

DISCUSSION & REVIEW QUESTIONS:

- Mr. Prager begins the video by definitively asserting that, “No document in world history so changed the world for the better as did the Ten Commandments.” Do you agree? Why or why not? What about the Magna Carta or the U.S. Constitution?
- Mr. Prager further asserts that, “Western civilization – the civilization that developed universal human rights, created women’s equality, ended slavery, created parliamentary democracy among other unique achievements – would not have developed without them [the Ten Commandments].” How, exactly, did the Ten Commandments directly contribute to Western Civilization’s great accomplishments? Do you think that Divine Providence was responsible for the Ten Commandments surviving long enough to have such an impact on humanity? Why or why not?
- Following those statements, Mr. Prager points out that, “...these commandments are as relevant today as when they were given over 3,000 years ago. In fact, they’re so relevant that the Ten Commandments are all that is necessary to make a good world, a world free of tyranny and cruelty.” What does he mean by a world ‘free of tyranny and cruelty?’ What makes the Ten Commandments still relevant? Do you agree with Mr. Prager’s conclusion that the Ten Commandments are basically all that’s necessary to make a good world?
- Mr. Prager states, “...if it isn’t God who declares murder wrong, murder isn’t wrong... Because without God, right and wrong are just personal beliefs. Personal opinions... Unless there is a God, all morality is just opinion and belief.” Do you agree with Mr. Prager’s assertion that a higher authority makes morality objective, and therefore valid; or put another way- can subjective morality be valid? Why or why not? Do you think that anything other than a higher authority can make a moral code objective and, thus, valid? If no, why not? If yes, what would that other thing be?
- Mr. Prager concludes the video by stating, “In 3,000 years no one has ever come up with a better system than the God-based Ten Commandments for making a better world. And no one ever will.” Why is this the case? What is so special about the Ten Commandments? Why do you think that no better system could ever be devised?

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

CASE STUDY: Aztec Crime and Punishment

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the article “Aztec crime and punishment,” then answer the questions that follow.

- How was Aztec law different than the modern legal system in North America? How was it similar?
- What guided and shaped Aztec law? How do you think not being aware of the Ten Commandments impacted the creation of the Aztec legal system? What conclusions can you draw from the fact that the Aztecs came up with some of the same laws as found in the Ten Commandments, even though they were not aware of the Ten Commandments? Do you think that God gave them their own version? How well do you think that the Aztec version worked?
- Although the article mentions the Aztec legal system being based on practicality, do you think that the same principle of ‘right and wrong’ being objective, and valid, because the Aztecs ultimately had to answer to a higher power applies in the same way as the ‘higher authority’ argument that Mr. Prager makes concerning the Ten Commandments? Why or why not?



QUIZ

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS: INTRODUCTION

1. **What document in world history so changed the world for the better?**
 - a. Magna Carta
 - b. Declaration of Independence
 - c. The Ten Commandments
 - d. The Code of Hammurabi

2. **What authority gave the Ten Commandments?**
 - a. Adam
 - b. Eve
 - c. Moses
 - d. God

3. **If it isn't God who declares murder wrong, murder isn't wrong.**
 - a. True
 - b. False

4. **Without God, the morality of murder is _____.**
 - a. still wrong
 - b. just a personal belief
 - c. the most important issue
 - d. All of the above.

5. **Which of the following has Western civilization achieved?**
 - a. Universal human rights.
 - b. Created women's equality.
 - c. Ended slavery.
 - d. All of the above.



QUIZ - ANSWER KEY

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Aztec crime and punishment

There was no shortage of laws in the ancient Aztec empire. **In many ways, Aztec crime and punishment was very much like crime and punishment in many countries today.** However, some parts of the Aztec legal system will no doubt seem strange to many people...



Aztec law

As the empire grew and became strong, many peoples became a part of the Aztec system. In the world of the Aztecs, the gods had power over people, through the leadership of the emperor and nobles, and of course through the priests. Interestingly, though, when it came to law, religion was less of a factor than in most of Aztec daily life. Practicality played a larger role.

Though the power was someone centralized, the empire was still really a loosely connected alliance between various cities. These cities shared a common emperor and often a similar heritage, so laws were similar throughout the empire, but not exactly the same. **And so Aztec crime and punishment did vary from city to city.**

Aztec laws covered almost every aspect of life. This included laws about marriage, inheriting an estate, the class system, and economic situations. As an example of a law intended to protect **the class system**, a common person was not allowed to decorate his house or dress in lavish clothes as a noble was. Regarding **marriage**, a man could have as many concubines as he wished, but only descendants of his original wife could inherit his estate. **Divorce** was allowed in certain situations, but the woman would get half of the couple's assets, and was free to re marry.

Crime

It's hard to know today how much crime there actually was in the empire. As we will see, punishment was harsh. Although some crime was overlooked, much of it was efficiently dealt with through a system of courts. Some crimes considered serious would include **stealing** from another's crops, public **drunkenness** (except at a festival, or if you're over 70 years old), and **murder**.

Courts

Most crime was dealt with in a **local court**, where senior warriors would be the judges. If the crime was more serious, it could be tried in **Tenochtitlan** in the *teccalco* court. Very serious cases, such as those involving nobles, could be tried by professional judges in the **emperor's palace**. These judges may even include the emperor himself.

The fact that much of the Aztec crime and punishment was swift and local made the system efficient, which it needed to be without a system of prisons.

Punishment

Remember that the people at the heart of the empire had recently been fairly nomadic. A system of prisons was impossible, so Aztec crime and punishment had to develop along totally different lines. There were no prisons, and no torture. Instead, **the death penalty** was a common punishment for crime. The criminal could be taken to an altar and put to death, strangled, or even stoned on the spot. The nobles, who were supposed to set an example, often got harsher punishments.

Sometimes there would be a **lighter punishment**, for example if this was a first offense. A lighter punishment might include having your home demolished, or having your head shaved.

Of course in Aztec crime and punishment, there were many crimes that were not considered nearly as serious. In these cases, people would simply be required to make **restitution**. For example, if there was a fight, the one who started the fight might be required to pay for the medical expenses. Or, of course, if something was stolen it would have to be paid back, though often even minor theft would be punished with death.

Slavery was often a punishment as well. In the Aztec empire, slavery was a common way to pay back what was owed. Exile was also a punishment in certain cases.