

The Ten Commandments in Covenant Renewal – *Deuteronomy 4:44 – 5:22*

Introduction – Sermons can be given on each one of the Ten Commandments, and so some might think we are inappropriately flying high over this important part of Deuteronomy. Actually, the whole book of Deuteronomy, and especially this second sermon (4:44 – 28:68) is an explanation and application of the Ten Words. All of the law and the prophets can be summarized in these Ten; Jesus summarizes them all in two (Matt 22:34-40). But we must also remember that “*we love Him because He first loved us*” (1 John 4:19) and so the law must always be remembered in the context of His covenant love.

The Context of Law and Covenant is Grace (4:44 – 5:6) – It is crucial that we see the gospel in this delivery of the law and note that law and gospel are not at odds with those who have faith. To the unbeliever, every law becomes one more millstone around his neck; to the redeemed, everything hangs together perfectly in Christ and in our free justification and deliverance through Him. This comes out clearly in the verses leading up to and including the preamble.

Yahweh the Giant Killer and Promise Keeper (4:44-49) – This law (*and testimonies, statutes, and judgments*) are all given on land that had been given to Israel by Yahweh, the giant-killer, on the edge of the land still promised to be given. Israel is invited to look around and sense the present presence of the One who is giving them victory.

Covenant Continuity (5:1-3) – The solemn formula, “*Hear, O Israel*” begins this and other important sections (v1, cf. 6:4, 9:1, 20:3, 27:9) and God is calling all Israel, a covenant people to a thousand generations. They are summoned to “*hear, learn, be careful, and observe*” God’s law (v1). In one sense, this Israel was at Horeb, but in another sense they were not (v2); nevertheless, covenantally they were there and therefore are already bound in covenant with Yahweh. We do not have the luxury of disconnecting generations; faithfulness and faithlessness both affects future generations.

A Personal Law (5:4-5) – The point is not to obey an impersonal set of rules hanging from the sky (or the refrigerator). Yahweh has spoken to us “*face to face*,” that is, personally and in the midst of a relationship with us.

Mercy and Law (5:6) – In this important preamble, God introduces His law by talking about His mercy. Law can only be rightly understood in the context of salvation or law gets seriously twisted. Consider the arrangement of the furniture in the Tabernacle: the Mercy Seat was placed about the ark of the Covenant (Ex 25:21-22) where God met with His people. The Ten Commandments were kept in the ark under the Mercy Seat (Deut 10:2). We do not have a Mercy Seat sitting by itself with no Law; neither do we have Law pulled out from under the Mercy Seat, made of gold and sprinkled with blood.

The Ten Words – Having experienced the faithfulness of God towards them, a response of faithfulness was called for. These commands teach us how.

No Other Gods (v7) – We are not simply monotheists. Our worship is to be towards the God of Israel, God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Yahweh is His name.

No Graven Images (vv8-10) – Images to worship or worship through are prohibited. We do not have the capacity to represent Yahweh except as He has revealed Himself – by His Word. Obedience here particularly has generational consequences.

No Misuse of His Name (v11) – We are not to bear the name of God vainly, whether it be through cursing or living in such a way as shames the name of our baptism.

No Ceaseless Labor (vv12-15) – To summarize, we are to cultivate Sabbath-life for ourselves and others. Six days are for work, and the Creation week taught us that a seventh was for rest (Ex 20:11). Here the reason given is the Exodus. Much debate existed in Jesus day over the Sabbath, and still today. But Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath, and we have been given through Him a New Creation (and a new, eighth day), and a Greater Exodus (born again to new life). Our 24/7, Lord’s Day dishonoring culture has much to recover here, but it is to recover it as a gift or it is still Sabbath-breaking.

No Dishonoring Parents (v16) – This is the first commandment with a promise (Eph 6:1-3). Young children must obey their parents and older children are to continue to honor them, which Jesus expounds on to include financial care (Matt 15:3ff).

No Murder (v17) – Cursed is the man who sheds innocent blood. Cursed is the nation which permits it.

No Adultery (v18) – The marriage bed is to be honored as the LORD defines it. Cursed is the man who defiles the holiness of sexual union.

No Theft (v19) – Just as marriage is assumed and protected, so is personal property. Redefining marriage by a majority vote does not make it marriage, and rezoning property by a majority vote is still stealing.

No Lying (v20) – There are all kinds of unlawful lying, but the principal point is perjury and the corruption of the court system. Cursed is the nation whose lawyers and judges are known for their corruption. However, they most likely represent the people who elected them well.

No Covetousness (v21) – It is this dimension of the commandments, the heart of desire, that Jesus takes up in Matt 5:21-48, showing the interconnectedness of all the commandments. Paul also teaches us that covetousness is idolatry which takes us full circle to the first.

He Added No More (v22) – How quickly the Law brings you to Christ, just as promised (Gal 3:24). Either it brings you to Christ in condemnation and you find yourself swimming in excuses, self-justification, and hatred of Jesus and His religion, or it brings you to Christ, “*that we might be justified by faith*.” And here, the Law is Gospel.