

The Ten Commandments

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"The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple." - Psalms 19:7

In August 2003, a controversy erupted in Montgomery, Alabama, over a monument displaying the Ten Commandments in the Alabama Judicial Building. Alabama Supreme Court Justice, Roy Moore, in August 2001, installed a 2.6 ton monument in the middle of the night without notifying anyone of his plans.

According to Judge Moore, he installed the monument "to acknowledge the sovereignty of God over the affairs of men." Later, Stephen Glassroth and Melinda Maddox, filed suit asking the court to remove the monument on the grounds that the Constitution of the United States forbids the endorsement of religion.

Eventually, U.S. District Judge, Myron Thompson, ordered Judge Moore to remove the monument by August 20, or the state would be fined \$5,000 per day. Judge Moore appealed the decision to the Supreme Court of the United States, but the high court refused to issue an injunction barring removal of the Ten Commandments. Ironically, the Ten Commandments are displayed in the U.S. Supreme Court Building which was built in 1935. To the dismay of those demonstrating in favor of Judge Moore's monument, it was removed on August 28, 2003, at 9 a.m.

During the past few years, many conflicts over the Ten Commandments have occurred. Prior to the Alabama case, in April 2003, a conflict arose in Lexington, Kentucky when a judge refused to allow the Ten Commandments to be displayed outside the Capitol Building.

The case was appealed to the Supreme Court of the United States and the high court refused to hear it. Earlier, in 2001, the U.S. Supreme Court also refused to rule whether a display of the Ten Commandments outside a municipal building in Elkhart, Indiana was unconstitutional. The Indiana display had been installed in 1958.

Even though many judges have ruled against a display of the Ten Commandments on public property, a 1920 bronze plaque of the Ten commandments found in the Chester County Courthouse in Pennsylvania was recently sustained by a federal appeals court in June 2003, and a 1918 Ten Commandments plaque was allowed to remain on display at the Allegheny County Courthouse in Pennsylvania.

According to a Gallup Poll taken during the last week of August 2003, 77 percent of the 1,009 Americans surveyed did not feel the presence of the Judge Moore's monument violated the separation of church and state. *Nevertheless, popular opinion was mooted by one man's view of the constitution when District Judge Myron Thompson agreed with the plaintiffs.*

I have two observations about this controversy that I would like to share with you. First, when God raised this nation and set it on its feet, He gave the framers of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, the wisdom and understanding necessary to establish laws that would enhance the development of this nation.

Even though this nation began with a great set of laws and profound respect for our Creator, a great set of laws will not ensure the survival of a nation if it forgets its Creator! The history of ancient Israel proves this point.

The Bible confirms that God takes nations down when they become hopelessly degenerate, and the USA appears to be moving in this direction. Our wonderful Constitution (which has inspired many nations to imitate our form of government) was inspired by Jesus Christ.

It is also important to remember that the Constitution was designed in such a way that we could *legally* remove the memory of our Creator from it. During the past thirty years, it has become evident that this has been America's corporate choice. God is being removed from society in the name of the "separation of church and state."

Our nation has become intolerant toward God and tolerant toward immorality. What began as a Protestant nation, under God with liberty and justice for all, has become a nation of confused, religiously diverse people protesting against God.

The second point is even more interesting. Once Moses put the Ten Commandments into the Ark of the Covenant, they were not viewed again. Even the High Priest did not see them during his entrance into the Most Holy Place once each year. When Israel traveled toward the promised land, they were not permitted to come within half a mile of Ark of the Covenant. (Joshua 3:4) Years later, when Uzzah reached out his hand to keep the Ark from tipping, God struck him dead. (2 Samuel 6:7)

Why did the Author of the Ten Commandments write them down and then hide them from view? Here are a couple of suggestions: God deliberately kept His law out of sight because His law has value only if it is written on the tablets of our heart. (Hebrews 8:10) God knew that mankind would view the Ten Commandments as an external icon rather than the embodiment of truth.

In other words, exalting an icon made of stone is not to be confused with obeying the Creator's ten commands. Exalting the Ten Commandments as a symbol is meaningless, but exalting the Creator and His Ten Commandments as rules to live by, is meaningful.