

# LCMS

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **The Bible – Old Testament**

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## Old Testament

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### Why does the LCMS number the Ten Commandments differently?

**Q: *Why do Lutherans not number the commandments like the other Protestants?***

**A:** The differing enumerations of the Ten Commandments among various religious traditions is not generally regarded as a doctrinal matter dividing the churches. The *Oxford Companion to the Bible* (Oxford, 1993) is correct when it states: "The contents of the Ten Commandments are . . . the same for all of the religious communities, despite the differences in their enumeration."

The *Lutheran Cyclopedia* notes in its article on the "Decalogue" that the Bible neither numbers the commandments nor determines their respective position, and for this reason divergent enumeration has occurred. The Jews make Exodus 20:2 the 1st Commandment, Exodus 20:3-6 the 2nd, and Exodus 20:17 the 10th. The Eastern Orthodox and the Reformed churches make Exodus 20:2-3 the 1st, Exodus 20:4-6 the 2nd, and Exodus 20:17 the 10th. The Lutheran and Roman Catholic churches regard Exodus 20:4 as a part of (or commentary on) the 1st Commandment (Exodus 20:3). They then draw the 2nd from Exodus 20:7, the 3rd from Exodus 20:8-11, and make Exodus 17a the 9th and Exodus 17b the 10th. The Jews divide the Ten Commandments into 2 groups of 5 each. Lutheran and Roman Catholics assign 3 commandments to the 1st table and 7 to the 2nd. Eastern Orthodox and Reformed churches assign 4 to the 1st table and 6 to the 2nd.

Usage: We urge you to contact an LCMS pastor in your area for more in-depth discussion.  
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## Why is the Old Testament important even today? Hasn't the New Testament replaced it?

**Q: *Why is the Old Testament important even today? Hasn't the New Testament completely replaced the Old?***

**A:** Both the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God (Heb.1:1), authored by the one and same Holy Spirit. No one can discard either one without incurring the wrath of God. Essentially the two are the same in that they both contain the same moral law and the same Gospel message that sinners are saved alone by grace in His Son, the Messiah, who was to come.

The Gospel of Christ is the central message of the entire Bible, essential for our salvation. Jesus affirmed that He is the Christ of the Old Testament (Luke 24:25-27). Above all, we need the Old Testament to see Jesus in it and to know what He fulfilled for us.

We also need the Old Testament, because, being God-breathed, it is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16) It can be used for edifying and encouraging one another. Without It we would not understand much of the New Testament, especially why God sent Jesus. History, examples of those who had faith and of those who rejected God's promises, wisdom for life, etc. would be missing. We need the Old Testament!

And that's what the ancient Christian Church said when they established the list of authentic books of God's Word, the Bible. The Bible is to be used as a whole for our justification and sanctification.

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## Was the universe created in six literal 24-hour periods?

**Q: A person, because of his study of science, does not believe that the universe was created in six literal 24-hour periods. Does this fact, by itself, render this person ineligible for membership in the LCMS?**

**A:** A person's private views regarding this question do not automatically disqualify a person from becoming a member of the congregation. It is possible, of course, that someone holding to a given theory about the "six days" of the creation accounts also holds to views about the Bible that would be troublesome and perhaps in some cases detrimental to saving faith.

But judgments in this regard belong in the realm of individual pastoral care, and are not a matter of hard and fast rules so that someone's personal opinions in this area would become in effect a kind of litmus test for membership.

It has generally been taught in our church that unless there is a compelling reason, on the basis of the biblical texts themselves, to understand the six days of the Genesis accounts as anything other than normal 24-hour days, we are to believe that God created the world in six 24-hour days (see Luther's *Small Catechism with Explanation*, Question 97 [[CPH](#), 1986, p. 106]).

Official members of the LCMS (congregations, pastors, rostered church workers), of course, pledge to honor and uphold the official position of the Synod on doctrinal issues, including its official position on creation ([see Of Creation](#)).

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