

Faculty Work Comprehensive List

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## Announcement of the Ten Commandments

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## Announcement of the Ten Commandments

### Abstract

"Imagine comparing God's presentation of the Ten Commandments to Steve Job's presentation of a new Apple product. It's not exactly a fair comparison, but in both cases, drama is made a big part of the announcement."

Posting about God's proclamation of the law from *In All Things* - an online journal for critical reflection on faith, culture, art, and every ordinary-yet-graced square inch of God's creation.

<http://inallthings.org/the-announcement-of-the-ten-commandments/>

### Keywords

In All Things, lectionary, commandments, drama, Bible and law

### Disciplines

Christianity

### Comments

*In All Things* is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service at Dordt College](#).

# The Announcement of the Ten Commandments

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 [inallthings.org/the-announcement-of-the-ten-commandments/](http://inallthings.org/the-announcement-of-the-ten-commandments/)

June 2,  
2017

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## Daily Scripture Texts

[Psalm 33:12-22](#)

[Exodus 19:16-25](#)

[Romans 8:14-17](#)

Imagine comparing God's presentation of the Ten Commandments to Steve Job's presentation of a new Apple product. It's not exactly a fair comparison, but in both cases, drama is made a big part of the announcement.

A big computer company might precede the announcement of a new product with press releases about a future revelation, to be made public in a month or so. To use some contemporary language, speculation will be encouraged about "what the reveal will be." Finally, the day of the "reveal" will come. A big gathering will be held with a rock band to warm up the audience, complete with lights, stage smoke, and pyrotechnics. Finally, a tech guru of the times—say someone of the stature of Steve Jobs—speaking via a microphone and a powerful public address system with a huge screen in the background to drive the point home visually, will reveal some new gadget. The message will be simple and strong: "You need our new gadget which is incomparable to any preceding gadget." Somehow, the drama surrounding the announcement gives credibility. Are we all susceptible to such drama?

In Exodus 19:16-25, God provides plenty of drama surrounding the announcement of the Ten Commandments. There is smoke and thunder and quaking. After an appropriate amount of trumpet sounds, Moses speaks and God answers. Indeed, God makes one of the greatest "product announcements" of all time—The Ten Commandments. The process by which The Ten Commandments were communicated to Israel gave the Commandments immediate and durable credibility because we mere mortals are susceptible to such drama.

The origin of law and the timelessness of the Ten Commandments has roots in the creation. The need for smoke and fire, for drama, to create credibility and to get the point across has to do with an apple. Not Steve Job's kind of Apple, but Adam and Eve's kind of apple. (Forgive me the drama, especially because the Bible only says "fruit.") The need for drama to get a point across, and our susceptibility to such drama, has to do with our fallen nature.

Romans 2:14-15 tells us that everyone has a conscience, "their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them." This is just one evidence that the conceptions of good and evil arise out of the creation. Prior to the fall, Adam and Eve communicated directly with God (Genesis 3:8). Part of that communication entailed a clear concept of "if you do this, then that will follow." That's the essence of law. Adam and Eve could understand it directly from communicating with God as well as from observation of outcomes. "If you drop an apple... If you tell a lie... If you kill... If you eat fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil..." Law has its origins in creation. Even though the Ten Commandments did not exist before the fall, the law-side of creation did. Presumably, Adam and Eve could easily understand the law-side of the creation by consulting with God. There was no need for a mere *Ten* Commandments.

The fall brought alienation in many dimensions. By our own rebellion we alienate ourselves from God, we alienate ourselves from others, and we alienate ourselves from understanding God's intentions for the creation. It is sin that must be dealt with in order to restore our relationships. The Ten Commandments were given to help us understand our sin. Ultimately, God has reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and He has given us a ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18-19).

The "product announcement" that preceded the presentation of the Ten Commandments was an appeal to our fallen

nature. The smoke and quaking of the mountain, the sound of the trumpet, were obviously an intimidating way to communicate the power and authority of God. That is not the kind of relationship God wants with His people, but it is what it sometimes takes to get our attention. The events surrounding the presentation of the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai represent a low point in our relationship with God. Fortunately, the Bible also tells us of Mount Zion. Hebrews 12 is the other bookend to Exodus 19.

*18 You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; 19 to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them...*

*22 But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, 23 to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, 24 to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.*

The next time you see some blustery product announcement, remember your human susceptibilities and your source of true joy and salvation. Remember Mount Zion in contrast to Mount Sinai.