

## GOD'S COVENANT WITH ISRAEL

### Deuteronomy 4–5

**Memory Verse:** *“You shall have no other gods before me”* (Deut. 5:7 ESV).

#### Background Helps:

The year is 1406 B.C. The forty years of wilderness wandering are over for the people of Israel (see the book of Numbers). The nation is encamped in the land of Moab (Deut. 1:5) on the eastern side of the Jordan River, poised to enter the Promised Land. In this setting Moses delivers a series of farewell addresses or sermons to the people. He also transfers leadership responsibility for the nation from himself to Joshua.

“Deuteronomy” means “repetition of the law” of “second law,” since the book consists mainly of a reiteration of the law God gave to Moses at Mount Sinai. Scholars have noticed that the structure of the book resembles the structure of royal covenants or treaties made between kings and their subjects in the ancient world—which is only fitting, since Deuteronomy is a document of covenant renewal between the LORD and his people Israel. There is an emphasis throughout on God's steadfast love for his people and their reciprocal response of love for God.

The importance of Deuteronomy is seen in the fact that there are almost 100 quotations of and allusions to this book in the New Testament.<sup>1</sup> We will spend the next four weeks studying God's covenant with Israel in the book of Deuteronomy.

This week's readings from Deuteronomy 4–5 emphasize the Ten Commandments, which (according to Deuteronomy 4:13 and 5:2-3) provide a basic summary of the covenant (that is, the covenant God made with Israel through Moses, sometimes called the “old covenant”).

#### Lesson Helps:

Here are some suggestions for your lesson:

The aim: My students will learn about Moses' repetition of the Ten Commandments in Deuteronomy 4–5, so that they will respond to God's love by obedience to his commandments.

Notice the following:

- An emphasis on obeying God's commandments (4:1-8, 14, 30, 40; 5:1, 12, 16, 27-33)
- Israel's role as a light to the nations (4:6-8)
- Moses' description of the awesome scene at Sinai (sometimes called Horeb) when God gave the Ten Commandments (4:9-13, 32-39; 5:2-5, 22-27)
- An emphasis on keeping the second of the Ten Commandments, since the Israelites saw no form at Horeb (4:12, 15-20, 23-28; 5:8-10)


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<sup>1</sup> Kenneth Barker, General Ed., *The NIV Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985), 243.

- Key descriptions of the nature and character of Israel's God: a God who is near (4:7), an invisible God (4:12, 15), a redeeming God (4:20, 32-38; 5:6, 15), a consuming fire, a jealous God (4:24; 5:9), a merciful God (4:31), the only God (4:35, 39), the God of heaven and earth (4:39), a loving and powerful God (4:37; 5:10), a God of glory and greatness (5:24), the living God (5:26). (Contrast the manmade gods of 4:28.)

In your review of the Ten Commandments, emphasize the ones that concern our relationship to God (commandments one to four), especially the second commandment. Emphasize the descriptions of the one true God throughout Deuteronomy 4–5 and his love for Israel (and for us!). Show your students that the appropriate loving response to this God involves obedience. Urge your students to obey God's commandments. You may want to include reference to Jeremiah 31:31-34, showing that, under the new covenant, God writes his law on our hearts, enabling us by the Holy Spirit to obey his commandments. If they have turned away from God in disobedience, he is merciful and ready for them to renew a relationship with him, if they seek him with all their heart and soul (see 4:29-31).

**Home Assignment:**

 Read Deuteronomy 6–8.

 Memorize Deuteronomy 6:5 ESV.