

Sessions 2 and 3 Deuteronomy 5:1-33

INTRODUCTION

Because all those who received the Law on Horeb were now dead, except for Caleb, Joshua and Moses, Moses now gives the Law to the next generation and tries to drum into them its importance for them. He gives other guidance as well as the Ten Commandments but the commandments are the central ones. The first three are about their relationship with God. The last six about social relationships but the Sabbath law has aspects of both. Jesus expands on their meaning in the New Testament and a number of the questions at the end are based on those from the Pilgrim Series Book: "The Commandments", which includes Jesus's teachings on the Ten Commandments and is a course in itself!

Deuteronomy 5:1-33 (see also Ex 20:1-17)

The Ten Commandments

¹ Moses summoned all Israel and said: Hear, Israel, the decrees and laws I declare in your hearing today. Learn them and be sure to follow them. ² The LORD our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. ³ It was not with our ancestors that the LORD made this covenant, but with us, with all of us who are alive here today. ⁴ The LORD spoke to you face to face out of the fire on the mountain. ⁵ (At that time I stood between the LORD and you to declare to you the word of the LORD, because you were afraid of the fire and did not go up the mountain.) And he said:

⁶ "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. ⁷ "You shall have no other gods before me".

⁸ "You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. ⁹ You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, ¹⁰ but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

¹¹ "You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

¹² "Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the LORD your God has commanded you. ¹³ Six days you shall labour and do all your work, ¹⁴ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns, so that your male and female servants may rest, as you do.

¹⁵ Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the LORD your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.

¹⁶ "Honour your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live long and that it may go well with you in the land the LORD your God is giving you.

¹⁷ "You shall not murder.

¹⁸ "You shall not commit adultery.

¹⁹ "You shall not steal.

²⁰ "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour.

²¹ "You shall not covet your neighbour's wife. You shall not set your desire on your neighbour's house or land, his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour."

²² These are the commandments the LORD proclaimed in a loud voice to your whole assembly there on the mountain from out of the fire, the cloud and the deep darkness; and he added nothing more. Then he wrote them on two stone tablets and gave them to me. ²³ When you heard the voice out of the darkness, while the mountain was ablaze with fire, all the leaders of your tribes and your elders came to me. ²⁴ And you said, "The LORD our God has shown us his glory and his majesty, and we have heard his voice from the fire. Today we have seen that a person can live even if God speaks with them. ²⁵ But now, why should we die? This great fire will consume us, and we will die if we hear the voice of the LORD our God any longer. ²⁶ For what mortal has ever heard the voice of the living God speaking out of fire, as we have, and survived? ²⁷ Go near and listen to all that the LORD our God says. Then tell us whatever the LORD our God tells you. We will listen and obey." ²⁸ The LORD heard you when you spoke to me, and the LORD said to me, "I have heard what this people said to you. Everything they said was good. ²⁹ Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!

³⁰ "Go, tell them to return to their tents. ³¹ But you stay here with me so that I may give you all the commands,

decrees and laws you are to teach them to follow in the land I am giving them to possess.”

³² So be careful to do what the LORD your God has commanded you; do not turn aside to the right or to the left.

³³ Walk in obedience to all that the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live and prosper and prolong your days in the land that you will possess.

Deuteronomy 6:4-5

⁴Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ⁵ Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

Leviticus 19:18

¹⁸ Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbour as yourself.

QUESTIONS

1. How do you view the commandments in view of what Paul says about the Law in Galatians (3:19-4:7)?
2. Compare the Ten Commandments given here in Deuteronomy with those in Exodus. What differences do you notice and what do you think their significance was to Israel at the time of entering Canaan?

EXODUS 20:2-17	DEUTERONOMY 5:6-21
² “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. ³ “You shall have no other gods before me.	⁶ “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. ⁷ “You shall have no other gods before me.
⁴ “You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. ⁵ You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶ but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.	⁸ “You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. ⁹ You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, ¹⁰ but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.
⁷ “You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.	¹¹ “You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.
⁸ “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labour and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. ¹¹ For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.	¹² “Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the LORD your God has commanded you. ¹³ Six days you shall labour and do all your work, ¹⁴ but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns, so that your male and female servants may rest, as you do. ¹⁵ Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the LORD your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.
¹² “Honour your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.	¹⁶ “Honour your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live long and that it may go well with you in the land the LORD your God is giving you.
¹³ “You shall not murder.	¹⁷ “You shall not murder.
¹⁴ “You shall not commit adultery.	¹⁸ “You shall not commit adultery.
¹⁵ “You shall not steal.	¹⁹ “You shall not steal.
¹⁶ “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour.	²⁰ “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour.
¹⁷ “You shall not covet your neighbour’s house. You shall not covet your neighbour’s wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour.”	²¹ “You shall not covet your neighbour’s wife. You shall not set your desire on your neighbour’s house or land, his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour.”

3. Israel's history showed a repeated breaking of the first commandment (v. 2-3). They didn't stop worshipping YHWH but worshipped Canaanite gods as well. Why do you think this happened? What would be the modern equivalent?
4. What does loving God really mean? How do the words "heart", "mind", "soul" and "strength" fill out the picture?
5. Love is more about how we act than what we say or how we feel. What might it mean to love our neighbour as ourselves and does this always mean giving them what they ask for? How do we best respond to the poor and homeless in the street?
6. In the second commandment (v. 4-6) idolatry is forbidden. The second commandment concerns how Yahweh is to be worshiped. It has nothing to do with art. The prohibition is concerned with how they are employed, and here the issue is power. Images of deity in the ancient Near East were where the deity became present in a special way, to the extent that the cult statue became the god, though not the only manifestation of the god. As a result of this linkage, spells, incantations and other magical acts could be performed on the image in order to threaten, bind or compel the deity. In contrast, other rites were intended to aid the deity or care for them. Idols represent a worldview of deity that was not consistent with Yahweh's revelation of himself. The Golden Calf (Exodus 32:1-5) was an idol of YHWH.
 - a. Why do you think God forbade idols, even when they tried to represent him?
 - b. An icon is a creation that you gaze upon in order to glimpse God who is ineffable and invisible. Do you think that an icon can become an idol? If so how could this happen and how would it affect worship?
 - c. Ancient Near Eastern households were usually multigenerational with up to four generations living under the same roof. Under these circumstances attitudes, beliefs and behaviours tended to be passed down the generations. Have you seen this in your own life? What responsibility does it place on those of us who are parents or grand-parents?
7. The third commandment (Deut.5:11) forbids misusing God's name.
 - a. When have you done or said something and used the authority of someone else to back you up? Have you ever used God as your source of authority? Has that always been wise?
 - b. **Mat 5:33-37**³³ "Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but fulfil to the Lord the vows you have made.'³⁴ But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne;³⁵ or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King.³⁶ And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black.³⁷ All you need to say is simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one." How do you treat the taking of oaths?
8. The fourth commandment (Deut.5:12-15) is to observe the Sabbath
 - a. Sabbath comes from the Hebrew word for "Cease or desist". For the Jews it is a day to look back at God's creation of the world (Genesis 1:1-2:4) whilst for the early Christians it was a day to look forward to the remaking of a new heaven and earth at Jesus's second coming. How do you see it?
 - b. How can we make a sensible Sabbath? What impact would that have on ourselves and others?
9. The fifth commandment (Deut.5:16) is to honour your parents. Throughout childhood parents represent God (albeit imperfectly) in how they care, nurture and teach us so respecting them, in O.T. times, was to respect God.
 - a. We are not required to love our parents but to honour or respect them. What does this mean in practical terms?
 - b. Who do you respect and why? How can you respect a parent who does not behave in a way that deserves respect (e.g. an abusive or negligent parent?)
10. The last five commandments (Deut.5:17-21) are common to all eastern societies, including the Babylonians who predated Moses by several hundred years. What does this tell you?
11. Is the sixth commandment (Deut. 5:17) an argument for pacifism? Is killing another person ever justified?

12. Jesus reminds us that the commandment not to murder is about more than simply not killing; It involves keeping our anger in check and treating one another with respect: ²¹ (Mat 5:21-22)
*"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' ²² But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister, will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, '*Raca,' is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.*
 *Raca is probably a reference to the Aramaic reka, which means "empty one", ("empty headed," or "foolish). How can we channel our negative thoughts and feelings in a more positive way, particularly when we don't respect someone?
13. The seventh commandment (Deut. 5:18) refers to extra-marital sexual activity. This was important to Israel for a number of reasons:
- They believed that a person, in some sense, lived on in their offspring
 - Land was passed on to your children and God had given them that land
 - Marriage was a metaphor of God's relationship with Israel
- However, Jesus extends this (Mat. 5:27-33) to seeing someone as an object of lust rather than a whole human. Is this realistic?
14. It has been suggested that marital breakdown is often caused by "a lack of the spirit of obedience that emerges from listening to the other. Obedience in essence is the capacity to listen to the other". Do you agree? What are barriers to listening?
15. The eighth commandment (Deut. 5:19) **may** originally have referred to kidnapping and selling when it says "steal" but many would not agree.
- What is the most common form of stealing in your experience?
 - When, if ever, do you think that stealing is justified?
 - Do you think that you are naturally a rule keeper or a rule breaker and how does that affect your view of these commandments?
16. The ninth commandment (Deut. 5:20) refers to judicial system in which the accused was expected to prove their accuser wrong, unlike our system where one is supposed to be "innocent until proved guilty". Elsewhere in the Bible we are encouraged to be truthful however.
- If a senior manager at work sought to place the blame for the organisations failings on another colleague, when you knew that the manager was themselves in a large part to blame, would you speak up? What might be the consequences both for you and others?
 - Is it ever right to lie? Explain? (then see Exod 1:15-22 and see if it challenges your view)
 - Would you regard spreading unsubstantiated gossip as in the spirit of the ninth commandment?
17. The tenth commandment (Deut. 5:21) makes it clear that the commandments are teachings not enforceable laws since you cannot be sentenced for what you are thinking.
- Which relationships, possessions and positions do you think are most prized by society? What do you most prize in your life? What do you most covet?
 - Does our society encourage covetousness? If so why?
 - To covet is to be unable to see the value of what God has already given us and so devalue our own worth. It can also be the motivator behind breaking some of the other commandments (murder, adultery, stealing). How does trying to see ourselves through God's eyes help us avoid covetousness?
18. Which of the Ten Commandments have you thought most deeply about over these two studies?