

Deuteronomy

The One and Only

Study 4 – The Law of Love

Introduction

One of the key aspects of Matthew's gospel is its teaching regarding Jesus' relationship to the Old Testament scriptures, both in His Person and His Mission. It is Matthew which relates the coming of Jesus to the end of the exile and to God's gracious work to save His people from their sins. It is in Matthew that we regularly read "this was to fulfil what was written in the prophets" and it is in Matthew that we find Jesus' own explanation of His relationship to the Law of Moses. This is of course particularly clear in the Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, but it is also clear in other places, not least in Jesus' answer to an expert in the Law recounted in Matthew 22:34-40. Asked which is the greatest commandment in the Law, Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind ...and love your neighbour as yourself", words taken from Deuteronomy 6 and Leviticus 19. It is upon the first of these passages, Deuteronomy 6, that we focus our attention in this study.

The close connection between Deuteronomy 5 & 6 is immediately evident if we compare 5:32-33 with 6:1-3. Israel have been told by Moses that they are to be careful to do all that the LORD has commanded them so that they may live long in the land (5:32) and this exhortation which of course point back to the Ten Commandments is then followed by the words "These are the commands, decrees and laws the LORD your God directed me to teach you" (6:1). What follows however is not a list of commands or a restatement of the Ten Commandments but the words that Jesus later quoted to the expert, words that remind Israel and us today that at the heart of God's commandments is his single concern for love – love for the LORD and love for other people. Put differently, we learn from Deuteronomy 6 that love is and always has been the fulfilment of the Law and thus that the purpose of the Law was to give shape and content to love.

Let's explore that important idea further by looking more carefully at Deuteronomy 6.

Read Deuteronomy 6:1-25



Investigate

1. Why was it important for Israel to obey the 'commands, decrees and laws' of the Lord? (6:1-3)
2. What did the LORD want from Israel as they lived in relationship with Him?
3. How were the Israelites and their children to relate to God's Law?
4. How were the Israelites to conduct themselves within the Promised Land?
5. What was the fundamental lesson that the Israelites were to remember and to teach to their children?

Apply



In what way has Deuteronomy 6 informed or challenged your thinking?



In what way has Deuteronomy 6 spoken to your heart?



What needs to change in your daily life as a result of this study?