

Deuteronomy 4:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone.

Analysis

God 'declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even ten commandments.' The equation of covenant with Decalogue reveals that the Ten Commandments function as covenant stipulations, not arbitrary rules. The Hebrew 'berit' (covenant) binds God and people in legal relationship with mutual obligations. God's initiative ('he declared...he commanded') emphasizes divine sovereignty in covenant establishment. Writing on 'two tables of stone' indicates permanence and divine authorship. From a Reformed perspective, the moral law reveals God's unchanging character and continues to guide Christian ethics, though Christ fulfills ceremonial aspects.

Historical Context

God inscribed the Ten Commandments on two stone tablets at Sinai (Exodus 31:18, 34:28). Following ancient Near Eastern treaty patterns, both tablets likely contained the full covenant text—one copy for each party (God and Israel). Moses received these tablets twice, smashing the first set after the golden calf apostasy (Exodus 32:19), then receiving replacement tablets (Exodus 34:1-4). These tablets were deposited in the Ark of the Covenant (Exodus 25:16).

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does identifying the Ten Commandments as 'covenant' shape your understanding of God's moral law?
2. In what ways do the Ten Commandments continue to reveal God's character and guide Christian living today?

Interlinear Text

וַיְדַבֵּר	אֶת	לְךָ	בְּרִית	אֲשֶׁר
And he declared			unto you his covenant	
H5046	H0	H853	H1285	H834
צִוָּה	אֶתְכֶם	לַעֲשׂוֹת	עֲשֵׂה	הַדְּבָרִים
which he commanded		you to perform	even ten	commandments
H6680	H853	H6213	H6235	H1697
וַיִּכְתֹּב	עַל	שְׁנֵי	לַח	אֲבָנִים:
and he wrote		them upon two	tables	of stone
H3789	H5921	H8147	H3871	H68

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 34:28 (Covenant): And he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.

Exodus 31:18 (Parallel theme): And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God.

Exodus 24:12 (Word): And the LORD said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them.

Exodus 19:5 (Covenant): Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:

Hebrews 9:4 (Covenant): Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant;

2 Corinthians 3:7 (Parallel theme): But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: