

Deuteronomy 5:7-16

Learning Vicariously (Hopefully!), Part I

The word “vicarious” means to experience in the imagination or mind through either the feelings or experiences of another. Thus, the adverb “vicariously” signifies the action of such learning.

When I went around the US in 2010 and preached at all the capitols, one of my friends who had not been to all fifty states followed along on Facebook. He said, “I am living your life vicariously.” I appreciated that, knowing that he was actually a partner with me on my lonely drives and difficult trials.

He was able to see what I saw, and he was able to enjoy what I enjoyed, as long as I either wrote about it in the blog or took photos or videos of what I was seeing.

Whether we realize it or not, this is what Scripture has done for us. And we can, if we are willing to use that experience, learn a great deal. We can avoid many pitfalls, we can grow in spiritual wealth, we can find satisfaction, and we can prevent being chucked into the pit of hell – if we are simply willing to accept and act upon what we see.

Text Verse: “For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.” Romans 15:4

I don’t watch a lot of TV. There just isn’t time. But when I do, I like to live and learn vicariously. I like to watch Sergio and Rhoda’s videos because I can experience Israel. I like to watch real war, so I can experience what those men went through. I like to watch how things are made, because I can contemplate what must go on in the mind of people who developed the useful things we have all around us.

A lot of TV is just junk. When junk goes in, nothing is really added to the value of one's life. I must admit that I do laugh when watching *Get Smart* or *The Pink Panther*. Laughter is good too. But I love to benefit beyond laughter in the few moments I get to watch things.

But the best application of vicarious learning one can find – by far – is found in the pages of Scripture. Although we will just be going through commands today, if we consider them in the greater plan of redemption, then we can truly learn a great deal from those of Israel who have gone before us.

Such wonderful lessons are to be found in God's superior word. And so, let us turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Impossible Standards (verses 7-11)

Moses has reminded Israel of the covenant the Lord made with them at Horeb. He has reminded them of the way in which this occurred – having been a personal communication of His laws to the people in a direct and specific display, meaning from the midst of the fire.

And, so far, he has repeated to them the first words that the Lord spoke, “I *am* the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.”

With that remembered from last week, Moses will now repeat the words of law that the Lord has spoken out. These are the “ten words,” or “commandments,” which provide a basis for the entire law of Moses.

Much of what you will hear concerning these laws, meaning my analysis of them to you, is a close repeat of what you heard when we were in Exodus. There will be some important changes though. Concerning the repeating of these Ten Commandments, or Ten Words, the Pulpit Commentary rightly says –

“On these, as the basis of the covenant, the whole legislation rests, and therefore a rehearsal of them is a fitting introduction to a repetition and enforcement of the laws of the theocracy.” Pulpit Commentary

Moses now repeats them, in order, starting with...

⁷ ‘You shall have no other gods before Me.

lo yihyeh lekha elohim aherim al panaya – “No you shall have to you gods other upon my face.” It is a word for word and letter for letter repeat of Exodus 20:3.

The first word. The command begins with an absolute negation – the word *lo* or “no.” The majority of the commandments come in the negative form, stating the prohibition which is then explained. By stating them this way, the wholly forbidden nature of the act is set as the standard, from which there is to be no deviation at all.

What this signifies is that the desire to do, exactly what is forbidden in the command, already exists within man. In other words, by saying “No shall you have gods other,” the Lord understands that it is exactly what man is prone to doing.

From the first man, Adam, all the way through the ages, man has been consumed with finding every possible god that he can place in his heart before the Lord. Such commands, like the one given to Adam at the very beginning – “of the tree of the knowledge of good at and evil you shall not eat” – point to our limitations.

Adam lacked the *knowledge* of good and evil; we lack the *ability* to properly exercise the knowledge of good and evil which we now possess. The laws then are given to us because of this. This is well explained by Paul in Romans 3 –

“There is none righteous, no, not one;

¹¹ There is none who understands;

There is none who seeks after God.

¹² They have all turned aside;

They have together become unprofitable;

There is none who does good, no, not one.” Romans 3:10-12

In the command, the verb “shall have” is singular, but the word “other” is plural. What this infers is that it isn’t speaking of just other gods, meaning deity, but other gods of any kind such as idols in thoughts, words, or deeds.

If a person was to make an idol of work, it would be a violation of this command. If a person made an idol of his intelligence, it would be a violation of this command. If a person made an idol of his personal strength, it would be a violation of this command.

Anything which is exalted by us before the Lord would be a violation of this command. As we previously saw in Exodus 20, Adam Clarke defines the sense of this first word, saying –

“This commandment prohibits every species of mental idolatry, and all inordinate attachment to earthly and sensible things. As God is the fountain of happiness, and no intelligent creature can be happy but through him, whoever seeks happiness in the creature is necessarily an idolater; as he puts the creature in the place of the Creator, expecting that from the gratification of his passions, in the use or abuse of earthly things, which is to be found in God alone. The very first commandment of the whole series is divinely calculated to prevent man’s misery and promote his happiness, by taking him off from all false dependence, and leading him to God himself, the fountain of all good.” Adam Clarke

However, although this may be the intent, if we were to stop with this first word and go no further, we can see how clearly it brings wrath. No person can say that he has fully kept this one precept without breaking it. Not only are we not good because of our inclinations, we are not good because of our actions.

Each of us has set up an idol in our heart in one form or another during our lives. We have failed by attempting to find another source of joy instead of seeking the Lord. This law can never bring salvation. It can only bring condemnation. And, as James says towards the end of the Bible –

“For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one *point*, he is guilty of all.” James 2:10

Concerning the words *al panaya*, or “upon my face,” it is a way of saying, anywhere at any time. As the psalmist said –

Where can I go from Your Spirit?
Or where can I flee from Your presence? Psalm 139:7

Just as we cannot flee from the presence of the Lord, so we are to never have a god upon His face – at any time or in any place. But we do, don't we? We all set up idols of one form or another before the face of the Lord. From the very first word, we are guilty of all of the law because we have broken this *one point*. How terrible it is to consider. As Paul says –

“I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. ¹⁰ And the commandment, which *was* to *bring* life, I found to *bring* death.” Romans 7:9, 10

Each individual of Israel agreed to this command, and thus each person, as well as the nation as a whole, violated it when they strayed from it. Many times, incidents of both personal and

national violation are noted, but Jeremiah 2 gives a good example of Israel's failure to meet this law –

“But where *are* your gods that you have made for yourselves?

Let them arise,

If they can save you in the time of your trouble;

For *according to* the number of your cities

Are your gods, O Judah.” Jeremiah 2:28

As far as this first word is given, something else was needed to bring life. The first word only condemns; it cannot save.

⁸‘You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness *of anything*

lo taaseh lekha pesel kal temunah – “Not you shall make for yourself a carved image any likeness.” With the exception of one letter, it is a word for word and letter for letter mirror of Exodus 20. The only difference is that in Exodus 20, it says, “and any likeness.” The conjunction “and” is left off here. We can put the thoughts side by side to see the difference –

You shall not make for yourself a carved image, and any likeness...
You shall not make for yourself a carved image, any likeness...

Exodus 20 thus separates the statement into two thoughts, a carved image and anything else which could be made into a likeness. Deuteronomy 5 has the words “any likeness” define what it means to not make a carved image.

By stating it both ways, it then ensures that someone cannot equivocate on what he claims to have been doing. The prohibition is all-encompassing concerning making a carved image of any likeness, or a carved image and any likeness.

The second word. The first command asserted the unity of God in Israel's worship. This second command is intended to ensure that the first command is adhered to in a physical sense. Yehovah showed them no form of Himself and therefore no form was to be assigned to Him in worship.

Further, no form was to be worshipped as a god other than Him. As He is the Creator, then all else is created. Therefore, to worship any physical part of the creation was to worship less than the Creator. This command then shows what is to be considered unlawful worship.

The *pesel* is an "idol" or "image." It comes from *pasal* which means "to cut" or "to hew into shape." The next word is *temunah*. It signifies a "likeness" or "form." These words combined thus signify any physical idol or image.

The command says *lo taaseh lekha* – "no make for yourself." There is an important point to consider here. The Bible does not forbid the making of shaped things such as cherubim for the Ark of the Covenant. It prohibits shaped things for personal use as an idol and it will go further to explain this later.

It is an important point, because people who challenge the Bible say that the making of the things for the tabernacle is a violation of this commandment. This is not so. There is nothing contradictory between this command and the Lord's other commands.

8 (con't) that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth;

asher ba'shamayim mi'maal v'asher ba'arets mi'takhat v'asher ba'mayim mi'takhat la'arets – "which under the heavens from above, and which the earth from below, and which in the waters from below the earth." It is an exact repeat of Exodus 20.

These words form a triple-division of the sphere of existence in the material universe. It is thus an all-encompassing statement concerning it, and it prohibits making anything resembling whatever exists in any of the spheres.

This goes from the sun, moon, and stars, to birds which fly in the sky. It goes from the plant and animal life on earth to fish in the sea or to any other part of the created order. Nothing in creation is to be likened to God, nor is any such thing to be likened as a god.

⁹you shall not bow down to them nor serve them.

lo tishtakhaveh lahem v'lo taabedem – “No you shall bow down to them, and no serve them.” These words further define the words, “You shall not make for yourself.” When an image is made, the intent is that it will be bowed down to and served – either by the maker, or by someone else, or by both. This is forbidden.

Roman Catholics, when citing the Ten Commandments, will leave out this command. In order to maintain Ten Commandments, they then divide the tenth command concerning coveting into two separate commands. Adam Clarke poignantly sums this up –

“This corruption of the word of God by the Roman Catholic Church stamps it, as a false and heretical Church, with the deepest brand of ever-during infamy!” Adam Clarke

To manipulate the presentation of the Ten Commandments in this way is really a despicable offense. For Israel, they were certainly guilty of violating this command throughout their history. In fact, they openly sought to violate it time and again, but the Lord told them that they would suffer because of it –

“What you have in your mind shall never be, when you say, ‘We will be like the Gentiles, like the families in other countries, serving wood and stone.’”
Ezekiel 20:32

9 (con’t) For I, the LORD your God, *am* a jealous God,

ki anokhi Yehovah elohekha el qanna – “For I Yehovah your God; God jealous.” The Lord unambiguously claims that He is a jealous God. It is the word *qanna*.

This doesn’t indicate jealousy of success in another. Instead, it speaks of a defense of His honor and glory. When one bows to another god, the Lord isn’t jealous of that false god receiving worship. His jealousy is directed to the violation of depriving Him what He is justly due. His words in Isaiah show this –

“I *am* the LORD, that *is* My name;
And My glory I will not give to another,
Nor My praise to carved images.” Isaiah 42:8

This adjective, *qanna*, is only used six times – always in connection with the Lord, and only in Exodus and Deuteronomy.

9 (con’t) *visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me,*

poqed avon avot al banim v’al shileshim v’al riveim l’soneai – “visiting iniquity of fathers upon sons and upon third and upon fourth of those who hate me.” There are two interesting changes from Exodus 20. The word “fathers” is spelled differently here, adding in the letter *vav*. Also, a *vav* is added to the word “upon” here, changing it from “upon third,” to “and upon third.” I have no explanation to give you.

As far as the words themselves, although they are scorned by those who hate the God of the Bible, as if He is showing a vindictive nature, it is rather intended to show us consequences that naturally result from misdeeds. It shows nothing vindictive in the Lord. Rather it shows what is just.

Adam sinned and his sin continues to trouble us 6000 years later. If a person is punished for stealing, he may lose his estate and earnings. That certainly causes the next generation, and even many generations later, to receive the sentence of the offender.

The very person who dismisses God for being vindictive may sue another person for wrongdoing against him. If he does, then he will actually visit the wrongdoing of the one he sues on the subsequent generations in exactly the manner that is described here.

To argue against God who is infinitely just and righteous concerning his judgments is a small-minded thing to do for a person who probably lacks any true wisdom or knowledge at all.

¹⁰ but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

v'oseh khesed la'alaphim l'ohavai u-l'shomere mitsvoto – “And showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and to those keeping my commandments.” There is a difference in the written and spoken text here. The written says *mitsvoto*. However, when it is read aloud, the speaker says *mitsvotai*, as it is written in Exodus 20. I cannot explain to you why the text reads differently.

The “thousands” here are not speaking of the number of people, but the number of generations. Moses will explicitly define it that way in Deuteronomy 7:9. The length of this mercy, or loving-kindness, is for those individuals who love Him and keep His

commandments. It doesn't mean the children *who don't*, but the individuals *who do*.

If a generation is conservatively said to be 40 years, then this would mean 40,000 years. As the Bible speaks of a 7000-year plan for the world we currently enjoy, then the term here is obviously meant to symbolize “forever” or “eternity.” This is demonstrated in the words of the 103rd Psalm –

“But the mercy of the LORD *is* from everlasting to everlasting
On those who fear Him,
And His righteousness to children’s children,
¹⁸ To such as keep His covenant,
And to those who remember His commandments to do them.” Psalm 103:17

However, as none are able to meet this standard perfectly, then none can be granted such eternal mercy apart from Christ who fulfilled the law on our behalf. All those who came before Christ and trusted in the Lord's provision are covered by His *future* mercy. Only those who trust in Christ after His advent will be covered by His *present* mercy.

It was this mercy of the Lord that called for Christ to fulfill the law for fallen man. Israel individually, and as a whole, is seen throughout the Old Testament to fall short of this command. Even very quickly after the initial giving of it, the entire congregation violated it –

“And Aaron said to them, ‘Break off the golden earrings which *are* in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring *them* to me.’
³ So all the people broke off the golden earrings which *were* in their ears, and brought *them* to Aaron. ⁴ And he received *the gold* from their hand, and he fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf.
Then they said, ‘This *is* your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!’” Exodus 32:2-4

Of this command, Charles Ellicott rightly states, “As love in this verse is practical, so is hatred in the previous verse. To hate God is to disobey His commandments.”

Concerning this second word, something else was needed. The second word only condemns; it cannot save.

11 ‘You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain,

lo tisa eth shem Yehovah elohekha lashav – “No you shall lift name Yehovah your God to vanity.” The words are letter for letter identical to Exodus 20.

The third word. The Hebrew here is ambiguous and can be taken to mean either forbidding false swearing only, or to include profane or vain swearing. Looking to Jesus’ words in Matthew 5, it appears that false swearing is what is being referred to. He says –

“Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.’” Matthew 5:33

The word “vain” in Hebrew is *shav*. It means falsely, lying, vain, etc. The intent is that one should never invoke the name of the Lord in a false manner. And should they presume to do so...

11 (con’t) for the LORD will not hold *him* guiltless who takes His name in vain.

ki lo yenaqeh Yehovah eth asher yisa eth shemo lashav – “for not will hold him guiltless Yehovah who takes His name in vain.” It is letter for letter identical to Exodus 20.

These words do not mean that there will be immediate punishment on the offender. Rather, it is something that may come in this life as the perjured man is found out and punished, or it may be in the day of God’s judgment in the future. Malachi shows us this –

“And I will come near you for judgment;
I will be a swift witness
Against sorcerers,
Against adulterers,
Against perjurers,
Against those who exploit wage earners and widows and orphans,
And against those who turn away an alien—
Because they do not fear Me,’
Says the LORD of hosts.” Malachi 3:5

Of the first three commandments, John Lange notes, “The sin against the first commandment banishes the name of Jehovah by means of idol names; the sin against the second obscures and disfigures it; the sin against this third one abuses it.”

Abusing God’s name is something that is forbidden. A transgression of this command is a violation of the entire law. And yet, the Bible demonstrates that Israel as a whole, individually and collectively, violated it –

“Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem;
See now and know;
And seek in her open places
If you can find a man,
If there is *anyone* who executes judgment,
Who seeks the truth,
And I will pardon her.
² Though they say, ‘As the LORD lives,’
Surely they swear falsely.” Jeremiah 5:1, 2

Concerning this third word, something else was needed. The third word only condemns; it cannot save.

*We have set our face before the Lord our God
To make request by prayer for what we do not deserve
We have sinned in our walk that we have trod*

And the Lord our God we have failed to serve

*O Lord, righteousness belongs to You
But to us belongs only shame of face
We have acted wickedly in all that we do
And upon Your glorious name, we have brought disgrace*

*And so, the curse and the oath has come upon us
But now we turn our hearts back to You
We call out for mercy through the Lord Jesus
And He will respond, because He is faithful and true*

II. Heaping Up Guilt (verses 12–16)

¹² ‘Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you.

shamor eth yom ha’shabbath l’qadesh ka’asher tsivekha Yehovah elohekha – “Keep day the Sabbath, to sanctify it as commanded you Yehovah your God.”

A great change is seen between here and Exodus 20. There, it said, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.” Here, Moses himself states what is to be done, and only then does he remind them that it was the command of the Lord. Further, Moses tells them to *shamar*, or keep, the Sabbath.

In Exodus 20, the Lord said to *zakar*, or remember, the Sabbath. One could argue semantics about the word *zakar*. However, by changing it to *shamar*, no semantics could be employed by the Sabbath-breaker.

The fourth word. Israel was given the Sabbath in Exodus 16, at the time of the giving of the Manna. Here, they are reminded to keep it, thus sanctifying the day. This means that they were to

separate the day from all others and observe it as a unique and special day, consecrated to the Lord.

The word *shabbat* implies rest and cessation from labor. This cessation from labor for Israel looked forward to a different type of rest. It was to be a foretaste of the blessed eternal rest which man lost. He was created outside of the Garden of Eden and was rested in the Garden to worship and serve His God. That was lost.

Everything from that point on has looked forward to the restoration of that day. And it finally arrived when Christ finished His work. In Him, the seventh day of rest is offered to all of God's people. This is why Hebrews 4, after the fulfillment of the law by Christ, says, "For we who have believed do enter that rest" (Hebrews 4:3).

¹³ Six days you shall labor and do all your work,

sheshet yamim taavod v'asita kal melaktekha – "six days you shall labor and do all your work." It is letter for letter the same as Exodus 20:9. It is an imperative. The week is divided into two sections, active work and active cessation from work. Man was not to be idle when he should be working, and man was not to be working when he should be at rest.

Things that needed to be done were to be done *before* the Sabbath so that no work was to be done *on* the Sabbath. This is, however, not to be taken as a command that one *must* work every day. If so, for example, it would violate the mandated feasts of the Lord when celebrated by Israel in Jerusalem. Rather, what should be done was to be done, but not on the Sabbath.

¹⁴ but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God.

v'yom ha'shevi shabbath l'Yehovah elohekha – “and day the seventh Sabbath to Yehovah your God.” It is letter for letter identical to Exodus 20:10.

This translation, following the KJV, is confusing and should rather read, “...but the seventh day is **a Sabbath to the Lord your God.**” Otherwise, it seems like the Lord is even now working six days and taking the seventh off. Rather, they were to work and then rest to the Lord, honoring Him on this special day dedicated to Him.

14 (con't) *In it* you shall do no work:

lo taaseh kal melakah – “No you shall do all work.” It reads the same as Exodus 20:10. The command is specific. The individual whom the Lord is speaking directly to shall not work on the Sabbath. The word “you” is singular.

14 (con't) you, nor your son, nor your daughter,

atah u-binkha u-bitekha – “you and your son and your daughter.” Nor were they to work their children, as if the lesser in the house were exempt from the requirement, or that the work of the stronger should now devolve to the weaker.

14 (con't) nor your male servant, nor your female servant,

v'avdekha va'amatekha – “and your male servant, and your female servant.” The word “and” prior to “male servant” is not found in Exodus 20. It is a new addition here in Deuteronomy. One might try to play semantics if this “and” was not added.

Like the children of the house, the servants – both male and female – who certainly bore the majority of the burdens in the house during the week, were to be given rest. The unattended labors of the owner were not to devolve to another, even in one's employ.

14 (con't) nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle,

v'sorkha v'hamorekha v'kal behemtekha – “and your ox, and your donkey, and all your beasts.” This greatly expands on Exodus 20:10, where it only says, “and your beasts.” Moses is probably being more specific because of the wickedness of the human heart.

If Exodus 20 was allowed to stand, someone may say, “Beasts doesn't include this animal or that.” And so, such a person may actually hook a yoke up to a kitty cat, sending it out to plow the field – poor Fifi. Thus, Moses gives two specific animals, and then adds in, “and all your beasts.” There will be no fudging with Fifi.

The question is, “What is implied if an animal is put to work?” Answer – “Someone is working the animal.” Rest is to be rest. Even if someone were to hook up an animal to a grinding mill, he would have to work to do so and he would continue to be profiting from the labors of the animal.

The Sabbath was made for man as a day to the Lord God. If he was thinking about the profit he was making while the cow was grinding grain, then he wouldn't be thinking about the things of Lord.

Also, these words show that the animal who is a servant of man, was to be given a break from its labors. Further, throughout the Bible, care for animals is noted. Even the bird of the air that falls to the ground does not do so unnoticed by God.

14 (con't) nor your stranger who is within your gates,

v'gerekha asher bisharekha – “and your stranger who in your gates.” It is letter for letter the same as Exodus 20:10. The stranger

within the gates implies someone not of Israel who has taken up permanent residence within a town.

This prohibition was certainly so that they wouldn't become a snare to Israel. If they saw strangers profiting and gaining advantage because they could work while others couldn't, it would become a problem for all.

Further, someone may hire a stranger to enrich himself. A stranger shows up and the man says, "We have a Sabbath, so I can't work, but my vines really need to be pruned. I'll pay you at the end of the day for getting that done."

Or, he may simply buy something from visiting strangers who are selling things. This would be a violation of the intent of the Sabbath as well. This exact scenario is found in Nehemiah 13:16 –

"Men of Tyre dwelt there also, who brought in fish and all kinds of goods, and sold *them* on the Sabbath to the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem."

14 (con't) that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you.

l'maan yanuakh avdekha v'amatekha kamoka – "to the purpose may rest your male servant and your female servant like you."

These words are not found in Exodus 20. They are an addition by Moses at this time.

It seems as if Moses skips over everyone mentioned in these previous verses except the male and female servants, but this isn't the case. What seems more likely is that the term is being used as an all-inclusive statement.

Whether one is a son or a daughter, a donkey or a cow, a hired hand or a stranger, all are considered one's servants when they are

expected to perform a work. And more, if a person rests, but the animal doesn't, it means that someone tended to it in order for it to work – be it a son or a stranger. The addition of this is to ensure that nothing, and no one, is expected to labor on the Sabbath.

¹⁵ And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt,

v'zakarta ki eved hayita b'erets mitsrayim – “And remember for slave you were in land Egypt.” Moses' reason for the giving of the Sabbath here in Deuteronomy is completely different than that given in Exodus.

There, it said, “For *in* six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that *is* in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.”

The Lord based His commanding Israel to observe the Sabbath on Creation. However, Moses now bases it on redemption.

First, the creation of the heavens and the earth was done in a specific way for specific reasons. One is that it was to foreshadow the Sabbath day for man on the seventh day. God could have simply created all things at once, but he did it in a set way to picture something else.

And, the six days of the week followed by a Sabbath was ordained in order to show the redemptive pattern of history itself. The six days of the week prefigure the six thousand years of man working towards the reign of Christ, followed by the final thousand years of the millennium where Christ reigns; a time of rest on earth.

Now Moses says that they were to observe the Sabbath in order to remember their redemption from Egypt. They were forced into labor, but now they were to work and then remember that the Lord brought them out from that...

15 (con't) and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm;

In Deuteronomy, it assumes that God has not only created, but redeemed. As Israel missed Christ the first time, therefore, he focuses on redemption. It is a hidden key for Israel of today to understand that they actually missed the final redemption which is found in Christ.

Why is that? Because being redeemed into the law is to be redeemed into death. As we have seen many times, by the law comes the knowledge of sin. And through sin, only death can result. This is why the author of Hebrews says this –

“Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” Hebrews 2:14, 15

Under law, one remains in bondage. Being brought out of Egypt was only a picture of the work of the Lord Jesus – by His mighty hand and His outstretched arm – bringing us out of bondage of the fear of death...

15 (con't) therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.

Even though the accounts differ, creation and redemption, they are tied together. Israel is to understand that the Sabbath is a sign of God's rest following His creative efforts, which had subsequently been lost in the Garden of Eden, but it is also a sign of God's redemption in order to bring them back to paradise as well.

Thus, there is no contradiction between Exodus and Deuteronomy. One act leads to another. The fallen world could not be redeemed unless it had first been created and then fallen. Everything is looking forward to God's rest; a rest which can only be found in Christ. As the law could only bring a curse, then the Sabbath was only a shadow, looking forward to Christ's fulfillment of it.

With His having fulfilled the law, we do enter God's rest. The words of Jesus, Paul, and the author of Hebrews all agree that our true rest is found in Christ and in Him alone.

The Sabbath was only a picture of what was to come. Would Israel obey? The answer is, "No." The book of Ezekiel, in particular, notes the continual profaning of the Sabbath by Israel. Concerning this fourth word, something else was needed. The fourth word only condemns; it cannot save.

¹⁶ 'Honor your father and your mother,

kabed eth avikha w'eth imekha – "Honor your father and your mother." It is precisely the same as Exodus 20:12.

The fifth word. The Ten Commandments are divided up by scholars in several ways. Some see them as logically dividing between commands 1-4 and then 5-10. The first four showing love for God, the last six showing love for neighbor.

Others divide them 1-5 and 6-10. This would then show a distinction between filial and fraternal matters. The first five show obedience to the parent as children, the latter, respect for others. As parents are the image of God to the child until the child can reason out who God is, then this second division makes more sense.

It should be noted that the father is placed first here, but the mother was placed first in Leviticus 19:3 when speaking of the mandated

Sabbath. This shows that both are to be regarded with a like respect, even if there is a hierarchy within the home.

The honoring of the parents is reflective of the honoring of our true heavenly Father. If one is disobedient to his parents, it goes hand in hand that he will be disrespectful towards the Lord. With this repetition from the Lord, Moses now adds in his own words...

16 (con't) as the LORD your God has commanded you,

ka'asher tsivekha Yehovah elohekha – “as commanded you Yehovah your God.” Only in the repeating of the fourth and fifth commandments does Moses say this.

As all of the other commandments are negatives, “You shall not,” the reason for Moses’ inclusion of “as the Lord your God commanded you” must be because of that. They are positive commandments – observe and honor – just as the Lord your God has commanded.

At times, it certainly must be harder to remember to do something than to not do something. Therefore, Moses stresses the doing of these commandments. In the doing of this particular command, Paul notes in Ephesians 6 that it is the first command with a promise attached to it...

*16 (fin) that your days may be long, and that it may be well with you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

Though the same general idea is expressed here as in Exodus 20, Moses expands on it. There it said, “that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.” Moses adds in, “that it may be well with you.”

As far as the command itself, some look at this as a national blessing for Israel. That if they were honoring of their parents, they would be nationally blessed with the land of Israel. This is incorrect. First, the word “land” here is not the usual term for the land of Israel, which is *eretz*. Instead, it is *adamah*. *Adamah* signifies the ground. It is the same as when cited in Ephesians 6.

Whatever ground the people possessed, they would possess it more fully if they were honoring of their parents. Second, the command is spoken in the singular to the individual, not in plural to all, just as it is in Ephesians 6 when Paul cites this.

And third, both here and Ephesians 6:3 explain the thought with words indicating long life. In essence, “That it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.”

Thus, it is a general statement that one will prosper through the honoring of the parents. The world of man in which we live is governed by general laws of God, not by laws which are universal. This promised blessing is one that is therefore generally to be expected, but not necessarily universally received.

Despite being a simple command and one which is almost universally accepted as right, Israel failed to keep it. Both Old Testament and New shows the people’s failure to honor their parents. From Ezekiel 22 –

“In you they have made light of father and mother; in your midst they have oppressed the stranger; in you they have mistreated the fatherless and the widow.” Ezekiel 22:7

Concerning this fifth command, something else was needed. The fifth word only condemns; it cannot save.

As we have seen, out of just the first five commandments, Israel failed completely. But they had already failed in some of them since leaving Horeb. And, based on the Lord's words to Moses later in Deuteronomy, He already knows that they will fail in them again, as we will see in our closing verse.

If this is so, and it certainly is, then the promise of life made in verse 4:1, is already nullified, even if it has to take place in reality for it to be so. The Lord's knowledge of this, however, has to be played out in time and experience for us to know that it is so.

But when it does occur, we can then understand what Paul later will say with the words, "I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. ¹⁰ And the commandment, which *was to bring* life, I found to *bring* death" (Romans 7:9, 10).

God already knows all things. One might think that He would just tell us those things in advance, and we would avoid the errors and heartaches. But... that doesn't work either. Don't you remember? Your mother told you not to touch the hot stove, and you did. Your father told you to watch your step on the wet floor, and you didn't. They even told you what would happen, and yet you did it anyway.

But more, the precedent of not listening was given in the first recorded words ever spoken by God to man –

"And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." Genesis 2:16, 17

We are not geared to learn without being given actual examples to live by. If mom tells you and your older brother to not touch the stove, and he beats you to the stove as soon as mom walks out, it is

he, not you, who will become the tangible lesson for both of you. You will see his pain, tears, and melted skin and say, “Whew, lesson vicariously learned!”

This is the purpose of Israel, and this is the purpose of the law. It is to teach Israel through experience that the law is an impossible weight to carry. And we can learn that lesson by watching and learning from our wayward brother.

Unfortunately for Israel, they not only burned their hand, but they did so, and they failed to learn. They will go through another attempt and another failure under the law. Let us not be so dull. Whether Jew or Gentile, let us learn the lesson from the word, and let us apply it to ourselves now.

Forget trusting in your attempts to be justified by the law. Instead, put your faith in Christ Jesus – the fulfillment and embodiment of this impossible weight for man to carry. He took the pain and punishment of the law so that you can hopefully vicariously learn from Him and live.

Closing Verse: “And the LORD said to Moses: “Behold, you will rest with your fathers; and this people will rise and play the harlot with the gods of the foreigners of the land, where they go *to be* among them, and they will forsake Me and break My covenant which I have made with them. ¹⁷ Then My anger shall be aroused against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide My face from them, and they shall be devoured. And many evils and troubles shall befall them, so that they will say in that day, ‘Have not these evils come upon us because our God *is* not among us?’ ¹⁸ And I will surely hide My face in that day because of all the evil which they have done, in that they have turned to other gods.” Deuteronomy 31:16-18

Next Week: Deuteronomy 5:17-22 *To make this rhyme, one must almost act nefariously; it is true...* (Learning Vicariously, Hopefully!, Part II) (21st Deuteronomy Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. But He also has expectations of you as He prepares you for entrance into His Land of Promise. So, follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Learning Vicariously (Hopefully!)

⁷ ‘You shall have no other gods before Me.

⁸ ‘You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of *anything* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth; ⁹ you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth *generations* of those who hate Me, ¹⁰ but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

¹¹ ‘You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold *him* guiltless who takes His name in vain.

¹² ‘Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. ¹³ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁴ but the seventh day *is* the Sabbath of the LORD your God. *In it* you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger who *is* within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. ¹⁵ And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.

¹⁶ ‘Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it may be well with you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

Lord God, turn our hearts to be obedient to Your word
Give us wisdom to be ever faithful to You
May we carefully heed each thing we have heard
Yes, Lord God may our hearts be faithful and true

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to You for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

⁷ ‘You shall have no other gods before Me.

⁸ ‘You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of *anything* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth; ⁹ you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth *generations* of those who hate Me, ¹⁰ but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

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