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A STUDY OF THE WHOLE BIBLE THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY

LOVE THE LORD (5:1–6:25)

The Place of the Passage

With Deuteronomy 1:1–4:43 as a historical and theological orientation, Moses begins a new section at Deuteronomy 4:44 that will continue all the way to 26:19, in which he calls Israel to obedience. He starts at the very heart of what it means to follow the Lord alone: Israel must love him with all that they are (6:5), and they are to express this love by keeping the Ten Commandments (5:7–21). Moses' pastoral exhortations for Israel to embody this basic attitude of loving obedience will occupy him for the next six chapters (chapters 6–11). Then he will give a detailed exposition of what it means to keep the Ten Commandments in all of life (chapters 12–26).

The Big Picture

Israel must love the Lord with all that they are by obeying the commands he has given through Moses.

Gospel Glimpses

GRACE, THEN OBEDIENCE. The order of Israel's history reflects a profound truth about the gospel. As Deuteronomy 5:6 reminds us, God saves Israel first and then summons them to Sinai so that they can be instructed about how to obey his commands. Israel does not obey God so that they can enter a relationship with him; they already are in covenant with him. Later in Deuteronomy, God emphatically states that the blessings Israel enjoys are not because they obeyed Him so well: "Know, therefore, that the Lord your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stubborn people" (9:6). Indeed, God blesses them in spite of their sin! This gracious attitude is one that God pledges to maintain. And so he does, for the same basic of structure of "grace, then obedience" lies at the heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ and even forms the template for several New Testament letters.

JESUS, THE BETTER MEDIATOR. Moses' role as mediator is central to Deuteronomy 5 and runs as a thread through the book. Juxtaposing 5:4 and 5:5, we can say that Israel is "face to face" with God (5:4) even though Moses stands between God and Israel, for, in a representative sense, Moses is Israel to God. Likewise, Moses represents God to Israel, for God speaks to Moses, who then relays God's words to Israel (5:27). The effect is that Moses' words are equated with God's words (1:3; 4:2), such that Israel will be held accountable for disobeying Moses' words as though they had disobeyed God himself. Yet for all of Moses' effectiveness as the

mediator of the old covenant, Jesus far surpasses him as the mediator of the new. Jesus actually is God and man: for us to see Him is to see the Father (John 14:9), and when the Father welcomes him, He welcomes all those whom Christ represents (Rom. 5:2). Jesus is our direct link to the Father, and the Father's link to us (John 14:23).

Theological Soundings

CROSS-GENERATIONAL UNITY. Deuteronomy 5:3 alerts us to a key idea of the book: "Not with our fathers did the Lord make this covenant, but with us, who are all of us here alive today." Since the original audience of Moses' sermons was the children of the wilderness generation, many in this audience had not even been born when Israel was at Sinai some 40 years before. What, then, can Moses mean by "all of us"? The answer is that the Israel of a later generation is one with the previous generations and with those yet to come. For this reason, Moses can say that this present generation was "there" when God worked mightily for Israel in the past. They are even considered eyewitnesses of those events (1:30; 11:7; 29:2–3)! As a result, they and all those who will descend from them are bound to obey the covenant, just as the first generation at Sinai was (5:32–33; 29:13–15). They also have as much a right to the promises as their forefathers did, and in their receiving the promises it is as though the forefathers themselves have received them.

KEEPING THE LAW AS CHRISTIANS. As some of the first concrete rules Moses teaches, the Ten Commandments raise the crucial issue of how we as new covenant Christians should relate to the old covenant laws given in Deuteronomy. On the one hand, many laws refer to old covenant realities that no longer apply to us directly. On the other hand, many laws are explicitly reaffirmed as expressions of God's moral will for Christians in the new covenant. The question can be resolved only by first considering our relationship to the old covenant: as Christians, we are no longer "under" the old covenant, since it has been replaced by the new (Ephesians 2:14–15; Hebrews 8:13). But the old covenant remains the authoritative Word of God and is rich with insight into God's moral character. Each law must, therefore, be considered in turn, asking about both continuity and discontinuity. How do we see God's unchanging character reflected in this law? And how does the work of Christ change the way in which we are now bound to reflect God's character?

Whole Bible Connections

ALL THE HEART AND ALL THE SOUL. The demand that Israel offers to God their whole heart, soul, and might is powerful language echoed throughout Scripture, especially at times when Israel is reminded of their duty to God (Joshua 22:5; I Kings 2:4; II Kings 23:3; II Chronicles 15:12; Matthew 22:37). Often shortened to "all the heart and all the soul," this catchphrase reminds us that God demands our whole selves, which is precisely what he deserves.

BIBLICAL LOVE. When Deuteronomy speaks of human love for God, it uses terms like “fear,” “walk in God’s ways,” “serve,” “hold fast,” “obey,” and “keep his commandments and statutes” (10:12–13; 11:1, 22; 19:9; 30:20). Love is virtually a synonym for “loyalty.” In short, Jesus is saying nothing new when he says, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15). Indeed, to have perfect love for God and for neighbor is to fulfill all of the law’s commands (Matthew 22:40). We show our love for God when we obey him above every other demand or desire, including the demands of family (Deuteronomy 13:3). Despite the closeness of familial love, it is to be like hatred in comparison to our love for God (Luke 14:26). Unfortunately, as we will see, Israel will fail God’s repeated tests to determine whether their love for him is paramount, and it will be only in the time of the new covenant that our hearts will be renewed so that we can obey and love God above all others (Deuteronomy 30:6).

Please answer the following questions:

Chapter 5

1. What had Moses called all Israel together for? (v. 1)
2. Where was the law first given? (v. 2)
3. Why does Moses say, “this covenant was made with them?” (v. 3)
4. Face to face is speaking of what? (v. 4)
5. The great I AM is the One who did what? (v. 6)
6. How many generations will God visit the iniquity to? (vv. 9-10)
7. Who celebrates Sabbath, besides the head of the family? (v. 12)
8. What two kinds of adultery are there? (vv. 18, 21)
9. What did the people ask Moses to do for them? (vv. 27-28)
10. If the people walked in obedience to God, what would the Lord do? (v. 33)

Chapter 6

1. What does Moses call God in verse 1?
2. What was another name for the agreement they had made with God? (v. 2)
3. What should our attitude be toward God? (vv. 4,5)
4. At what four times should we teach our children? (7)
5. What is meant by the “frontlets between thine eyes”? (vv. 6-9)
6. Where were they to write the commandments? (9)
7. When should we be careful not to forget God? (10-12)
8. What is verse 11 warning the people not to do?
9. Why did God swear by His own name? (v. 13)
10. What does “Massah” mean? (v. 16)

11. What were they to answer when asked “What is the meaning of the testimonies, statutes and judgments?” (20-25)

12. To be righteous means you do what before with God. (v. 25)