

Introduction: One truth, of many, about God, that people ignore or dismiss at their own peril, is this: God is the initiator of everything. *** It began when God created the physical universe out of nothing in an instant (*Hebrews 11:3*). God's creation was complete after He created people in His image (*Genesis 1:26-31*). He gave the people one stipulation: they must not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil (*Genesis 2:15-17*). *** Sometime after the great disobedience (*Genesis 3*), God called Abraham to be a blessing to all the people on earth (*Genesis 12:1-3*). After his descendants had been slaves in Egypt for four hundred years, God called Moses to be His spokesman as He brought them out of bondage with signs and wonders (*Genesis 15:12-16; Acts 7:30-36*). Then He gave the stipulations of His covenant with the people of Israel to Moses on Mt. Sinai. (*Exodus 19:16-31:18*). *** Over the centuries, God's people could not keep His covenant in their own strength. So God sent His ONLY Son, The Savior, as a man to do what we could not do. He was the perfect sacrifice to God to pay the price for our disobedience done out of brokenness. After He came back to life, He gave The Holy Spirit to all who come to Him in humble, dependent faith. The question for every person is now: What will I do with Jesus? God has given all of us the gift of His Son. *** If we surrender control of our lives to God IN Jesus we will have life as God intended at creation: full of meaning and with great purpose. If we desire to live as independent people, we will have lives of unrelieved pain and sorrow, lives of quiet desperation. *** For those who surrender to God to be His people, He has one more stipulation: We must constantly renew and re-commit to our relationship with Him as His children, and as citizens in His Kingdom. *** The first passage we consider this morning is Moses' call to all Israel to renew their covenant commitment to Yahweh their God as they prepare to cross the Jordan River into the land pledged to their forefather Abraham. Some of the provisions have been expanded in the specifics from what was given on Mt. Sinai for the life they would live as settled farmers. They would no longer be wandering nomads. *** In The Gospel passage, Jesus says the primary commandment of God's covenant is to love. First and foremost, to love God; but, as an outgrowth from this, to love people too. Let's dig in.

I. Moses calls all Israel to a covenant renewal. (*Deuteronomy 5:1-5*)

A. Hear to learn to observe the covenant. (*Verses 1-2*)

1. Then Moses called all Israel. (*Verse 1a*)

Location: They are east of the Jordan River and the Promised Land, forty years of wandering over.

2. He said: Hear Israel, the statutes and judgments I am saying I your ears to learn them and keep them. (*Verses 1b-c*)

Hear: They must hear statutes, prescribed actions or decrees; and judgments, proper and fitting ordinances.

Spoken: These were both spoken in their ears so they would hear them and retain them.

Purpose: They would learn to do these by exercise and training; and, they would guard them to keep them in all they did.

3. Yahweh made a covenant with us at Horeb. (*Verse 2*)

Covenant: Horeb is the desert around Mt. Sinai and is sometimes used for Mt. Sinai. The covenant was 'cut' (*Genesis 15*) almost 300 miles away and forty years ago.

B. This is for us, not our fathers. (*Verses 3-5*)

1. Yahweh did not cut this covenant with our fathers but with all of us alive here today. (*Verse 3*)

Us: All over age twenty had died. The covenant must be renewed generation-to-generation. May we constantly renew our relationship with God.

2. Yahweh spoke with you face-to-face from the fire, I standing between, to tell you the Word of Yahweh. (*Verses 4-5a*)

Fire: Fire represents God's holy judgments.

Moses: Moses was an intermediary between God and His people.

3. Because you were afraid in the presence of the fire and did not go up the mountain. (*Verse 5b*)

Fear: The experience of God's awesome holiness produces fear in all people.

What He said: Then Moses repeats what Yahweh said.

II. Ten responses to Yahweh for taking them out of slavery. (*Deuteronomy 5:6-21*)

A. Because He set them free from slavery, they worship and serve Yahweh only, and every seventh day to rest IN Him. (*Verses 6-15*)

Prelude. I have been Yahweh your God who brought you out of bondage in Egypt. (*Verse 6*)

Yahweh: He is their God who keeps His covenant word.

Took out: He kept His word by taking them out of dehumanizing slavery.

Basis-ground: God gave them gracious, miraculous salvation. He has the right to give decrees and ordinances. But, these are given in LOVE for their benefit.

1. You will not have other gods above Me. (*Verse 7*)

One God: We heard in Deuteronomy (6:4-9): He is The ONLY God. Yahweh commanded they love Him with all, with the commands in their heart to always incisively instruct their children.

2. You will not make an image-idol to which you bow down because I will count iniquity to those hating Me, but doing steadfast love to those who love Me and keep My commands. (*Verses 8-10*)

No idol-image: They should not serve anything other than Yahweh – nothing!

Consequences: If they do, God will count it against them.

Reward: But, those who only bow down to God in loving obedience experience His strong LOVE.

3. You will not take the name of your God in vain because you will be guilty. (*Verse 11*)

Vain: Never use God's Name in an empty or false way.

4. Observe to keep holy the seventh day as God commanded; all people and animals in will rest to Yahweh. (*Verses 12-15*)

Seventh day: It is Yahweh's Sabbath and must be kept holy to Him.

No work: No one: children, servants, all animals and sojourners 'in their gates' will do any work.

Rest: God desires settled, quiet rest IN Him for all His people, all His creatures.

Learn to rest in God

Remember: They have the memory of being slaves in Egypt who were brought out from there by Yahweh's mighty hand; therefore, they must keep the Sabbath day of rest.

Bottom Line: The fourth commandment is the longest. It has one third of all the words. So, let us all consider practicing a weekly day of rest in God because of the emphasis He put on this commandment. And the first four commandments together describe how to love God.

The greatest commandment – love God fully

B. They were to honor their parents and to do no wrong to one another: in deeds, in words or in their hearts. (*Verses 16-21*)

1. Yahweh, your God, has commanded you to honor your father and mother that your days will be made long and it will go well with you in the land He is giving you. (*Verse 16*)

Promise: Paul was inspired to write this is the first commandment with a promise. (*Ephesians 6:2*)

2. You will not kill. (*Verse 17*)

Murder: The word carries the meaning of murder.

3. You will not commit adultery. (*Verse 18*)

Marriage: This is when a man has sexual relations with a married woman, causing unfaithfulness.

4. You will not steal. (*Verse 19*)

Steal: This is taking what belongs to another by stealth or deception, and is more than 'scam artists'

5. You will not answer false witness against your neighbor. (*Verse 20*)

False witness: This is both testifying and speaking falsely against anyone.

6. You will not greatly desire the wife of your neighbor (*Matthew 5:27-28*); and, you will not long for his house, field, servants, animals and all that is his. (*Verse 21*)

Covet: After four commandments dealing with physical actions, the last one is all about the heart, what goes on inside us.

Bottom Line: Proper behavior and attitudes toward our fellow human beings is evidence that we do fully love God for all He has done for us.

The greatest commandment – love God fully

III. Jesus clarifies and focuses the words given to Moses. (*Mark 12:28-31*)

A. After hearing Jesus' good answer, a scribe asks Him: which commandment is foremost of all. (*Verse 28*)

1. And after one of the scribes came ... (*Verse 28a*)

Copier of Scripture: These were men who copied Scripture: Torah, early and late prophets, writings.

2. ... having heard them reasoning together ... (*Verse 28b*)

Reasoning together: The Sadducees had told Jesus of a hypothetical woman who became the widow of seven brothers to demonstrate the folly of resurrection. Jesus disarmed them for not knowing Scripture or the power of God (*verses 18-23*).

3. ... after perceiving Jesus answered them well ... (*Verse 28c*)

Perception: He was a scribe with good spiritual discernment.

4. ... he asked Him which is the foremost commandment of all. (*Verse 28d*)

Foremost: With many commands and decrees to obey, he wanted to know the most important.

B. Jesus answered: Hear Israel – The Lord is ONE, love Him with everything; and, love your neighbor. (*Verses 29-31*)

1. The Savior answered him: The foremost is hear Israel, The Lord our God one Lord is. (*Verse 29*)

Hear: He quotes our second *Deuteronomy* passage. The commandment is to hear to obey every day.

ONE: There is one God (in three persons). When we put anything above The ONE God, we sin.

2. And you will love The Lord your God: from the whole of your heart; and from the whole of your life; and from the whole of your mind; and from the whole of your strength. (*Verse 30*)

Love: We are to love God with our whole being, four times over: heart and mind, life and strength. May we all constantly renew and recommit to our love relationship with God: to love Him with all we are and all we have in us.

The greatest commandment – love God fully

3. This second: you will love your neighbor as yourself. (*Verse 31a*)

Love others: We will share what is most important to us. This should be that we know we are children of Father God with Jesus as our big Brother, Savior and Lord. So, may we also (re-)commit to sharing The LOVE we have received from God with all our 'neighbors'.

Textbook inscription: The quote on the first page of a math textbook at WPI: The greatest human love is to share what we love most with others. This is not mathematics. It should be knowing God in Jesus.

4. Greater than these, no other commandment is. (*Verse 31b*)

These two: In other words, all other commandments, decrees and ordinances support these two great commandments. We will be able to love IF we know God, understand who He is, His LOVE, and how He has acted in history to give us what we need, namely a committed love relationship with Him.

Conclusion: As God is about to fulfill His word to Abraham about his descendants and the land, Moses reminds a new generation of Israelites about all God has done for them in the past, and restates the key stipulations of His covenant with them.

Fifteen centuries later, in response to a sincere question by a scribe of God's Word, Jesus states the foremost commandment is to love God with our entire being, and to demonstrate our love to God by loving our neighbors as He has loved us.

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