

The Sixth Commandment

This article is from the "Among Friends" section of the Church of God Big Sandy's website, churchofgodbigandy.com. It was posted for the weekend of Nov. 30, 2019.

By Dave Havir

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 sixth commandment.

Exodus 20:13—"You shall not murder."

Hebrew word

Although the King James Version of the Bible and some other Bible translations quote the Sixth Commandment as "You shall not kill," many other translations have the better translation of "You shall not murder."

The Hebrew word *rasah* is translated into 11 different English words in the King James Version of the Bible. Here is the breakdown—"slayer" (17 times); "murderer" (13 times); "kill" (four times); "murder" (three times); "slain" (three times); "manslayer" (two times); and five other words that are used only one time each.

Many people can easily see why the other translations use the English word *murder* instead of *kill*. And many people can also recognize the difference in the concepts of murdering and killing.

Cities of refuge

Many judicial systems in the world today differentiate between the action of manslaughter and the action of murder.

This was also true in the Old Testament system given to the children of Israel. An interesting study from the Old Testament is to examine the cities of refuge.

In that study, people find Numbers 35, which describes a different approach towards manslaughter (verses 11-15 and verses 22-28) from the approach towards murder (verses 16-21).

For the record

At this time, I would like to acknowledge that some critics of the Bible love to spotlight the contrast of the Sixth Commandment with the Old Testament supporting the concept of capital punishment.

They wonder how God could instruct against murder and yet allow a system that “murders” criminals.

Although that discussion is a bigger topic than the space allotted for this article, I would like to quickly mention the ideas of due process (Numbers 35:30-31) and deterrence (Deuteronomy 13:11).

Magnifying the law

One of the great lessons Jesus Christ taught in the New Testament was how He magnified the law of God.

The good news was that believers were not going to be punished under what the apostle Paul called the administration of death (2 Corinthians 3:7). Paul went on to say that, although the administration of death had merit, the administration of life was better (verses 8-11).

Under the New Covenant, people who repent do not necessarily suffer the immediate penalty for sin.

Higher expectations

Along with the greater mercy of the New Covenant came some higher expectations of believers. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus explained a tougher standard for disciples to follow concerning the Sixth Commandment.

Matthew 5:21-22—“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca!’ shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire.”