

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS, PART 4

EXODUS 20:16-21

The next commandment to examine concerns bearing false witness.

Exodus 20:16 16“¹⁶You shall not bear [עֲנֶה] false [שָׁקֵר] witness [עֵד] against your neighbor [רֵעַ].

This has to do with judicial types of proceedings. Without a fair system in place to adjudicate disputes, society would be unstable and impossible to sustain for the good of all people. Men would take justice into their own hands and impartiality could not exist. Everyone would do what he thought was the thing to do regardless of whether or not it was fair or just or correct. That is a recipe for anarchy.

Bear, also translated give, עֲנֶה, means to answer, to respond, to reply, or to testify. Legally, it has the sense of being a witness to or about something, to be a witness against, or to testify. False, שָׁקֵר, means to deceive or to present a misleading falsehood; it is a state or condition which is utterly false and causes a mistaken belief. It carries the connotation of acting in a deceptive manner. We would ordinarily think of this as a verbal communication which is misleading at best but usually completely and knowingly untrue. Witness, עֵד, refers to a witness or testimony; it is the giving of evidence in a formal legal setting. Neighbor, רֵעַ, can have a broad meaning and it can carry a more restrictive meaning. It refers to a fellow countryman or a neighbor; it references one who is of the same race or social/geographical group. This word has a wide variety of uses and it really

refers to a second party in a personal interaction without specifying any particular relationship. It may be used in a friendly relationship or it may be used of one involved in an adversarial relationship. In the context of the Ten Words, it is referring to anyone who is the object of testimony in some sort of fact finding, legal situation where truth is of the utmost importance in terms of arriving at a just resolution concerning the issue at hand. This commandment almost certainly also applies to the sojourner among them if they happen to become subject to Israelite justice while in the land. The use of the concept of neighbor, lends a personal note to this commandment. Lying about a person or his circumstances can cause harm to him in various ways. It can incite people against him, damage his reputation, cost him business and money, and damage his personal relationships among other things and all of that is still applicable today.

Leviticus expands what it means to bear false witness by including the failure to tell what one knows, if it has any bearing on the dispute.

Leviticus 5:1 ¹'Now if a person sins after he hears a public adjuration *to testify* when he is a witness, whether he has seen or *otherwise* known, if he does not tell *it*, then he will bear his guilt.

Knowingly presenting false information which leads the arbiter away from the truth is obviously devious and immoral making it prohibited conduct, but withholding information can negatively affect the outcome of a judicial proceeding as well because the arbiter has incomplete information on one side of the issue or the other. That prevents a just resolution which makes withholding facts as much an unacceptable practice in the sight of God as is lying.

Deuteronomy also contains provisions for dealing with those who bear false witness in a judicial proceeding.

Deuteronomy 19:16–20 16“If a malicious witness rises up against a man to accuse him of wrongdoing, 17then both the men who have the dispute shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges who will be *in office* in those days. 18“The judges shall investigate thoroughly, and if the witness is a false witness *and* he has accused his brother falsely, 19then you shall do to him just as he had intended to do to his brother. Thus you shall purge the evil from among you. 20“The rest will hear and be afraid, and will never again do such an evil thing among you.

Obviously, the Lord established a legal system for the resolution of disputes among the Israelites and the judges were to “investigate thoroughly,” but they couldn’t do that unless they received a full, factual account of the dispute. If a witness or a party to the dispute was found to be either lying or withholding pertinent information, they were to suffer the penalty the otherwise innocent party would have suffered if he had been found guilty or liable based on that false information. The assumption seems to be that if one was not guilty he would have no need to lie or withhold information. That may or may not have been true in practice. Punishing the untruthful one should serve as an example for other potential witnesses to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

Some expositors believe this commandment is referring to lying in general, but the context suggests a judicial proceeding is in view and other biblical revelation reveals a prohibition on lying. Lying is certainly an element of this commandment as it pertains to untruthful testimony, but to make it only about lying in general is an expansion of the command that is not in the text. Here is an ex-

ample of a commentary that presents that position. This is the entire entry and judicial proceedings are not even mentioned. "The Lord is a God of truth. He loves truth (because He loves Himself) and He 'hates every false way' (cf. Ps. 119:104, 128). Lying is a denial that truth is always right. It is a denial of God's character and of His attributes. Without truth-telling the whole social structure will fail. This command prohibits blatant lies, any conscious deceptions, and unsubstantiated assertions (i.e., gossip and rumor)."¹ All this is quite true, but Dr. Zuber turned the commandment into a commandment about lying without even mentioning the judicial context. Others believe the emphasis is not as much on the provision of false testimony that corrupts the judicial proceedings, as it is on the harm it does to the person who suffers injustice due to the lie. There is also truth in this assertion, but again the judicial context cannot be removed from the commandment. Certainly, the prohibition against lying is an obvious component of this commandment, but it is not the totality of the meaning and it is not the primary emphasis. Untruthfulness is a lesser included offense in the commission of perjury in a judicial inquiry. The primary concern of this commandment was maintaining the integrity of the judicial system which is foundational for maintaining the integrity of society.

We do also have to acknowledge that people can unknowingly present an untruth as truth, if they think it is, in fact, true. That's where evidence and other witnesses come into play so the arbiter can weigh the facts and arrive at a

¹ Kevin D. Zuber, "Exodus," *The Moody Bible Commentary*, gen. eds. Michael Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2014), 143-144.

just conclusion. The problem is at that point in history, personal testimony was the most common form of testimony, and the Israelites needed to know that while they might fool a human judge with a lie, they wouldn't fool their God.

One of the issues to keep in mind concerning lying is Satan is the father of lies and we really shouldn't be dabbling in the things of Satan.

John 8:44 44“You are of *your* father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *nature*, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

The last commandment refers to coveting.

Exodus 20:17 17“You shall not covet [קַמַּד] your neighbor's house; you shall not covet [קַמַּד] your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”

Covet, קַמַּד, means to take pleasure in, to desire, to lust, to covet, to be desirable, or to desire passionately.

Contrary to what most people seem to think, this commandment is not an all-encompassing prohibition on coveting or desiring anything at all. There are good and proper things to covet or desire to have in one's life. Coveting a closer, stronger walk with the Lord is a good form of coveting. A desire to know the Bible well and working to achieve that knowledge is a good form of coveting and so on. Coveting that which is good is therefore not prohibited, but coveting that which belongs to someone else is not good and therefore prohibited. Considering the other commandments in light of this one as a complete unit, sug-

gests that coveting things which are morally wrong and violate any other law are also always wrong to covet.

This commandment prohibits coveting anything that rightly, properly belongs to another person. The commandment prohibits coveting another's house which includes the family and those people associated with it to include servants (employees), the personal possessions of the family, and the curtilage (property) surrounding the house. Whatever belongs to someone else is not to be coveted; to do so is a violation of this commandment. It specifically prohibits coveting the spouse of another person. It prohibits coveting their animals which in that agricultural economy suggests the implements they used to make a living and to provide transportation.

When God told the Israelites they were to appear before Him three times a year, He promised not only to drive the people out of the land He was giving them but to keep other nations from coveting their land if they faithfully obeyed Him.

Exodus 34:23–24 ²³“Three times a year all your males are to appear before the Lord GOD, the God of Israel. ²⁴“For I will drive out nations before you and enlarge your borders, and no man shall covet [קַמַּד] your land when you go up three times a year to appear before the LORD your God.

Just before going into the land, God ordered the Israelites to burn the idols of the people they conquered there, and they were not to keep the gold and silver that melted out of them.

Deuteronomy 7:25²⁵“The graven images of their gods you are to burn with fire; you shall not covet [קָמַד] the silver or the gold that is on them, nor take it for yourselves, or you will be snared by it, for it is an abomination to the LORD your God.

Coveting and stealing the prohibited spoils of war got Achan in a lot of trouble at Jericho.

Joshua 7:21 ²¹when I saw among the spoil a beautiful mantle from Shinar and two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold fifty shekels in weight, then I coveted [קָמַד] them and took them; and behold, they are concealed in the earth inside my tent with the silver underneath it.”

There is nothing difficult about understanding what it means to covet. The command is likewise not difficult to understand; to simply say it, don't desire other people's stuff. Work for whatever you want and get it honestly and ethically for yourself. Coveting puts a desire into the heart that is unhealthy and just as Achan was led to destruction by coveting, we can be taken down a harmful path when we engage in that sin.

The Greek word used for the Hebrew קָמַד is ἐπιθυμέω meaning to greatly desire to do or to have something. It is translated into English as either “desire” or “covet” and “desire” is how the *Lexham English Septuagint* translates it in Exodus 20:17. The Greek may be translated as to desire (Ex. 34:24; Dt. 7:25), to covet (Joshua 7:21), or to lust. In this context, these words are used as synonyms.

The point is when something gets into the mind and develops into a strong desire, it can manifest itself as sin if it isn't controlled and put out of the mind. James dealt with this issue.

James 1:14–15 ¹⁴But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust [ἐπιθυμέω]. ¹⁵Then when lust [ἐπιθυμέω] has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

All these words—covet, desire, lust—are expressing the same concept which is the harboring of a strong desire for something. When that strong desire is for something that is improper and we continually keep it in mind, it gives birth to sin. This commandment is a warning to deal with that desire and get rid of it, get it out of your mind, before it grows into a sin problem. The commandment is dealing with the beginning, that is, with the coveting; the commandment isn't dealing with accomplishing the coveting. If the coveting isn't dealt with early, it will develop into something more serious. This commandment isn't about action; it's about the thoughts and the desires that lead to action. Many people assert, and this used to be correct, there is no other known law code that ever deals with thoughts and desires as the Mosaic Law deals with them in this commandment and prohibits them, but that is no longer true. Modern politically correct laws dealing with "hate crimes" are thought codes. In terms of this commandment, God is not just concerned with what we do, but He is also concerned with how we think and live and with the development of a worldview that serves to guide and guard our hearts and minds.

Jewish Rabbinical theology doesn't agree with that interpretation of the commandment. Their doctrine is the commandment is violated only when one follows through with the desire and commits the sin when what is improperly coveted is actually gained. They base this on Deuteronomy 7:25 by claiming the

sin of coveting the silver and the gold wasn't a sin unless and until the precious metals were actually confiscated for oneself. The TANAKH suggests this interpretation by translating it, "... you shall not covet the silver and the gold and keep it for yourselves ...". The NET Bible also suggests this interpretation by translating it, "... but do not covet the silver and gold that covers them so much that you take it for yourself ...". There are two problems with this interpretation. First, basing it on only one verse in the Bible when the word is used in a number of verses isn't good exegetical practice. If they don't covet the silver and gold, they won't take it, and if they covet it, but deal with that and suppress it, they won't take it either. It does not follow that coveting, as identified in the text, is only a sin if they act on it and confiscate the melted metals. Coveting it is the beginning of taking it and they aren't to go there in the first place—do not covet! The concept of coveting and only then, subsequent to the coveting, the taking of the precious metal is in this verse. Second, the commandment itself only addresses the issue of coveting; it doesn't cover the issue of actually committing the act of acquiring the object of one's desire. Other commandments such as adultery and stealing cover the actual commission of the sins that flow from the sin of coveting.

This is part of what James was addressing. Here's how Dr. Anderson describes it. "While Lust is conceiving and before Sin has been brought forth, that is the time to stop the growth, so that Sin is never born. The more we toy with something in our mind, the harder it becomes to resist it. The more we allow it to

remain there, the longer we allow our minds to feed on it, the stronger it becomes, until finally birth is inevitable. We need to cut it off while there is opportunity to cut it off. And then if Sin is born as a result of Lust, kill it while it is still an infant. Repent of it, turn aside from it before it can become mature and fully developed.”² Remember, in Greek, the word translated “lust” is a synonym for the Hebrew word translated “covet.”

This is not incongruent with other biblical revelation. The evil thoughts of the heart are unequivocally condemned by God.

Genesis 6:5 ⁵Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Jeremiah 4:14 ¹⁴Wash your heart from evil, O Jerusalem, That you may be saved. How long will your wicked thoughts Lodge within you?

The argument that the first nine commandments deal with specific acts; therefore, the tenth commandment must also deal with specific acts is nullified by these other Scriptures. God does condemn evil thoughts that are plotting to do that which is prohibited and is therefore sin. By identifying coveting as a violation of the Mosaic Law, the commandment is encouraging us to deal with those desires before they manifest themselves in the commission of overt personal sins.

We have discussed the fact that nine of the Ten Words are repeated in the New Testament and applicable in this dispensation under the Law of Christ.

² David R. Anderson, *Triumph through Trials: The Epistle of James* (The Woodlands, TX: Grace Theology Press, 2013), 42.

Where are these found in the New Testament? The following New Testament Scriptures are only a representative sample of the Scriptures applying the Ten Words in the New Testament.

The first commandment is:

Exodus 20:3 ³“You shall have no other gods before Me.”

New Testament application:

Matthew 4:10 ¹⁰Then Jesus said to him, “Go, Satan! For it is written, ‘YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.’”

1 Corinthians 8:6 ⁶yet for us there is *but* one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we *exist* for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we *exist* through Him.

The second commandment is:

Exodus 20:4–5 ⁴“You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. ⁵“You shall not worship them or serve them ...

New Testament application:

1 Corinthians 10:14 ¹⁴Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.

1 Thessalonians 1:9⁹For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God,

The third commandment is:

Exodus 20:7 ⁷“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.

New Testament application:

Matthew 5:33, 37 ³³“Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, ‘YOU SHALL NOT MAKE FALSE VOWS, BUT SHALL FULFILL YOUR VOWS TO THE LORD.’... ³⁷“But let your statement be, ‘Yes, yes’ or ‘No, no’; anything beyond these is of evil.

The fourth commandment concerns observing the Sabbath and that command is not repeated in the New Testament and is therefore not applicable in this dispensation under the Law of Christ.

The fifth commandment is:

Exodus 20:12 ¹²“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you.

New Testament application:

Ephesians 6:2–3 ²HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise), ³SO THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH.

The sixth commandment is:

Exodus 20:13 ¹³“You shall not murder.

New Testament application:

Matthew 5:21 ²¹“You have heard that the ancients were told, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER’ and ‘Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.’”

Romans 13:9 ⁹For this, “YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, YOU SHALL NOT STEAL, YOU SHALL NOT COVET,” and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, “YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.”

The seventh commandment is:

Exodus 20:14 ¹⁴“You shall not commit adultery.

New Testament application:

Romans 13:9 ⁹For this, “YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY ...”

1 Thessalonians 4:3 ³For this is the will of God, your sanctification; *that is*, that you abstain from sexual immorality;

The eighth commandment is:

Exodus 20:15 ¹⁵“You shall not steal.”

New Testament application:

Ephesians 4:28 ²⁸He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have *something* to share with one who has need.

Romans 13:9 ⁹For this “... YOU SHALL NOT STEAL ... and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, “YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.”

The ninth commandment:

Exodus 20:16 ¹⁶“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.”

New Testament application:

John 8:44 ⁴⁴“You are of *your* father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *nature*, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

Ephesians 4:25 ²⁵Therefore, laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE *of you* WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another.

The tenth commandment:

Exodus 20:17 ¹⁷“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”

New Testament application:

James 1:14–15 ¹⁴But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. ¹⁵Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

1 Timothy 6:10 ¹⁰For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

The above order of the Ten Words is the generally accepted Protestant understanding of the commandments. The Roman Catholic Church does not have the same list.

1. ... You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything ... you shall not bow down to them or serve them.
2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
3. Remember the Sabbath day ...
4. Honor your father and your mother ...
5. You shall not kill.
6. You shall not commit adultery.
7. You shall not steal.
8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
9. You shall not covet your neighbor's house, you shall not covet your neighbor's wife ...
10. You shall not covet ... anything that is your neighbor's ... house, his field, or his manservant, or his maidservant, or his ox, or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor's.³

They have combined what we call the first two commandments into the first one alone. In order to make the Ten Commandments actually count as ten, they divide the prohibition against coveting into two parts. One part of coveting involves sexual immorality, in other words, coveting your neighbor's wife, and the other part of coveting involves your neighbor's property. This is not necessarily incorrect, but the way they word this in *The Catholic Catechism* is confusing

³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 553-672, paragraphs 2052-2550.

because they include property in their ninth commandment with the wife, but omit the wife in their tenth commandment which repeats the prohibition of coveting property. They seem to put house and wife together in one commandment and all other property in the next one.

At this point, the voice of God frightened the people to the point they did not want to hear God speak again. They wanted Moses to be their intermediary and they would hear what God had to say through the prophet.

Exodus 20:18–21 ¹⁸All the people perceived the thunder and the lightning flashes and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw *it*, they trembled and stood at a distance. ¹⁹Then they said to Moses, “Speak to us yourself and we will listen; but let not God speak to us, or we will die.” ²⁰Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test [יָרָאָה] you, and in order that the fear [יִרְאָה] of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin.” ²¹So the people stood at a distance, while Moses approached the thick cloud where God was.

When examining Scriptures such as this, we need to keep in mind that believers, then and now, still have a sin nature and being in close proximity to God or even to a clearly heavenly being, is frightening. Considering that fact then, how frightening must it have been to stand at the base of a mountain that is lit up with flashes of lightning, smoking as though it is an erupting volcano, covered in fire, and shaking as peals of thunder vibrate the ground and the atmosphere? Add to that the supernatural blowing of a trumpet which could not in any way be thought of as a naturally occurring phenomenon. Finally, hearing the voice of God speaking to them, which is a voice like no other, must have terrified the

people. This is sensory overload and they couldn't take it; they moved away from the base of the mountain.

Only when man has reached the glorification salvation stage of the salvation process will he be able to stand in God's presence unafraid. In this life, to come face-to-face with God in a theophany causes fear to strike the heart of a sinful man who instinctively knows he has no business standing in His holy presence. It happened to such biblical stalwarts as Daniel and John who was the disciple who leaned on the Lord's chest at the table and was the disciple Jesus loved. If John, still in his mortal body and possessing a sin nature, cannot stand in the presence of the glorified Lord who he knew so intimately as the God-man, we shouldn't think we wouldn't be scared nearly to death as well.

Daniel 10:5–10 ⁵I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, there was a certain man dressed in linen, whose waist was girded with a *belt* of pure gold of Uphaz. ⁶His body also was like beryl, his face had the appearance of lightning, his eyes were like flaming torches, his arms and feet like the gleam of polished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a tumult. ⁷Now I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, while the men who were with me did not see the vision; nevertheless, a great dread fell on them, and they ran away to hide themselves. ⁸So I was left alone and saw this great vision; yet no strength was left in me, for my natural color turned to a deathly pallor, and I retained no strength. ⁹But I heard the sound of his words; and as soon as I heard the sound of his words, I fell into a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground. ¹⁰Then behold, a hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees.

Revelation 1:17–18¹⁷When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, ¹⁸and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.

Except for one place in the Bible where God's voice is probably mistranslated as being "a still small voice" (KJV) or a "gentle blowing" (NASB), His voice is always said to be thunderous or like the sound of rushing waters. Whatever it sounds like, it is loud and unmistakable for the person or people to whom it is directed. An audible, understandable voice thundering from the heavens would be frightening enough, but when the voice is God's voice, the intensity and the pressure would be overpowering for a mortal human being.

Ezekiel 43:2 ²and behold, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the way of the east. And His voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone with His glory.

Job 40:9 ⁹"Or do you have an arm like God, And can you thunder with a voice like His?"

The people told Moses they wanted to hear what God had to say to them, but they wanted the prophet to be an intermediary on their behalf. Moses assured them they had no reason to be afraid. We might wonder why, after all they had seen God do on their behalf, they were afraid, but this awesome spectacle they had just witnessed was so much sensory overload and overwhelming that they were understandably afraid.

Moses said God was testing them. Test, נִסָּה, means to test or prove the quality of someone or something often through adversity or hardship. God's testing is generally for the purpose of developing the character of man in order for them to walk in fellowship with Him. That is the purpose for the theophany at Mt. Sinai. He wanted them to develop the proper respect and fear of Him as a holy

God and therefore walk before Him in obedience and faithfulness. If they responded to Him in the appropriate manner, that would be for their long-term benefit.

This spectacular appearance before the Israelites was designed to instill the fear of the Lord in them so they would not sin. Most people want to define fear, *יִרְאַה*, as reverence meaning a state of piety and respect toward a superior and it can carry that meaning, but it can also mean being terrified or being afraid which is the meaning of the word in this context. Some theologians are very reluctant to suggest we should be afraid of God at times, but we should have a healthy fear of the God who can impose temporal discipline on His children for wayward behavior up to and including the forfeiture of physical life. If the Israelites had maintained both kinds of the fear of the Lord, respect and being afraid, perhaps they would have heeded the messages revealed to them concerning the blessing and cursing in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28. History reveals it didn't take the people long to lose their fear of Yahweh and rebel; their history is a history of rebellion and temporal discipline. In this case, it was a good thing the people were terrified of the Lord which was the purpose for this awesome display of God's power and holiness so they would be fearful of angering Him by sinning against Him. Fear is a motivating factor in human behavior. One commentator put it this way: "Fear of death or injury helps people drive safely; fear of heart attacks helps people keep their cholesterol levels low; fear of academic failure helps people study and learn; fear of harming children

helps keep marriages together. Fear is a basic motivator of human behavior, and attempts to deny that the Bible actually tells us that we should fear God are quite misplaced.”⁴ How much more then should we fear the Creator God of the universe who controls not only the temporal world but eternity as well?

These verses, Exodus 20:18-21, are linked back to Exodus 19:16-25. I believe I was in error doing chapter 19 concerning Moses' location during this first recitation of the Ten Words. Here is how I now believe it went: Moses went up the mountain (Ex. 19:20) and he was sent back down to warn the people to respect the boundaries Yahweh set (Ex. 19:21). Moses was with the people when the Ten Words were spoken in their hearing. After that, the people told Moses how afraid they were and Moses sent them back to their tents (Dt. 5:30) and went up the mountain again (Ex. 20:21; Dt. 5:31) to receive what is called the Covenant Code (Ex. 20:22-21:33). Moses came back down the mountain and the people approved the Covenant Code by proclaiming “all the words which the Lord has spoken we will do” (Ex. 24:3). After that, he would go back up the mountain and receive the instructions for the Tabernacle and the priesthood culminating in the tablets of the Ten Words.

Deuteronomy 5:22-33 provides more detail and helps to explain what went on in Exodus 19-20.

Deuteronomy 5:28–33 ²⁸“The LORD heard the voice of your words when you spoke to me, and the LORD said to me, ‘I have heard the voice of the words of this people which they have spoken to you. They have done well in all that they

⁴ Douglas K. Stuart, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scriptures: Exodus* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 469, n. 85.

have spoken. ²⁹'Oh that they had such a heart in them, that they would fear Me and keep all My commandments always, that it may be well with them and with their sons forever! ³⁰'Go, say to them, "Return to your tents." ³¹'But as for you, stand here by Me, that I may speak to you all the commandments and the statutes and the judgments which you shall teach them, that they may observe *them* in the land which I give them to possess.' ³²"So you shall observe to do just as the LORD your God has commanded you; you shall not turn aside to the right or to the left. ³³"You shall walk in all the way which the LORD your God has commanded you, that you may live and that it may be well with you, and that you may prolong *your* days in the land which you will possess.