

Deuteronomy 13 - How to Determine Truth; The Punishment of Apostates; Temptation of Idolatry

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

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

(B) Laws arising from the second commandment (13:1-18)

(a) False prophet (13:1-5)

(b) Close relative (13:6-11)

(c) Town (13:12-18)

Deuteronomy 13

(B) Laws arising from the second commandment (13:1-18)

(a) False prophet (13:1-5)

1 "If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder,

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1 "A prophet or a diviner of dreams may arise among you, give you an omen or a miracle

1 If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder,

2 and the sign or the wonder comes *true*, of which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let's follow other gods (whom you have not known) and let's serve them,'

2 and the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods (whom you have not known) and let us serve them,'

2 that takes place, and then he may tell you, 'Let's follow other gods (whom you have not known) and let's serve them.' Even though the sign or portent comes to pass,

2 And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them;

- Miraculous signs alone were never meant to be a test of truth

— Miracles happen in many religions because Satan uses false religions and false prophets to deceive the world (Cf. 2 Cor 11:13-15; Eph 6:11; Rev 12:9)

— So Moses warned the people that the standard for truth must never be a miraculous sign or wonder (or other areas of human experience)

— The standard of truth is the Word of God

3 you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer of dreams; for the LORD your God is testing you to find out whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

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3 you must not listen to the words of that prophet or that diviner of dreams. For the LORD your God is testing you, to make known whether or not you'll continue to love the LORD your God with all your heart and soul.

3 Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

- Moses is outlining to Israel how to determine truth...even if someone performs a miracle in front of you, and urges you to follow other gods, reject them

— If the prophet or dreamer urges you to drift from prior revelation (follow other gods), you know that prophet is false

— It is impossible for God to say one thing one day, then something different later

4 You shall follow the LORD your God and fear Him; and you shall keep His commandments, listen to His voice, serve Him, and cling to Him.

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4 You must follow the LORD your God, fear him, observe his commandments, listen to his voice, serve him, and cling to him.

4 Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him.

- A prophet's or a dreamer's prediction may come true. But if his message contradicted God's commands, the people were to trust God and His Word rather than their experience of a miracle.

- If human experience seemed to contradict God's clear teachings, the Israelites were to bow in submission to God's commands, for His Word is truth (Cf. John 17:17)

5 But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken falsely against the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, to drive you from the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall eliminate the evil from among you.

5 But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has counseled rebellion against the LORD your God who brought you from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, to seduce you from the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall purge the evil from among you.

5 That prophet or diviner of dreams must be executed, because he advocated rebellion against the LORD your God, who brought you from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, and because he lured you from the way in which the LORD your God instructed you to live. Purge the evil from among you.”

5 And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn you away from the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to thrust thee out of the way which the LORD thy God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee.

- The Israelites were to view each solicitation to idolatry as a test of their love for the Lord
— Though there was always the danger that they might succumb to a temptation, with each successful resistance to sin their faith in and love for Him would grow stronger (Cf. James 1:2-4)

— They were to love, follow, revere, obey, serve, and hold fast, to Him (Cf. Deut 10:20; 11:22; 30:20)

- The death penalty for a false prophet was appropriate for if he would successfully seduce people into idolatry he would bring them under God’s judgment (Cf. 7:26)

— Killing a false prophet was a way to purge the evil from Israel

— The need to maintain national purity was emphasized by Moses, for the command, “You must purge the evil,” occurs 9x (13:5; 17:7,12; 19:19; 21:21; 22:21-22,24; 24:7)

(b) Close relative (13:6-11)

6 “If your brother, your mother’s son, or your son or daughter, or the wife you cherish, or your friend who is like your own soul, entices you secretly, saying, ‘Let’s go and serve other gods’ (whom neither you nor your fathers have known,

6 “If your brother, your mother’s son, or your son or daughter, or the wife you cherish, or your friend who is as your own soul, entice you secretly, saying, ‘Let us go and serve other gods’ (whom neither you nor your fathers have known,

6 “Your own blood brother, your son, your daughter, your beloved wife, or your friend who is like your soul mate may entice you quietly. He may tell you, ‘Let’s go and serve other gods,’ (whom neither you nor your ancestors have known

6 If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers;

- Perhaps the most tragic and painful of all situations which Moses could envision was a temptation to idolatry by a loved one
— He showed he understood the depth of the tragedy as he deliberately described the various relationships involved with endearing terminology: your very own brother...the wife you love (lit., "the wife of your bosom"), or your closest friend. Often friends try to influence each other.

7 of the gods of the peoples who are around you, near you, or far from you, from one end of the earth to the other end),

7 of the gods of the peoples who are around you, near you or far from you, from one end of the earth to the other end),

7 from the gods of the people that surround you—whether near or far from you—from one end of the earth to the other).

7 Namely, of the gods of the people which are round about you, nigh unto thee, or far off from thee, from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth;

- Unlike the preceding case in which false prophets openly attempted to seduce the people into idolatry (v1-2), this temptation was offered secretly and individually

- The absurdity of the temptation is heightened by Moses' explanation of the other gods. They are gods that neither you nor your fathers (ancestors) have known.

- Moses did not mean that the people had not known about these gods intellectually, but they had not known them experientially

- These "other gods" had done nothing for Israel and never would because they did not exist

8 you shall not consent to him or listen to him; and your eye shall not pity him, nor shall you spare or conceal him.

8 you shall not yield to him or listen to him; and your eye shall not pity him, nor shall you spare or conceal him.

8 You must not yield to him, listen to him, look with pity on him, show compassion to him, or even cover up for him.

8 Thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him:

9 Instead, you shall most certainly kill him; your hand shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people.

9 But you shall surely kill him; your hand shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people.

9 But you must surely execute him. You must be the first to put him to death with your own hand, and then the hands of the whole community.

9 But thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people.

- The person who was being tempted should respond first by not yielding to the temptation (do not consent)

- The command not to listen to him may have meant not to give in to his plea that his ways be kept secret

- Since the temptation came through a loved one, the tempted person would naturally feel compassion or pity and would probably be inclined to cover up the sin of his loved one (shield him)

- But here again God's commands were to rule over human feelings and experiences

10 So you shall stone him to death, because he has attempted to drive you away from the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

10 So you shall stone him to death because he has sought to seduce you from the LORD your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

10 Stone him to death, because he sought to lure you from the LORD your God who brought you from the land of Egypt, from the land of slavery.

10 And thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die; because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

11 Then all Israel will hear *about it* and be afraid, and will not do such a wicked thing among you again.

11 Then all Israel will hear and be afraid, and will never again do such a wicked thing among you.

11 Then all Israel will hear about it, be afraid, and won't do this evil thing again among you.

11 And all Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall do no more any such wickedness as this is among you.

- The tempted person was to expose his loved one and in fact to be the first in stoning him to death (Cf. Zech 13:3)

— By casting the first stone the accuser was testifying to the truth of his testimony

— The participation of the rest of the community then showed their allegiance to the Lord and their resolute hostility toward anything that might endanger that allegiance and turn them away from the Lord

The result of such a severe action would be that all Israel would hear about this extraordinary devotion to the Lord and be afraid to disobey Him (Cf. Acts 5:11). This is precisely what Moses was demanding of the people—an extraordinary commitment (superseding all other intimate relationships) to the God who had shown extraordinary grace to the nation (who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery; Cf. Ex 13:3,14; 20:2; Deut 5:6; 6:12; 7:8; 8:14; 13:5). This passage may have been in Jesus' mind when He demanded a similar commitment of His followers (Cf. Matt 10:34-39; Luke 14:26)

(c) Town (13:12-18)

12 "If you hear in one of your cities, which the LORD your God is giving you to live in, *anyone saying that*

12 "If you hear in one of your cities, which the LORD your God is giving you to live in, *anyone saying that*

12 "You may hear in one of your towns that the LORD your God is giving you to inhabit

12 If thou shalt hear say in one of thy cities, which the LORD thy God hath given thee to dwell there, saying,

13 some worthless men have gone out from among you and have seduced the inhabitants of their city, saying, 'Let's go and serve other gods' (whom you have not known),

13 some worthless men have gone out from among you and have seduced the inhabitants of their city, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods' (whom you have not known),

13 that worthless men have come from among you to entice those who live in the towns. They may say, 'Let's go and serve other gods that you haven't known.'

13 Certain men, the children of Belial, are gone out from among you, and have withdrawn the inhabitants of their city, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which ye have not known;

- The situation Moses envisioned here was perhaps the most potentially dangerous for the nation as a whole. Certain wicked men may lead a whole town astray.

- The men's wickedness is highlighted by the fact that they deceived one of the towns the Lord would give to Israel.

14 then you shall investigate, search out, and inquire thoroughly. And if it is true *and* the matter is certain that this abomination has been committed among you,

14 then you shall investigate and search out and inquire thoroughly. If it is true *and* the matter established that this abomination has been done among you,

14 You must thoroughly investigate and inquire if it is true that this detestable thing exists among you. If it is so,

14 Then shalt thou enquire, and make search, and ask diligently; and, behold, if it be truth, and the thing certain, that such abomination is wrought among you;

15 you shall most certainly strike the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword. Utterly destroy it and all who are in it and its cattle, with the edge of the sword.

15 you shall surely strike the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying it and all that is in it and its cattle with the edge of the sword.

15 then put the inhabitants of the town to death by the sword. Devote everything in it to divine destruction—even its livestock—by the sword.

15 Thou shalt surely smite the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, destroying it utterly, and all that is therein, and the cattle thereof, with the edge of the sword.

- The punishment of this sin was to be so drastic that before any action was taken, the truth of the report must be confirmed by a thorough investigation

- If the report was confirmed, then the town was to be treated like a Canaanite city: set aside for complete destruction of people and livestock

- The fact that all its plunder was to be destroyed, and that it was never to be rebuilt, precluded any greedy or illegitimate motivations by those who were to carry out its destruction

- Obedience to this command would bring about a moral cleansing of the land and a spiritual renewal

- Then in mercy and compassion...the Lord would prosper the people by increasing their numbers, as He promised on oath (Cf. 4:31)

- For the most part, Israel failed to apply the commands of this chapter. This failure resulted in both the Northern Kingdom and later the Southern Kingdom being exiled.

- The commands of this chapter are not directed to Christians, because they do not live in one nation ruled by God; that is, the New Testament church is not a theocracy

- However, church discipline should be exercised (Matt 18:15-17; 1 Cor 5) and there is a sin that leads to death (1 John 5:16-17; Cf. Heb 10:26-31)

16 Then you shall gather all its plunder into the middle of its public square, and burn the city and all its plunder with fire as a whole burnt offering to the LORD your God; and it shall be a ruin forever. It shall never be rebuilt.

16 Then you shall gather all its booty into the middle of its open square and burn the city and all its booty with fire as a whole burnt offering to the LORD your God; and it shall be a ruin forever. It shall never be rebuilt.

16 Gather whatever you've taken as spoils at the public square of the town, then burn the town, along with whatever you've taken, as an offering to the LORD your God. It will remain

a permanent mound of ruins, never to be rebuilt again.

16 And thou shalt gather all the spoil of it into the midst of the street thereof, and shalt burn with fire the city, and all the spoil thereof every whit, for the LORD thy God: and it shall be an heap for ever; it shall not be built again.

17 Nothing at all from what is designated for destruction is to cling to your hand, in order that the LORD may turn from His burning anger and show mercy to you, and have compassion on you and make you increase, just as He has sworn to your fathers,

17 Nothing from that which is put under the ban shall cling to your hand, in order that the LORD may turn from His burning anger and show mercy to you, and have compassion on you and make you increase, just as He has sworn to your fathers,

17 Moreover, you must never take any item from those condemned things, so the LORD may yet relent from his burning anger and extend compassion, have mercy, and cause you to increase in number—as he promised by an oath to your ancestors—

17 And there shall cleave nought of the cursed thing to thine hand: that the LORD may turn from the fierceness of his anger, and shew thee mercy, and have compassion upon thee, and multiply thee, as he hath sworn unto thy fathers;

18 if you will listen to the voice of the LORD your God, keeping all His commandments which I am commanding you today, and doing what is right in the sight of the LORD your God.

18 if you will listen to the voice of the LORD your God, keeping all His commandments which I am commanding you today, and doing what is right in the sight of the LORD your God.

18 if you obey the voice of the LORD your God by observing all his commands that I'm commanding you today. Do what is right in the sight of the LORD your God."

18 When thou shalt hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep all his commandments which I command thee this day, to do that which is right in the eyes of the LORD thy God.