

Luke 18:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother.

Analysis

Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother—Jesus quotes the Decalogue, specifically the second table (duties toward others) from Exodus 20. Τας εντολας οιδας (τὰς ἐντολὰς οἴδας)—'you know the commandments'—assumes the ruler's Torah education.

Jesus lists commandments six through nine (adultery, murder, theft, false witness) and jumps to five (honor parents), omitting ten (coveting). He focuses on external behaviors the ruler can claim to have kept. This is pedagogical strategy: Jesus will expose that commandment-keeping doesn't produce righteousness but reveals heart idolatry (coveting wealth). The law's purpose isn't justification but conviction—showing inability to save oneself (Romans 3:20, Galatians 3:24).

Historical Context

Pharisaic Judaism taught that perfect commandment observance earned eternal life. The ruler represents this theology's best case—someone who sincerely believes he's kept the law from youth. Jesus doesn't initially dispute this claim (v. 21) but will demonstrate that external conformity masks internal idolatry. Paul later testified to similar pre-conversion confidence: 'touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless' (Philippians 3:6), yet counted it all loss compared to Christ.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. Why does Jesus focus on the second table (duties to others) rather than the first table (duties to God)?
2. What does Jesus's strategy of citing commandments the ruler claims to keep reveal about the law's purpose?
3. How can external commandment-keeping coexist with internal heart idolatry?

Interlinear Text

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|-------|------------------|--------|-------|-----------|-------|----------|
| τὰς | ἐντολὰς | οἶδας· | Μὴ | μοιχεύσῃς | Μὴ | φονεύσῃς |
| G3588 | the commandments | G1785 | G1492 | G3361 | G3431 | G3361 |
| | | | | | | G5407 |

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|-------|--------|-------|-----------------|--------|-------|--------|-------|
| Μὴ | κλέψῃς | Μὴ | ψευδομαρτυρήσῃς | Τίμα | τὸν | πατέρα | σου |
| not | Do | not | Do | Honour | G3588 | father | thy |
| G3361 | G2813 | G3361 | G5576 | G5091 | | G3962 | G4675 |

| | | | |
|-------|-------|--------|-------|
| καὶ | τὴν | μητέρα | σου |
| and | G3588 | mother | thy |
| G2532 | | G3384 | G4675 |

Additional Cross-References

Romans 13:9 (Word): For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Ephesians 6:2 (Word): Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;)

