

Deuteronomy

The Law (4:41-26:19)

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The Law (4:41-26:19)

Preamble and the Ten Commandments (4:41-6:25)

Original Context

As Moses prepares to give the Law to the new generation of God's people preparing to enter the Promised Land, he describes for them the consequences of abandoning God through infidelity (4:25-31).¹ Moses outlines five distinct results for infidelity to their God: 1) they would be removed from the land; 2) they would be utterly destroyed; 3) they would be scattered to lands and among people outside the Promised Land; 4) there would be a remnant of Israel who would survive in those scattered lands; and 5) they would get their fill of the idolatry that led to their devastation.

Yet, there is hope (4:29-31). With four specific verbs, Moses describes the attitude and actions of God's remnant people who would gain hope in the midst of the judgment. First, they will seek God.² Second, if they seek God with their whole heart, then they will find Him. Third, they will turn toward God and away from their idolatry.³ Finally, in order to taste the hope of restoration, they must listen and obey God's voice.⁴

Ultimately, there is hope for the remnant because God is merciful (4:31). God's warm and tender affection for His people moves Him to be found by them when they seek Him with their whole heart. The singular foundation for hope for sinners is the character of God Himself.⁵

Following the establishment of the cities of refuge (4:41-43), Moses began to explain the Ten Commandments to the new generation of God's people (4:44-6:25). Deuteronomy presents the Decalogue in a more "expansionistic, stylistically less formal, and more humanitarian" than the parallel account in Exodus 20:1-17. The changes of wording in Deuteronomy when compared to Exodus "reflect the pastoral context and the paranetic aims of this recitation."⁶

Moses introduces the Law using three specific words: testimonies, statutes, and rules (4:44-49). "Testimonies" [עֲדוּת; *ēdûth*] points to the Decalogue as God penned them upon the tablets of stone and contained in the ark.⁷ "Statutes" [חֻקִּים; *chûqqîm*] and "rules" [מִשְׁפָּטִים; *mišpātîm*] combined together have led some scholars to see two kinds of Israelite laws, but it is more than problematic to discern what the differences are.⁸ Essentially, these two words describe the explanation of the Law. On the lips of Moses the prophet, however, this explanation is also part of God's divine will.⁹

Moses gathered all the children of Israel to himself and called them to hear the statutes and judgments of the Law, to learn them, and to obey them (5:1).¹⁰ He certainly was emphasizing a point. "To hear" is synonymous to "obey."¹¹ Moses highlighted the importance of the generation living now to learn and obey the Lord God by learning and doing what He had given them in His Law (5:2-3).¹² As the Lord God appeared to the previous generation, He now speaks through His mediator, Moses, to this generation (5:4-5).

Moses' review of the Decalogue is a call to all members of the covenant community for all time.

1. Exclusive loyalty to God, 5:6-7. Every aspect of life must be dominated by their relationship with God. There must be no area of life in which a person or thing comes before commitment to the one true God.¹³

2. No idols, 5:8-10. The people of God shall have no visual substitutes for God. Rather than substitutes, "we are constantly cast back upon our knowledge of God as gained from the experience of God's living reality," especially in His redemptive work.¹⁴ The steadfast love [חֶסֶד; *chěsěd*] of God should be one of the clear realities that pushes away competing affections in the hearts of His people.¹⁵ The danger, however, is to embrace a substitute,

“carved images,” which “may become confused with what they are intended to represent.”¹⁶

3. Do not misuse God’s name, 5:11. This command called God’s people to refuse to misuse God’s name to manipulate God to use His power for personal or selfish reasons.

4. Keep the Sabbath, 5:12-15. God’s people should set aside the Sabbath in order to remember that they are totally dependent upon God for life and existence. Through His love and power, He created His people, and they should set aside time to remember and celebrate His powerful love.¹⁷ The idea behind the phrase, “make it holy,” points God’s people to set aside this day from the norm of everyday life and dedicate that day in relation to God.¹⁸

5. Respect your parents, 5:16. This commandment was primarily for adult children and how they should show respect to their aging parents. If they refuse to honor their parents, they will experience the consequences of breaking covenant with God.¹⁹

6. Do not murder, 5:17. This commandment refers to any form of unlawful or unauthorized killing.²⁰

7. Do not commit adultery, 5:18. This commandment refers to “sexual intercourse between two persons, one or both of whom are married to another party or other parties.”²¹

8. Do not steal, 5:19. The picture of stealing here is akin to human trafficking. Like the third commandment which seeks to manipulate God for personal gain, stealing seeks to manipulate a human being for personal gain.²²

9. Do not bear false witness, 5:20. This commandment means that God’s people tell the truth, especially “telling the truth in the place where it counts the most... the court of law.”²³

10. Do not covet, 5:21. The people of God should seek to set their hearts on God’s provision so that they have no inner desire to possess anything that belongs to another, and thus not taking something that belongs to another. It is both the sin of intention and the sin of action.²⁴

Moses returns to the history of the giving of the Law and the response of the Exodus generation (5:22-31). He reminds them that the living God had entrusted His commandments to His people so that they might obey them and teach them

to their children. When God's people respond to His commands in obedience, then they will prosper.

At this point, Moses passed on the greatest commandment to the people of God (6:1-25). Moses declared that God commanded His people to fear Him and to obey Him (6:2). To fear God meant that those who heard the words of God would surrender themselves to do what God wanted.²⁵

God's people must surrender control of their lives to Him.²⁶ What He wants, they do. When God's people surrender control of our lives to God, they make a faith statement that He will fulfill His promises to them. Fearing God is bending to the will of God. Trusting God is waiting and believing that He will lift up His people and bless their lives.

The God who is One is alone worthy of loyalty (6:4).²⁷ Loving God means that God's people make Him the supreme passion in our lives.²⁸ Loving God means that God's people give all to bring God glory and pleasure.²⁹

God understood that it was going to be a constant struggle for His people to move from hearing to obeying. He also knew that there would be a temptation to read the commands, leaving them in the head. There was the problem that they would do the right things, but fail to have a heart that beat for Him. So God called Israel to saturate their lives with God's instruction so that every relationship would be touched by God (6:6).³⁰

Moses declared that as the heart of God's people becomes saturated with God's point of view, they must saturate their relationships with that point of view and pass it on to the following generations (6:7-9). Everything that they did and everywhere that they went, God went with them. He alone was the source of hope and peace in their relationships, and they communicated Him as that source to their family and friends.³¹

Entrusted with special relationship with God, His people must be careful to guard against disobedience and infidelity to their covenant with Him (6:10-25). Moses looks to the future and sees that God's people must take care (6:12).

Moses knows that the satiation produces amnesia, and amnesia is the great threat to a community whose defining relationship is grounded in a concrete, nameable memory. Satiation banishes the past and obliterates the future. Everything is reduced to an endless present tense.³²

In the "present tense" in which God's people are satiated with all the good that God had given, they were in danger of forgetting God, their covenant with Him,

and their commitment to His Law. In the “present tense,” God’s people forget all that God had done for them to give them the land flowing with milk and honey. They were slaves in Egypt. God delivered them, brought judgment on Egypt, and led them to the Promised Land (6:21-23). He gave them His Law and presented to them the conditions for experiencing the blessings of the covenant: obey God and fear Him (6:24-25).³³

Eternal Truth

1) Be holy even as God is holy. Even as God is holy in His ways and works, we must in turn follow His commands and do what He calls us to do.³⁴ To worship the Lord, we must allow His Spirit to melt the impurities of our heart each day so that we come before God in humility and obedience.³⁵ We must “refract” His holiness to the world.³⁶

But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, “Be holy, for I am holy.” (1 Peter 1:15-16)

One aspect of a holy life is our relationships with others. As those who are part of God’s family, we exhibit His holy love.

Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. (Colossians 3:12-13)

2) His directions never go off course: God’s directions are right.³⁷ They’re straight. They won’t lead us off course. It produces joy in our hearts because we know we’re moving in the right direction.

3) His commands open our eyes to see life as it is: God’s commands open our eyes to see life from a different point of view. In fact, God’s commands show us who we are and the nature of this world from the perfect point of view, unclouded by those things that keep us from moving forward faithfully.

4) God desires for His Word to sink deep into our heart. Our relationship with God through faith in Christ is more than what we do. It is more than words on a page to follow. It is who we are, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells within us.

5) Loving God supremely is our first-purpose. Jesus began His teaching with a phrase familiar to the people. “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One.”³⁸ This was a statement of God’s undivided love, loyalty, and leadership to

humanity.³⁹ And it presented the center of everything that God's people undertook.⁴⁰ Jesus called the people to worship God, for He is God.⁴¹

When Jesus declared, "Love the Lord your God," He was describing more than mere sentimentality. He was describing a lifestyle of loving God.⁴² God alone is worthy of humanity's supreme devotion. This is our first purpose in life. Jesus wants us to journey with Him to the heights of life in His grip. Jesus called the people to love God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength.⁴³ His words indicate an absolute devotion of all that we are to God.⁴⁴ We must love God above everything else in our lives. Loving God supremely fuels the passion in our life.

What kind of marriage would I have if I told my wife that I loved her, but I spent all my energy and focus on a friend at work? What kind of relationship would I have with my daughters if I told them I loved them, but I spent more time on a golf course with my buddies than with them?

In a similar way, Christ can never be added as an afterthought to an already full and committed life. We can tell Him that we love Him and still give Him the one position He will not accept: Second Place.⁴⁵ Christ's words show that we must live for God each day. To give Him our absolute allegiance in every arena of life.⁴⁶ To allow Him to direct our steps and dictate our destiny.⁴⁷ We must love God above everything else in our lives.

A Chosen People (7:1-25)

Original Context

In the instructions that Moses relays to Israel facing the Land, he tells them to utterly destroy all the inhabitants they encounter so that they will not be tempted to infidelity to God and serve other gods (7:1-2). He further declares that they shall not intermarry with peoples of other nations, again to protect their fidelity to God (7:3-4). Finally, God tells them that they must destroy every form of worship toward other gods in the Land that they will possess (7:5).

This call to faithfulness is built upon the foundation of God's choosing them as His own (7:6-11). They are a holy people, set apart from other peoples and their gods. They are a holy people because God chose them to be His treasured people. God chooses Israel because He loves them, not because of their inherent characteristics or qualities.⁴⁸

This call to the people's faithfulness to God is built also upon God's faithfulness. Moses calls His people to stand upon the faithfulness of God's great love, each day resting in His glorious embrace.⁴⁹ Thus, based upon His covenant and steadfast love, they must keep the whole Law that Moses delivered.

When we follow God's instruction,⁵⁰ He promises to give us a "prolonged life" filled with well-being and productivity. The love and blessing of God is pictured through the "traditional language of fertility" (7:13). The grain, new wine and oil "constitute the principle food products in Palestine."⁵¹ God produces a prolonged and provisioned life for His people when they follow His instructions.

Again the danger is that God's people will think more about the strength of their enemies than they focus on the strength of their God (7:17). The antidote for this fear is the "memory of actual experiences."⁵² When God's people focus on the greatness of God, fear flees for God will fight the battles before them (7:21-22). God moves with power and His power is unstoppable.⁵³ There is nothing too hard for God (Jer 32:17). His sovereign purpose and perfection of character determines how He exercises His power.⁵⁴ His power is perfectly consistent with His character of holiness, righteousness, mercy, and love.⁵⁵

Eternal Truth

1) Be rescued by God's love. It is the goodness of God that leads sinners to repentance (Rom 2:4). His love displayed through patience and mercy and the display of His grace opens your heart today. My prayer is that you might be rescued by His love through faith in Jesus Christ.

2) God is faithful forever.⁵⁶ As Peter wrote, "The Lord is not slack in His promises" (2 Pet 3:9). He is true, He tells the truth, and He proves Himself true.⁵⁷ He comes through on His promises perfectly.⁵⁸ Through the faithfulness of the Lord, we will find ultimate deliverance. We will experience deliverance from the sin that confronts us (1 Cor 10:13). We will find deliverance from the evil one who attacks our life (2 Th 3:3). When we trust the Father, He will give us deliverance rather than destruction.⁵⁹

3) Be satisfied in God's love. God is the greatest satisfaction. To praise God, therefore, is the consummate joy in a life gripped by the grandeur, majesty, and unsearchable greatness of God.⁶⁰ In praise, we find the fulfillment of our great joy, which is supreme satisfaction in God through Christ. Stand upon the faithfulness of God's great love, each day resting in His glorious embrace.⁶¹

4) Trust God's glorious rule. We need to remember God's faithfulness. He has always been faithful and will continue in faithfulness. Jesus declares that all of

the pursuits of His followers should begin and end with the search for God's kingdom and righteousness. The kingdom is the sovereign rule and reign of God in our lives, and righteousness is the fulfillment of God's will. We can seek His rule because Jesus Christ has already brought this gift of fellowship with God.⁶² And when we seek God's rule in our lives, then we can count on Him faithfully fulfilling the deepest yearnings of our heart.

"Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?" (Matt 6:26)

"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." (Matt 6:31-33)

Jesus has brought us a wonderful new world of relationship with God. We live under His wondrous rule, and we conduct ourselves in obedience to His commands.

He recognized that they had a lot of things that gripped their hearts with anxiety and fear. He listed the fears: concerns about life, nourishment, and clothing.

God is sufficient and His rule is perfect. His basic command in this section is to stop worrying. When we trust God's glorious rule we need not be anxious about the details of life, particularly our basic necessities. Those who don't know God have that kind of anxiety.⁶³ But we have absolute confidence in the One who has rescued us from sin's guilt.⁶⁴ We can trust the One who cares for us with such extravagance.⁶⁵ We know that the One who loves us is sufficient to care for our daily needs.⁶⁶ Our confidence is in Him.⁶⁷

Obey the Law (8:1-20)

Original Context

As the chosen people of God, fidelity to the covenant with Him is essential to experience the blessings that He promises. If they obey, then they will live, multiply, and possess the Land (8:1). Moses pleads with God's people to recognize the opposite consequence for disobedience to God. If they disobey God, they will perish.

The motivation for obedience is again the shared memory of God's faithful provision and leadership during the wilderness wanderings (8:2-6). The years in the wilderness were years of testing in which God revealed the hearts of His people, and in which God revealed His heart to His people.⁶⁸ Through those wilderness years, God taught them that He and His words were life.⁶⁹ God fed them manna from heaven and even preserved the clothes on their backs. More importantly, He fed them His Word which fed their inner selves (8:3).⁷⁰ For everything that God called them to do, He provided everything they needed to do it, down to food for their stomachs and clothes on their backs. Therefore, they should obey God and taste the bounty of the Promised Land, remembering that God is the source of their blessings.⁷¹

Yet, if the children of Israel forget to walk in the ways of God, then they shall perish (8:11-20). After all that God had done for them (8:12-16), "instead of blessing Yahweh, the Israelites' hearts will be tempted to 'rise' with pride."⁷² Instead of blessing God, they will be tempted to take credit for their own blessing (8:17). In the wilderness, the struggle of those years provided the testing ground for their loyalty to God. In the Land, the prosperity of God's provision in the Land will be the testing ground for their fidelity.⁷³

Eternal Truth

1) Obey God according to His purposeful love. Everything that comes to us in this life is purposed by God's benevolence for our good.⁷⁴ God preserves and provides for us within the struggles and suffering of life. The goal of this outworking of God's will is that His children, those who have received His inheritance, might receive the blessings from His hand and be conformed to the likeness of Jesus Christ (Rom 8:28-29).⁷⁵ Although we don't always see it, God has a plan to bring the greatest measure of blessing into our lives. It's a joyful thing when God's plan and purpose connect in our lives.

Paul declared, "we know." This is a statement of certainty. Paul's certainty and ours is based upon God's Character and His Testimony. God is faithful to send His Son to die for us, and He is faithful to take care of us. To transform every aspect of our lives into a beautiful work of art. He is faithful to His love and purpose for us. His plan is moving toward the best for us, and we can depend upon His faithfulness to bring good out of all things that we might face. Scripture shows us time and again how that God transformed "all things" into a symphony of blessing.

This is especially the significance of this passage. When God is at work in our lives, He makes our sufferings, struggles, and slips into a wonderful masterpiece

of grace. Did you know that God takes our sufferings and trials and squeezes the good out of them?

Paul described the personal choice for every child of God: to love Him as His chosen vessels, or not. Through our love for Christ, we determine that we will follow the path and the plan that God has marked for us. We choose to obey Him, even though the way that we must go seems hard. But our love for Him gives us the determination and endurance to stick with His plan and purpose.

God's plan includes His calling to salvation. That is certainly the best for us. His plan and purpose also includes our growth in the image and likeness of His Son. The more we grow in our relationship of love with Jesus, the more we experience the best in life from the hand of God through His plan.

2) Disobedience to God brings disastrous consequences. Jesus gives us instruction on how to build a life that will survive the tests we face (Matt 7:24-27). In order to have a life that is built to last, we must have the right foundation. And that foundation is obeying the instructions of Jesus Christ. We are wise when we take the teaching of Jesus and filter every decision, action, thought, and feeling through what He has taught.⁷⁶

When we disobey Christ, however, we then will have a future built upon the shifting sands that will not provide a secure destiny. We will have a great fall, plummeting headlong into fiery torment of eternity. When we hear His Word, but then leave His words to live according to our own desires, our personal intellect, or the collective ignorance of others. Our house may appear as secure as the one built upon the rock, but the test of the whirlwind and the deluge will reveal its diseased foundation of sand.⁷⁷

The mark of a marvelous future is obedience to Christ. Anything less will not stand secure, especially in the final, raging wind of God's holy judgment.⁷⁸ As Augustine wrote: "You stimulate us to take pleasure in praising You, because You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they can find peace in You."⁷⁹

¹See Daniel Block, *Deuteronomy*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 132-33. He writes that if Israel abandoned God, then "the tripartite covenant relationship involving Yahweh, Israel, and the land will disintegrate."

²"To seek" [בקש; *bāqas̄*] means to approach God humbly with a passionate loyalty.

³"To turn" [שוב; *šūb*] means to turn in such a way as to walk toward God and away from every affection that first drew one away from Him [BDB, s. v., "שוב," 996.2]

⁴As Block [2012: 133] rightly suggests, “the voice refers to the covenantal words Yahweh delivered at Sinai and the words being preached presently by his spokesman Moses.”

⁵Walter Brueggemann [*Deuteronomy*, AOTC (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 56] writes: “YHWH is merciful, will not abandon, not destroy, not forget. . . . YHWH is indeed a God of mercy whose attentiveness to Israel and inclination toward Israel endure through and beyond the alienation of exile. In the end, Deuteronomy proclaims a God of mercy!”

⁶Block 2012: 159

⁷BDB s. v., “עֲדוּת,” 730.1.

⁸Jack Lewis, s. v., “חֻקִּים,” in *TWOT*, 317.

⁹For more on the use of the phrase, [חֻקִּים וְחֻמְשֵׁיִם; *hā`ēdōth wehāchūqqîm*], see J. G. Millar and J. G. McConville, *Time and Place in Deuteronomy* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 38-40.

¹⁰For more on the terms for the Law in Deuteronomy, see G. Braulik, “Die Ausdrücke für ‘Gesetz’ im Buch Deuteronomium,” *Biblica* 51 (1970): 39-65.

¹¹See J. A. Thompson, *The Ancient Near Eastern Treaties and the Old Testament* (London: Tyndale, 1964), 36.

¹²The use of first common plural forms in 5:2-3 “highlights the living reality of the covenant relationship between God and his people” [Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1-11*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1991), 111].

¹³Interestingly, R. Knierim [“Das Erste Gebot,” *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 36 (1965): 20-39] proposes that על פני [’*āl-pānā’yā*] means that there should be no other gods in the shrine of Yahweh. Craigie [*The Book of Deuteronomy*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 152], however, rightly states that the command “is directed rather toward the sphere of relationships.”

¹⁴Christensen 1991: 113

¹⁵On חֶסֶד [*chēsēd*], see K. D. Sakenfield, *The Meaning of Hesed in the Hebrew Bible* (Chico: Scholar’s Press, 1978).

¹⁶Christensen 1991: 112

¹⁷Craigie 1976: 157

¹⁸See N. Lohfink, “Leisure: The Work Week and the Sabbath in the Old Testament and Especially in the Priestly Chronicle,” in *Great Themes from the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1982), 209. He notably writes that the verb here, קָדַשׁ [*qādas̄*], means “to remove something from the sphere of the normal, the common, the profane; to place it in relation to God through ritual or prayer or worship.”

¹⁹Christopher J. H. Wright [*Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 76] concurs that this commandment “addresses adults and reminds us of the broad, extended nature of the Israelite family, in which seven generations lived ‘together’ under the authority and protection of the ‘head of household’ – probably the senior living male. Honoring parents was thus a broader reality than childhood obedience, though it would, of course, have included that.”

²⁰This is the significance of using the verb, רצח [*rātsach*], rather than the more common verb, הרג [*hārag*], which means simply to kill.

²¹Christensen [1991: 124] highlights this as the meaning of נָאָפַ [nāap]. Deuteronomy 22-25 will deal with other sexual matters.

²²Craigie 1976: 162. See specifically, גָּנַב [*gānab*; James Smith, s. v., “גָּנַב,” in *TWOT*, 168], which means to steal, cheat, deceive, or to kidnap.

²³Wright 1996: 83.

²⁴Miller [*Deuteronomy, Interpretation* (Louisville: John Knox, 1990), 59], along with other scholars, points to חָמַד [*chāmad*] as possessing “two meanings, both to covet and to take.”

²⁵See M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), 274-81. To fear the Lord means that we are loyal to Him in every detail.

Christensen [1991: 207] writes: “The nature of fear is dependent upon the object of that fear. When we fear someone, or something, which we know is evil and powerful, and perhaps ‘out to get us,’ then our reaction is all too familiar. It either causes us to tense up, perhaps even paralyzing us, or it causes the adrenalin to flow such that we are sometimes capable of remarkable feats of strength for mere survival. But what happens when you fear someone whom you know has your best interests at heart? When you fear someone who loves you, such as God himself, that very fear becomes altogether different. It becomes reverence, a feeling of awe in the presence of divine love and power. It makes us want to surrender our will to God’s will.”

²⁶P. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 204. To fear God is to love and to serve Him with all our heart.

²⁷On the various interpretations of יהוה אחד in 6:4, see S. Dean McBride, “The Yoke of the Kingdom: An Exposition of Deuteronomy 6:4-5,” *Interpretation* 27 (1973): 291-92. Although the interpretation, “YHWH is one,” reveals the theological significance of God’s unity, McBride suggests that “YHWH alone” is more specific and pointed in the context of absolute loyalty to God (Ibid., 303-306).

²⁸On the essential nature and supreme importance of the summons in 6:4-5, see Patrick Miller, “The Most Important Word: The Yoke of the Kingdom,” *The Iliff Review* 41 (1984): 17-30.

²⁹William Moran, “The Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Love of God in Deuteronomy,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 25 (1963): 77-87. Love of God reveals the faithfulness of the more dependent person in a relationship to the more important person in the relationship. It is a formal claim to be loyal and faithful in the daily details of life to the covenant one makes with another.

³⁰Walter Brueggemann, *Deuteronomy*, Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 85. "The core claim of YHWH is to be everywhere available to Israel, audible and visible." It is "saturation education" that will absolutely pervade the thoughts and imaginations of our relationships with the Divine Design to fear, obey, and love God absolutely.

³¹Christensen 1991: 136. The Hebrew term דְבַר [*dabar*] is used eleven times in 5:23-6:3 to show that the Ten Commandments and the Great Commandment (6:4) are the Word of God. "Though one cannot look on the face of God and live, one can hear God's voice speaking 'from the midst of the fire . . . and he may still live' (5:24). It is easy for us to have too small a view of God in mind. The actual experience of God often shatters the inadequacy of our view to impress us with the awesomeness of the 'living God' (5:26)."

³²Brueggemann 2001: 86

³³See the outline of 6:21-24 presented by Craigie 1976: 175.

³⁴James Leo Garrett Jr., *Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Evangelical, Volume 1* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 211.

³⁵Erickson [*Christian Theology*, 312] suggests that "God not only is personally free from any moral wickedness or evil, He is unable to tolerate its presence. He is, as it were, allergic to sin and evil. Those who are his must therefore seek the same holiness that is so basic to his own nature."

³⁶Thomas Oden [*The Living God, Systematic Theology: Volume One* (reprint, Peabody, MA: Prince Press, 1998), 102-103] writes that "God creates beings who are capable of creaturely goodness and thereby are also capable of reflecting the incomparable divine goodness."

³⁷Donald Wiseman, s. v., "יֵשׁוּעַ," in *TWOT*, 417.

³⁸On the consideration of Jesus' self-consciousness as Messiah and God Himself reflected in the Shema, see James Edwards, "The Authority of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 37 (June 1994): 227-28. He considers Mark's portrait of Jesus as God a reflection of Jesus' transmission rather than some strategic position of Jewish believers to evangelize Gentiles. The movement from the Shema to the "Nicene formulation" of Jesus as "true God of true God" is a movement initiated by Jesus Himself.

³⁹This interpretation of the phrase follows J. Gerald Janzen's interpretation of יהוה אֶחָד in Deut 6:4-5. See his argument concerning the meaning of אֶחָד in J. Gerald Janzen, "On the Most Important Word in the Shema (Deuteronomy VI 4-5)," *Vetus Testamentum* (July 1987): 280-300. He suggests that the word points to the unity of God as loyal, covenant keeping without fail.

⁴⁰J. Gerald Janzen, "The Yoke That Gives Rest," *Interpretation* 41 (1987): 256. He writes: "It can hardly be doubted that the Shema constitutes the theological center of the Book of Deuteronomy. . . . Every act of Torah-obedience finds its motivation, its purpose, and its criterion of appropriateness in Israel's love for Yahweh."

I do not agree with Eugene Merrill's [*Deuteronomy* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1994), 165] contention that the Shema "encapsulates all of God's saving intentions and provisions," but I do believe that the Shema reflects and calls to memory the salvific work of God in the history of Israel and, on the lips of Jesus, of humanity.

⁴¹See Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology: Volume 3*, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 185-87, 191-92. Pannenberg examines the historical interpretation of this passage. He shows that Augustine declared that the love of God is seeking after Him and the highest pursuit of life. Augustine proposed that we love God because He is God. Duns Scotus further proposed that the pure act of love always has God as its highest object and not others. Luther also saw the fear of God and the love of God linked with our trust in God.

⁴²See, Gerald Eddie Gerbrandt, *Kingship According to the Deuteronomistic History*, SBLDS 87 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 55-68. The Scripture declares that Josiah turned to YHWH “with all his heart with all his soul with all his might” (2 Kgs 23:25). Josiah obeyed the heart of God’s law described in the Shema. This high evaluation of Josiah is an indication of his turn to YHWH in private and in his lifestyle in public through the reforms he instituted.

⁴³We must not follow Emil Brunner, *The Divine Imperative* (New York: Random House, 1937), 116-20. Brunner indicates that love for God is faith. But he also concluded that we can only love God when we allow Him to love us. He equates the love of God with the love of neighbor. His logic appears to lean toward the idea that faith is encompassed in our love for neighbor.

⁴⁴See S. Dean McBride, “The Yoke of the Kingdom: An Exposition of Deuteronomy 6:4-5,” *Interpretation* 27 (1973): 304. Concerning the original Heb phrase, “with all your heart, soul, strength,” McBride suggests: “They were not meant to specify distinct acts, spheres of life, attributes, or the like, but were chosen to reinforce the absolute singularity of personal devotion to God. While syntactically the three phrases are co-ordinate, semantically they are concentric, forming a sort of (prosaic) climactic parallelism. Thus . . . *lēbâb* alone designates the intentionality of the whole man; *nepheš* similarly means the whole ‘self,’ a unity of flesh, will, and vitality. Most difficult is *mē’ôd* since its use here as a substantive noun is a *hapax* . . . Usually *mē’ôd* connotes ‘excess, muchness’ and it hence appears to function in 6:5 to accent the superlative degree of total commitment to Yahweh already expressed through the use of the preceding terms. Rather than a particular faculty, ‘strength’ or the like, *mē’ôd* evokes the fullest ‘capacity’ of loving obedience to Yahweh which the whole person can muster.”

⁴⁵Lloyd John Ogilvie, *The Heart of God*, quoted in *Christianity Today*, 39:8.

⁴⁶Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 513. He writes: “[God’s] glory, not our pleasure and comfort, is the ultimate value. We must never elevate our respect for humans to the point of virtually worshiping them. Worship is to be given to God alone; when offered to any other person or object, it is idolatry.”

⁴⁷W. Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology: Volume 3*, 191-92. He writes: “Thus far we may indeed say that believers love God. Yet taken alone faith’s act of trust does not contain all aspects of love, for love does not just link up with the object of trust as trust itself does, but is also the power of recognizing what is different. In this way it makes fellowship possible, and it is thus the presupposition and condition and setting of a life in faith rather than identical with faith.”

⁴⁸Mark Dever [The Message of the Old Testament: Promises Made (Wheaton: Crossway, 2006), 159] writes, concerning 7:6-8, that “this great and sovereign God chooses to set his love upon this people for no reason inherent to them but simply because he loves them.”

⁴⁹J. I. Packer [*Concise Theology* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 2001), 47] writes: “God’s fidelity, along with the other aspects of his gracious goodness as set forth in his Word, is always solid ground on which to rest our faith and hope.”

⁵⁰Christensen [1991: 164] notes that “legal instructions” in Deut 7:12 is the translation of משפטים [*mišpāthîm*] although it is translated ordinances in other places. “It would appear that the term here includes the ‘law’ in its entirety.”

⁵¹Christensen 1991: 164

⁵²Christensen 1991: 167.

⁵³This is the intent of the description of God with the terms, גדול [*gādōl*; “great”] and ירא [*yārē*; “to be feared”].

⁵⁴Wayne Grudem [Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 217] writes that “God can do anything he wills to do or anything that is consistent with his character. Although God’s power is infinite, his use of that power is qualified by his other attributes.”

⁵⁵Oden [*The Living God, Systematic Theology: Volume One* (reprint, Peabody, MA: Prince Press, 1998), 75] suggests as well that God’s power is “unlimited in capacity,” and His omnipotence is “the perfect ability of God to do all things that are consistent with the divine character.” Accordingly, “all the power there is in the universe, physical or spiritual, has its source in God” [Conner, *Christian Doctrine*, 88].

⁵⁶James Leo Garrett, *Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Evangelical, Volume 1* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 242-43. The Heb term, אֱמוּנָה, denotes the stability and faithfulness of God. It is used preeminently in the Pss to describe God’s nature to keep His promises. The Greek adjective, πίστος, also points to God’s faithfulness. Garrett notes: “God’s faithfulness is the reliability of his nature and purpose as made known by historical revelation and especially through the keeping of his promises.”

⁵⁷Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 317. The Father always does what He says He will do.

⁵⁸Thomas C. Oden, *The Living God, Systematic Theology: Volume One* (reprint, Peabody, MA: Prince Press, 1998), 115. “The faithfulness of God means that God proves true to his promises by keeping them. God’s faithfulness is a steady, reliable application of divine truth to changing, developing historical circumstances. Trusting God’s fidelity, the faithful are kept by him.”

⁵⁹Emil Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, (), 272. “For those who trust in this faithfulness, deliverance, not deserved ruin, not the righteous judgment of condemnation, is certain.”

⁶⁰John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad! The Supremacy of God in Missions*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 225. Piper suggests that “genuine, heartfelt praise is not artificially tacked on to joy. It is the consummation of joy.”

⁶¹J. I. Packer [*Concise Theology* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 2001), 47] writes: “God’s fidelity, along with the other aspects of his gracious goodness as set forth in his Word, is always solid ground on which to rest our faith and hope.”

⁶²Robert A. Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Foundation for Understanding* (Waco: Word, 1982), 347. He remarks rightly that the “kingdom” and the “righteousness” after which we are to seek are complementary. “To seek righteousness, to set one’s efforts in the pursuit of conduct corresponding to the Father’s will, is not merely the prelude or the entrance requirement of the Kingdom. It is the concomitant of the presence of the Kingdom.” Because God’s rule and reign are now present in the life of the believer, he or she can live in obedience to God.

⁶³The use of τὰ ἔθνη [*ta ethnē*] refers to those who do not know God.

⁶⁴R. H. Mounce, *Matthew*, Good News Commentary (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985), 58. As Mounce states, “Worry is practical atheism and an affront to God” demonstrated by those who do not know God.

⁶⁵Blomberg [*Matthew*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 126] notes that “anxiety characterized pagan religions, which were dominated by fears of a capricious and despotic deity who constantly had to be appeased. In its modern, irreligious garb, pagan anxiety displays a great preoccupation with physical exercise and diet without a corresponding concern for spiritual growth and nutrition.”

⁶⁶J. Finegan, *Myth and Mystery* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), 47-54. The pursuit (ἐπιζητέω) of those who do not know God is the pursuit of the basic needs for life. They cannot trust the despotic gods whom they had worshiped, for those gods neither knew their plight nor cared for them.

⁶⁷Leavell [*Studies in Matthew: The King and the Kingdom* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1962), 49] writes: “Not to trust God is downright heathenish, for the heathen do not know a providential loving God to trust. Diligence in business and trustfulness of heart seem to be the scriptural prescription for kingdom peace and poise and power.”

⁶⁸Wright [1996: 122] concludes that God used the wilderness to humble [עָנָה; *‘ānāh*] His people. This picture of humbling is to educate His people. As such, “the wilderness was indeed punishment. But as a place of learning, it was an ideal classroom.” Thus, according to Wright, God used the wilderness to “test” them as in proving their word and intentions.

⁶⁹Christensen [1991: 175] writes that during the wilderness, “the basic source of life was God and הַדְּבָרִים, ‘the words of God,’ to his people.”

⁷⁰S. R. Driver, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy*, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1896), 107-108.

⁷¹See Gerhard von Rad’s [*Deuteronomy*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), 72] description of 8:7-10.

⁷²Block 2012: 232

⁷³As Brueggemann [2001: 110] writes: "By refusing to listen, Israel imagined it was not addressed but was autonomous. Autonomy produces death, because the self-sufficient think they live without limit, without accountability. That illusion in the long run is not sustainable."

⁷⁴J. I. Packer [*Concise Theology* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 2001), 56] writes that "the doctrine of providence teaches Christians that they are never in the grip of blind forces (fortune, chance, luck, fate); all that happens to them is divinely planned, and each event comes as a new summons to trust, obey, and rejoice, knowing that all is for one's spiritual and eternal good (Rom. 8:28)."

⁷⁵Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 377. Erickson writes that Paul "regards 'everything' that happens as part of God's intention for His children (Eph. 1:11-12), so that 'in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose' (Rom. 8:28), his purpose being that we might be 'conformed to the likeness of his Son' (v. 29)."

⁷⁶France [*Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989), 146] alludes to the fact that Jesus is referencing His teaching in the sermon He has just preached on the mountain. Although France is certainly correct, the principle of following Jesus demands that we heed all that He has taught. Further, it is more than mere hearing and respect for the teaching of Jesus. France correctly notes that "the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount is not to be admired but to be obeyed."

⁷⁷Schweizer [*The Good News According to Matthew*, trans. David Green (Atlanta: John Knox, 1975), 190-91] notes that the eschatological imagery is prevalent in this passage. The coming of the storm reveals the foundations of life, and the "imagery of the Judgment is reminiscent of the Deluge (cf. 24:37-39), and even more directly of the prophetic image of whirlwind and cloudburst that demolish whatever cannot stand before God."

⁷⁸Spurgeon [*Spurgeon's Expository Encyclopedia*, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977), 226] put it this way: "Want of depth, want of sincerity, want of reality in religion--this is the want of our times. Want of an eye to God in religion, lack of sincere dealing with one's soul, neglect of using the lancet with our hearts, neglect of the search warrant which God gives out against sin, carelessness concerning living upon Christ; much reading about Him, much talking about Him, but too little feeding upon His flesh, and drinking of His blood--these are the causes of tottering professions and baseless hopes."

⁷⁹St. Augustine, *The Confessions of Saint Augustine*, Book 1.1.