



Deuteronomy 22:6-12
Letting A Bird in the Hand Go

6 " If a bird's nest happens to be before you along the way, in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs, with the mother sitting on the young or on the eggs, you shall not take the mother with the young;

7 "you shall surely let the mother go, and take the young for yourself, that it may be well with you and that you may prolong your days.

8 " When you build a new house, then you shall make a parapet for your roof, that you may not bring guilt of bloodshed on your household if anyone falls from it.

9 " You shall not sow your vineyard with different kinds of seed, lest the yield of the seed which you have sown and the fruit of your vineyard be defiled.

10 " You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together.

11 " You shall not wear a garment of different sorts, such as wool and linen mixed together.

12 " You shall make tassels on the four corners of the clothing with which you cover yourself.

As we continue through Deuteronomy we are going to begin to encounter laws, which while they have a link to one of the moral laws of the Ten Commandments, and practical applications to our lives today, are no longer binding on believers. We are no longer, for instance, forbidden to plant different kinds of seed in our vineyard, to wear garments of mixed materials (which is a relief, because I'm guessing that most of the people in this room are wearing garments that consist of some sort of blend) or to have tassels on the corners of our clothing.

This is not because we have a low view of the law, far from it, but rather because we distinguish within the law, three different kinds of laws from God. We call this the *Tripartite Division of the Law*. The first and most important kind of law, is the moral law, the Ten Commandments. This law is forever binding on all men, both believers and unbelievers. It is an expression of the Holiness and Nature of God himself. There will never be a time when, for instance, lying, stealing, adultery, or blasphemy are ok. To disobey or ignore the moral will always constitute sin.

But, we also distinguish two other kinds of law within the Old Testament, the first we call the Ceremonial Laws which regulated the worship of God, and the Second we call the civil laws which were applications of the moral law to the nation of Israel. Turn with me if you would into the back of your Trinity Psalters, to page 859 so that we can look together at what the Westminster Divines had to say about these laws:

“III. Beside this law, commonly called moral, God was pleased to give to the people of Israel, as a church under age, ceremonial laws, containing several typical ordinances, partly of worship, prefiguring Christ, his graces, actions, sufferings, and benefits;[4] and partly, holding forth divers

instructions of moral duties.[5] All which ceremonial laws are now abrogated, under the new testament.[6]'

These laws would include laws regarding sacrifices, the worship of the temple, the Old Testament feasts, the laws regarding clean and unclean food and so on. All of these laws in some way prefigured or pointed forward to Christ who was the fulfillment of them. So, for instance, in the sacrifice of the Passover lamb we see a picture of Christ, the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Just as the blood of the Passover lamb applied to the doorposts caused the angel of death to "Passover" those houses and spare them from death, so the blood of Christ applied to believers spares us from judgment and eternal death.

IV. To them also, as a body politic, he gave sundry judicial laws, which expired together with the State of that people; not obliging any other now, further than the general equity thereof may require.[7]

These civil or judicial laws, which applied the Ten Commandments to Israel creating a criminal or legal code are no longer in effect over believers, however just because a law was in the criminal code of ancient Israel that does not mean that it should not be in our own civil laws. We should not fall off horse on the other side by banning laws merely because they were in Israel's code and as we shall see the moral law should still be the guiding instrument in the creation of our own civil legal codes – there should be in ever nation, laws that prevent all forms of perjury, theft, murder, adultery, and so on.

V. The moral law doth forever bind all, as well justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof;[8] and that, not only in regard of the matter contained in it, but also in respect of the authority of God the Creator, who gave it.[9] Neither doth Christ, in the gospel, any way dissolve, but much strengthen this obligation.[10]

The laws in the section that we have read are civil and ceremonial and therefore not directly binding, however there is still much we can learn from them.

First in verses 6-7 we have a law forbidding the taking of a mother bird with its chicks or eggs. Kids, most birds when you approach them will fly away, however a mother bird with eggs or chicks is much more inclined to hunker down and hope you don't see her. Her natural instinct is to protect and stay with her young. In fact often when there are predators or natural dangers like a fire in the area the mother bird will attempt to collect her chicks under her and thus protect them from the danger. Jesus himself drew a comparison between this practice and His own desire to protect Israel from the approach of the wrath of God in Luke 13:34 when he said "***O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing!***"

Now the Lord tells the Israelites not to do this because to do so would be to endanger the wellbeing of the next generations of Israelites and thus a violation of the sixth commandment. You see a person finding the mother and the nest would say "good for me" I got the bird and the eggs! Roast quail tonight, and an omelet tomorrow morning! As Peter Craigie explains though "***the effect of such action would however would be bad; in commercial language, it would be exchanging a long term profit for an immediate gain. To take and kill the mother would be to terminate the potential supply of food.***" I know the Stephens and the Phillips raise chickens and this would be the equivalent of them going out in the morning and instead of gathering eggs, taking the eggs and then wringing the necks of

their chickens as well. They'd eat very well that week, but the next week they'd find themselves without chickens or eggs. God here is preserving a future supply of food, just as earlier in the legislation regarding building siege equipment he had forbidden them to use fruit bearing trees. His intention is that it may be well with you and that you may prolong your days. Now kids, I know you might be thinking why not eat the mommy and leave the chicks or eggs? Wouldn't that be kinder? The answer there is no, the chicks would die without their mother so eating the eggs or young would be the best solution. And you gotta eat something.

Second in verse 8 we have a requirement that a parapet be built around the roof of the house
Our roofs are peaked so water and snow roll off

Theirs were flat, they had beams covered by sticks and then hard clay, and they used them for all sorts of things, drying crops, places for entertainment, they were cooler in the summer time so they would sleep up there in the summertime.

Without this 3 foot high parapet or wall someone, particularly a child might fall off the roof and die. The person who neglected this law would be guilty of bloodshed, they did not preserve the life of their neighbor and thus violated the 6th commandment.

This is what is sometimes called a *paradigm law* it has applications to all sorts of necessary safety precautions in building and manufacturing where negligence, greed, or carelessness would lead to unnecessary deaths. And there are a colossal number of them every year. For instance, far more toddlers die each year from falling into buckets full of water negligently left around than are killed in firearms accidents. Matthew Henry comments, ***“The Jews say that by the equity of this law they were obliged (and so are we too) to fence, or remove, every thing by which life may be endangered, as to cover draw-wells, keep bridges in repair, and the like, lest, if any perish through our omission, their blood be required at our hand.”***

Third in verses 9-11 we have ceremonial restriction on certain kinds of mixtures. The reasons for these restrictions, like most of the dietary laws was to reinforce the idea of the distinctiveness of God's people and teach an important lesson about not mixing with unbelievers in marriage or importing their pagan practices. In observing them you constant day by day reminder in the household as you dressed, and in the field as you sowed and plowed and reaped. If you ask, ***“whats the value of such visible lessons”*** you have only to look at the table and see the visible reminder of Christ's sacrifice in the Lord's Supper. God knows we are forgetful people and he knows without reminders we are prone to forget and neglect what he teaches us.

The restriction on yoking was even more telling, the ox was a clean animal the donkey was not, they walked differently and don't plow well together, in this we have a potent reminder not to be “yoked together” with unbelievers in marriage and contracts and one which Paul will use in 2 Cor. 6:14-18. More about that in a while.

Fabric too was not to be blended to produce one garment. The nation was not to be woven of believers and unbelievers, pagan practices and the laws of the Lord.

Finally in the ceremonial requirements for tassels in clothing two objectives were achieved. First they were once again set apart from their neighbors, so that if you saw someone walking by with tassels on his clothes you'd say “There goes an Israelite” but more importantly than telling others who the

Israelites were, the tassels reminded the Israelites whose people they were as Numbers 15:37-41 tells us: ***“37 Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,***

38 "Speak to the children of Israel: Tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a blue thread in the tassels of the corners.

39 "And you shall have the tassel, that you may look upon it and remember all the commandments of the LORD and do them, and that you may not follow the harlotry to which your own heart and your own eyes are inclined,

40 "and that you may remember and do all My commandments, and be holy for your God.

41 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the LORD your God."

Applications:

1) We see here the importance of obedience to the Lord. The law regarding not taking the mother bird, was considered the smallest of all the laws and so people might be encouraged to disobey because they didn't see the importance of it but Matthew Henry reminds us ***“as disobedience in a small matter shows a very great contempt of the law, so obedience in a small matter shows a very great regard to it. He that let go a bird out of his hand (which was worth two in the bush) purely because God bade him, in that made it to appear that he esteemed all God's precepts concerning all things to be right, and that he could deny himself rather than sin against God.”***

How many times have we done similar things, ranking our sins, saying well its not murder, its not even theft, its just the Lord's day, or it's just a little blasphemy, a little rude joking, and so on.

2) We see here the abiding importance of not being yoked together with unbelievers either in marriage or in adopting pagan practices: ***“2 Cor. 6:14 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?***

15 And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?

16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people."

17 Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you."

18 "I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty."”

3) We see the abiding importance of the reminders that God has given covenant people of their different status in the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

What makes us a different people? It is not that we are from a certain nation. We are made up of people of every tribe or tongue. What makes us different is that we were bought at a price, redeemed by the blood of Christ, set apart, but our tendency is to forget to simply blend back in.

Washed, marked as within the Covenant –

1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

10 who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

Acts 2:39 "For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."