



READ: Deuteronomy 5:1-22, 28-29 (ESV)

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. The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. Not with our fathers did the LORD make this covenant, but with us, who are all of us here alive today. The LORD spoke with you face to face at the mountain, out of the midst of the fire, 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: 'I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 'You shall have no other gods before me. '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. 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, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.' '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.' 'Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 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. 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.' '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.' 'You shall not murder.' 'And you shall not commit adultery.' 'And you shall not steal.' 'And you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.' '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.' 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. "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. 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!

ENTER THE STORY:

These ten rules were given to a group of people who had just experienced God at his most glorious. They personally witnessed the ten plagues he used to dismantle one of the largest, wealthiest civilizations of its time – the Egyptian Empire. They literally escaped death the night of the Passover, even as they listened to the cries of the Egyptians. The Egyptians even handed over their riches just as God said they would, items the Egyptians were happy to give up,

if it meant they would finally be released from Yahweh's judgment. The Israelites followed the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, even when he led them through the parted Red Sea to escape their enemy. They watched as that same sea closed in on the Egyptian army, which brought an end to the hold Egypt had on them.

They were no longer slaves...they were a redeemed people, freed from the tyranny of their captors. It was time to establish the boundaries of their new relationship with Yahweh, the Creator of the world, their God and soon to be King. These ten rules would govern what the people could and couldn't do, and most importantly how they would reflect their King to the rest of the world. After all, they were supposed to be set apart and distinct so that other nations would be able to KNOW Yahweh through them. They were his representatives, but really this covenant relationship was *SO MUCH* more than that. This was a marriage. Yahweh, the groom, and Israel, his bride.

It makes these rules a lot more relatable when we think of them as, "vows." Each party committed to do their part. God promised to bless them in every way imaginable if they kept their part of the covenant, but he also promised to curse them if they turned their back on him and betrayed him. Can you guess how the people responded to this agreement? *"All that the LORD has spoken, we will do, and we will be obedient!"*

If you've ever wondered how long it took them to FAIL at keeping their word, go read Exodus 32. It didn't take long.

We might be tempted to look at the Israelites and believe that we would have done a better job at keeping these rules. That is, until we get to the gospel of Matthew and hear Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) and find out that it was not just about the external action but the inner heart condition. When Jesus equates hating your brother with murder, and says, *"Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect,"* (Matthew 5:48), we all begin to realize how desperately hopeless our situation is.

But God doesn't leave us there. He sends his Son, the perfect human who, as we've already seen a few days ago, IS the image of God (Colossians 1:15). Jesus is the perfect reflection of his Father, and he fulfills every aspect of the law. He keeps the commandments that we have failed to keep, and he reverses the curse of the fall.

Now we who follow him are the ones set apart...distinct so that other people can KNOW God through us. And what does he want us to do? Jesus summed up the law by giving us the two greatest commandments: love God with all our hearts, souls, mind and strength, and love our neighbor as ourselves. This is how we represent him. Yahweh is still the groom but now *ALL* who follow him and surrender to him are his bride.

With the first set of commandments, God used his own finger to engrave them onto stone tablets. But through Jesus Christ, we are *"...engraved on the palms of his hands,"* (Isaiah 49:16) and the law is engraved on our hearts through the power of the Holy Spirit. Through him, we have the power to keep the law; and when we don't, we have the ability to confess our sins and be forgiven.

PRAY: *Jesus, thank you for doing what we could not do and fulfilling all of the requirements of the law. God, we long to be more like your Son, so please continue to work in us as we walk in your Spirit and submit ourselves to your will. Amen.*