

God Calls People to Covenant

Key Verse: “*Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them.*”
—Deuteronomy 5:1

Selected Scripture:
Deuteronomy 5:1-27

TODAY'S LESSON RECOUNTS

the giving of the Law Covenant to Israel by God through his servant Moses. In particular, the portion of that law commonly referred to as the ‘Ten Commandments’ are highlighted in Deuteronomy 5, although there are many other details of the covenant given elsewhere in Scripture. Our Key Verse provides clear statements that this law came directly from God, his desire being that Israel hear and learn his law, and that they keep it to the best of their ability.

The Ten Commandments of our lesson can be divided into two groups. The first four had to do with the Israelites’ responsibilities to God. They are stated this way, “Thou shalt have none other gods before me. Thou shalt not make thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters beneath the earth: Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain: for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee. Six days thou

shalt labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God.”—Deut. 5:7,8,11-14

The essence of the first four commandments was that of acknowledging the only true and living God as the Almighty Jehovah and Creator of the universe, that he should be revered, honored, loved, and obeyed above all other beings. Jesus summed up this first grouping of commandments with these words, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.”—Matt. 22:37

The second group of commandments—the last six—were given to Israel for the purpose of instructing them of their responsibilities toward their fellow man. The account states, “Honour thy father and thy mother, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. Thou shalt not kill. Neither shalt thou commit adultery. Neither shalt thou steal. Neither shalt thou bear false witness against thy neighbour. Neither shalt thou desire thy neighbour’s wife, neither shalt thou covet thy neighbour’s house, his field, or his manservant, or his maid-servant, his ox, or his ass, or any thing that is thy neighbour’s.”—Deut. 5:16-21

Jesus also summarized the second group of commandments this way, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” (Matt. 22:39) This simple statement goes far beyond the mere literal application of the commandments not to kill, commit adultery, steal, etc. It is, in fact, another way of stating the ‘Golden Rule’ of doing unto others as you would have them do unto you. Jesus states in another place the higher, spiritual application of these principles, concluding that in its fullness, such love would even include those we might consider our enemies. (Matt. 5:21-47) “Be ye therefore perfect [complete], even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”—vs. 48 ■