

Dt. 5:1-5 (LD 34) “Why Listen to the Law?”

For the Children: Why listen to your parents when they give you instructions? One reason, but not the best one, is that if you disobey, you might be punished. A far better reason is that you realize that they have authority over you and you should obey. God has commanded it. But perhaps the best reason is that you love your parents and feel gratitude for all they do for you. Therefore, you want to please them. God has an even greater right to command us: we belong to Him as our Creator, Ruler and Saviour. But the best reason to obey Him is because we love Him and feel grateful for the way He has saved us. **Questions:** How do God’s Names remind us of His right to command us? How does the covenant remind us that we should obey the Lord? How does Dt. 5:1-5 remind us to obey out of gratitude?

Introduction:

First Point: Because It Is Commanded

- 1) Summoned and Commanded by Moses: Moses summoned the people and commanded them, because God had told him to do so. That implies that the 10 commandments are not optional.
- 2) Hear, Learn and Observe: Specifically, the people were commanded to hear with a view to learning the commandments; with a view to doing them carefully. They were not to be mere “hearers.”
- 3) Other Indications of Importance: The commandments are also called “statutes,” engravings, implying stability and permanence. An “ordinance” is a judgement issued by the King. These come from the holy God who spoke from the fire on the mountain. They ought to be taken seriously.
- 4) Still Relevant: LD 34 asks “What *does* the Lord say in His Law?” It then lists all 10 commandments. All are still relevant. All are upheld in the NT e.g., The Sermon on the Mount; Mt. 12:12; Lk. 18; Jn. 4:23-24; 17:3. Jesus did not come to abolish them, but to fulfill (Mt. 5:17). The fulfilling does not abolish them.

Second Point: Because It Is Covenanted

- 1) An Ancient Treaty: In Ancient Near Eastern treaties, the conquering king would make often an oath (covenant) with the conquered leader. Both would pass between cut pieces of sacrificial animals. The conqueror would list his titles and achievements; his laws; punishments for disobedience and rewards for obedience; the conquered king would swear that he and his people would obey. God’s covenant uses this custom. Hence, it was “cut” (“made,” Gen. 15:18, Dt. 5:2,3) by God, who listed His Names (Yahweh and Elohim) and works (delivering His people from Egypt and revealing Himself to them), gave commands, promises and penalties for disobedience. Israel responded by saying “All these things we will do.”
- 2) Obligations for the Whole Covenant Community: The covenant was originally made with Abraham (Gen. 15), later with Israel at Sinai (Ex. 20). the generation present in Dt. 5 was not present then. Yet Dt. 5:2, 4 speak as if this covenant is made with the generation at Canaan’s border. That is because the covenant was with Abraham and his descendants after him. That includes us, also the covenant children, who are Abraham’s spiritual descendants and part of the New Israel. The obligation to do all these things remains.

Third Point: Because It Is Mediated

- 1) Moses Between: Moses was an OT mediator, standing between the holy God and sinful Israel (v. 5). Through this mediator, God spoke to Israel and allowed the people to draw nearer to Him – despite their sins.
- 2) Christ Between: Moses pointed to Christ, the Great Mediator. He stands between God and sinners as the One who has effectually removed our sins, made us righteous in God’s sight, has revealed God to us and enables us to draw even closer to God.
- 3) A Rule of Gratitude: God’s Law reminds us of the sin that Christ has removed in principle, of our need of

Christ and the reason for gratitude to God for this great gift. That is why the Catechism places the Law in Part III, on showing gratitude to God.

Conclusion: