

Bible Doctrines

1. The Ten Commandments and Their Importance.

The Ten Commandments were delivered to Israel at Mount Sinai by God Himself as a concise expression of man's obligations towards God and toward his fellow men. The impressive and solemn manner in which they were delivered emphasized their supreme importance.

Exodus 19: 10-15. Special preparations were made for the occasion of the delivery of the Ten Commandments.

Exodus 19: 16-25. God manifested His presence in awful splendor on Mount Sinai.

Exodus 20: 1. The Ten Commandments were spoken by God's own voice to all the people. In this respect they were unique as all other communications from God for Israel were delivered through Moses.

Deuteronomy 4: 9-13. The giving of the Ten Commandments was to be an event of special remembrance.

Exodus 20: 1-17. (Memorize)-The Ten Commandments as spoken from Sinai.

2. The Requirements of the Ten Commandments Ante-date Sinai.

The requirements expressed in the Ten Commandments, and delivered to Israel at Mount Sinai, were known to men as the will of God for human conduct in pre-Sinaitic times, and are therefore not Jewish but universal obligations.

FIRST Commandment

The whole tenor of the history recorded in Genesis and the early chapters of Exodus reveals the Lord's displeasure at the worship of other gods.

Genesis 35: 2, 3. Jacob knew it was wrong to serve other gods.

Joshua 24: 2, 3. Abraham was called away from a people who worshipped false gods.

Exodus 12: 12. The plagues in Egypt were directed against false gods.

SECOND Commandment

The manner of patriarchal worship with no visible representation of God, reveals their understanding of the fact that God was opposed to idols.

Genesis 31: 32; 35:2, 3. Jacob destroyed the images in his household when he sought the Lord.

THIRD Commandment

The patriarchs showed the utmost respect for God's name. Adam and Eve were punished for taking God's name in vain.

Genesis 18: 27-32. Abraham manifested reverence in approaching [20: 11] God.

Genesis 22: 1-3; Abraham's obedience was evidence that he did [18:19] not take God's name in vain.

FOURTH Commandment

The Sabbath was instituted at Creation- Genesis 2:1-3. It was known before God proclaimed the Ten Commandments at Sinai, and kept before any directions for doing so were given by Moses. (Exodus 16:22-26.) It was intended for men in general and was not instituted originally as a national requirement - Mark 2:27, 28.

FIFTH Commandment

The patriarchal system was based on the Principle of respect for parents.

Genesis 9: 22-27. A curse rested upon Ham for disrespect to his father. Shem and Japheth showed respect to their father.

SIXTH Commandment

God's condemnation of Cain, and Cain's acts of guilt showed that it was wrong to kill. (Genesis 4.) Genesis 9: 6. The murderer was to be punished with death.

SEVENTH Commandment

Genesis 6: 1-3. The antediluvians were condemned for polygamy

Genesis 13: 13. The sin of Sodom (19: 4-8).

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Genesis 20: 1-6. Adultery, a sin (See also Genesis 39: 7-12.)
2 Peter 2: 7. People of Sodom were filthy in their conversation.

EIGHTH Commandment

Respect for ownership reveals a sense of the wrong of stealing.

Genesis 14: 16, 22-24. Abraham's respect for the property of others was a part of his religion.

NINTH Commandment

Genesis 27. Jacob was condemned for bearing false witness against Esau in impersonating him.

TENTH Commandment

The judgment of God fell on those who coveted what was not theirs. This is shown in the overthrow of the kings who captured Lot's goods (Genesis 14), the flight of Jacob before Esau for stealing his blessing (Genesis 27), God's prevention of Laban's effort to seize Jacob (Genesis 31), etc.

There is nothing in the Bible record to indicate that the Ten Commandments were known during the patriarchal period in the same verbal form as they were delivered from Sinai. It seems that their wording originated at the mount when they were declared to Israel. But it is apparent from the historic facts given above, that men were acquainted with the principles of the Ten Commandments from the beginning of history.

Romans 2:14, 15. Originally God's requirements were written in the conscience of man. This is evidenced by the fact that men who had no knowledge of the instructions which God gave to Israel show traces of God's moral requirements in their hearts. Instances are seen in Job, Jethro, Abimelech, etc.

Romans 1:21. Sin darkened man's mind

Ephesians 4: 18 Through sin man became ignorant of his obligations to God.

In the long period between Creation and Sinai sin practically obliterated the knowledge of the true God from the earth. Even the descendants of Abraham in the period of their long sojourn and oppression in Egypt had largely forgotten their obligations to God. Conscience had become perverted through sin and was no longer a safe guide. It was doubtless because of the prevailing ignorance of man's responsibility to his Creator that God spoke the Ten Commandments from Sinai, and delivered them in His own handwriting on tables of stone to Israel.

3. The Ten Commandments Called the Testimony.

Exodus 24: 12. Moses was directed to receive the commandments from God after they had been spoken from the mount.

Exodus 31:18. The tables of stone were called "tables of testimony."

Exodus 32:15,16. God Himself wrote the commandments on the two tables of stone.

Exodus 32: 17-19. When Moses saw that Israel had set up another god he broke the tables of testimony.

Deuteronomy 10: 1-5. Afterward the tables were renewed and deposited by Moses in the ark.

Exodus 40: 20. The Ten Commandments was called "the testimony."

Exodus 25: 22. The ark where the two tablets of the Ten Commandments were deposited was called "the ark of the testimony." (Exodus 26: 33, 34; 30: 6, 26; 31: 7, etc.)

Leviticus 24: 3. The veil separating the two apartments of the sanctuary was called "the veil of the testimony."

Exodus 38: 21. The tabernacle itself was called "the tabernacle of the testimony." (Numbers 1:50, 53; 9:15; 10:11.)

The fact that the testimony, or Ten Commandments, gave its name to so many parts of the sanctuary shows its great importance. It was the central thing in the sanctuary.

4. The Eternal Nature of the Ten Commandments.

Psalms 19: 7. The testimony of the Lord is sure.

According to Gesenius the Hebrew word for "sure," is aman, which means steadfast, firm, durable, lasting. Notice its use in 1 Samuel 2: 35; Psalm 111:7, 8; Isaiah 22: 23, 25; 33: 16; 55: 3.

Psalms 119: 144. Contains an everlasting righteousness.

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5. The Ten Commandments in the Christian Era.

Hebrews 8: 11 2. There is a sanctuary in heaven which forms the center of the Christian faith.

Revelation 15: 5. The sanctuary in heaven is called “the tabernacle of the testimony,” i.e., the tabernacle of the Ten Commandments.

This shows clearly that the Ten Commandments belong to the gospel era, as well as to the old dispensation, and are therefore binding on Christians.

Revelation 11:19. John saw an ark in the sanctuary in heaven.

Since there is an ark in the tabernacle of the testimony John saw in heaven it is obvious that the ark contains the Ten Commandments; otherwise it would not be called “the tabernacle of the testimony.” Note that the ark is called “the ark of God's covenant. The covenant referred to must be the new covenant, for the heavenly temple belonging to the Christian era.

Hebrews 8:10. In the new covenant God's laws are written on the heart. These laws must include the Ten Commandments, for the tabernacle of the new covenant with its ark is the tabernacle of the testimony. (Revelation 15:5; 11:19.)

Revelation 14: 12. The commandments of God and faith in Jesus Christ belong, to each other.

MEMORIZE: Exodus 20:1-17.

Questions on the Lesson

1. What special preparations were Israel directed to make at Sinai for the reception of the Ten Commandments!
2. How did God manifest His presence at Sinai?
3. Show that the requirements of the Ten Commandments did not originate with their proclamation at Sinai.
4. How did man know God's requirements in the early centuries of the world's history?
What evidence of this is still observable?
5. Why was it necessary to proclaim the commandments at Sinai?
6. Describe the writing and reception of the tables of the Ten Commandments?
7. What name is given to the Ten Commandments?
8. What shows that the testimony was the most important thing in the sanctuary?
9. Show that the commandments of the Ten Commandments are eternal.
10. What name is given to the heavenly sanctuary?
What does this infer concerning the Ten Commandments?
11. Name the ark of the heavenly sanctuary, and what covenant is connected with the sanctuary in heaven?
12. How would you show that the laws written on the heart in the new covenant law the commandments of the Ten Commandments?
13. Show that the gospel does not abolish the Ten Commandments.

For Further Study

1. Why is the conscience not a safe guide?

What do you think of the proposition that because the Ten Commandments were given to Israel it was Jewish?

42. THE TWO COVENANTS

1. The Covenants of God.

In the Bible the word “covenant,” when used in connection with a divine covenant, does not signify the making of terms as they are made between equals. Men are not called upon to make terms with God, but are offered the privilege of accepting God's terms. It is God who makes covenant with man. The terms of a divine covenant represent an expression of the divine will concerning man. God's covenant is His pledged promise. There are two main covenants revealed in the Bible spoken of as:

The old or first covenant, and The new or second covenant. Hebrews 8: 13, 7.

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2. The Old or First Covenant.

- Hebrews 8: 7-9. The old covenant was made with ancient Israel at the time of the Exodus.
A study of Israel's history reveals that the first step in the old covenant relationship was made in the call of Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees.
- Genesis 12: 2. God had called Abraham for the purpose of making "a great nation" out of his children. For this purpose He promised him the land of Canaan. Verse 7.
- Genesis 15: 1-21. Later God made a covenant (verse 18) with Abraham that He would deliver his children from bondage and plant them in Canaan.
- Genesis 17: 1-22. God repeated His covenant to Abraham, and directed him to institute circumcision as a sign that his children were the covenant people.
- Psalms 105: 8-12. The covenant – "His [God's] covenant," or pledge, that Abraham's children would be His special people, was renewed to Isaac, Jacob, and the people of Israel.
- Exodus 19: 1-6. At Sinai God invited the people to keep His covenant by obeying His commandments. If they would obey Him He promised to accept them as His own special nation.
- Exodus 19: 7, 8, 9. The response of the people.
So that Israel might know the conditions on which God could fulfil His covenant He made known His requirements to them by speaking His Ten Commandments from the mount (Exodus 20:1-17), and delivering His judgments through Moses (Exodus 21:1-23: 33).
- Exodus 24: 3-8. The covenant ratified by blood.
The old covenant was a national covenant, a covenant made with a people in which God accepted them as His own nation on condition of their obedience. The sins of a few individuals would not break the covenant; only if the nation as a whole departed from God would the covenant be nullified. By the ratification of the old covenant at Sinai the Jews had accepted God's purpose that they should be His special people.
- Exodus 32: 15-20. In less than forty days after the acceptance of God's covenant it was broken by a national rejection of Jehovah for an idol. Moses broke the tables of the law as a symbol of Israel's breaking of the covenant.
- Exodus 32: 30-32. Moses pleaded with God to spare Israel from destruction.
- Exodus 32: 33,34. God spares Israel but does not recognize them as His nation or people.
- Exodus 33: 12, 13. Moses pleaded for Israel's restoration as God's people.
- Exodus 33: 14-17. Moses' request is heard and Israel is re-instated.
- Exodus 34: 10,11,27. God renews His covenant by accepting anew Israel as His nation.

The history of Israel its nation was one of frequent departure from God. Occasionally as in the reign of David, and others, there were bright chapters when God was able to manifest His glory through them to the heathen round about. But the course of the nation was generally downward until Israel was filially plucked up from its homeland and sent into captivity. But through all the long years of Israel's apostasy God remained true to His covenant and regarded them as His people. God is a loving father He yearned after His erring children. However, the time came when God told Israel that His Spirit could not plead with them forever, and though Daniel He gave them another 490 years of grace at the end of which period they were to be forever rejected as His nation. (Daniel 9:24.) This rejection was inescapable after their rejection of the Messiah and His messengers. With the rejection of the Jewish nation through their rejection of Christ the old covenant came to its end. (Matthew 21:42, 43.)

3. The New Covenant.

- Jeremiah 31: 31-34. In the dark days of Israel's apostasy God spoke of another covenant – "a new covenant" which He purposed to make.
- Matthew 26: 26-28. The new covenant (see R.S.V.) was made by Jesus Christ. It was ratified or sealed by the shedding of His blood.
- Hebrews 13:20. The covenant ratified by Christ's blood is also called "the everlasting covenant."
- Matthew 26:28. The new or everlasting covenant is God's provision for the remission of sins.

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The new covenant is God's pledged promise of salvation through Jesus Christ. It is the gracious provision of the gospel by which God secures a people, the true Israel, as His own special people.

- Ephesians 1:3-5. The new covenant was in the mind of God before He made the world.
Genesis 3: 15. The first announcement of it was given in Eden.
 Actually the new covenant was in existence by promise all through the centuries from the fall to the Cross, and melt could be forgiven through faith in it Redeemer to come. It was not really made or ratified, however, until Christ's death. It is in this sense that it is called a new and second covenant.
Hebrews 8: 6. The new covenant is a better covenant with better promises than the old.
Hebrews 8: 10-12. It is an individual covenant dealing with the individual rather than with a nation. It promises transformation of character (verse 10), a personal knowledge of God (verse 11), and forgiveness of sins (verse 12).
1 Peter 2: 9, 10. Through the new covenant God brings into existence a special people, or holy nation, consisting of those who accept Christ and are transformed by His Spirit.
1 Peter 1:3-5. The inheritance of the new covenant is a heavenly one.

MEMORIZE: Jeremiah 31: 33.

Questions on the Lesson

1. Explain the meaning of a covenant when used in connection with God's covenant.
2. Name the two leading covenants of Scripture.
3. When and where was the old covenant made?
 What are the earliest indications of God's desire to make a covenant with Israel?
4. What purpose did God have in mind in the call of Abraham? What Covenant did He make with him?
5. What revelation of the future history of Abraham's children did God give to Abraham?
 What sign of His covenant was instituted?
6. How was God's covenant kept before Abraham's children?
7. What invitation was extended to Israel at Sinai? What promise accompanied the invitation?
 State the conditions of the covenant.
8. How did the people respond?
9. How did God acquaint the people with what the acceptance of His covenant required of them?
 What did it require of them?
10. Give an account of the ratification of the old covenant. With whom was the covenant made?
11. How was the covenant broken? Why did Moses break the two tables of the Ten Commandments?
12. What two things did Moses pray God to do? How was he answered?
13. How long did the old covenant last? What brought it to an end?
14. What did God say through Jeremiah about another covenant?
15. Who made the new covenant? How was it ratified?
 What do you mean by the ratification of a covenant?
16. What other name is given to the new covenant?
17. What benefit is derived from Christ's death?
18. Explain what the new covenant is.
19. When was the new covenant in God's mind?
 Could anyone receive the benefits of the new covenant before it was actually made? Explain.
20. How is the new covenant better than the old?
21. What three things are promised in the new covenant?
22. Who are God's special people of the new covenant? What is their promised inheritance?

For Further Study

1. Who are the mediators of the two covenants?
2. What position did the Ten Commandments have in the old covenant?
3. How would you show that the laws which God promises to write in the heart in the new covenant must include the Ten Commandments?