

God's Covenant with Israel

Key Verse: *"I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me."*
—Exodus 20:2,3

Selected Scripture:
Exodus 20

Israel made at Mt. Sinai was that if they should perfectly keep the Ten Commandments they would then demonstrate that they were perfect men and worthy of everlasting life. It would then be possible for them to attain to the chief blessing under the Abrahamic Covenant. They would become the spiritual seed of Abraham through whom God had promised that he would bless the world. "I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." "And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth."—Gen. 12:2,3; 28:14

The Decalogue, or Ten Commandments, is a brief synopsis of the whole Law. It would serve as a code of worship and morals for a now free people of Israel to live by. The Covenant given to Israel through Moses expressed the righteous will of God. (Exod. 20:1-26) The 'judgments' governed the social life of Israel. (chap. 21:1-24:11) The 'ordinances' governed the religious life

of Israel. (Exod. 24:12-31:18) These elements formed “the law” as termed in the New Testament. (Matt. 5:17,18) The Commandments and the ordinances formed one religious system.

The first tables of the Law were prepared and written by the Lord God. This represents how man was a perfect image of his Creator. God’s law to man, however, was not originally given at Mt. Sinai. That statement of the Law was not given to mankind in general, but to the Jewish nation for the eventual blessing of all nations. God’s original law was given in Eden when man was created. God’s law was written in Adam’s heart, in the sense that he was created in the divine image. Man was given attributes of mind and heart fully in accord with that of God’s. He was a lover of righteousness, and of doing the will of his Heavenly Father. After the fall of man, the human race was marred by sin, and lost its love for the Heavenly Father and for their fellow man. “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.”—Ps. 51:5

We might look at the Law and question why the Jews were not able to perform it fully and satisfactorily. It might appear to be simple, until we see the depth of meaning not seen on the surface. This was not seen until Jesus magnified the law and made it honorable. (Isa. 42:21) None but Jesus has ever been able to keep this Law since the fall of Adam.

The Great Teacher explains that the first table of the law pertaining to man’s duties toward his Creator means more than just avoiding idol worship and profane things. It means that God should have first place in the human heart. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind.” (Luke 10:27) This also shows that any division of the heart or strength or mind violates this commandment. We should not let anything take away our minds and hearts from the Lord. ■