

*Why do we list the Ten Commandments different than Protestants?*

Or should we ask, why did Protestants change the way they number them? Actually it's no really big deal. The Commandments are listed in the Book of Genesis and again in Deuteronomy, but neither place assigns numbers to them.

We have divided them into ten units because they are called the Decalogue. This indicates a list of ten commands. Actually we could easily divide them into at least twelve units. We all divide them into numbered lists of ten for catechetical reasons. What we Catholics traditionally list as the First Commandment, most Protestants call two separate Commandments and Jews traditionally list three Commandments out of our one Commandment. Jews would say,

*1<sup>st</sup>, I am the Lord thy God who brought you out of the Land of Egypt.*  
*2<sup>nd</sup>, You shall not have other gods beside me. And*  
*3<sup>rd</sup>, You shall not carve images to worship.*

Most Protestant Bibles list the Jewish first and second commandments as their first, and the third as their second. We Catholics traditionally see all three as saying the same thing in three different ways. All this is included in our first commandment.

To keep from listing eleven commandments Protestants usually list the 9<sup>th</sup> commandment, *Thou shall not covet thy neighbor's wife*, along with the 10<sup>th</sup>, *thou shall not covet thy neighbor's goods*, as simply one command, *Thou shall not covet*. We note there is a big difference between the way wives are coveted and the way we covet ordinary possessions. Therefore we study two Commandments here.

Catholics like to see the Ten Commandments divided as, three for God and seven for community. Three and seven are significant symbolic numbers.