

Present Truth in Deuteronomy

The Stranger in Your Gates

Lesson #5 for October 30, 2021

Scriptures: Mark 12:29-31; Deuteronomy 10:1-19; 27:19; Psalm 146:5-10; Matthew 7:12; James 1:27-2:11.

1. Deuteronomy is quoted at least 44 times in the New Testament. Jesus Himself made this very important statement quoting Deuteronomy as recorded in Mark 12:29-31:

Mark 12:29-31: ²⁹ Jesus replied, “The most important one [commandment] is this: ‘Listen, Israel! The Lord our God is the only Lord. ³⁰Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ ³¹The second most important commandment is this: ‘Love your neighbour as you love yourself.’ There is no other commandment more important than these two.”—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Mark 12:29–31). New York: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible*].[‡]

2. What is the relationship between loving God fully and completely and loving our neighbors as ourselves? And Jesus went on to say: “There is no other commandment greater than these.” (Mark 12:31, *NKJV**) Are we to understand, then, that love is the single greatest commandment? Yes!
3. As Seventh-day Adventists, we have focused on the Ten Commandments and especially the fourth commandment since our early days. But, what are we doing about these two “greatest” commandments? **Are we proving to be the most loving people on earth? Love is not just a warm, fuzzy feeling. Real love is a principle.**
4. It is important to notice that when Jesus was questioned about the greatest commandment, He quoted from Moses’s speech to the children of Israel while they were preparing to cross the Jordan and enter the Promised Land. Of course, we believe that Jesus Himself inspired those messages from long ago. But, are we to understand that they have not generally been honored and obeyed?
5. It is important to remember that in the original scrolls Moses wrote, there were no separations into chapters or verses. What we call *Deuteronomy 10* followed immediately after *Deuteronomy 9*.

Deuteronomy 10:1-11: ¹ “Then the LORD said to me, ‘Cut two stone tablets like the first ones and make a wooden box to put them in. Come up to me on the mountain, ²and I will write on those tablets what I wrote on the tablets that you broke, and then you are to put them in the box.’

³ “So I made a box of acacia wood and cut two stone tablets like the first ones and took them up the mountain. ⁴Then the LORD wrote on those tablets the same words that he had written the first time, the Ten Commandments that he gave you when he spoke from the fire on the day you were gathered at the mountain. The LORD gave me the tablets, ⁵and I turned and went down the mountain. Then, just as the LORD had commanded, I put them in the box that I had made—and they have been there ever since.”

⁶ (The Israelites set out from the wells that belonged to the people of Jaakan,

and went to Moserah. There Aaron died and was buried, and his son Eleazar succeeded him as priest. ⁷From there they went to Gudgodah and then on to Jotbathah, a well-watered place. ⁸At the mountain the LORD appointed the men of the tribe of Levi to be in charge of the Covenant Box, to serve him as priests, and to pronounce blessings in his name. And these are still their duties. ⁹That is why the tribe of Levi received no land as the other tribes did; what they received was the privilege of being the LORD's priests, as the LORD your God promised.)

¹⁰ "I stayed on the mountain forty days and nights, as I did the first time. The LORD listened to me once more and agreed not to destroy you. ¹¹Then he told me to go and lead you, so that you could take possession of the land that he had promised to give to your ancestors."—*Good News Bible*.*

6. God did not abandon the children of Israel, even though they had turned so quickly to idolatry **even while Moses was up in the mountain**. God's presence was still visible on the mountain above them as they were doing this! And Moses dropped or threw down those first precious tablets of stone on which had been written the Ten Commandments by the finger of God. Thus, he signaled that their covenant with God had been broken.

Deuteronomy 9:17: "So there in front of you I threw the stone tablets down and broke them to pieces."—*Good News Bible*.* [Did the people see that?][‡]

Deuteronomy 32:19: "When the LORD saw this, he was angry and rejected his sons and daughters."—*Good News Bible*.*

To show his abhorrence of their crime, he [Moses] threw down the tables of stone, and they were broken in the sight of all the people, thus signifying that as they had broken their covenant with God, so God had broken His covenant with them.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets** 320.1.^{††}

7. God agreed to rewrite the commandments on new tables of stone so the children of Israel could have them in their possession. Then, God tried to convince the children of Israel how important it was/is to obey His commandments. He reminded them of who He was!

Deuteronomy 10:14-16: ¹⁴ "To the LORD belong even the highest heavens; the earth is his also, and everything on it. ¹⁵But the LORD's love for your ancestors was so strong that **he chose you instead of any other people**, and you are still his chosen people. ¹⁶So then, from now on be obedient to the LORD and stop being stubborn."—*Good News Bible*.[†]

Deuteronomy 10:14-16: ¹⁴ Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the LORD's thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is. ¹⁵ Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day. ¹⁶ Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked.—*King James Version*.* (2009). (Electronic Edition of the 1900 Authorized Version., Deuteronomy 10:14–16). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc. [abbreviated as *King James Version*].[‡]

8. In these verses God has made it very clear that an external circumcision or any other external sign would not be—and is not—adequate for what He was/is asking of His children. He needed and needs a new birth, a transformation of the inward motives of the heart. Do

we have any divided loyalties? What might they be? This theme is repeated often.

9. Notice what God went on to say through Moses.

Deuteronomy 10:17-19: ¹⁷ “The LORD your God is supreme over all gods and over all powers. He is great and mighty, and he is to be feared. He does not show partiality, and he does not accept bribes. ¹⁸He makes sure that orphans and widows are treated fairly; he loves the foreigners who live with our people, and gives them food and clothes. ¹⁹So then, show love for those foreigners, because you were once foreigners in Egypt.”—*Good News Bible*.*

Deuteronomy 10:17-19: ¹⁷ For the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward: ¹⁸ He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment. ¹⁹ Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.—*King James Version*.*

10. It is important for us to remember that when God called Himself *God of gods and Lord of lords*, He was not suggesting that there are some other gods, perhaps lesser than He somewhere else in the universe. It was simply a way of saying that He is supreme over all; He is the only God. And He will not be corrupted by bribes or any other means.
11. Who would be considered the fatherless, the widow, and the stranger in our society? Does that also include all the homeless, drunkards, drug addicts, etc.? How should we relate to those groups? Is it easy to carry the gospel to them?
12. But, how does our God behave?

Colossians 1:16-17: ¹⁶For through him God created everything in heaven and on earth, the seen and the unseen things, including spiritual powers, lords, rulers, and authorities. God created the whole universe through him and for him. ¹⁷Christ existed before all things, and in union with him all things have their proper place.—*Good News Bible*.*

13. There are many passages in Scripture, including Psalm 146:5-10, that make it clear that God is the source of our lives. By that, we mean that every breath and every heartbeat happens only because He makes it happen. He set up all the processes that keep us alive. He is the source of any healing. He gives us the power for everything that we do.
14. Particularly challenging and interesting is what Deuteronomy 10:19 says: “Therefore love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.” (*NKJV**) Since we have never been slaves in Egypt, does this verse not apply to us? Or, should we think of ourselves as strangers in this sin-polluted world? Do we belong to this world?
15. God had warned Abram 400 years earlier that his descendants would pass through those terrible years of enslavement in Egypt.

Genesis 17:8: “I will give to you and to your descendants this land in which you are now a foreigner. The whole land of Canaan will belong to your descendants for ever, and I will be their God.”—*Good News Bible*.*

Acts 13:17: “The God of the people of Israel chose our ancestors and made the people a great nation during the time they lived as foreigners in Egypt. God brought them out of Egypt by his great power.”—*Good News Bible*.*

Exodus 15:13: “Faithful to your promise, you led the people you had rescued; by your strength you guided them to your sacred land.”—*Good News Bible*.*

Exodus 14:13: Moses answered, “Don’t be afraid! Stand your ground, and you will see what the LORD will do to save you today; you will never see these Egyptians again.”—*Good News Bible*.*

16. Have any of us ever experienced living on the margins of society, being outcasts or slaves in a given situation? At the foot of Mount Sinai, the children of Israel had been designated by God as: “A people dedicated to me alone, and you will serve me as priests.” (Exodus 19:6, *GNB**) But, even though they may have known all the details of every religious ritual and all that God wanted them to do, that did not change their duty to honor human rights including of the stranger, the widow, and the orphan! Does it include more than those?
17. Not many of us have the responsibility of acting as a judge of other people, legally or financially. But, do we criticize them and disrespect them by our attitudes and behaviors? Do we look down on people standing on the street corners, begging?
18. There is a famous law code that was drawn up years before Moses wrote what we have in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. It was put together by a famous ancient king by the name of Hammurabi. In that “code,” he made “legal” what mothers have been saying to their children for millennia: “If you do not want your brother or sister to hit you, do not hit them.” “If you don’t want someone else to mistreat you, don’t mistreat them.” Thousands of years later when Jesus was on this earth, He turned that command upside down!

Matthew 7:12: “Do for others what you want them to do for you: this is the meaning of the Law of Moses and of the teachings of the prophets.”—*Good News Bible*.* [Did we get that in our reading of Deuteronomy?][†]

19. What is the difference between the Code of Hammurabi and this command from Jesus which He ascribes to the Law of Moses and the teachings of the prophets? The Code of Hammurabi was all in the negative, i.e., “Don’t do unto others what you don’t want them to do unto you.” Jesus’s command was all positive; Jesus said: “Do for others what you want them to do for you.” What an incredible difference in the overall implications of those two statements.
20. Are the homeless and street people in our day treated with fairness? Think of what is happening in our world today. The homeless on our streets are matched by whole societies in other parts of the world who are even more poor and more helpless. Do we have a responsibility to these peoples? Did God really expect the Israelites to be a light to the nations, and to treat even strangers with kindness and tenderness? Would that not have been a powerful witness to the nations around them of the superiority of their faith and their God? Isn’t that the whole reason why God placed them at the junction of three continents?
21. We believe that Adam and Eve were made in the likeness of God. Surely, that includes far more than just some physical appearance. Were they supposed to love and care for their children and their descendants always in a kind and tender way?
22. Look at these passages from Deuteronomy. Do you see a common thread?

Deuteronomy 1:16: “At that time I instructed them, ‘Listen to the disputes that come up among your people. **Judge every dispute fairly, whether it concerns only your own people or involves foreigners who live among**

you.”—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

Deuteronomy 16:19: “They are not to be unjust or show partiality in their judgements; and they are not to accept bribes, for gifts blind the eyes even of wise and honest men, and cause them to give wrong decisions.”—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

Deuteronomy 24:17: “Do not deprive foreigners and orphans of their rights; and do not take a widow’s garment as security for a loan.”—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

Deuteronomy 27:19: “God’s curse on anyone who deprives foreigners, orphans, and widows of their rights.’

“And all the people will answer, ‘Amen!’”—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

23. While we live in a nation supposedly committed to fairness before the law, few of us would argue with the fact that the weak, the poor, the homeless, and the outcasts do not receive the same level of justice that the more prosperous and well-educated and connected receive. That same general truth is true of nations around the world. Has there ever been—or will there ever be—a nation where even the poorest, most marginalized people are treated with equal fairness before the law?
24. What did God mean when He said, ““You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy””? (Leviticus 19:2, *NKJV**) Is it of any value if we learn to go through all the usual motions of practicing a proper religious tradition, but we do not love God and love our neighbors and act accordingly?
25. The later prophets in the Old Testament including several of the minor prophets spoke out repeatedly against the ill-treatment that was given to the poor and marginalized.
26. In the days of Amos and Isaiah, the poor and the needy were despised and mistreated, both in the northern kingdom of Israel (which was about to be conquered by the Assyrians) and the southern kingdom of Judah with its capital in Jerusalem. Amos came from the southern kingdom of Judah; but, he was sent by God to witness to the northern kingdom of Israel. Isaiah, a cousin of the king in Jerusalem, remained in and around Jerusalem throughout his ministry. Look at some of the words spoken by Amos, Isaiah, and even Jeremiah to describe conditions in their world.

Amos 2:6: The LORD says, “The people of Israel have sinned again and again, and for this I will certainly punish them. They sell into slavery honest people who cannot pay their debts, the poor who cannot repay even the price of a pair of sandals.”—*Good News Bible*.^{*}

Amos 4:1: Listen to this, you women of Samaria, who grow fat like the well-fed cows of Bashan, who ill-treat the weak, oppress the poor, and demand that your husbands keep you supplied with liquor!—*Good News Bible*.^{*}

Amos 5:11: You have oppressed the poor and robbed them of their grain. And so you will not live in the fine stone houses you build or drink wine from the beautiful vineyards you plant.—*Good News Bible*.^{*}

Isaiah 3:14-15: ¹⁴The LORD is bringing the elders and leaders of his people to judgement. He makes this accusation: “You have plundered vineyards, and your houses are full of what you have taken from the poor. ¹⁵You have no right to crush my people and take advantage of the poor. I, the Sovereign

LORD Almighty, have spoken.”—*Good News Bible*.*

Isaiah 10:1-2: ¹You are doomed! You make unjust laws that oppress my people. ²That is how you prevent the poor from having their rights and from getting justice. That is how you take the property that belongs to widows and orphans.—*Good News Bible*.*

Jeremiah 2:34-35: ³⁴ “Your clothes are stained with the blood of the poor and innocent, not with the blood of burglars.

“But in spite of all this, ³⁵you say, ‘I am innocent; surely the LORD is no longer angry with me.’ But I, the LORD, will punish you because you deny that you have sinned.”—*Good News Bible*.*

27. How many foreigners were living in Israel in the early years of their occupation of Palestine? How were the strangers to be treated? What about the Gibeonites? (Joshua 9:1-27)

Deuteronomy 24:10-15: ¹⁰ “When you lend a neighbour something, do not go into his house to get the garment he is going to give you as security; ¹¹wait outside and let him bring it to you himself. ¹²If he is poor, do not keep it overnight; ¹³return it to him each evening, so that he can have it to sleep in. Then he will be grateful, and the LORD your God will be pleased with you.

¹⁴ **“Do not cheat poor and needy hired servants, whether fellow-Israelites or foreigners living in one of your towns.** ¹⁵Each day before sunset pay them for that day’s work; they need the money and have counted on getting it. If you do not pay them, they will cry out against you to the LORD, and you will be guilty of sin.”—*Good News Bible*.*[†]

28. Are we always fair to those who may owe us something? Or, do we demand that they pay immediately? Do we pay those to whom we owe something? Clearly, strangers and the poor were marginalized or mistreated enormously in the countries around Israel. So, it would have been quite a contrast if Israel had done what God asked them to do.
29. But, the Old Testament prophets after Moses were not the only ones who spoke out against discrimination.
30. **James 1:27-2:11:** ²⁷What God the Father considers to be pure and genuine religion is this: to take care of orphans and widows in their suffering and to keep oneself from being corrupted by the world.

^{2:1}My brothers and sisters, as believers in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, you must never treat people in different ways according to their outward appearance. ²Suppose a rich man wearing a gold ring and fine clothes comes to your meeting, and a poor man in ragged clothes also comes. ³If you show more respect to the well-dressed man and say to him, “Have this best seat here,” but say to the poor man, “Stand over there, or sit here on the floor by my feet,” ⁴then you are guilty of creating distinctions among yourselves and of making judgements based on evil motives.

⁵ Listen, my dear brothers and sisters! God chose the poor people of this world to be rich in faith and to possess the kingdom which he promised to those who love him. ⁶But you dishonour the poor! Who are the ones who oppress you and drag you before the judges? The rich! ⁷They are the ones

who speak evil of that good name which has been given to you.

⁸ You will be doing the right thing if you obey the law of the Kingdom, which is found in the scripture, “Love your neighbour as you love yourself.” ⁹But if you treat people according to their outward appearance, you are guilty of sin, and the Law condemns you as a lawbreaker. ¹⁰Whoever breaks one commandment is guilty of breaking them all. ¹¹For the same one who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not commit murder.” Even if you do not commit adultery, you have become a lawbreaker if you commit murder.—*Good News Bible*.*

31. We recognize that there is nothing specifically mentioned in the Ten Commandments about the poor versus the rich. However, if we practice the principles of the Ten Commandments, loving God and loving our neighbors, there will be no problem.

32. So, what about it? Does loving your neighbor include loving the drunkards, heroin addicts, and homeless? Jesus answered the question: “Who is my neighbor?” by telling this story:

Luke 10:25-37: ²⁵ A teacher of the Law came up and tried to trap Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to receive eternal life?”

²⁶ Jesus answered him, “What do the Scriptures say? How do you interpret them?”

²⁷ The man answered, “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind’; and ‘Love your neighbour as you love yourself.’ ” [Deuteronomy 6:4; Leviticus 19:18]

²⁸ “You are right,” Jesus replied; “do this and you will live.”

²⁹ But the teacher of the Law wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “Who is my neighbour?”

³⁰ Jesus answered, “There was once a man who was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho when robbers attacked him, stripped him, and beat him up, leaving him half dead. ³¹It so happened that a priest was going down that road; but when he saw the man, he walked on by, on the other side. ³²In the same way a Levite also came along, went over and looked at the man, and then walked on by, on the other side. ³³But a Samaritan who was travelling that way came upon the man, and when he saw him, his heart was filled with pity. ³⁴He went over to him, poured oil and wine on his wounds and bandaged them; then he put the man on his own animal and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. ³⁵The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Take care of him,’ he told the innkeeper, ‘and when I come back this way, I will pay you whatever else you spend on him.’ ”

³⁶ And Jesus concluded, “In your opinion, which one of these three acted like a neighbour towards the man attacked by the robbers?”

³⁷ The teacher of the Law answered, “The one who was kind to him.”

Jesus replied, “You go, then, and do the same.”—*Good News Bible*.*

[Notice that he did not even mention the word *Samaritan!*][‡]

33. Ellen White added some very interesting details to that story.

In the story of the good Samaritan, Christ illustrates the nature of true religion. He shows that it consists not in systems, creeds, or rites, but in the performance of loving deeds, in bringing the greatest good to others, in genuine goodness.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 497.1.

This was no imaginary scene, but an actual occurrence, which was known to be exactly as represented. The priest and the Levite who had passed by on the other side were in the company that listened to Christ's words.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 499.1.†

The Levite was of the same tribe as was the wounded, bruised sufferer. All Heaven watched as the Levite passed down the road, to see if his heart would be touched with human woe. As he beheld the man, he was convicted of what he ought to do; but as it was not an agreeable duty, he wished he had not come that way, so that he need not have seen the man who was wounded and bruised, naked and perishing, and in want of help from his fellow-men. He passed on his way, persuading himself that it was none of his business, and that he had no need to trouble himself over the case. **Claiming to be an expositor of the law, to be a minister in sacred things, he yet passed by on the other side.**—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*,* January 1, 1895, par. 5; *Welfare Ministry** 47.1.†¶ [Both the priest and the Levite were of the same tribe as the wounded man!][‡]

34. Do we as adherents to the law and insisting that others observe the Sabbath, for example, do just as much to make sure that we are observing those instructions from James and Deuteronomy and the prophets of the Old Testament?
35. Should we be doing what the Salvation Army is doing? Should we be establishing homeless shelters and feeding sites? Do we have opportunity, even in our society, to plunder the poor in one way or another?
36. One of the arguments that God through Moses used with the children of Israel was that they had been slaves themselves in Egypt in the past and that they knew what it was like to be slaves. Most of us today would immediately reject the idea that we have ever been slaves. But, are we slaves to sin? Do you feel like you are in bondage of some kind? Should we feel that way? How would that impact the way we live? What could we do to escape that bondage? We may understand the three angels' messages; we may understand the truth about the nature of man, about hell, and the mark of the beast; but, if we do not know how to love and care for those around us in a respectful way, could we really claim to be Christians? Shouldn't the truth that we espouse make us particularly loving?
37. In our day, there are situations in which it could even be dangerous to stop and help someone along the road. What should we do in such a situation? Should Seventh-day Adventists be foremost in promoting "human rights"?
38. Think back to the sin that happened when the children of Israel worshiped that golden calf, even calling it *Yahweh*. How does it make you feel about God that He told Moses to carve out two tablets of stone and take them up to the top of the mountain so He could rewrite those commandments for them and preserve them in the ark or covenant box?
39. We have already suggested that God's covenant of love is everlasting. So, how could it be made new? Isn't that a contradiction? Why did Jeremiah talk about a new covenant?

Jeremiah 31:31-34: ³¹ The LORD says, “The time is coming when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. ³²It will not be like the old covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand and led them out of Egypt. Although I was like a husband to them, they did not keep that covenant. ³³**The new covenant that I will make with the people of Israel will be this: I will put my law within them and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.** ³⁴None of them will have to teach his fellow-citizen to know the LORD, because all will know me, from the least to the greatest. I will forgive their sins and I will no longer remember their wrongs. I, the LORD, have spoken.”—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

40. Why didn't God just write His law straight on men's hearts as He suggested in Jeremiah? What does it mean to *circumcise the heart*? If we really understand the tenth commandment, it suggests that **we should not even want to do anything wrong**. How would that impact the people around us?

Romans 2:28-29: ²⁸After all, who is a real Jew, truly circumcised? It is not the man who is a Jew on the outside, whose circumcision is a physical thing. ²⁹Rather, **the real Jew is the person who is a Jew on the inside, that is, whose heart has been circumcised**, and this is the work of God's Spirit, not of the written Law. Such a person receives praise from God, not from human beings.—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

41. Do we fully understand what it means *to love strangers*?

As former slaves, Israel had to learn to see others, not just as cruel masters they hated, but as “neighbors” to commune with and to share with and to love. The experience of love gets richer and stronger when it is lived between two different people.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*^{*} 67.

42. Is that one of the reasons God asks us to marry a person of the opposite sex? Don't we need practice in getting along with people who do not always think as we do? Remember that we are hoping to live in a society where everyone gets along with everyone, people from all ages and all cultures that have ever existed!
43. Shouldn't we start by loving the fatherless, the widows, and the strangers on this earth to get practice for when we get to heaven and the new earth?

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Last Modified: September 12, 2021

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