

THOU SHALT NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS

Introduction:

1. Throughout this study, it must be emphasized that man today is not under the Law of Moses – including the Ten Commandments.
2. However, the things that “were written aforetime were written for our learning” (Rom. 15:4).
3. THOU SHALT HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME
4. THOU SHALT NOT MAKE ANY GRAVEN IMAGE
5. THOU SHALT NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD THY GOD IN VAIN
6. REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY, TO KEEP IT HOLY
7. HONOR THY FATHER AND THY MOTHER
8. THOU SHALT NOT KILL
9. THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT ADULTERY
10. THOU SHALT NOT STEAL

I. The Specific Sin

- A. To be a witness is to claim firsthand knowledge of a person or situation.
- B. To bear witness is to give testimony – to testify – about a person or situation.
- C. To bear false witness is to give a dishonest, deceitful, or untrue testimony about a person or situation.
 1. Literally, “Thou shalt not testify a false testimony against thy neighbor”
 2. Generally, “Thou shalt not lie to or about others.”
- D. This command had a specific application to the court of law – perjury.
 1. In the theocracy of Israel, God was the ultimate judge – “author and the final arbiter of the law by which justice was carefully administered” (Duet. 1:16-17; 2 Chron. 19:5-7; Isa. 33:22).
 2. The judges or elders “at the gate” served as the jury in legal cases (cf. Ruth 4:1-12).
 3. They were required to measure up to a high standard (Deut. 16:18-20).
 4. Witnesses were necessary for a just judgment (Exo. 23:1-3, 6-7; Deut. 17:6; 19:15).
 5. To dissuade perjury, the punishments for a false witness were severe.
 - a. At least two witness were required and their testimony must agree.
 - b. A false witness would receive the punishment he sought for the one he testified against (Deut. 19:15-21; Dan. 6:24; Est. 7:9-10).
 - c. Witnesses were required to act as the executioners of the sentence (Deut. 17:6-7).
 6. The Pharisees sought to limit this command to legal cases alone; however, it had a much broader application.

II. The Related Sins

- A. It is also wrong to bear false witness against one’s neighbor in any other setting or situation.
- B. Gossip – the spreading of false information, no matter one’s intent.

1. Lev. 19:16; Prov. 26:20, 22; Titus 2:3; 1 Pet. 2:1
2. Even truth can become gossip if it does not need to be repeated (cf. Proc. 11:13; 20:19; 25:9).
- C. Slander – the spreading of false information with malicious intent.
 1. Psa. 50:20; 101:5; Prov. 10:18; Rom. 3:8; 1 Tim. 3:11
 2. Slander is a form of theft and murder – for it steals and kills one’s character and reputation.
- D. Lying – dishonesty, untruthfulness, deceitfulness
 1. Lev. 19:11; Psa. 120:2; 141:3; Prov. 6:16-19; John 8:44; Eph. 4:25; Col. 3:9; Rev. 21:8; 22:15
 2. This includes the “half-truth” practice of many (cf. Gen. 20:12) – telling only a part of the truth in order to make a false impression.
 3. It also includes many so-called “excuses” (cf. Gen. 3:12-13; Exo. 32:24; etc.).
- E. Consider the consequences of bearing false witness...
 1. Sin brought into the world (Rom. 5:12)
 2. Imprisonment of the innocent (Gen. 39:20)
 3. Death of a generation (Num. 14:34-37)
 4. Death of the innocent (1 Kings 21 – *Naboth*)
 5. Persecution of the righteous (Matt. 5:11; 1 Pet. 3:16-17)
 6. Gospel obedience hindered (Rom. 3:8)