

Deuteronomy 12 - A Prescribed Place of Worship; Warning About False gods

II. Second sermon: What Israel must do for God (Deut 4:41—26:19)

(3) Exposition of the Decalogue (Deut 12:1—25:19)

(A) Laws arising from the first commandment (12:1-32)

(a) Destruction of Canaanite places of worship (12:1-4)

(b) Central place of worship (12:5-14)

(c) Blood not to be eaten but rather offered in the central place of worship (12:15-28)

(d) Warning against imitating pagan practices (12:29-32)

Deuteronomy 12

(3) Exposition of the Decalogue (Deut 12:1—25:19)

(A) Laws arising from the first commandment (12:1-32)

(a) Destruction of Canaanite places of worship (12:1-4)

1 "These are the statutes and the judgments which you shall carefully follow in the land which the LORD, the God of your fathers, has given you to possess as long as you live on the earth.

1 "These are the statutes and the judgments which you shall carefully observe in the land which the LORD, the God of your fathers, has given you to possess as long as you live on the earth.

1 "These are the statutes and ordinances that you must carefully observe in the land that the LORD God of your ancestors has given you to possess every day that you live on the earth.

1 These are the statutes and judgments, which ye shall observe to do in the land, which the LORD God of thy fathers giveth thee to possess it, all the days that ye live upon the earth.

- The decrees and laws that follow in this section of Moses' speech (12:2—26:15) were not meant to be exhaustive

— Moses intentionally did not repeat many of the details and laws recorded in Exodus and Leviticus

— Deuteronomy is law preached (or better, "instruction")

— Moses was setting a quality of living before the nation rather than an exhaustive law code that covered every detail of life

— The specific laws in this section were given to help the people subordinate every area of their lives to the Lord, and to help them eradicate whatever might threaten that pure devotion

These laws were given with the Promised Land specifically in mind: be careful to follow these commands in the land. Because God's Word is certain of fulfillment, Moses could tell the Israelites on the plains of Moab, still outside the boundaries of the Promised Land, that the Lord had given them the land.

2 You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations whom you are going to dispossess serve their gods, on the high mountains, on the hills, and under every leafy tree.

2 You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations whom you shall dispossess serve their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree.

2 Be sure you destroy there all the places where the nations that you're going to dispossess serve their gods—upon the high mountains and hills and under every leafy tree.

2 Ye shall utterly destroy all the places, wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree:

- Idolatrous shrines were to be demolished

- *meqomot* places, not *bamot* high places

— This negates the theory that Deuteronomy was written during Josiah's times (6th century BC) to prohibit the use of "high places" found in accounts of Josiah's reform (2 Kings 23:5-20; 2 Chr 33:3,17,19; 34:3)

— They were already instructed to kill the Canaanite idolaters (7:1-6)

3 And you shall tear down their altars and smash their memorial stones to pieces, and burn their Asherim in the fire, and cut to pieces the carved images of their gods; and you shall eliminate their name from that place.

3 You shall tear down their altars and smash their *sacred* pillars and burn their Asherim with fire, and you shall cut down the engraved images of their gods and obliterate their name from that place.

3 Tear down their altars, cut down their sacred poles, and burn them. Cut down the carved images of their gods to erase their memory from that place."

3 And ye shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place.

4 You shall not act this way toward the LORD your God.

4 You shall not act like this toward the LORD your God.

4 "You must not act like this with respect to the LORD your God.

4 Ye shall not do so unto the LORD your God.

- Mountains and hills were particularly significant in some of the religions of the ancient Near East for many deities were thought to have originated there and to live there

- The spreading tree was also significant for the Canaanite worship of fertility deities

— The sacred stones (Cf. 7:5; Ex 23:24; 34:13) were possibly male fertility symbols and the Asherah poles (Cf. Ex 34:13; Deut 7:5; 16:21) were wooden symbols of the fertility goddess Asherah, Baal's consort

— The idols were probably in stone

- The complete destruction of these cultic objects was intended to remove the temptation to worship their deities and to stop polluting the pure worship of the Lord with pagan rituals and objects

— The Lord would not tolerate a partial commitment. By destroying these cultic objects and centers the Israelites could express their total allegiance to Him.

— Also the Israelites could show that they did not believe in the existence of the Canaanite deities and therefore had no fear of "retribution" from them

(b) Central place of worship (12:5-14)

5 But you shall seek *the LORD* at the place which the LORD your God will choose from all your tribes, to **establish His name there** for His dwelling, and you shall come there.

5 But you shall seek *the LORD* at the place which the LORD your God will choose from all your tribes, to establish His name there for His dwelling, and there you shall come.

5 Instead, you must seek to enter only the place that the LORD your God will choose among your tribes. There he will establish his name and live.

5 But unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come:

- "...establish His name there" - when Israel entered the Promised Land, God would choose a place to put His name (Cf. v11,21; 14:23-24; 16:2,6,11; 26:2) that is, He would choose a site for the tabernacle, the place where God and the people would meet (Cf. Ex 33:7-11)

- Shechem, between Mt. Ebal (cursing) and Mt. Gerizim (blessing) (Josh 24:1-8)

- Shiloh (Judges 21:19; 1 Sam 1:3; 2:4)

[No mention of Jerusalem!]

- The ultimate fulfillment of this command came centuries later when God let David move the tabernacle to Jerusalem where his son Solomon built the temple. The command for a single sanctuary promoted or emphasized the unity of three things: the unity of God (i.e., He is One, not many), the purity of the Israelites' worship of the Lord, and the people's political and spiritual unity.

6 You shall bring there your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the contribution of your hand, your vowed offerings, your voluntary offerings, and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock.

6 There you shall bring your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the contribution of your hand, your votive offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock.

6 Bring your burnt offerings there, along with your sacrifices, your tithes, your hand-carried gifts, your offerings in fulfillment of promises, your freely given offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks.

6 And thither ye shall bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks:

- The burnt offerings (Lev 1) were to be completely burned on the altar

- They were given at various times to express the worshiper's total dependence on the Lord

- The word translated sacrifice (*zebahò*) refers to a sacrifice given as an expression of appreciation, and it involved a communal meal

- It may have been given as a thank offering (Lev 7:12-15; 22:29-30) for something specific God had done for a worshiper

- Or it may have been offered as a votive offering to fulfill a vow made to the Lord (Lev 7:16-17; 22:18-23)

- Or it may have been offered as a freewill offering in which the person thanked God but not necessarily for anything specific

- The special gifts (lit., "what is lifted up in the hand") were for the priests.

7 There you and your households shall eat before the LORD your God, and **rejoice** in all your undertakings in which the LORD your God has blessed you.

7 There also you and your households shall eat before the LORD your God, and rejoice in all your undertakings in which the LORD your God has blessed you.

7 Then you and your household will eat in the presence of the LORD your God and rejoice with all the works of your hand with which he blessed you.

7 And there ye shall eat before the LORD your God, and ye shall rejoice in all that ye put your hand unto, ye and your households, wherein the LORD thy God hath blessed thee.

- An Israelite "worship service" would be characterized by joy (you and your families shall eat and shall rejoice) if they lived faithfully in the new land for they could count on the Lord's abundant blessing

- "...rejoice" - rejoicing in the Lord's presence occurs several times in Deut (v7,12,18; 14:26; 16:11; also note 16:14-15)

8 "You shall not do at all what we are doing here today, **everyone doing whatever is right in his own eyes**;

8 "You shall not do at all what we are doing here today, every man *doing* whatever is right in his own eyes;

8 "You must not act as we have been doing here today, where everyone acts as they see fit,

8 Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes.

- Earlier in Israel's wilderness experience, the Lord instructed Moses to command the people not to slaughter a cow, sheep, or goat without first bringing the animal to the entrance of the tabernacle to present it as an offering to Him (Lev 17:1-4)

- God had two reasons for this.

— First, the prohibition was designed to keep the Israelites from worshiping as pagans (Lev 17:5-9)

— Second, it was to keep worshipers from eating the blood of the sacrifice (Lev 17:10-13)

- "...everyone *doing* whatever is right in his *own* eyes" - may imply some laxity on the people's part in observing the prohibition (Lev 17:3-4)

— Or Moses may have meant that there had been some confusion as to how to apply the original prohibition

— The following legislation, however, removes any ambiguity about the eating and sacrificing of meat

9 for you have not as yet come to the **resting place** and the **inheritance** which the LORD your God is giving you.

9 for you have not as yet come to the resting place and the inheritance which the LORD your God is giving you.

9 for you haven't arrived yet to your allotted place that the LORD your God is about to give you.

9 For ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which the LORD your God giveth you.

- "...resting place" - *katapausis* (LXX); see note: **The "Rest" Being Offered** on Heb 4:1

— This word on the Greek is clearly paralleled with *kleronomia*, the Greek word for inheritance (Cf. Deut 3:18-20)

- "...inheritance" - *kleronomia* (LXX)

10 When you cross the Jordan and live in the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, and He gives you rest from all your enemies around *you* so that you live in security,

10 When you cross the Jordan and live in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to inherit, and He gives you rest from all your enemies around *you* so that you live in security,

10 But after you have crossed the Jordan River and settled in the land that the Lord your God is giving you to inherit, and after you have received relief from the enemies around you and are living securely,

10 But when ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the LORD your God giveth you to inherit, and when he giveth you rest from all your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety;

11 then it shall come about that the place in which the LORD your God will choose for His name to dwell, there you shall bring everything that I command you: your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the contribution of your hand, and all your choice vowed offerings which you will vow to the LORD.

11 then it shall come about that the place in which the LORD your God will choose for His name to dwell, there you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the contribution of your hand, and all your choice votive offerings which you will vow to the LORD.

11 then bring to the place that the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling place—where he will establish his name—everything that I'm commanding you: your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, your hand-carried gifts, and all your best offerings in fulfillment of promises that you pledged to the LORD.

11 Then there shall be a place which the LORD your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all that I command you; your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave offering of your hand, and all your choice vows which ye vow unto the LORD:

- The offerings, whether of flesh or grain, could be offered only at the tabernacle (Cf. v17-18), the place the Lord would choose as a dwelling for His name

12 And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you and your sons and daughters, your male and female slaves, and the Levite who is within your gates, since he has no portion or inheritance with you.

12 And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you and your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, and the Levite who is within your gates, since he has no portion or inheritance with you.

12 "Rejoice in the presence of the LORD your God—you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, and the descendant of Levi who is in your city—for there is no territorial allotment for him as you have.

12 And ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God, ye, and your sons, and your daughters, and your menservants, and your maidservants, and the Levite that is within your gates; forasmuch as he hath no part nor inheritance with you.

- These acts of worship were to be times of joy (v12)

13 "Be careful that you do not offer your burnt offerings in any *cultic* place that you see,

13 "Be careful that you do not offer your burnt offerings in every *cultic* place you see,

13 Be careful not to offer burnt offerings at any location you happen to see

13 Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest:

14 but *only* in the place which the LORD chooses in one of your tribes: there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do everything that I command you.

14 but in the place which the LORD chooses in one of your tribes, there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I command you.

14 instead of at the place the LORD will choose in one of the tribal areas. There you may offer burnt offerings, and there you may do everything that I'm commanding you."

14 But in the place which the LORD shall choose in one of thy tribes, there thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, and there thou shalt do all that I command thee.

(c) Blood not to be eaten but rather offered in the central place of worship
(12:15-28)

15 "However, you may slaughter and eat meat within any of your gates, whatever you desire, according to the blessing of the LORD your God which He has given you; the unclean and the clean *alike* may eat it, as the gazelle and the deer.

15 "However, you may slaughter and eat meat within any of your gates, whatever you desire, according to the blessing of the LORD your God which He has given you; the unclean and the clean may eat of it, as of the gazelle and the deer.

15 "You may slaughter and eat as much meat as you desire, according to the blessing of the LORD your God, when he provides for you in all your cities. Both ritually unqualified and qualified people may eat it as they would gazelle and deer.

15 Notwithstanding thou mayest kill and eat flesh in all thy gates, whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee: the unclean and the clean may eat thereof, as of the roebuck, and as of the hart.

16 Only you shall not eat the blood; you are to pour it out on the ground like water.

16 Only you shall not eat the blood; you are to pour it out on the ground like water.

16 Only, you must not consume the blood; instead, pour it out on the ground as you would water.

16 Only ye shall not eat the blood; ye shall pour it upon the earth as water.

- Wild game animals and animals acceptable for sacrifice could be eaten without taking them to the central sanctuary as long as they were not slaughtered for offerings

— Since such an animal was not intended for sacrificial worship it did not matter whether the partakers of the meal were ceremonially unclean or clean

[The ceremonial laws, found mainly in Leviticus, were not of a moral nature, but were designed to teach the people truths about the nature of God, their human natures, and their relationship to God. For example, the ceremonial laws in Lev 12 regarding childbirth do not imply that the bearing of children is ethically wrong]

— The prohibition against eating an animal's blood, however, was still in force.

17 You are not allowed to eat within your gates the tithe of your grain, new wine, or oil, or the firstborn of your herd or flock, or any of your vowed offerings which you vow, or your voluntary offerings, or the contribution of your hand.

17 You are not allowed to eat within your gates the tithe of your grain or new wine or oil, or the firstborn of your herd or flock, or any of your votive offerings which you vow, or your freewill offerings, or the contribution of your hand.

17 "You won't be allowed to eat your tithe of grain, new wine, oil, the firstborn of your herd and flock, your voluntary offerings that you pledged, your free-will offerings, and the works of your hands in your own cities.

17 Thou mayest not eat within thy gates the tithe of thy corn, or of thy wine, or of thy oil, or the firstlings of thy herds or of thy flock, nor any of thy vows which thou vowest, nor thy freewill offerings, or heave offering of thine hand:

- For a second time (Cf. v12-13) Moses warned the people that anything intended for use in worshiping the Lord could only be eaten at the future site of the central sanctuary

— In this way purity in worship was protected

— Again Moses spoke of worship as a time of joy (Cf. v12)

— Since the Levites had no tribal allotment of land (10:9; 12:12), they lived in towns among the tribes (v18; 14:29; 16:11). The people were to provide for them (Cf. 14:27)

18 But you shall eat them before the LORD your God in the place which the LORD your God will choose, you and your son and daughter, and your male and female slaves, and the Levite who is within your gates; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God in all your undertakings.

18 But you shall eat them before the LORD your God in the place which the LORD your God will choose, you and your son and daughter, and your male and female servants, and the Levite who is within your gates; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God in all your undertakings.

18 You'll eat only in the presence of the LORD your God at the place that he will choose—you, your sons and your daughters, your male and female servants, and the descendant of Levi who is in your cities. Rejoice in the presence of the LORD your God in everything you undertake.

18 But thou must eat them before the LORD thy God in the place which the LORD thy God shall choose, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that is within thy gates: and thou shalt rejoice before the LORD thy God in all that thou puttest thine hands unto.

19 Be careful that you do not abandon the Levite as long as you live in your land.

19 Be careful that you do not forsake the Levite as long as you live in your land.

19 Be careful not to forget the descendant of Levi while you live in the land.

19 Take heed to thyself that thou forsake not the Levite as long as thou livest upon the earth.

- The permission to eat meat not intended for use in worship without bringing it to the sanctuary was repeated here (Cf. v15-16) but with some added details

— Modern readers may find this repetition a bit tedious. But it should be remembered that Deuteronomy was originally presented in sermon form to Israel. Normally repetition is important in the learning process, but it is doubly important in oral presentations as the audience does not have the opportunity to “read” over something missed the first time.

Eating Meat Without Offering at Tabernacle

The earlier prohibition (Lev 17:1-12) against eating meat without offering it first at the tabernacle was only meant to apply while the Israelites were in the wilderness, when their “homes” were near the religious sanctuary. Now the people were about to move into the Promised Land where the majority would live too far away from the central sanctuary to bring all meat there. So permission was given to slaughter and eat animals at home for “secular” meals. Yet the permission was given in such a way that the original intent of the command (Lev 17:1-12) was preserved. There the prohibition was aimed at preventing the pollution of worship by Canaanite ritual, and at preventing the Israelites from eating the blood of the animals.

Eating Blood

Here Moses warned against eating the blood whether the animal was killed at home (Deut 12:23-25; Cf. v16) or at the sanctuary (v27). The blood symbolized life (the blood is the life, v23). By refraining from eating blood the Israelites demonstrated a respect for life and ultimately for the Creator of life. Also as Leviticus 17:11 indicates, the blood is a ransom price for sins, so blood is sacred and should not be consumed by people. Moses also preserved the original intent of Lev 17:3-4 by again insisting that all offerings to the Lord be given at the central sanctuary (Deut 12:26-27; Cf. v11,17-18). The blood was to be poured beside the altar of burnt offering.

Single Sanctuary

The NT has abrogated the Law of the single sanctuary because each Christian has become a sanctuary, a "temple of the living God" (2 Cor 6:16). However, the eternal principle expressed in the Law of the single sanctuary is still in force for God still demands purity in worship (John 4:24) and the unity of His people (Phil 2:1-5). Each of three sections in this chapter concludes with the admonition to be careful in carrying out the instructions (Deut 12:13,19,28; also note v1,30). This is one of many emphases in Deuteronomy, given perhaps because the people tended to be careless and negligent.

20 "When the LORD your God extends your border as He has promised you, and you say, 'I will eat meat,' because you desire to eat meat, *then* you may eat meat, whatever you desire.

20 "When the LORD your God extends your border as He has promised you, and you say, 'I will eat meat,' because you desire to eat meat, *then* you may eat meat, whatever you desire.

20 When the LORD your God enlarges your territory—just as he told you—and you say 'I want to eat meat' since you desire to eat it, you may do so as much as you please.

20 When the LORD thy God shall enlarge thy border, as he hath promised thee, and thou shalt say, I will eat flesh, because thy soul longeth to eat flesh; thou mayest eat flesh, whatsoever thy soul lusteth after.

21 If the place where the LORD your God chooses to put His name is too far from you, then you may slaughter *animals* from your herd and flock which the LORD has given you, as I have commanded you; and you may eat within your gates whatever you desire.

21 If the place which the LORD your God chooses to put His name is too far from you, then you may slaughter of your herd and flock which the LORD has given you, as I have commanded you; and you may eat within your gates whatever you desire.

21 "If the place where the LORD your God chooses to establish his name is distant from you, then you may slaughter from your herd and your flock what the LORD has provided for

you, as he instructed you. You may consume them in your cities as much as you please.

21 If the place which the LORD thy God hath chosen to put his name there be too far from thee, then thou shalt kill of thy herd and of thy flock, which the LORD hath given thee, as I have commanded thee, and thou shalt eat in thy gates whatsoever thy soul lusteth after.

22 Just as a gazelle or a deer is eaten, so you may eat it; the unclean and the clean alike may eat it.

22 Just as a gazelle or a deer is eaten, so you will eat it; the unclean and the clean alike may eat of it.

22 You may eat them, just as you would gazelle and deer. Ritually unqualified and qualified people may eat them.

22 Even as the roebuck and the hart is eaten, so thou shalt eat them: the unclean and the clean shall eat of them alike.

23 Only be sure not to eat the blood, for the blood is the life, and you shall not eat the life with the flesh.

23 Only be sure not to eat the blood, for the blood is the life, and you shall not eat the life with the flesh.

23 Only be sure to refrain from eating blood, because blood is the source of life and you must not consume blood with the meat.

23 Only be sure that thou eat not the blood: for the blood is the life; and thou mayest not eat the life with the flesh.

24 You shall not eat it; you shall pour it out on the ground like water.

24 You shall not eat it; you shall pour it out on the ground like water.

24 You must not consume it; instead, pour it on the ground as you would water.

24 Thou shalt not eat it; thou shalt pour it upon the earth as water.

25 You shall not eat it, so that it may go well for you and your sons after you, since you will be doing what is right in the sight of the LORD.

25 You shall not eat it, so that it may be well with you and your sons after you, for you will be doing what is right in the sight of the LORD.

25 You must not eat it, so that life will go well for you and for your children after you. Then you'll do what is right in the eyes of the LORD.

25 Thou shalt not eat it; that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, when thou shalt do that which is right in the sight of the LORD.

26 Only your holy things which you may have and your vowed offerings, you shall take and go to the place which the LORD chooses.

26 Only your holy things which you may have and your votive offerings, you shall take and go to the place which the LORD chooses.

26 "You may carry and bring only your consecrated gifts and offerings in fulfillment of promises to the place that the LORD will choose.

26 Only thy holy things which thou hast, and thy vows, thou shalt take, and go unto the place which the LORD shall choose:

27 And you shall offer your burnt offerings, the flesh and the blood, on the altar of the LORD your God; and the blood of your sacrifices shall be poured out on the altar of the LORD your God, and you shall eat the flesh.

27 And you shall offer your burnt offerings, the flesh and the blood, on the altar of the LORD your God; and the blood of your sacrifices shall be poured out on the altar of the LORD your God, and you shall eat the flesh.

27 You must offer your burnt offerings, both the meat and the blood, on the altar of the LORD your God. You must offer the blood by pouring it on the altar of the LORD your God while you consume the meat.

27 And thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, the flesh and the blood, upon the altar of the LORD thy God: and the blood of thy sacrifices shall be poured out upon the altar of the LORD thy God, and thou shalt eat the flesh.

28 "Be careful and listen to all these words which I am commanding you, so that it may go well for you and your sons after you forever, for you will be doing what is good and right in the sight of the LORD your God.

28 "Be careful to listen to all these words which I command you, so that it may be well with you and your sons after you forever, for you will be doing what is good and right in the sight of the LORD your God.

28 Be sure to observe all these words that I'm commanding you, in order that life may go well for you and your children after you forever, for this is good and right in the eyes of the LORD your God."

28 Observe and hear all these words which I command thee, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee for ever, when thou doest that which is good and right in the sight of the LORD thy God.

(d) Warning against imitating pagan practices (12:29-32)

29 "When the LORD your God cuts off from you the nations which you are going in to dispossess, and you dispossess them and live in their land,

29 "When the LORD your God cuts off before you the nations which you are going in to dispossess, and you dispossess them and dwell in their land,

29 "When the LORD your God eliminates the nations that you are about to dispossess so you can live in their land,

29 When the LORD thy God shall cut off the nations from before thee, whither thou goest to possess them, and thou succeedest them, and dwellest in their land;

30 be careful that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from your presence, and that you do not inquire about their gods, saying, 'How do these nations serve their gods, that I also may do likewise?'

30 beware that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, 'How do these nations serve their gods, that I also may do likewise?'

30 after they have been destroyed in your sight, be careful not to be ensnared as they were. Otherwise, you will seek their gods and ask yourselves, 'How do these nations serve their gods? I will do likewise.'

30 Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou enquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise.

- Once again Moses drove home the need to avoid all contacts with pagan cultic practices

- This sin was offensive for two reasons:

(1) It would come in the wake of the Lord's grace, that is, after the Lord would cut off...the nations before them

- In spite of such divine grace, simple curiosity can lead believers to be ensnared (Cf. 7:26) by idolatrous practices
- This graphically depicts the depravity of the human heart and the fragile nature of the human will's commitment to the holy God. No wonder Moses again urged his people to be careful!

31 You shall not behave this way toward the LORD your God, because every abominable act which the LORD hates, they have done for their gods; for they even burn their sons and daughters in the fire for their gods.

31 You shall not behave thus toward the LORD your God, for every abominable act which the LORD hates they have done for their gods; for they even burn their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods.

31 You must not do the same to the LORD your God, because they practiced in the presence of their gods every sort of abomination that the LORD hates. Moreover, they sacrificed their sons and daughters to their gods.

31 Thou shalt not do so unto the LORD thy God: for every abomination to the LORD, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods.

32 "Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take *anything* away from it.

32 "Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it.

32 Now as to everything I'm commanding you, you must be careful to observe it. Don't add to or subtract from it."

32 What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.

(2) The second reason for the offensive nature of pagan worship is the depth of the abominations into which they lead

- In worshiping their gods, pagans do all kinds of detestable things the Lord hates. The worst of these "detestable things" was child sacrifice. This practice of burning their sons and daughters in the fire as sacrifices was frequently associated with the worship of the Ammonite god Molech (Lev 18:21; 20:2-5; 2 Kings 23:10; Jer 32:35)
- God's penalty for child sacrifice was death (Lev 20:2-5)
- Yet despite this Solomon built a high place for worshiping Molech on the Mount of Olives (1 Kings 11:7), and both Ahaz (2 Chr 28:3) and Manasseh (2 Kings 21:6) sacrificed their own children in fire
- The practice of child sacrifice is listed as the culminating reason for the exile of the Northern Kingdom of Israel in the eighth century BC (2 Kings 17:6,17)
- Thus a simple curiosity about evil religious practices eventually led to the destruction of a nation
- The same warning is repeated by the Apostle Paul. "For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret" (Eph 5:12)