

Bible Study – Deuteronomy Chapter 5 – The Ten Commandments

In our last study, we learned the word obedience. Moses wanted Israel to respond to God's love with willing obedience. His reminder that following God in obedience would make things go well for the Israelites in the land they were to possess, but disobedience would bring dire consequences for the nation.

In today's study, we will look at the statutes and rules as given to the Israelites at Horeb, as a general overview. These will be explored in more detail throughout the rest of the book of Deuteronomy.

Read Deuteronomy 4:44 – 5:21

Moses briefly summarizes the first four chapters of Deuteronomy and then reintroduces the law and statutes that God gave to them at Horeb, namely the Ten Commandments. The basis for the Ten Commandments was that "He is who He is" (cf. Exodus 3:14) and that He provided them a way to live, specifically when they enter into the land that God promised their forefathers. In brief, the commandments can be summarized into two categories: loving God (commandments 1-4) and loving others (commandments 5-10). This was taught by Christ in his ministry (cf. Matthew 22:36-40).

The remaining chapters (6-26) will go further into the Ten Commandments, which we will explore in future studies.

Q. Regarding the Lord's name, in what ways can it be taken in vain (cf. Matthew 5:33-37; 1 Timothy 6:1; James 5:12)? How are Christians to apply this commandment (cf. Matthew 6:9)? **Bonus** - What did the Israelites do to prevent themselves from taking the LORD's name in vain? **(15 minutes)**

- **Leader's Notes – Main thrust of this question is to explore all the different ways we can not revere or honour the name of the LORD in both our words and actions. The take away is that we need to make sure we always respect the name of the LORD as He is our king and saviour and should deserve the respect of royalty**
- "In vain" means to take it emptily, carelessly, or profanely
- In a general sense, it means using the name of God in a common way, as opposed in reverence and honour (e.g. respect)
- We can take his name in vain in the following ways:
 - By hypocrisy, such as making a profession of God's name and not living up to that profession (e.g. claiming to be a follower of Christ, yet continuing to live as though there is no power of Christ to turn you away from your sins – cf. 1 Timothy 6:1)
 - By covenant breaking – making promises to God, binding our souls to that which is good and not performing those vows
 - By rash swearing – mentioning the name of God with no purpose behind it or to a no-good purpose (e.g. a flippant use of his name)
 - By false swearing – using his name to be called a witness to a lie
- They were not to use it simply for emphasis or for any unworthy objective in their speech (cf. Matthew 5:33-37; James 5:12)
- Saying something false about God
- Using his name to curse others
- The purpose of this commandment is that we hallow the majesty of his name (cf. Matthew 6:9) – We need to fixate upon Him
- Our speech and behaviour should reflect the fact that we honour and respect God
- How we speak and behave reflects on God's "reputation"
- As Christians, we must advocate that the name of God (or "person" of God) be respected
- We must observe the name of God in these three ways (though not limited to this list)
 - First, whatever our mind conceives of God, whatever our tongue utters, should savor of his excellence, match the loftiness of his sacred name, and lastly, serve to glorify his greatness

- Second, we should not rashly or perversely abuse his Holy Word and worshipful mysteries either for the sake of our ambition, or greed, or amusement, but they should be honoured and prized among us.
- Thirdly, we should not defame or detract from his works, but whatever we recognize as done by him we should speak of with praise of his wisdom, righteousness, and goodness
- Yahweh's name, specifically the tetragrammaton (e.g. four-letter Hebrew name "YHWH") but all of Yahweh's name and titles, must be honoured, blessed, praised, celebrated, invoked, pronounced, and so shared
- To treat with disrespect is to treat his gift lightly, to underestimate his power, to scorn his Presence, and to misrepresent to the family of humankind his very nature as "The One Who Always Is"
- Jews did not speak God's name (Yahweh) to avoid any (unintentional) abuse of it
- They used the phrase "the Name" in place of Yahweh
- They also used "heaven" in place of the name of God
- This may explain why Matthew, who wrote primarily to Jewish audience, usually spoke of the "Kingdom of Heaven" whereas the other Gospel writers, who wrote primarily for a Gentile audience, used the "Kingdom of God"
- According to Jewish tradition, when a Jewish scribe wrote "the name of God", he would first bathe, change his clothes, and use a new quill with which to continue writing
- All this to say that we should hold of the name of God in high honour, respect, and reverence and need to be very careful how we use it in our speech and our corresponding behaviour

Q. Regarding the Sabbath, the telling of the commandment here is like Exodus 20:8-11. However, the focus is different. What is the focus of the commandment in Exodus? How does it differ here? Does the Sabbath commandment still apply to Christians today (cf. Romans 10:4; 14:5-6; Mark 2:23-28; Colossians 2:16-17)? Why or why not? **(15 minutes)**

- **Leader's Notes – Main thrust of this question is that even though as Christians we no longer observe the Sabbath as originally given to the Israelites, we still observe the principles that come from it, namely physical and spiritual rest, as well as a time to remember and worship God for the things He has done in our lives.**
- In the Exodus, the purpose of the Sabbath law was for the Israelites to remember God and His creation and how he rested on the seventh day after doing His creative work the six days prior
- In the Deuteronomy passage, the purpose of the Sabbath law was for the Israelites to remember their exodus and deliverance from the land of Egypt and creation of the nation of Israel (Deuteronomy 7:6-8)
- Though it may seem like two separate reasons why the Sabbath was given, but in fact, the one in Deuteronomy is an addition to commemorating God's finished creation
- God gave the commandment regarding the observance of the Sabbath day for the physical and spiritual welfare of the people (cf. Mark 2:22-28)
- However, the Pharisees made the observance stricter than what God intended (cf. Mark 2:18 – 3:6)
- God did not command Christians to "observe the Sabbath", as was originally given to the Israelites (cf. Romans 10:4; 14:5-6; Galatians 3:23-29; 4:10; Colossians 2:16-17)
- Note that the day of rest predated the Mosaic Law (Exodus 16:22-30 – gathering of manna)
- Christians customarily give the first day of the week (e.g. the Lord's day as opposed to the Sabbath day, the seventh day of the week) as a day of rest
 - This is done, traditionally, as a commemoration of Christ's resurrection, which is a validation of Him fulfilling the law perfectly and his resulting triumph over death
- The Sabbath symbolizes the Old Covenant of Law: you laboured for six days and then you rested. The Lord's Day commemorates the New Covenant of grace: it opens the week with rest in Christ and the works follow.

- Most Christians observe Sunday as a special day devoted to spiritual, rather than physical matters, and God's interests, rather than our selfish interests, because we choose to do so, not because God has commanded us to do so
- This questions presents a number of different views, with each being argued as equally valid, however, the main principle out of this commandment should be observed – That a day of rest be given to each person in order to be physically and spiritually refreshed
- ****Leaders Note – Once the “day of rest” is established, ask the question of how the day of rest should be observed – e.g. what activities should we participate in that would honour God?**

Q. The commandments to love our fellow man are given by “Do not ...” commands. Instead of “Do not”, what would the opposite be? For each command, fill in the blank and cite a practical example: **(15 minutes)**

INSTEAD OF **MURDER**, IT SHOULD BE LIVE PEACEABLY WITH ALL
(Romans 12:18)

INSTEAD OF **BEARING FALSE WITNESS**, IT SHOULD BE TO SPEAK THE TRUTH
(Ephesians 4:25)

INSTEAD OF **COMMITTING ADULTERY**, IT SHOULD BE TO LOVE YOUR SPOUSE (WIFE) AS CHRIST LOVED THE CHURCH; PURITY/UPHOLDING THE MARRIAGE COVENANT
(Ephesians 5:25-28; Hebrews 13:4)

INSTEAD OF **STEALING**, IT SHOULD BE LET HIM LABOUR, DOING HONEST WORK SO HE HAS SOMETHING TO SHARE WITH OTHERS
(Ephesians 4:28)

INSTEAD OF **COVETING**, IT SHOULD BE TO BE CONTENT
(1 Timothy 6:6-12; Hebrews 13:5)

- **Leader's notes** – depending on timing, have each person in the group share on one of the commandments and for them to give specific examples on how they can show love to their fellow man
- The commands go beyond the stated words. The intent of these commandments are also in scope, as expounded on in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) (e.g. lust of the eyes also counts as adultery, not just the physical act)
- Some suggestions as follows:
 - Living at Peace with others – find ways to compromise, where possible and where it doesn't violate your faith or the law, such as cost sharing on a property fence
 - Speak the Truth – to allows tell the truth, even when it is inconvenient
 - Love your spouse/upholding the marriage covenant – to do acts of love to your spouse and for them to be your only object of desire. Also, to keep your mind pure and not to let lust control your mind.
 - Let him labour, doing honest work – regardless of what you want in life, one should work for it rather than taking a shortcut to get it
 - To be content – to be satisfied with what we have and not to desire more than you have or to desire someone else's property

Q. Why can covetousness be the most dangerous of the commandments listed above? How can one protect themselves against this sin? **(15 minutes)**

- **Leader's Notes – Main point is that coveting is a springboard for all other types of sins, as seen in various characters in the bible. We need to guard against wanting more of something we have or wanting the object our neighbour has (by taking it from them). This is not an outward looking sin, which is why it is harder to detect and can be more dangerous**
- Coveting means inordinately desiring to possess what belongs to another person
- Another definition – wanting more and more of something one already has enough of
- This commandment deals with motivation rather than deed and with attitude rather than action
- It gets at the spirit that often leads to the 'forbidden' sins listed in commandments 6-9
- The attitude that is revealed is selfishness or self-centeredness
- The covetous attitude itself is sinful (cf. Matthew 5:21-48)
- It leads to overt sin (e.g. Eve, Lot, Achan, David, Ahab, Judas Iscariot, Ananias and Sapphira)
- Coveting is a root attitude from which every sin – in both sin and deed – against a neighbour grows (cf. Ephesians 5:3)
- How can we control or protect ourselves from this sin?
 - First, we must recognize that we need God's help (grace) in combatting it (cf. John 15:5) and to ask for that help (cf. James 4:2; Psalms 55:22; 1 Peter 5:7)
 - Second, we need to be content in our present condition (cf. Philippians 4:6, 11, 19; 1 Timothy 6:6, Deuteronomy 5:21)
 - Third, we need to evaluate why we want the things we want. The reason why we want it makes it 'right' or 'wrong' (cf. James 4:2-3). Do we want it to exalt ourselves or use it to better serve God or others (cf. Mark 10:15)?
 - Fourth, we need to make sure we are valuing spiritual things higher than material things (cf. Colossians 3:2)
- Also remember, that whatever we conceive, deliberate, will, or attempt is linked to our neighbour's good and advantage

Read Deuteronomy 5:22 – 33

Moses recounts that after giving the commandments to Israel, they respond with fear because they hear God speak and are allowed to live. They ask that Moses be their mediator rather than hear from God directly. The Lord affirms what the Israelites have said and will continue to instruct Moses with the laws and statutes that will eventually be given to Israel. He gives stern warning to Israel not to deviate from these instructions.

Q. What steps can we take to ensure we do not deviate from the Word of God? How do we cultivate a heart that always reveres His Word? **(10 minutes)**

- Keep the word of God in our heart (Deuteronomy 11:18)
- To study it diligently, ask God for wisdom to understand his word (James 1:5)
- To seek the Lord always and to repent when we sin, so that He may have compassion on us (Isaiah 55:6-7)
- Prepare for spiritual battle by equipping ourselves with the Word (Ephesians 6:10-18)

When the LORD says, "Oh that they had such a heart as this always, to fear me and to keep all my commandments, that it might go well with them and with their descendants forever!" (v.29), this should be our goal as well. These commandments should not be viewed as restrictions on our lives, but rather a healthy way to love God and our fellow man. They also should be viewed as God's grace upon Israel by giving them a way to live long in the land they are to possess and that it may go well with them and their sons. For the Christian, it helps us to live a life worthy of our calling and as a testimony of who God is.