

END-TIMES ISSUES



#107 Commandment #7 – Marriage and procreation.

GOD DOESN'T TELL US TO KNOW ALL THE END-TIME DETAILS. HE TELLS US TO BE READY.

A N D B E Y O N D I

THE IMMEDIATE FOCUS VS. THE PRINCIPLE.

- **The Fifth Commandment:** "Honor your father and mother."
 - ✓ **Immediate:** Honor and respect for one's parents. [Note: "Father and mother" echoes God's affirmation of marriage in Genesis 2.]
 - ✓ **Principle:** Honor and respect in *all* relationships, and in one's attitude toward God. (Applied in various ways, depending on one's relationship to the other: as an authority, a subordinate, or an equal.)
- **The Sixth Commandment:** "You shall not murder."
 - ✓ **Immediate:** A prohibition against destroying people. The focus is on humans as *individuals*. This commandment has to do with "the sanctity of life."
 - ✓ **Principle:** The need to do nothing that tears down or destroys other people; the need to do only what builds them up.

- **The Seventh Commandment:** "You shall not commit adultery."
 - ✓ **Immediate:** A prohibition against violating the marriage relationship. The focus is on humans as "*male-female units*." This commandment has to do with "the sanctity of marriage."
 - ✓ **Principle:** The moral qualities which are required by this commandment – such as faithfulness and purity – also apply to other relationships, including our relationship with God.

✦ This commandment is our current focus. ✦

- This commandment focuses on the marriage relationship, which has as its foundation the very nature of God. Specifically, it is a *picture* of the relationship that exists between Father, Son and Holy Spirit, which includes both:
 - ✓ An intimate oneness, with complete, unbroken fellowship.
 - ✓ Differentiation in function, though equal in essence.

✦ Concerning what God has revealed about his nature. ✦

THERE WAS LIMITED REVELATION IN GENESIS.

- **The early accounts in Genesis** are *summaries* of various events. We don't fully know what the people did or didn't understand about the nature of God, though we can be certain that they didn't know all that we know *today*.
 - ✓ These accounts briefly mention *many* issues that are not fully explained until later. (The nature of God is just one of many.)
- **We should not be surprised** that we do not find the full explanation of the nature of God in Genesis. That would come later – with some revelation in the Old Testament, and further revelation in the New Testament.
- **Not knowing such details** did not in any way inhibit their ability to obey and glorify God! In all ages, people knew their obligation. God progressively revealed more about *why* the obligation exists – and this knowledge has increased our responsibility to obey. (It has also increased the severity of judgment for those who don't obey.)

FURTHER REVELATION OF THIS CONCEPT BEGAN IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

TWO OF THE WAYS:

- **The ways that God revealed himself in the Old Testament.**
 - ✓ God revealed himself as one who *cannot* be seen – and attempting to see him would result in death – Exodus 33:20. When present, the fullness of his glory would be hidden by fire and smoke – Exodus 3:1-6; 19:16-20; Deuteronomy 4:10-16; etc.
 - ✓ God also revealed himself in a *visible* way, often as "the angel of the LORD" (who is described as looking like a man) – Exodus 24:9-11; Isaiah 6:1; Judges 13:21-22; Genesis 16:7-13; etc. Sometimes, the terms "the LORD" and "the Angel of the LORD" are used *interchangeably*.
 - ✓ **The New Testament** gives further explanation of this. God reveals himself in Jesus Christ – John 1:1, 14, 18; Colossians 2:9; Philippians 2:5-6; Hebrews 1:8; etc. We also learn that Jesus is identified as the Old Testament *visible* manifestation of God – John 12:40-10 (referring to Isaiah 6:1-10).

- **The "Shema"** (the most basic statement of the Israelite faith) either *directly implies* the plurality/diversity aspect of God, or *prepares the way* for it in later revelation. (Opinions vary as to its specific emphasis.)

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, **the LORD is One.**

Deuteronomy 6:4 (BSB)

There are two Hebrew words for the English word "one." The word *not* used here would be a denial of the concept; the word that *is* used here implies the concept, or at least allows for it.

- ✓ **yachid [יָחִיד]** – the word **NOT** used here – refers to "one" as being unique, solitary, alone, the *only* one. It can refer to being isolated or lonely. When referring to an only child, it can mean "only begotten." *This word does not imply plurality in the unity.*
 - ❖ Interestingly, when this word was translated into Greek (2nd to 3rd centuries BC), they sometimes used the *same* word that was later used to describe Jesus, as the "only begotten" or "unique" Son of God (as in John 3:16)!

- ✓ 'ehād [אֶחָד] – the word that **IS used here** – can have the notion of uniqueness or oneness; but it generally stresses unity *while recognizing diversity within it*. This fits perfectly with the concept of God being both "one" and "a compound unity" (or "a unity with plurality," i.e., Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as revealed in the New Testament).
 - ✓ Scholars are divided in opinion over which stress ("oneness" or "unity that implies diversity") is the best for the context of Deuteronomy 6:4. But either way, God chose to use *this* word for "one" (instead of the other) – to either *emphasize* the diversity aspect, or else to *prepare the way* for what Scripture would later reveal about the diversity aspect. (The *other* word would not have allowed for this!)
 - ❖ Interestingly, this word for "one" is the *same* word used to describe *the union of male and female*, in Genesis 2:24: the two shall become "*one* flesh."
- The word translated as "God" is *also* plural – which can also point to diversity, or at least prepare the way for what Scripture would later say about this issue!

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THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT.

- Since marriage is designed to be a reflection of the very nature of God, *any violation of that relationship is an offense, and an indirect attack on God*. This is why God gave us this commandment:

You shall not commit adultery.

Exodus 20:14 (BSB);
also in Deuteronomy 5:18

- **The marriage relationship is so serious, that God calls it a covenant** – and violating this covenant has *serious consequences*.
- ✓ **In Proverbs**, God describes the adulteress as one who has ignored the covenant she made before God. Those who go after her are led down the path of death.
- ✓ **In Malachi**, God warns us that when a man is unfaithful to his wife, God will reject the man's religious devotion. It will also have a serious effect on their offspring. Such activities are often associated with divorce, which God describes as *an act of violence*.

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[The adulterous woman,] who has **left the partner of her youth** and **ignored the covenant** she made before God.

WARNING!!
There are serious consequences!

Surely her house leads down to **death** and her paths to **the spirits of the dead**.

None who go to her return or attain the paths of life.

Proverbs 2:17-19 (NIV)

WARNING!!
There are serious consequences!

You cover the LORD's altar with tears, with weeping and crying; because **he pays no attention** to your offerings, nor accepts them with pleasure from your hand.

You ask, "Why not?"

WHAT HAS THE LORD WITNESSED?

Because **the LORD has been a witness** between you and the wife of your youth.

Malachi 2:13b-14a (DHT)

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HE HAS WITNESSED THIS:

You have **broken faith** with her, though she is **your companion, the wife of your marriage covenant**.

This points back to the Genesis account.

Didn't he make them one, united in body and spirit? And why one? Because he wanted them to have **godly offspring**.

So guard your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth.

For "I hate **divorce**," says the Lord God of Israel, and "I hate when a person covers his garment with **violence**," says the Lord Almighty. **So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith.**

Malachi 2:14b-16 (DHT)

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- *Wrong attitudes* toward one's spouse, a violation of the *Fifth Commandment*, can also have serious consequences – as seen in 1 Peter 3:7 (also implied in vs. 1-2).

- **Is divorce really an act of violence?** YES! It's tearing apart something that God has united into *one* entity! God says: "Don't do it!"

Jesus answered, "Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'?"

So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

Matthew 19:4-6 (BSB)

- The Old Testament law *does* contain some regulations pertaining to divorce. But those regulations were given to place limits on people who had *hard hearts* – Matthew 19:8.

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- **The Malachi passage also points to another reason for marriage:** The creation of *godly* offspring.

Didn't he make them one, united in body and spirit? And why one? Because he wanted them to have **godly offspring**.

Malachi 2:15a (DHT)

- ✓ **God's purpose** in marriage included the creation of additional image-bearers (children), who would grow up and get married (i.e., would form "male-female units") and share in ruling over creation in a way that displayed the glory of God.
- ✓ **Because of sin**, almost 100% of the human race fails to do this. Parents do not love God, and they do not teach their children to love God. Those who *do* love God have the entire world (and the children's sinful natures) fighting against them. And many who *claim* to love God don't take God's commands seriously.

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HERE, WE GET TO THE ISSUE OF PROCREATION

God blessed them and said to them, "**Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth** and subdue it."

Genesis 1:28a (NIV)

- **This concept has become so distorted** from its original intent, that it is sometimes difficult to talk about it, without wrong responses. Since this distortion *permeates* society – the society we live in – it can be difficult to view this topic properly, *even when we want to*.
- **The act of procreation** has been torn completely out of its holy intent, and is now treated as a joke, a form of entertainment, a weapon, a type of exploitation, a bargaining tool, a method of self-gratification, and countless other distortions and perversions.
- **The offspring of this act** are often treated as inconveniences, or even as disposable – murdering them before they have a chance to be born. And even when this doesn't happen, the parents almost *never* train their children in the way that God requires them to.

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MARRIAGE AND SEXUAL ACTIVITY.

- **God created marriage** as a *permanent* covenant commitment. It is *not* an arbitrary cultural invention that can be ignored or changed.
 - ✓ This commitment is to involve the *whole* person. It's a union that involves both body and soul.
 - ✓ Unlike certain philosophies of the world, God considers the body to be important. It's not a matter of the soul being important and the body being less (or not) important. That is why God plans to resurrect our bodies at the future resurrection.
- **God created sexual activity** to be an expression of this union – an expression that involves the body, as well as the soul.
 - ✓ He did *not* create it to be simply a matter of satisfying physical urges, but to be an act of holy obedience. Since we are made in God's image, it is *not* to be a blind response to impulses, but something that is under the control of the will.

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GOD CREATED LIVING THINGS TO REPRODUCE.

In many (not all) cases, this involves a union of male and female. When it does, **there are differences** between the various life forms.

- **Plants do it as a physical process** – a mechanical transfer of pollen to the ovary, often accomplished by the actions of something else (such as an insect, or wind).
- **Animals do it by instinct** – going through certain motions, without understanding why; and often limited to certain times of the year.
- **Humans were created to do it by moral choice** – not a response to blind impulses, but a conscious act of the will, with the awareness of what they are doing, and why.
 - ✓ It is only after sin entered the world, that humans began trying to do it like animals (yet without the restraint that most animals have), or even like plants.
 - ✓ When humans distort what God has created and blessed, it becomes a curse – and often an *enslaving* sin.

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VIOLATING THIS COMMAND IS A SIN AGAINST GOD.

- Since marriage and procreation were designed to be a *reflection* or *picture* of God's intimacy (as Father, Son and Holy Spirit), violating the marriage relationship is a mockery of the God, who's nature it is designed to reflect. *It is a sin against God, even more than it is a sin against people.*

"How then could I do such a wicked thing and **sin against God?**"

Genesis 39:9b (NIV)

- Violating this relationship should be considered as *unthinkable* and *repulsive* as the idea that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit could break up their relationship, and each go after something else that is *not* God. No wonder God hates it so much!
- Violating this command also has devastating consequences for *people* – some obvious to all; some not quickly recognized by those who have rejected God's Word and have become slaves to sin.

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RESPONDING TO THESE ISSUES

Scripture has a consistent message throughout Scripture. How do people respond to it?

CAN SAVED PEOPLE CONTINUE TO VIOLATE THIS COMMANDMENT? YES AND NO!

- It is **possible** for a saved person to violate this command. But there will be long term consequences, sometimes disastrous. Furthermore, those who try this will often find it *easier to repeat* the sin – which is also disastrous, because:
- It is **impossible** for it to be an ongoing practice. Those who choose to continue committing this sin should be questioning their salvation. Such conduct is *not* the expression of a changed heart – which God places in *all* saved people. Your only hope, if you have already sinned, is to repent and learn to obey God, rather than continue in rebellion against him. He makes this obedience possible (Philippians 2:13); but you must be *willing* to obey.

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Anyone born of God **refuses to practice sin**, because God's seed abides in him; **he cannot go on sinning**, because he has been born of God.

By this the children of God are distinguished from the children of the devil: Anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is anyone who does not love his brother.

1 John 3:9-10 (BSB)

- **What about grace?** There are those who pretend that God's "grace" *allows* a person to go on sinning. They *ignore* that grace, if genuine, *teaches* people to *not* sin.

I'M UNDER GRACE, SO I CAN SIN ALL I WANT AND STILL BE FORGIVEN!

It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, ...

Titus 2:12 (NIV)

They are **ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God** into a license for immorality ...

Jude 1:4b (NIV)

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WHAT ABOUT THE WICKED AND UNSAVED CHURCH-GOERS?

- You can expect them to hate and attack the teachings of the 7th Commandment. Or at least ignore them. Church-goers may use a distorted concept "grace," in order to excuse their sin
- Today, in the present-day apostasy, not only is there *opposition* to what Scripture says, but people actively *distort* the very concepts Scripture uses to describe these matters – concepts related to marriage, as well as to male-female relationships.
 - ✓ People who do this lose the ability to read the Bible, without *misinterpreting* it. Their only hope is to *unlearn* the lie that the world has taught and *relearn* what the Scripture concepts actually mean – *and few are willing to do this.*

The world's influence permeates *all* aspects of society. Even *saved* people have to fight its influence. God enables us to do to, if we are willing to let Scripture change our thinking. (This is part of what it means to pursue the "renewed mind" of Romans 12:2.)

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WHAT DO WE FIND IN SCRIPTURE?

- Regarding the people in Scripture: Responses vary, depending on the extent that the people were influenced by Scripture. There are:
 - ✓ The wicked, who refused to live according to God's standards.
 - ✓ Followers of God who, to varying degrees, aligned their conduct to God's standards.
 - ✓ People who seemed to be following God, but who's lives were *inconsistent* with God's standards (whether due to ignorance, or to still being partly under the world's influence).
- Regarding the teaching of Scripture: There is a consistent theme in this matter, and it is often linked to holiness and godly conduct.
 - ✓ Our ability to recognize this may depend on the degree that we have been influenced by the *world's definitions* of the concepts.
 - ✓ This doesn't always match the conduct of individuals – even those who appear to be used by God to accomplish good things. People are often inconsistent. God may use them, *in spite of* their sin, not *because of* it.

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WHAT DO WE NEED TO DO??

- We need to get our views from Scripture, not the world. (We also need to recognize the way the world *distorts* these concepts, as they attempt to make something that is *good* appear to be *evil*.)
 - ✓ Recognize that Scripture does say these things. There is no significant question regarding the Seventh Commandment and what it means. *The issue isn't what it teaches, but our willingness to accept what it teaches.*
 - ✓ Pursue what Scripture says – not just *learning* what it says, but *following* it in our lives.
 - ✓ Don't be surprised when we see people *not* living 100% according to Scripture. But don't follow their example! We need to base our conduct on what Scripture says, not on what *people* do.
 - ✓ Realize the imperfections (sins) of both men and women, and the fact that *nobody* is 100% sinless in this matter. It is a sin to *yield* to temptation; but it is also a sin to *tempt* – Matthew 18:7; Luke 17:1. *Both* will result in God's judgment.

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OUR MISSION

✚ **RECOGNIZE** the views of the world and **OPPOSE** them.

✚ **LEARN** what Scripture says and **FOLLOW** it!

IT WILL TAKE EFFORT TO SUCCEED IN DOING THIS.
Our attitude and actions toward this issue have been influenced by the presence of sin in the world – not just our own sins and the specific sins of others, but also the very existence of sin in general.
 We may need to *unlearn* false perspectives and *reinterpret* passages we have wrongly understood (because of what the world has taught us). We may also have to *change* conduct that the world has taught us to accept.

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Credits

SCRIPTURE

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HEBREW WORDS FOR "ONE"

- For those who are interested, the Strong's Concordance numbers, which can be used to locate other Scripture passages that contain the two Hebrew words for "one," are #265 (*ehad*) and #8173 (*yachid*).

PICTURES (original sources; modifications may have been made)

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