

Lesson 1

TO ATTAIN ETERNAL LIFE



Jesus who moved around Galilee preaching the Gospel, reached the boundaries of Judea. There, He taught the people and healed the sick. Then a rich young man approached Jesus and asked: "Teacher, What good deed must I do to have eternal life?" Jesus answered: "If you wish to enter into life, keep the **Commandments.**" (Mt 19:16-17).

On another occasion a lawyer came to Jesus and asked this question to test Him: "Teacher, which Commandment in the law is the greatest?" Jesus said to him: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and prophets." (Mt. 22:34-40).

The Commandments that the Lord has Given

God chose Israel as His own people, delivered them from Egyptian captivity and led them to the land of Canaan. When the Israelites reached the desert of Sinai, God established a covenant with them. "Now therefore, if you obey my

voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples" (Ex.19:5). This was the core of the old covenant. The Israelites agreed that they will obey whatever the Lord commanded. On Mount Sinai, God gave Moses two Covenantal tablets. Ten Commandments were written on them, and God taught them how to obey them.

Ten Commandments of God

1. I am the Lord your God: You shall not have strange gods before me.
2. You shall not take the name of Lord your God in vain.
3. Remember to keep holy the Lords's Day.
4. Honour your father and your mother.
5. You shall not kill.
6. You shall not commit adultery.
7. You shall not steal.
8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.
9. You shall not covet your neighbour's wife.
10. You shall not covet your neighbour's goods.

These commandments can be summed up in two commandments.

1. Love God above everything else.
2. Love your neighbour as you love yourself.

Significance of Commandments

The basis of God's Commandments is love. Its essence is Love of God and love of fellow brethren. Thus, the ten Commandments are summed up in two Commandments: **1.Love your God; 2. Love your Brethren.**

God gave these Commandments for the integral growth and progress of Israel, the God's own people. We can categorize them into two sections. The first three Commandments belong to the first section. They refer to the relationship of man with God. The next seven Commandments belong to the second section. These Commandments teach us about the mutual relationships of human beings.

The Commandments which the Lord gave to Moses on stone tablets are now written in human hearts. The Lord says: "I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts." (Heb 8:10). These Commandments of God also contain the moral laws for all people. The Commandments of God are the instructions to know and love God and to live in righteousness. These Commandments also help for the welfare and prosperity of entire humanity.

The Meaning of these Commandments

The Commandments have not only literal meaning, but also have an inner meaning. While we interpret them, we have to take it into account. Since many of the Commandments express a negative statement, we may think that they are all negative. But, they not only prevent us from doing evil, but also give us powerful inspiration to do good things. For example, The fifth Commandment, 'You shall not kill' teaches us not only to keep ourselves away from murder, but also to respect and protect human life. This Commandment also means to maintain the dignity of life. We should understand that the Commandment 'You shall not steal' intends not only to avoid stealing, 'but also to protect others properties' and to be just in the use of money.

The Fulfillment of Commandments

The Commandments that God gave in the Old Testament find their fulfillment in the New Testament. Jesus taught that He came not to nullify but to fulfill the laws. He wanted us to keep the spirit of love and justice underlying the law. "You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, you shall not murder; and whoever murders shall be liable to judgment. But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment." (Mt. 5:21-22). By this, Jesus demands us to avoid even the anger that diminishes our love for our brethren. Thus Jesus fulfilled the Commandments of God, with love.

Jesus gave a detailed explanation to the Commandments of God in His Sermon on the Mount. He exhorts us to conquer evil with goodness. The Old Testament concept was 'an eye for an eye', 'a tooth for a tooth'. But Jesus asks us to love our enemies and thus become the children of our heavenly Father.

Commandments in Our Daily Life

Commandments convince us about our duties and responsibilities to God, our brethren and ourselves. They help us to know, love and serve God and thus attain heaven. It is not enough that we know the Commandments; we must obey them. Jesus taught by His own life how to obey the Commandments with love. Jesus longed that every person who follows Him should obey these Commandments in daily life. He said: "If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love." (Jn. 15:10).

Jesus, who asked the rich young man and the lawyer to keep the Commandments in their right sense tells us: keep the Commandments; grow in love that makes it meaningful. Love is the hallmark of a Christian. When we obey God's Commandments sincerely, we will grow in love and thus we will inherit eternal life. Hence, let us obey God's Commandments, live in love and inherit eternal life.

Let us Pray

O loving God, thank you for teaching us the commandments, the way to eternal life. Help us to attain eternal life, obeying your commandments in our day to day life.

Read the Word of God and Narrate

Ex: 20:1-17.

Word of God for our Guidance

If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love (Jn. 15:10).

Let us Do

Learn the Ten Commandments by-heart.

My Resolution

I will lead a life, obeying God's commandments.

Find out the Answer

1. What was the core of the old covenant?
2. What is the essence of God's Commandments?
3. How do we interpret the Commandments?
4. How did Jesus fulfill God's Commandments?
5. In what ways do these Commandments help us?