

The Ten Commandments

The Ten Commandments (see Ex. 20:1–17) were laws given by God as guidelines for daily living. Although God gave the commandments to His people through Moses at Mount Sinai more than three thousand years ago, they are still relevant today. These laws are also known as the Decalogue, from the Greek word meaning “ten words.”

The Ten Commandments are divided into two sections. The first four commandments govern our relationship to God, while commandments five through ten speak of our relationship to other people. The meaning of the Ten Commandments may be stated briefly as follows:

1. Trust God only (20:3, 4).
2. Worship God only (20:5, 6).
3. Use God’s name in ways that honor Him (20:7).
4. Rest on the Sabbath day and think about God (20:8–11).
5. Respect and obey your parents (20:12).
6. Protect and respect human life (20:13).
7. Be true to your husband or wife (20:14).
8. Do not take what belongs to others (20:15).
9. Do not lie about others (20:16).
10. Be satisfied with what you have (20:17).

About 1,300 years after God gave these commandments, Jesus upheld them. He actually placed these laws on a higher plane, demanding that the spirit, as well as the legal aspects, of the laws be observed. He placed His stamp of approval on the commandments by declaring, “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill” (Matt. 5:17).

The Code of Hammurabi, an ancient law code named after an early king of Babylonia, bears many similarities to the Ten Commandments. However, the Law given at Mount Sinai reflects a high view of the nature of God and His holiness and His requirements of His people.