

The Eighth Commandment

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BIG SANDY, Texas—We as believers are thankful that we are saved by grace. In fact, we should reflect our appreciation by giving much thought and attention into recognizing God's expectations for us.

We can reflect back to the time in the Old Testament when the children of Israel were brought out of the land of Egypt—the house of bondage (Exodus 20:1-2)—and remember that God gave them instructions about how to live (verses 3-17).

Let's spend some time considering the Eighth Commandment.

Exodus 20:15—"You shall not steal."

Ancient guidelines

Some readers of the Bible might be initially surprised about some of the detail devoted to the subject of stealing in the book of Exodus—especially in the first 13 verses in chapter 22. Let's notice only a few of the items.

- If a person stole an ox (that was killed or sold), he replaced it with five oxen (verse 1). If a person stole a sheep (that was killed or sold), he replaced it with four sheep (also verse 1).
- If a person killed a thief who was burglarizing during the night, the killer was not guilty (verse 2). If a person killed a thief who was burglarizing during the day, the killer was guilty (verse 3).
- If a person could not make full restitution, he became a slave to the owner (also verse 3).
- If a thief was caught with the animals alive, he paid the owner double (verse 4).

Consequences for kidnapping

You might also find it interesting to notice a few instructions about the consequences of kidnapping in the Old Testament.

- If a person kidnapped a person, he was sentenced to death (Exodus 21:16).
- If a person kidnapped a person and made him a slave, he was put to death (Deuteronomy 24:7).

Specific lessons

There were also some lessons recorded in the New Testament.

When John the Baptist was teaching the people to bring forth “fruits worthy of repentance” (Luke 3:7-8), some asked him for specific examples.

- When the tax collectors asked John for specific instructions, he told them: “Don’t make people pay more than they owe” (verses 12-13).
- When the soldiers asked John for specific instructions, he told them: “Don’t force people to pay money to make you leave them alone. Be satisfied with your pay” (verse 14).

Theft in the name of religion

Theft in society does not occur only in civil areas. Unfortunately, theft in society also occurs in religious systems.

Here are some scriptures that warn believers to be careful of religious systems that fleece the flock: John 10:1-10; Ezekiel 34:1-6; John 2:14-16; Matthew 21:12-13; and 2 Peter 2:1-3.

Final thoughts before death

The writer of Proverbs 30:7-9 uttered some interesting words before his death. He had two requests before he died (verse 7).

- The first was a request for God to help him to be honest (verse 8).
- The second was a request for God to avoid giving him poverty or riches (also verse 8).

He explained the second request this way: “If I have too much to eat, I might forget about You. If I don’t have enough, I might steal and disgrace Your name” (verse 9).