

Ten Commandments (Part 22)  
(The Third Commandment – Part 5)

Exodus 20:7

→What does the 3<sup>rd</sup> Commandment prohibit?

False Oaths and Vows

I. The Definitions of Oaths and Vows

-Oaths and vows are similar but not the same thing (Numbers 30:2).

-Vow: a solemn promise [to God] (Ecclesiastes 5:14; Acts 18:18; 21:23; James 5:15) A vow is a promise to God.

-Oath: a solemn appeal [before men] for God to witness and judge one's intention to tell the truth or fulfill a vow (Acts 23:12) An oath is a confirmation of a vow before men.

II. The Difficulty Associated With Oaths and Vows

-In the Bible as a whole, there is nothing inherently wrong or sinful about taking an oath or making a vow (Genesis 24:3; Deuteronomy 6:13; 10:20; Numbers 5:19, 21; Isaiah 65:16; 2 Corinthians 1:23; Hebrews 6:13; Revelation 10:6).

-In light of the Bible as a whole, how are we to understand Jesus' and James' statements in Matthew 5:33-37 and James 5:12?

- Jesus came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 5:17).
  
- Jesus permitted Himself to be placed under an oath (Matthew 26:63, 64).
  
- In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus was dealing with a particular perversion of God's Law that was common in His day i.e. swearing falsely using euphemisms for God.
  
- Jesus wasn't prohibiting oath-taking altogether.

III. The Demand Entailed in Oaths and Vows

Practical Lessons

- 1) Beware of superficial, ultra-literal interpretations of the Bible.
  
- 2) Oaths are good for a society.
  
- 3) Avoid foolish oaths and vows.
  
- 4) God Himself has taken an oath to fulfill all His covenant promises in Christ (Hebrews 6:13).