NIV)

You shall remember the Sabbath and keep it holy

The Fourth Commandment is set apart from the first three and last six because, the first three Commandments spoke of our relationship with God; and the last six detail our relationships within the community. This Fourth Commandment deals with our personal well-being. If we do not have a healthy relationship with God, we cannot enter true rest. If we do not have a healthy regard for ourselves, we will not be fully capable of loving others. We are to remember the Sabbath and *keep it holy*.

Significance for the Sinner:

This is one Commandment that has almost 100% acceptance – at least in part, the part that has to do with taking a day for rest. Almost everyone sees the benefit of taking time away from the daily grind to “recharge our batteries.” Life seemed a lot simpler when the “Blue Laws”¹ were in effect.

Significance for the Saint:

Here again, the *saint* should be at the forefront, demonstrating the practical aspects of this Law of God. If it were not for the fact of a Christian’s commitment to fellowship with other Christians, we would be hard pressed to tell the Christian from the non-Christian on any given Sunday.

¹ Laws passed restricting business concerning Sunday hours of operation.

Christians are just as *busy* on this day as everyone else, forgetting the two main principles governing this Law. It is for *rest*, and it is for *God's pleasure*. Most of us have the first part down pat, it's the second part that gives us problems.

Significance for Society:

As the Church goes, so goes the nation. The Sabbath day has become a time to pursue favorite pastimes rather than spending time with family and friends. It is not unusual to see 24/7 signs on various businesses – open 24 hours a day and seven days a week. This omission of “rest” will soon catch up with this nation as it did with Israel. If we don't take a break, we'll break!

Commandments Five through Ten center on the horizontal – our interpersonal relationships, beginning with our relationship to our parents and continuing with our relationships in society! And in our study, we have seen that this extends to *employers* and *spouses*! When Jesus spoke of the Law, He summed up these Commandments in the following way:

Mark 12:28-31 One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, 'Of all the commandments, which is the most important?' ²⁹ 'The most important one,' answered Jesus, 'is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰ Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." ³¹ The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these.

Significance for the Sinner:

A chain is only as strong as its weakest link and a society only as strong as its family unit. The future of your life and this nation depends on what you do with God's holy Law. I am *not* advocating a Christian president nor am I advocating a form of Government that is patterned after Old Testament Israel. This is a call to repent of your sins and return the Ten Commandments to their rightful place in your life, then in our homes, in our schools and in our society.

Significance for the Saint:

When God brings judgment, He has promised to start in His own house,

1 Peter 4:17-19 For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸ And, "If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?" ¹⁹ So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good. (NIV)

It is our responsibility as Christians, those who claim a covenant relationship with God through Jesus Christ, to take our rightful place by giving God the glory due His name. We can start by repenting of our negligence to His Law. The sinner, and the very framework of our society depend on it. If we do not, judgment will come!

Significance for Society:

Think how peaceful and safe you would feel if everyone obeyed these last six Commandments.

No worry about broken homes, murder, stealing, lying, or promiscuous living. Wouldn't it be great if we could go back to the way it was 50 years ago when neighbors knew each other and no one felt compelled to lock their doors or carry a weapon when on the streets at night. We felt safe, because the majority subscribed to a moral code that was greater than any single individual and applied to all equally! Now, because we have settled for a seemingly *more flexible morality*, we find our society coming apart at the seams. Psalm 144:15 states, "How blessed are the people who are so situated; how blessed are the people whose God is the LORD!" (NAS)

The key is for the individual member of society to love the Lord (as) his God with all his strength and his neighbor as himself. When we love our neighbor to the same degree that we love ourselves, there will be no murder, there will be no adultery, there will be no stealing, there will be no lying; and there will be no coveting! That kind of love is only possible through the Lord Jesus Christ.

The following is a clipping from the Arizona Republic:

Arizona Republic; Tuesday, January 14, 1997

Drivers get directions from God

10 Commandments on Valley billboards

No name, no phone number, no church address, just something to ponder while traffic slows: "God spoke these commandments. You shall not give false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet," reads the purple and white billboard on Central Avenue, south of McDowell Road, in Phoenix. "Bill Eaton didn't put up the billboards for himself or the church he attends, ... 'I just wanted God's Word to speak for itself, and He'll accomplish His purpose through His word,' said Eaton, 49, a Christian and owner of an independent insurance brokerage firm in Scottsdale.

Billboards spread word, 'bring glory to God'

The article goes on to tell about Bill's conversion experience four years ago and how he "changed his priority from making a profit to discovering and fulfilling God's purpose in his life. ... "This is God's money now. ... I'd rather spend it on billboards building God's kingdom than on driving a certain car." "The billboards are placed so that 50% of Valley residents see at least one daily...."

What are *we* doing to convince the world that God's Commandments are "Holy, just, and good"?

The Second Scripture we considered at the outset of this study was Paul's words to Timothy,

2 Timothy 3:1-7 But realize this, that in the last days difficult (perilous - KJV) times will come. ² For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, *arrogant*, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, ⁴ treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; ⁵ holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; and avoid such

men as these. ⁶ For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, ⁷ always learning and never able to come to the *knowledge* of the truth. ~Emphasis added.

What these individuals were doing was setting their own standard as to what was right and what was wrong! But we have seen that the result of such activity is chaos because no such standard is absolute, rather it is relative and, consequently, changes with the times. This is the type of standard system society wants for our children. God wants us to recognize that His standard is the only one that is absolute and timeless. To ignore that standard, or to try to circumvent it with one of our own makings will produce deep, deep wounds that no society, no program and no combination of these will be able to heal. In fact, one of the alternate translations to “perilous times”, “difficult times” (double emphasis) is *hurtful* times ... *painful* times. When, in the history of man, has *pain* or *hurt* been more evident than it is now? How many individuals do you know who have been severely wounded – many within their own family. There is child abuse, spouse abuse, parent abuse, each case causing deep, deep wounds. Why is it? Because we have *rejected God’s standard!* Ironically enough, there are even individuals who have been wounded by being beaten up with God’s Law – not by God, but by misinformed, incomplete individuals. God never intended for His Law to wound us, but to show us the way to the healer of our wounds.

Jesus is the only one, who also being wounded and rejected, can heal those wounds. He suffered as He did to become the initiator of a “better covenant”. Perilous, painful, and hurtful times are here. Our responsibility is to be strong in the Lord and with our root in Him by faith so that we can *stand* in these evil days.

I hope you have been encouraged by this study on the Ten Commandments. They are God’s perfect mirror to point out our imperfections and flaws that need attention; and, to point us to Jesus – the great Physician, the healer of our painful times. Have you experienced that kind of pain ... that kind of hurt? The Psalmist addresses that in Psalm 55:22 when he says, “Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall.” The Apostle, Peter, echoes those words when he writes, “Casting all your cares upon Him, because it matters to Him the things that concern you.” (1 Peter 5:7). God said it ... believe it!

Adherence to God’s Law *must* begin with the Christian! We cannot expect the sinner or society in general to follow God’s Law when Christians have been so lax in their attention to God’s demands, desires and details. We, as a nation, are where we deserve to be. We, as a Church, are where we are determined to be. Changing is our choice.