

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS “The Two Tables”

Heb 5:12

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. KJV

Once more, we want to emphasize that the law of God is milk. It is a basic doctrine by which to grow. To teach milk is no slight. Simply because one has grown enough to handle the meat of the word does not mean that milk should no longer be ingested. We need a balanced diet.

1 Peter 1:23-2:2 NIV

23 For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

24 For, "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall,

25 but the word of the Lord stands forever." And this is the word that was preached to you.

1 Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.

2 Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, [KJV – *that you may grow thereby.*]

*Being born again, we are to crave (Greek **epipotheo**, to long for, pursue with love, lust after) the milk of the word. It causes us to grow up in our salvation.*

We've examined the two mountains, Mt. Sinai and Mt. Zion. We will be examining the law of God from both of these mountain tops in the course of this series. Today, we want to examine the two tables of the law.

Ex 24:12

12 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Come up to Me on the mountain and be there; and I will give you tablets of stone, and the law and commandments which I have written, that you may teach them." NKJV

The purpose for the writing of the tablets (expressed with the word THAT) was the teaching of the law. Remember the purpose of the audible voice of God (near compatible to the utterance manifestations in the church)?

Ex 19:9

The LORD said to Moses, "I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, so that the people will hear me speaking with you and will always put their trust in you." Then Moses told the LORD what the people had said. NIV

1 Cor 14:24-25

24 But if an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying, he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all, 25 and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, "God is really among you!" NIV

The spoken prophecy convinces unbelievers that God is truly in our midst. This is why God spoke audibly from the mountain, that the people would trust that Moses indeed walked with God.

John 12:27-30

27 "Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. 28 Father, glorify your name!" Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again." 29 The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him. 30 Jesus said, "This voice was for your benefit, not mine." NIV

*Sometimes we long for the audible voice of God. When we hear of such occurrences, we think, "My, those people must be very spiritual." But to hear God speak audibly with your **physical** ears is not primarily a spiritual experience. It is heard in the flesh, after all. God did not leave His law to the uncertainty and temporality of oral expression and tradition.*

Hab 2:2

Then the LORD replied: "Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it. NIV

2 Peter 1:17-21

17 For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." 18 We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. 19 And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. 20 Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. 21 For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. NIV

The written word of God is a more sure word of prophecy. But as we have seen, this word is not simply written on stone or paper. It is written on our hearts.

2 Cor 3:3

clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart. NKJV

The Apostle Paul makes a direct comparison between the tablets of stone and the tablets of the heart. If it is a comparison that the Holy Spirit felt worth mentioning, then it must be a comparison worth understanding. In juxtaposing the two, we not only get a comparison (like to like) but a contrast as well (the conjunction used is "but"). In order to do this, though, we have to have some factual understanding of both types of tablets.

Ex 24:12-18

12 The LORD said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain and stay here, and I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and commands I have written for their instruction."

13 Then Moses set out with Joshua his aide, and Moses went up on the mountain of God.

14 He said to the elders, "Wait here for us until we come back to you. Aaron and Hur are with you, and anyone involved in a dispute can go to them."

15 When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it,

16 and the glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai. For six days the cloud covered the mountain, and on the seventh day the LORD called to Moses from within the cloud.

17 To the Israelites the glory of the LORD looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain.

18 Then Moses entered the cloud as he went on up the mountain. And he stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights. NIV

Heb 12:29 for our "God is a consuming fire." NIV

Ex 31:18

When the LORD finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of the Testimony, the **tablets** of stone inscribed by the finger of God. NIV

*For reasons I am unaware of, the tablets of the law have often been represented in a tombstone shape. The Hebrew word used is **luwach**, which means "a board, a slab, a tablet, a plank." The use of this word in Scripture may give us some clue as to their shape.*

Ex 27:8 NIV

Make the altar hollow, out of **boards**. It is to be made just as you were shown on the mountain.

1 Kings 7:36

For on the **plates** of the ledges thereof, and on the borders thereof, he graved cherubims, lions, and palm trees, according to the proportion of every one, and additions round about. KJV

Both the boards of the altar of burnt offering in the Tabernacle and the metal plates on the sides of the stands for the lavers in the Temple were flat and rectangular (both, by the way, are articles of cleansing, thus pointing to the necessity of the water and the blood to survive the mandate of the law).

The first two tablets were hewn by God and written on by His finger. Their destination was the Ark of the Covenant (thus its name). Based on the external measurements of the ark given in Exodus 37:10 (2.5 cubits long x 1.5 wide x 1.5 high) and supposing the boards were at least an inch thick, the internal dimensions of the ark could have been 2' 10" long x 18" wide x 19" deep. If we are to allow ample space for the golden pot of manna to be in the ark, the tablets were at most 2' x 18".

Ex 32:15-16

15 And Moses turned and went down from the mountain, and the two **tablets** of the Testimony were in his hand. The **tablets** were written on both sides; on the one side and on the other they were written.

16 Now the **tablets** were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God engraved on the **tablets**. NKJV

*The Hebrew word **luwach** comes from a root word which means to polish or to glisten. Note that verse 15 states that Moses came off the mountain with the tablets (plural) in his hand (singular). I believe that the images we have received through paintings, drawings, and film of a Moses struggling down the mountain with two heavy, rough hewn tombstones cradled in his arms is Biblically incorrect. These were polished stones (the work of God, both the raw material and its carving and polishing), more than likely rectangular in shape, engraved on both sides by the finger of God. They were light enough for an eighty-year-old man to carry them down a rough mountain in one hand.*

Two is the Biblical number of witness or testimony (John 8:17-18). In keeping with ancient Near East customs, each tablet was a copy of the covenant, one for Israel and one for the Lord. That the words of Exodus 20 are the text of the tablets is testified to by Deuteronomy 10:4.

Deut 10:4

The LORD wrote on these tablets what he had written before, the Ten Commandments he had proclaimed to you on the mountain, out of the fire, on the day of the assembly. And the LORD gave them to me. NIV

I believe that the most valid division of the laws on each face of each tablet is five and five. As we shall see, the first five laws deal with our duty to God (love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength – Mark 12:39-30; Deut. 6:4-5). The last five deal with our duty to man (love your neighbor as yourself – Mark 12:31; Lev. 19:18).

[**Note:** This is based on honoring parents as a practical discipline of the fear of the Lord. Numerically, this would divide out to 5 and 5, grace to grace. Were one to place the fifth commandment under duty to man, this would make the division 4 and 6, creation and man. Four proceeds from three (Godhead) and is dependent thereon. Thus 4 = creation's relation to Creator, 6 = man's duty to man.]

One obvious observation that can be made about stone is that it is rigid and brittle.

Ex 32:17-19

17 When Joshua heard the noise of the people shouting, he said to Moses, "There is the sound of war in the camp."

18 Moses replied: "It is not the sound of victory, it is not the sound of defeat; it is the sound of singing that I hear."

19 When Moses approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, his anger burned and he threw the tablets out of his hands, breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain. NIV

And so, Moses became the first to break the Ten Commandments! The Lord remedied the consequence of this action by having Moses come up to the mountain again.

Ex 34:1-2

1 The LORD said to Moses, "Chisel out two stone tablets like the first ones, and I will write on them the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke.

2 Be ready in the morning, and then come up on Mount Sinai. Present yourself to me there on top of the mountain. NIV

The Lord said that He would write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets. We need to clarify a possible misunderstanding we may have about this second set of tablets.

Ex 34:28

Moses was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights without eating bread or drinking water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant--the Ten Commandments. NIV

Based on verse 1, the he of "he wrote" must refer to the Lord and not Moses.

Deut 10:4-5

4 The LORD wrote on these tablets what he had written before, the Ten Commandments he had proclaimed to you on the mountain, out of the fire, on the day of the assembly. And the LORD gave them to me.

5 Then I came back down the mountain and put the tablets in the ark I had made, as the LORD commanded me, and they are there now. NIV

What is the significance of all this? First, the Lord carves the stones and engraves them. The second time, He has Moses care the stones and then He engraves them. At the least common denominator, the Lord made both stones by virtue of having created the stone in the first place. God formed man out of the dust of the ground. Adam was perfect, the law of God written in his heart. But Adam sinned, breaking the first set of stones, if you will. Now, we must bring our hearts to God to have Him engrave His law on them.

So much for the insight on the physical stones. As we read in 2 Corinthians 3, these stones are juxtaposed (laid along side) the tablets of the heart. Tablets of the heart are not a new concept in Scripture.

Jer 17:1

"Judah's sin is engraved with an iron tool, inscribed with a flint point, on the tablets of their hearts and on the horns of their altars. NIV

Here is the crux of the problem, our sins are engraved on the tablets of our hearts. These hearts are called hearts of stone.

Ezek 36:26-27

26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

27 And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. NIV

In that 2 Corinthians tells us that the epistle is written on the fleshly tables of the heart, then some sort of heart surgery must have gone on. This is the major difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.

Jer 31:31-34

31 "The time is coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.

32 It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the LORD.

33 "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

34 No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." NIV

"I will put my law in their minds" =

Rom 7:25

I thank God--through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin. NKJV

1 Cor 2:16

"For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ. NIV

"Write it upon their hearts" =

Heb 10:12-17

12 But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.

13 Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool,

14 because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

15 The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says:

16 "This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds."

17 Then he adds: "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more." NIV

As we looked at the physical stones upon which the law was written, we need to look at the physical heart before we go on to the spiritual contrasts.

The heart has two sides, left and right, each divided into two chambers, the atrium and the ventricle. Blood fills both atria, which contract, pushing the blood into the ventricle, which contract, sending the blood out through the veins and arteries. Very simple. When we examine the heart as an organ in the context of the circulatory system, we begin to see why God compared it to the tables of stone.

TABLE OF COMPARISON	
Tablets of Stone	Tablets of the Heart
Two tablets	-Two sides
Two sides per tablet	-Two chambers per side
1 st laws (duty to God, vertical) Mark 12:29-30	-Upper chamber, atrium (vertical)
2 nd laws (duty to man, horizontal) Mark 12:31	-Lower chamber, ventricle (horizontal)
Two copies of one covenant	-Two types of blood in one heart
One copy for man	-Deoxygenated blood, right side (veins)
One copy for God	-Oxygenated blood, left side (arteries) *blood must flow through lungs (spirit) to have oxygen.
Duty of the law is vertical first, "love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength."	-Blood flows into the atria first.
Second duty of the law is horizontal and flows from the first duty ("the second is like unto it, love your neighbor as yourself"0.	-Blood flows from the atria into the ventricles and then out to the body.
Two is the number of witness.	-His Spirit bears witness with our spirit (heart).

TABLE OF CONTRAST (2 Cor. 3:1-18)¹	
Tablets of Stone	Tablets of the Heart
Tablets of stone	-Tablets of the heart
Written with the finger of God	-Written with the Spirit of God
Ministration of death	-Ministration of life
The letter killeth	-The Spirit giveth life
Glory to be done away	-Glory which is greater to remain
The Old Covenant	-The New Covenant
Ministration of condemnation	-Ministration of righteousness
Veil on the face of Moses	-No veil; may behold His face; be changed
Done away, abolished	-That which remaineth

¹ K. Connor, K. Malmin, *Interpreting the Scriptures*, BT Publishing, Portland, OR, ©1983, p. 53

Understanding the two tables, we also need to understand the differences of conscience, commandment, and conviction. These lead men into the grace of God like steps of ascent into His Temple.

Conscience-

Rom 2:14-15

14(Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law,

15 since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.) NIV

One could call conscience the highest instinct of man. Referred to once "as the law of nature," it is the intrinsic knowledge in the heart of man of the distinction between right and wrong. No culture has ever made a virtue of murder, lying, stealing, or adultery. Because God has written this code in the heart of man, man knows within himself the basic framework of right and wrong.

Commandment-

Rom 7:1-14

1 Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives?

2 For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband.

3 So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man.

4 Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another-- to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.

5 For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death.

6 But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.

7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet."

8 But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead.

9 I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.

10 And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death.

11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me.

12 Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.

13 Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful.

14 For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. NKJV

The commandment defined the reality of conscience by specifying the requirements of a holy God. When one looks at the law, it exposes the sin in one's heart. Man begins to understand that all the law requires and speaks against is at once impossible for him to accomplish and evil is present with him at all times.

The law exacerbates the voice of conscience by defining the reality of its requirements. When we take something that is not ours, our conscience may prick us. But if we have been taught "thou shalt not steal" and then take something that is not ours, our conscience screams at us. The dilemma is that at the very same time that our conscience may be screaming, our flesh reads "thou shalt not steal" and immediately begins to think of things that it can take. Before the onslaught of requirement and sin, man is helpless.

Conviction-

John 16:7-11

- 7 But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.
8 When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment:
9 in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me;
10 in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer;
11 and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned. NIV

Jer 31:34

No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." NIV

1 John 2:27-29

- 27 As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit-just as it has taught you, remain in him.
28 And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming.
29 If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him. NIV

Conscience can be overcome (a seared conscience is the result). The commandment is external to man and easily broken. But the Holy Spirit continually abides within us and convicts of sin, righteousness, and judgment. This is an inward work in the heart of the believer. To the extent that we heed and obey the voice of the Spirit of God is the extent that Jesus is Lord in our lives.

These principles of conscience, commandment, and conviction do not cancel each other out. When Moses came off the mountain with the Ten Commandments, the consciences of men did not fall silent. When the Holy Spirit came in regenerating power, the requirements of the holy law of God did not go away, rather their fulfillment was made possible. These aspects build one on

another. It is a study of laws and higher laws (like the law of aerodynamics is used to supersede the law of gravity).

The Lord's inscription of His law on our hearts was a work of grace. Now, as His followers, it behooves us to write that law in our souls. Most often, heart in Scripture refers to the spirit of man. But our physical being has a heart as does our soul.

Prov 7:1-3

1 My son, keep my words and store up my commands within you.

2 Keep my commands and you will live; guard my teachings as the apple of your eye.

3 Bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart. NIV

Prov 3:1-7

1 My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart,

2 for they will prolong your life many years and bring you prosperity.

3 Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart.

4 Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man.

5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;

6 in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil. NIV

May we retain a healthy conscience that obeys the tenants of His Ten Commandments through the power of His Holy Spirit. Amen!