

Exegetical Notes, Deuteronomy 4:44-5:33

“The Rehearsal of the Law Begins”

Prepared by Charles H. Jensen, Pastor, Cornerstone Fellowship

101 Kyllies Road, Coatesville, PA 19320

610-384-1375

charleshjensen@aol.com

Deuteronomy 4:44-5:33

Verses 44-49

This is the law Moses set before the Israelites. ⁴⁵ These are the stipulations, decrees and laws Moses gave them when they came out of Egypt ⁴⁶ and were in the valley near Beth Peor east of the Jordan, in the land of Sihon king of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon and was defeated by Moses and the Israelites as they came out of Egypt. ⁴⁷ They took possession of his land and the land of Og king of Bashan, the two Amorite kings east of the Jordan. ⁴⁸ This land extended from Aroer on the rim of the Arnon Gorge to Mount Sirion (that is, Hermon), ⁴⁹ and included all the Arabah east of the Jordan, as far as the Dead Sea, below the slopes of Pisgah.

- The setting indicates that this is not a retelling of the first giving of the law. As the people of Israel were preparing to enter the promised land, after the 40 year wilderness wandering, Moses gave them the law of God again. This is a covenant renewal ceremony. The people are given the law again so that they will understand it for themselves and commit themselves to following all of its stipulations.

Verses 5:1-6

Moses summoned all Israel and said: “Hear, Israel, the decrees and laws I declare in your hearing today. Learn them and be sure to follow them. ² The LORD our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. ³ It was not with our ancestors that the LORD made this covenant, but with us, with all of us who are alive here today. ⁴ The LORD spoke to you face to face out of the fire on the mountain. ⁵ (At that time I stood between the LORD and you to declare to you the word of the LORD, because you were afraid of the fire and did not go up the mountain.) And he said: ⁶ “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

- Moses summoned the entire nation to hear the law. He called upon the people of Israel to hear the law and to demonstrate that they had heard by obeying.
- Moses made it clear that the covenant God had first offered to the ancestors of those summoned to hear the law was extended to include all those who were there that day.
- Moses reminded them that at the time of the Law's first giving, God had spoken directly to their ancestors on Mt Horeb out of a blazing fire. Though they clearly heard God's voice, they could not see God's form for the fire hid it from them. So, God spoke to them "face to face" from the fire.
- Because the people were afraid of God, they would not go close to the fire. So, Moses stood between them and God as their intercessor.
- On the occasion of God's first giving of the Law he had reminded them that it was he who had delivered them from 400 years of slavery in Egypt.

Verses 7-21

"You shall have no other gods before me.

⁸ "You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. ⁹ You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, ¹⁰ but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

¹¹ "You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

¹² "Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the LORD your God has commanded you. ¹³ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁴ but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns, so that your male and female servants may rest, as you do. ¹⁵ Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the LORD your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.

¹⁶ "Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live long and that it may go well with you in the land the LORD your God is giving you.

¹⁷ ***"You shall not murder.***

¹⁸ ***"You shall not commit adultery.***

¹⁹ ***"You shall not steal.***

²⁰ ***"You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.***

²¹ ***"You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. You shall not set your desire on your neighbor's house or land, his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."***

- The summation of the Law is the Ten Commandments. Moses reiterated this summation of the law to the people.
- See notes on Exodus 20:1-17 for a full explanation of the stipulations of the law's summary.

Verse 22

²² ***These are the commandments the LORD proclaimed in a loud voice to your whole assembly there on the mountain from out of the fire, the cloud and the deep darkness; and he added nothing more. Then he wrote them on two stone tablets and gave them to me.***

- After God had given Israel the Ten Commandments orally, he wrote them down on two stone tablets to perpetuate their giving. What was heard could be forgotten or altered over time. What was written down was permanent.

Verses 23-27

When you heard the voice out of the darkness, while the mountain was ablaze with fire, all the leaders of your tribes and your elders came to me. ²⁴ And you said, "The LORD our God has shown us his glory and his majesty, and we have heard his voice from the fire. Today we have seen that a person can live even if God speaks with them. ²⁵ But now, why should we die? This great fire will consume us, and we will die if we hear the voice of the LORD our God any longer. ²⁶ For what mortal has ever heard the voice of the living God speaking out of fire, as we have, and survived? ²⁷ Go near and listen to all that the LORD our God says. Then tell us whatever the LORD our God tells you. We will listen and obey."

- On the day when the people of Israel first received the Law, they were greatly shaken by the experience. They feared God and were afraid that if they continued to have personal encounters with him, they would be consumed by his glory. So, they begged Moses to be their intercessor. They

asked him to go to God on their behalf and to bring the word of the Lord back to them.

- They promised that they would always listen to the words that Moses brought back to them and obey the commands of God.
- See Exodus 32. This arrangement was immediately broken by the Israelites.

Verses 28-31

²⁸ The LORD heard you when you spoke to me, and the LORD said to me, “I have heard what this people said to you. Everything they said was good. ²⁹ Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!

³⁰ “Go, tell them to return to their tents. ³¹ But you stay here with me so that I may give you all the commands, decrees and laws you are to teach them to follow in the land I am giving them to possess.”

- God granted the request of the first generation knowing that they respected him at the moment but that things would change quickly.
- That day, Moses became the intercessor between God and the people of Israel, and Israel vowed to listen to what Moses said and to obey God.

Verses 32-33

³² So be careful to do what the LORD your God has commanded you; do not turn aside to the right or to the left. ³³ Walk in obedience to all that the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live and prosper and prolong your days in the land that you will possess.

- Moses challenged the present generation to hear God’s word and to obey it. The promise was that if they obeyed God, God would prosper and bless them.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *The Rehearsal of the Law Begins*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by Dr. Jensen and *Cornerstone Fellowship*.)