

CHAPTER 5

INTRODUCTION TO DEUTERONOMY 5

In this chapter Moses, after a short preface, (^{<R10>}Deuteronomy 5:1-5), repeats the law of the decalogue, or ten commands, with some little variation, (^{<R16>}Deuteronomy 5:6-21), and then reminds the Israelites of the terrible manner in which it was delivered to them, (^{<R22>}Deuteronomy 5:22,23) which put them upon making a request that Moses might be a mediator between God and them, and hear what the Lord had to say, and report it to them; to which they promised obedience, (^{<R24>}Deuteronomy 5:24-27) and which being agreeable to the Lord was granted, (^{<R28>}Deuteronomy 5:28-31), and this laid them under a greater obligation to observe the commands of God, and keep them, (^{<R32>}Deuteronomy 5:32,33).

Ver. 1. *And Moses called all Israel*, etc.] The heads of the various tribes, and elders of the people, as he had on occasion been used to do; unless it can be thought that at different times he repeated the following laws to separate parties and bodies of them, until they had all heard them:

and said unto them, hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day; the laws, moral, ceremonial, and judicial, which he was about to repeat, and afresh declare unto them, being what they had all a concern in, and under obligation to regard.

Ver. 2. *The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb.*] Which is Sinai, as Aben Ezra observes; it being the same mountain, only it had two tops, which bore these different names; for certain it is that the decalogue after repeated was given at Sinai, and had the nature and form of a covenant; (see ^{<D47>}Exodus 24:7,8).

Ver. 3. *The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers*, etc.] That is, not with them only, as Jarchi, Aben Ezra, and Abendana remark; for certain it is that this covenant was made, or law was given, to the immediate fathers of this present generation of Israelites, whose carcasses had fallen in the wilderness; unless this is to be understood of their more

remote ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with whom the covenant of grace was made, or afresh made manifest, especially with the former; when the law, the covenant here spoken of, was not delivered until four hundred and thirty years after, (^{<RB16>}Galatians 3:16,17),

but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day; many of them were then present at the giving of the law, and though under twenty years of age, could remember it, and the circumstances of it; and besides, they were the same people to whom it was given, though not consisting wholly of the same individuals.

Ver. 4. *The Lord talked with you face to face in the mount*, etc.] Meaning, not in that free, friendly, and familiar manner, in which he sometimes talked with Moses, of whom this phrase is used, (^{<RB11>}Exodus 33:11), but publicly, audibly, clearly, and distinctly, or without the interposition of another; he did not speak to them by Moses, but to them themselves; he talked to them without a middle person between them, as Aben Ezra expresses it: without making use of one to relate to them what he said; but he talked to them directly, personally:

out of the midst of the fire; in which he descended, and with which the mountain was burning all the time he was speaking; which made it very awful and terrible, and pointed at the terrors of the legal dispensation.

Ver. 5. *I stood between the Lord and you at that time*, etc.] Between the Word of the Lord and you, as the Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan; that is, about that time, not at the exact precise time the ten commandments were delivered, for these were spoken immediately to the people; but when the ceremonial law was given, which was ordained by angels, in the hand of a mediator, (^{<RB19>}Galatians 3:19), and which was at the request of the people as follows, terrified by the appearance of the fire out of which the moral law was delivered:

to show you the word of the Lord; not the decalogue, that they heard with their own ears, but the other laws which were afterwards given, that were of the ceremonial and judicial kind:

for ye were afraid by reason of the fire, and went not up into the mount; lest they should be consumed by it: and indeed bounds were set about the mount, and they were charged not to break through:

saying; this word is in connection with the preceding verse, the Lord's talking out of the midst of the fire, when he said what follows.

Ver. 6-11. *I am the Lord thy God*, etc.] This is the preface to the ten commandments, and is the same with that in (^{<0210>}Exodus 20:2), (see Gill on "^{<0210>}Exodus 20:2"), and those commands are here delivered in the same order, and pretty near in the same words, with a little variation, and a few additions; which I shall only observe, and refer to (^{<0210>}Exodus 20:1-17) for the sense of the various laws.

Ver. 12,13. *Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it*, etc.] Or observe it, by setting it apart as a time of natural rest, and for the performance of holy and religious exercises; (see ^{<0218>}Exodus 20:8), where the phrase is a little varied, "remember the sabbath day to keep it holy"; it having been instituted before:

as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee; not at Sinai only, for the same might then have been observed of all the rest of the commands, but before the giving of the law, at the first of the manna; (see ^{<0263>}Exodus 16:23).

Ver. 14. *Nor thine ox, nor thine ass*, etc.] In (^{<0210>}Exodus 20:10), it is only in general said,

nor thy cattle: here by way of illustration and explanation the ox and the ass are particularly mentioned; the one being used in ploughing ground, and treading out the corn, and the other in carrying burdens; and it is added,

nor any of thy cattle; as their camels, or whatever else they were wont to use in any kind of service; they were none of them to do any kind of work on the sabbath day. The following clause also is not used before, which expresses the end of this institution:

that thy manservant and thy maidservant may have rest as well as thee; which if the cattle had not rest, they could not have, being obliged to attend them at the plough or elsewhere; and this respects not only hired, but bond servants and maidens.

Ver. 15. *And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt*, etc.] Even a bondservant; for Egypt was an house of bondage, and there the Israelites were made to serve in hard bondage; of which they are reminded, that their hearts might be touched with it, and inclined to show pity to

persons in somewhat similar circumstances; calling to mind how sweet a little rest would have been unto them when in Egypt:

and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence, through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm; signifying that their deliverance from their state of bondage was not owing to themselves, nor to any creature, but to the mercy and kindness of God, and to his almighty power; and therefore they were under the greatest obligations to observe any command and institution of his he should think fit to make; and particularly this of the sabbath, which was made on that account, as follows:

wherefore the Lord thy God commandeth thee to keep the sabbath day; in commemoration of their rest from Egyptian bondage.

Ver. 16. *Honour thy father and thy mother, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee,* etc.] And is the first commandment with promise, as the apostle observes, (^{<4012>}Ephesians 6:2,3) with a promise of long life and happiness in the land of Canaan, as follows:

that thy days may be prolonged; (see ^{<1202>}Exodus 20:12) here it is added, *and that it may go well with thee;* and which the apostle also has in the place referred to:

in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee; the land of Canaan; which the same apostle explains to a greater latitude,

that thou mayest live long on the earth; applying it to Christians under the Gospel dispensation, whether Jews or Gentiles.

Ver. 17-20. *Thou shalt not kill,* etc.] The following commands begin with the copulative “and”, different from the manner in which they are expressed, (^{<1207>}Exodus 20:17) which joins these together, and them with the preceding ones; hence the law is by some said to be one copulative, and may serve to illustrate a passage in (^{<5120>}James 2:10).

Ver. 21. *Neither shalt thou desire thy neighbour’s wife,* etc.] Here a neighbour’s wife is put before his house, different from (^{<1207>}Exodus 20:17) and “his field” is added, which with what follows take in everything that is a man’s property; and which is not to be desired or coveted in an unlawful manner by another, and much less should any means be made use of to deprive him of it; but “lust” is the thing intended and prohibited, be it after

what it may, which is another man's: (see ^{<105>}Matthew 5:28 ^{<106>}Romans 7:7), of a man's field, (see ^{<218>}Isaiah 5:8 ^{<312>}Micah 2:2).

Ver. 22. *These words the Lord spake unto all your assembly in the mount,* etc.] The above ten words or commands, which were spoken so audibly and loudly by the Lord himself on Mount Sinai, that the whole congregation of the people of Israel heard them:

out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness; in which the Lord was; (see ^{<1041>}Deuteronomy 4:11),

with a great voice, and he added no more; ceased speaking; after he had delivered the ten commands, he said no more at that time. The Targum of Jonathan is,

“with a great voice which ceased not.”

It ceased not until all were delivered, and then it did; it was a continued voice, yet clear and distinct:

and he wrote them in

two tables of stone; marble stone, as the Targum of Jonathan; which is much more likely than what the paraphrase has on (^{<1043>}Deuteronomy 4:13), this is an emblem of the duration of the law:

and delivered them unto me; to Moses, and by him to be delivered to the people, who though they had heard them would be apt to forget them; and therefore they were written, that they might read them, and meditate on them, and be careful to keep them.

Ver. 23. *And it came to pass, when ye heard the voice out of the midst of the darkness,* etc.] The thick darkness, where God was, and with which the mountain was covered, (^{<1021>}Exodus 20:21)

for the mountain did burn with fire; which is a reason both why the Lord spoke out of the midst of the fire, the mountain on which he descended burning with it and also for his speaking out of the midst of darkness, because not only a thick cloud covered the mountain, but it was altogether on a smoke, which ascended as the smoke of a furnace, (^{<1096>}Exodus 19:16,18)

that ye come near unto me, even all the heads of your tribes and your elders; or wise men, as the Targum of Jonathan; by which it appears, that

not only the common people were frightened at what they heard and saw on Mount Sinai, but those of the first rank and eminence among them, who were the most famous for their authority and wisdom.

Ver. 24. *And ye said, behold, the Lord our God hath showed us his glory and his greatness*, etc.] In descending on Mount Sinai in the manner he did, and giving the law from thence with such solemnity; for there was a glory in the ministration of it, as the apostle argues (^{<FORM>}2 Corinthians 3:7-11), it being delivered with so much majesty, and such a glorious apparatus attending it; (see ^{<FORM>}Deuteronomy 33:2). Aben Ezra interprets this of the appearance of fire in which the Lord was, “and his greatness”, of the thunders and lightnings, and the voice of the trumpet:

and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire; the ten words, as the same interpreter rightly notes, which were vocally and audibly expressed out of the fire:

we have seen this day, that God doth talk with man, and he liveth; they had proof of it in themselves; God had been talking with them out of the fire, and yet it did not reach and consume them, but they were still alive.

Ver. 25. *Now therefore why should we die?* etc.] Since we are now alive, and have so wonderfully escaped the danger we were exposed unto, let us be careful that we are not liable to it again:

for this great fire will consume us: if it continues, and we are exposed to it; perhaps some of them might remember the fire that burnt in the uttermost parts of the camp at Taberah, and the destruction of Korah and the two hundred and fifty men with him by fire, (^{<FORM>}Numbers 11:1 16:35),

if we hear the voice of the Lord our God any more, then we shall die; for it was such a voice of words they could not endure as to the matter of them, and therefore entreated the word might not be spoken to them any more; it being the killing letter, and the ministration of condemnation and death; and the manner in which it was delivered was so terrible, that they concluded they could not live, but must die if they heard it again; and imagined that if the fire continued, the flames of it would spread and reach them, and they would not be able to escape them.

Ver. 26. *For who [is there] of all flesh*, etc.] What man was there in any age, that was ever heard of or can be named:

that hath heard the voice of the living God; who lives in and of himself, and is the author and giver of life to all his creatures, whereby he is distinguished from and is opposed unto the lifeless deities of the Gentiles; and which makes him and his voice heard the more awful and tremendous, and especially as

speaking out of the midst of the fire: which was the present case:

as we [have], and lived? of this there never was the like instance; for though some had seen God and lived, as Jacob did, and therefore called the name of the place where he saw him Penuel, (^{<0323>}Genesis 32:30), and Moses had heard the voice of the angel of the Lord out of a bush, which seemed to be burning, and was not consumed, (^{<0302>}Exodus 3:2,4), yet none ever heard the voice of the Lord out of real fire, and particularly expressing such words as he did, but the Israelites. Zoroastres, the founder of the Magi among the Persians, and of their religion, seems to have had respect to this, and to have applied falsely this to himself, which belonged to Moses and the people of Israel; for it is said ^{f58},

“one reason the Persians have fire in so much veneration is, because they say that Zoroastres, being caught up to heaven, did not see God, but heard him speaking with him out of the midst of fire.”

Ver. 27. *Go thou near*, etc.] To the mount, and to God on it:

and hear all that the Lord our God shall say; for they supposed, by the continuance of the Lord on the mount, and the fire burning on it, that he had more to say, which they were not averse to hear; but desired it might be not immediately delivered to them, but by the means of Moses; the sound of the words, and the sight of the fire, being so terrible to them:

and speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee: they did not doubt, knowing the faithfulness of Moses, his declaring all unto them that should be told him by the Lord; and they were desirous that he should, they did not want to have anything withheld from them, only they could not bear to see and hear things immediately from the Lord:

and we will hear it and do it; hearken to it, and receive it, as the word of God, and not man, and yield a ready and cheerful obedience, even to everything that should be required; (see ^{<0209>}Exodus 20:19 24:3-7).

Ver. 28. *And the Lord heard the voice of your word, when ye spake unto me*, etc.] Not only in a general way, as he hears and knows all that is spoken by men; for there is not a word on the tongue, formed upon it, and uttered by it, but what is altogether known to him; but in a special and particular manner observed, took notice of, approved, and was well pleased with what these people said:

and the Lord said unto me, I have heard the voice of the words of this people which they have spoken unto thee; not only heard the sound of them, but took notice of the sense and meaning of them, and listened to them with pleasure and delight:

they have well said all that they have spoken; expressing such an awe and reverence of the divine Majesty, desiring to have a mediator between God and them, and purposing and promising to hearken to and obey whatsoever he should command by him.

Ver. 29. *O that there were such an heart in them*, etc.] Not that there is properly speaking such volitions and wishes in God; but, as Aben Ezra observes, the Scripture speaks after the language of the children of men; and may be considered as upbraiding them with want of such an heart, and with weakness to do what they had promised; and, at most, as approving of those things they spoke of as grateful to him, and profitable to them: the words may be rendered, “who will give^{f59} that they had such an heart”; not to me, but to them, as Aben Ezra notes; they cannot give it to themselves, nor can any creature give it to them; none but God can, and therefore they ought to have prayed to him to give them an heart to hearken and do; agreeably to which is the Arabic version,

“it is to be wished by them, that such an heart would continue with them;”

which they by their language signified was in them: that they would fear me; which is not naturally in the heart of man, is a gift of God, a part of the covenant of grace, is implanted in regeneration, and is no inconsiderable branch of it; it is opposed to pride, and is consistent with faith and joy, and is increased by views of the grace and goodness of God, and is a distinguishing character of a good man:

and keep all my commandments always; not only one, but all, and not only at some certain times, but continually; and which are to be kept in faith from a principle of love, with a view to the glory of God, and in the

strength of Christ; and to this the fear of God is necessary, for where there is no fear of God, there is no regard to his commandments; but where there is a reverential fear of God, there are faith, hope, love, and every other grace; yea, the Spirit, the author of all, who is in the saints, to enable them to walk in the statutes of the Lord, and to keep his judgments and do them; and such keep the commandments of God, not from a slavish fear, but from a sense of divine goodness:

that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever; for the fear of God, and the keeping of his commandments, issue in the good of men, in their own good, their inward peace, and spiritual welfare; in the good of others, their neighbours, servants, and children, by way of example and instruction; and even in the public peace and prosperity of a nation in which they dwell: not that these things are meritorious of eternal life, but are what are approved of by the Lord, and are grateful to him; which is the chief view in the expression of the text.

Ver. 30. *Go say to them, get you into your tents again.*] Which they had left, being brought by Moses, at the direction of God, to the foot of Mount Sinai, to receive the law from his mouth; this being done, they are ordered to return to their tents again, to their families, wives, and children.

Ver. 31. *But as for thee, stand thou here by me,* etc.] On the mount by him whither he was called up; Moses was not permitted to go to his tent when the children of Israel were, but was ordered to wait upon the Lord to receive instructions from him, which he was to communicate to the people, being a kind of a mediator between God and them, as they requested, and which was granted them:

and I will speak unto thee all the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments: all laws, moral, ceremonial, and judicial, which belong to them as men, as in a church state, and members of a body politic:

which thou shalt teach them, that they may do them; for all doctrine is in order to practice, without which all instructions, and theoretical notions, signify little: and these they were more especially to do, and some of them peculiarly,

in the land which I give them to possess it: the land of Canaan, and which laid on them no small obligation to do the commandments of God; since of his free favour and good will, and as a pure gift of his, he had bestowed upon them a land flowing with milk and honey, into which he was just now

about to bring them; as nothing can more strongly engage souls to a cheerful obedience to the service of God, whether in private or in public, than the consideration of the great and good things which God of his rich grace bestows upon them, and has promised to them, and prepared for them, and will quickly put them into the possession of; and upon such an account Moses presses the observance of the commands of God in the following verses.

Ver. 32. *Ye shall observe to do therefore as the Lord your God doth command you*, etc.] Observe every precept, as to matter and manner, which the Lord has commanded, and that under a sense of the great obligations laid on them by him, in giving them freely so good a land to possess:

you shall not turn to the right hand or to the left; but walk in the way of the commandments of God, and not depart from them at all, but follow the Lord in his own ways fully. The phrase is expressive of a strict and close attention to the word of God, without deviating from it in the least; for every sin, which is a transgression of some command of God or another, is a going out of the way that directs unto; (see ^{<330>}Isaiah 30:21).

Ver. 33. *Ye shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God hath commanded you*, etc.] None are to be avoided or departed from on any consideration whatever; (see ^{<330>}Psalms 119:6) an instance of this we have in Zacharias and Elizabeth, (^{<330>}Luke 1:6) that ye may live; corporeally, comfortably, in all the outward enjoyments of life needful for them, particularly in the possession of the land of Canaan, and the benefits of it; for these promises of life upon obedience seem to reach no further, unless as types and emblems of what is enjoyed through the obedience and righteousness of Christ, as the following phrases show:

and [that] it [may] be well with you, and [that] ye may prolong your days in the land which ye shall possess; the land of Canaan; though the Jewish writers ^{f60} carry it further, even to heaven and eternal happiness; and so may we in the sense before given.