

DEUTERONOMY

Chapter 5

The Ten Commandments

And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them, “Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the rules that I speak in your hearing today, and you shall learn them and be careful to do them. 2 The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. 3 Not with our fathers did the LORD make this covenant, but with us, who are all of us here alive today. 4 The LORD spoke with you face to face at the mountain, out of the midst of the fire, 5 while I stood between the LORD and you at that time, to declare to you the word of the LORD. For you were afraid because of the fire, and you did not go up into the mountain. He said: 6 “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 7 “You shall have no other gods before me. 8 “You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. 9 You shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, 10 but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments. 11 “You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain. 12 “Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. 13 Six days you shall labor 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, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant, or your ox or your donkey or any of your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. 15 You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day. 16 “Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it may go well with you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you. 17 “You shall not murder. 18 “And you shall not commit adultery. 19 “And you shall not steal. 20 “And you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. 21 “And you shall not covet your neighbor's wife. And you shall not desire your neighbor's house, his field, or his male servant, or his female servant, his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's.’ 22 “These words the LORD spoke to all your assembly at the mountain out of the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness, with a loud voice; and he added no more. And he wrote them on two tablets of stone and gave them to me. 23 And as soon as you heard the voice out of the midst of the darkness, while the mountain was burning with fire, you came near to me, all the heads of your tribes, and your elders. 24 And you said, ‘Behold, the LORD our God has shown us his glory and greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire. This day we have seen God speak with man, and man still live. 25 Now therefore why should we die? For this great fire will consume us. If we hear the voice of the LORD our God any more, we shall die. 26 For who is there of all flesh, that has heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of fire as we have, and has still lived? 27 Go near and hear all that the LORD our God will say, and speak to us all that the LORD our God will speak to you, and we will hear and do it.’ 28 “And the LORD heard your words, when you spoke to me. And the LORD said to me, ‘I have heard the words of this people, which they have spoken to you. They are right in all that they have spoken. 29 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! 30 Go and say to them, “Return to your tents.” 31 But you, stand here by me, and I will tell you the whole

commandment and the statutes and the rules that you shall teach them, that they may do them in the land that I am giving them to possess.’ 32 You shall be careful therefore to do as the LORD your God has commanded you. You shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. 33 You shall walk in all the way that the LORD your God has commanded you, that you may live, and that it may go well with you, and that you may live long in the land that you shall possess.

5:2 *covenant with us at Horeb.* God’s covenant with Israel, given at Mount Horeb (Sinai) and now being confirmed, bound Israel to the Lord as their absolute Sovereign, and to his laws and regulations as their way of life. Adherence to the covenant would bring to Israel the blessings of the Lord, while breaking the covenant would bring against them the punishments described as “curses” (see, e.g., 28:15–20). Jer 31:31–34 predicted the establishing of a new covenant, which made the Sinaitic covenant obsolete. (CSB)

5:3 *not with our fathers ... but with us.* The covenant was made with those who were present at Sinai, but since they were representatives of the nation, it was made with all succeeding generations as well. (CSB)

Given to the first generation of Israelites at Sinai, but the terms now apply to this second generation. Chem: “Before the birth of Christ no teaching was ever revealed in the church with such great miracles and testimonies as the promulgation of the Law” (*LTh* 2:354). (TLSB)

5:4 *face to face.* The Lord spoke to them and heard their reply (4:12, 15). (TLSB)

5:5 *I stood between.* Moses served as the mediator between God and His people at Sinai, carrying messages back and forth during the preparation for the covenant (Ex 19) and for the ratification (Ex 24). We see in Moses a preview of our Lord Jesus Christ, who mediates between God and us (1Tm 2:5). (TLSB)

5:6–21 The Ten Commandments are both the basis and the heart of Israel’s relationship with the Lord. It is almost impossible to exaggerate their effect on subsequent history. They constitute the basis of moral principles throughout the Western world, and they summarize how faith in the one true God will respond to his goodness in worship and conduct. (CSB)

5:6 God introduces Himself—part of a standard suzerain-vassal agreement of the ancient Near East. In these pacts, the ruler begins the agreement with a preamble (“I am the LORD your God”), followed by a historic prologue (“who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery”). This verse is critical for our understanding of the covenant. These Commandments were given to people who were already called and redeemed by God in order that they might show their love for God. They were not given to sinners in order for them to achieve justification, which they had already received by faith (Gn 15:6; Rm 4). (TLSB)

5:12 *as the LORD your God has commanded you.* Missing from the parallel verse in Exodus (20:8), this clause reminds the people of the divine origin of the Ten Commandments 40 years earlier (see vv. 15–16). (CSB)

5:14 Text differs from Ex 20:8–11. (TLSB)

seventh day. Chemnitz: “God has willed that in the observances of the Sabbath there be a memorial of the article of creation ... that the people may be instructed by this teaching device to pray to God and to await His blessings, and that thus faith be strengthened” (*LTh* 2:391). Tertullian: “The force of such precepts was temporary, and respected the necessity of present circumstances” (*ANF* 3:156). (TLSB)

5:15 *you were a slave.* Moses adds a reminder of how the Israelites are to treat their slaves on the Sabbath; both male and female slaves are given rest on each Sabbath, just as the Israelites. Chemnitz: “This manifestly pertains to the people of Israel ... [who] were put in a place of rest in the land of Canaan” (*LTh* 2:389). (TLSB)

5:16–21 The NT quotes often from this section of the Ten Commandments. (CSB)

5:16 *Honor.* Hbr *kabed*, lit, “heavy.” Here it means “consider someone very important, prize highly.” Luther emphasizes the wider implications of this commandment: “All authority flows and is born from the authority of parents” (LC I 141). (TLSB)

that your days may be long. The blessings of obedience are also applied to all of the Commandments. (TLSB)

5:21 Moses weaves together the Ninth and Tenth Commandments by transposing “house” and “wife.” (TLSB)

5:22 *spoke to all.* Chem: “God in the very act of promulgating the Law showed that He did not place the ceremonial and the civil on the same level with the Decalog.... The Lord spoke these words to the whole multitude. But with regard to the other laws God [spoke] to Moses alone” (*LTh* 2:351). (TLSB)

5:24 When the Israelites first heard God’s voice at Mount Sinai, they thought they would die (Ex 20:19). However, no one died in this transaction. Iren: “God the Father is shown forth through all these [operations], the Spirit indeed working, and the Son ministering, while the Father was approving, and man’s salvation being accomplished” (*ANF* 1:489). (TLSB)

5:25–27 In this recounting of the events at Sinai, Moses recalls the fear expressed by the previous Israelite generation: that God had brought them to Mount Sinai to exterminate them. Moses served as the intermediary between God and His people (Ex 20:19). (TLSB)

5:28 *They are right.* God Himself approved the Israelite nation’s request for Moses to serve as an intermediary. (TLSB)

5:29–30 In His infinite wisdom, God commended the Israelites’ request for a mediator and for their fear and reverence toward Him. (TLSB)

5:31 *commandment ... statutes ... rules.* All of God’s statutes and commands were shared exclusively with Moses. Moses then taught these regulations to God’s people. (TLSB)

Ch 5 Moses recounts how all of the Israelites assembled at Mount Sinai to hear God present guidelines for a holy relationship with Him and with one another. Sinful men and women need an intermediary between themselves and God. Though Moses served in that capacity at Sinai, Jesus Christ fills that role in a much greater way for you and for me (1Tm 2:5–6; cf Rm 8:1–2). • Lord of mercy, in Your Law we become painfully aware that our sinful nature separates us from You. Through Christ, our Lord, draw us ever closer to You through Your Word and Sacraments. Amen. (TLSB)