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Deuteronomy—Call to Obedience

The common theme of Deuteronomy is a call to obedience. The stress is both on what and why we should walk in obedience to the Lord.

Other Helpful links

Matthew Henry's Commentary

<http://www.ccel.org/h/henry/mhc2/MHC04000.HTM>

David Guzik's Commentary on

<http://www.enduringword.com/commentaries/05.html>

Daily Bible Study

Thursday, May 18, 2006



Passage for today: **Deuteronomy 1**

Quick Notes

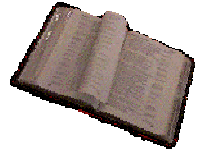
The Kadesh Barnea event is recorded in Numbers 14, and the New Testament commentary is in Hebrews 3–4. God warns against “an evil heart of unbelief” (Heb. 3:12). Why is the sin of unbelief so evil?

Questions to Ponder

God quickly reminds Israel of their history up to this point in time. As He does so—what events does He point out & why?
What events does He leave out or skim over & Why?
With the theme of Deuteronomy being obedience, how does this chapter set the tone or setting for the book? How does this apply to our lives?

Daily Bible Study

Friday, May 19, 2006



Passage for today: **Deuteronomy 2**

Quick Notes

2:1–3 The 38 lost years of wandering

2:4–23 “Don’t pick a fight with your relatives.”

2:24–37 “But if they attack first, you can fight back.”

Questions to Ponder

Why does God remind them of the land they cannot take? What might be the lessons for us today in the church? How can we apply this? There are also personal lessons in this. Consider these statements— “God assigns our battles”, “God assures our victory when we fight the battles He has for us”. How do you see these statements pictured in this chapter? How do they apply to our lives today?

Daily Bible Study

Saturday, May 20, 2006



Passage for today: **Deuteronomy 3**

Quick Notes

Continuing north on the east side of the Jordan, Israel defeated Og, the Amorite king of Bashan . Og was no little man. His iron bed was more than 13 feet long and 6 feet wide.

Questions to Ponder

Why do you think God has the children of Israel experience these two victories before they begin to cross over into the promised land?
How does Moses encourage Joshua for all that is before him?
Moses prays to enter the land, what does God answer? Why? What does this teach us in light of Moses powerful prayer life?

Daily Bible Study

Sunday, May 21, 2006



Passage for today: **Deuteronomy 4**

Quick Notes

Before God through Moses repeats the - He reminds them and us of our holy relationship with God—of who we are with God and of our privileges as His chosen people.

Questions to Ponder

Why is it important that God reminds them of who they are before He reminds them about the law they are to follow? How does this apply to us today?

What is the purpose of obedience stated in v.1? What

What things are God’s people to “take heed” to in this chapter? How does that apply to us?

Daily Bible Study

Monday, May 22, 2006



Passage for today: **Deuteronomy 5**

Quick Notes

Moses began by restating the Ten Commandments (Exod. 20) for the new generation of Israelites. He reminded them that these commandments were written on stone tablets by God himself and that Israel had promised to hear and obey all that God commanded (5:27).

Questions to Ponder

Why do you think God restates the Ten Commandments here? Why is it significant for where the nation is? Lessons for us?
What ways does God call for His people to respond to His Word in this chapter? (there are at least three ways listed in this chapter) Why? Why this order? How does this apply to us today?

Daily Bible Study

Tuesday, May 23, 2006



Passage for today: **Deuteronomy 6**

Quick Notes

- v.4 is called “the Shema,” from the Hebrew word for “hear.” The devout Jew recites it several times a day to affirm his faith in God.
- When a scribe asked Jesus what he considered the essence of the law, He quoted 6:5 (Matt. 22:34–40). It was the “bottom line” of God’s law for us

Questions to Ponder

What does this chapter teach us about God’s commandments for us?

What are they for? How are we too put them into practice?

How are we supposed to be sharing the Word with others and specifically our children? What does this mean?

Daily Bible Study

Wednesday, May 24, 2006



WEDNESDAY

Passage for today: **Deuteronomy 5-6**

Quick Notes

Questions to Ponder

What key statements about God's Word do you find in these two chapters?

What do these chapters teach us about the obedience that God is drawing us to?

What benefits does God show us in these two chapters there are from His Word?

Quick Facts



Author: Moses

There are in Deuteronomy more than forty claims that Moses wrote this book. But most of all, Jesus directly attributes it to Moses (Matt 19:7-9; John 5:45-47)



Time: Like Leviticus, Deuteronomy does not progress historically, but covers a period of about one month. This book is written at the end of Moses' life (at 120), at the end of Israel's wanderings (40 years) and right before the enter into the promised land.



Theme: The common theme of Deuteronomy is a call to obedience. The stress is both on what and why we should walk in obedience to the Lord.



Title: The term Deuteronomy literally means "second law". It is not the second law, as in a replacement of the first, but more a restatement of the first. It is seen as God giving them another chance to obey the Lord. Therefore Deuteronomy is sometimes seen as the book of "Second Chances"!

Outline of Deuteronomy

First Message	(1:1-4:43)	What God has done for Israel
Second Message	(4:44-26:19)	What God expects of Israel
Third Message	(27:1-34:12)	What God will do for Israel

(Deu 30:11-16) **"For this commandment which I command you today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off.But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it. See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the LORD your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess."**

Advice to Parents

Deuteronomy 6:6 tells us, *"These words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up."*

I love how God tells us to teach spiritual truth to our kids. He doesn't say hold daily Bible classes – or sit down once a week, and have a family devotion – although both practices have value.

The preferred method though is much more hands-on and relational. The best approach to conveying spiritual truth to our kids is to integrate its application and relevance into everyday life. Teach God's truth as you live life. Apply as you go.

This is how Jesus taught His disciples. He's walking down the road, and sees a man sowing seed: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed..." Or He points to a flock of birds, "Look at the birds of the air, for they neither reap or gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them..." It's life application.

God also tells us in verses 8-9, *"You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."*

In other words, let the Word of God guide your activities - color your thoughts - form the atmosphere of your home.

Today, orthodox Jews take these commandments literally. They wear leather pouches called phylacteries that contain tiny pages of Scripture on their forehead and wrists. Mezzuzahs hang outside their doors - weatherproof containers that hold the Scripture, and are nailed to the column or doorpost of the house. When the Jews enter or exit the house they kiss it to show their love for God's Word. It is an interesting thing to see...but I think misses the intention here—of letting the Word be in everything you do.

Guys, we need to surround ourselves, and our kids, with the Word of God. Do whatever you can to keep God's Word in the forefront of your mind

The Trinity in the Shema

Chapter 6 contains what the Jews called the “*the Shema*”. Verse 4 is a declaration of the monotheistic nature of God, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!" This is the Jewish creed. They're affirmation of faith. And it certainly is a powerful statement that the true God, is but one God.

But the Shema holds an even a deeper revelation. The word translated “one” is the Hebrew word “echad”, which speaks not of an absolute unity, but of a compound unity. When the rabbis explain the word “echad” they hold up one fist, then point out that this one fist is also made up of five fingers – it’s a compound unity.

This is a beautiful way to describe the Triune nature of God. Yes, God is one God, but He is a compound unity. He is one God, who exists in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Quotable book

As you read through the book of Deuteronomy, you hopefully will find many “familiar phrases”. That is because Deuteronomy is the most quoted book of the Bible from other books of the Bible. Deuteronomy is quoted 356 times by other Old Testament books. It is then quoted 196 times in the New Testament. That adds up to whooping 552 times that this book is quoted by other books in the Bible!

So, here is the challenge, how many of these references can you spot as you read through the book.

Jewish Calendar – Hebrew months were based on the lunar calendar and were 29 or 30 days long. Their years were 354 days. Approximately every 3 years (7 times in 19 years) an extra 29-day month, Veadar, was added between Adar and Nisan.

Names of Months	Corresponds with	No. of Days	Month of Civil Year	Month of Sacred Year
Tishri	Sept – Oct	30	1	7
Heshvan	Oct – Nov	29 or 30	2	8
Chislev	Nov – Dec	29 or 30	3	9
Tebeth	Dec – Jan	29	4	10
Shebat	Jan – Feb	30	5	11
Adar	Feb – Mar	29 or 30	6	12
Nisan (Abib)	Mar – Apr	30	7	1
Iyar	Apr – May	29	8	2
Sivan	May – Jun	30	9	3
Tammuz	Jun – July	29	10	4
Ab	July – Aug	30	11	5
Elul	Aug – Sept	29	12	6

Responsibilities of Fatherhood

(Deuteronomy 6:1-19)

By: J. Hampton Keathley, III , Th.M.

Introduction

Deuteronomy 6:4-10 has been called the Magna Carta of the home which would guarantee the happiness and well being of the family in the purpose of God. But while it is an important passage for the home, this passage must not be used outside of its overall context and purpose or it loses its real impact for the home.

One of the chief purposes of this section of Scripture is a call to ministry and testimony as the people of God through obedience to God.

Exodus 19:6-7 and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. 'These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.'

7 So Moses came and called the elders of the people, and set before them all these words which the LORD had commanded him.

Deuteronomy 4:6-8 "So keep and do them, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'

7 "For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the LORD OUR God whenever we call on Him?"

8 "Or what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today?"

Deuteronomy 6 is not simply a call to obedience for obedience's sake or obedience for happiness' sake, nor is it just a passage with principles for the home. It is a call to obedience for God's glory, as an evidence of love for God and for a ministry to the world through the perpetuation of faith in the Lord from generation to generation. Personal blessing was promised, but primarily as a by-product of relationship with the Lord, not as an end in itself.

As God's people today (the church of Jesus Christ), this is not unlike our call and responsibility (1 Pet. 2:5-12). Remember, these Old Testament principles, warnings, and exhortations are given for

us today as examples to us and for our instruction and “that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures, we might have hope” (Rom. 15:4).

There are three key notes that form the background and backbone for this passage in Deuteronomy:

- Obedience as an evidence of love and reverence for God.
- Warnings against forgetting the Lord.
- The need of the transmission of God’s truth to the coming generations—godly parenting (cf. Ps. 78:1ff)

Deuteronomy 6 shows us how this is to be done or what is necessary if we are to be an obedient people who do not forget the Lord and who seek God’s Word with careful obedience handed down from generation to generation.

**The Call for Obedience:
Communication of Truth
(6:1-2)**

Deuteronomy 6:1-2 “Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which the LORD YOUR God has commanded me to teach you, that you might do them in the land where you are going over to possess it,

2 so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged.

Deuteronomy 4:10-11 “Remember the day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, when the LORD said to me, ‘Assemble the people to Me, that I may let them hear My words so they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children.’

11 “And you came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire to the very heart of the heavens: darkness, cloud and thick gloom.

The experience at Horeb in Deuteronomy 4 was designed to produce a reverential fear of God in the hearts of the people so that a covenant between them and the Lord would be possible. In the Old Testament the fear of God is more than awe or reverence

though it includes both. Fearing God is to become so acutely aware of His moral purity and omnipotence that one is genuinely afraid to disobey Him. Fearing God also includes responding to Him in worship, service, trust, obedience, and commitment.

That day at Horeb God's omnipotence was displayed in the fire ... black clouds ... deep darkness, and the voice of God that thundered from the heavens. His moral purity was displayed in the Ten Commandments, called His covenant (Bible Knowledge Commentary).

Of course, the perpetuation or transmission of faith and truth into the hearts of each new generation was vital to continued obedience and the privilege of remaining in the land where Israel could enjoy its blessings and fulfill God's purposes for them as a priesthood nation to the nations.

**The Foundation for Obedience:
Hearing God's Truth
(6:3-4)**

3 *"O Israel, you should listen and be careful to do it, that it may be well with you and that you may multiply greatly, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey.*

4 *"Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!*

Hearing God

The foundation for obedience begins with listening—with hearing the Word. Hearing is a protection against scarring or hardening (Heb. 3:7).

These verses are addressed to the nation of Israel. But in particular, they are addressed to parents—especially to fathers and grandfathers because of their leadership role according to Scripture, and because of the responsibility of parents in the perpetuation of faith in their children. This is clear from the context (cf. verses 2, 7, 20).

Dads, the most important thing you can do for yourself and your family is to make hearing the Word of God one of the greatest priorities of your life and the lives of your children. Our children

must learn the importance of hearing and knowing the Word of God formally and informally. Hearing, knowing, and obeying the Word is critical to our spiritual growth and walk with God, to our ability as parents, and to the lives of our children.

A little girl, with shining eyes and little face aglow, said, “Daddy, it is almost time for Sunday school. Let’s go! They teach us there of Jesus’ love, and how He died that we might all have everlasting life by trusting in Him!”

“Oh, no,” said Daddy, “not today, I have worked so hard all the week, I am going to the woods and to the creek. There I can relax and rest. I must have one day to rest, and fishing is fine, they say. So run along. Don’t bother me. We’ll go to church some other day!”

Months and years have passed, but Daddy hears that plea no more: “Let’s go to Sunday school!” Those childish years are over and that Daddy is growing old, when life is almost through, he finds time to go to church. But what does daughter do? She says, “Oh, Daddy, not today. I stayed up almost all last night, and I’ve got to get some sleep!”

Next, the text teaches us the foundation of obedience and godly parenting is:

Knowing God

The purpose of hearing the Word is to know the Lord. “Hear” is the Hebrew *shama*, and means “to hear and understand, or to hear with discernment.” Hearing the Word must never degenerate into religious formality or into merely a religious routine in which we do our ‘nod to God,’ but afterwards immediately forget God (cf. Ps. 50:22). The text will show us, that our purpose for hearing the Word and its truth is to really know God intimately and personally, to so understand the truths of Scripture that they become the means and guide to a personal relationship with the Lord. We do “not live by bread alone, (i.e., by the details of life) but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.” We need to live by God’s Word that we might personally know God and put our trust in Him.

We need to understand how much we lack of the knowledge of

God. We must learn to measure ourselves, not by our knowledge about God, not by how many verses we can spit out by memory, not by our gifts or talents or ministry, but by how we pray, by how we commune with the Lord in His Word, by what goes on in our hearts, and by our level of obedience to what we know (For a wonderful study on this need, see J. I. Packer's book, *Knowing God*).

The rest of verse 4, "...The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!" is debated as to its exact meaning. It may stress the unity of God, or the uniqueness of the Lord (i.e. there is only one God like Yahweh).

Ryrie writes,

Verse 4 is subject to various translations, though the statement is likely stressing the uniqueness of Yahweh and should be translated, "The LORD is our God, the LORD alone." A secondary emphasis, His indivisibility, is apparent in most English translations. The Lord's uniqueness precludes the worship of any other and demands a total love commitment (v. 5). This confession does not preclude the later revelation of the Trinity, for the word God (Elohim) is a plural word, and the word one is also used of the union of Adam and Eve (Gen. 2:24) to describe two persons in one flesh (*Charles Caldwell Ryrie, Ryrie Study Bible, Expanded Edition, Moody, p. 285*).

Verse 4 gives expression to what was to be the heart of Israel's confession of faith, namely, Yahweh was not a pantheon of gods, nor was He one of the gods of the ancient mystery cults. He was the only true God who was one in essence, but clearly revealed in the New Testament as three in personality.

The point is we must hear the word to learn about the Lord that we might know Him and live in the light of all that He is as the sovereign and holy God of the universe and savior of our lives—the God of redemption and revelation. This is very important. A proper perspective about God is vital and fundamental to our love and obedience to Him, and our to ability to trust Him for all of life. Without this knowledge embedded in our hearts and functioning as the rock of our lives, we will pursue the gods of the world; we will experience the emptiness of materialism and fall for one of the many traps of Satan. As we come to know God, we learn that we

need no other god's—He alone is sufficient to meet our needs and to fulfill our lives; indeed, He is our SUFFICIENCY, OUR ONLY ONE.

As we study His Word and come to know Him, we learn to trust Him, and this in turn is transmitted to our children.

Obeying God

“Hear” in verse 4 includes the idea of “to hear and obey.” The point is that we really have not heard unless we are following through with obedience, acting on the precepts of Scripture. We must act in accord with Scripture (6:2b-3a, 4), from the heart, from an intimate understanding and relationship with Him or we have not truly heard. Note the words, “to keep all, ...” “be careful to do it,” and “hear.” Taking Scripture as our index is the point here: we must realize that we cannot guide our own lives.

Proverbs 14:12 There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.

Proverbs 12:15 The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, But a wise man is he who listens to counsel.

Jeremiah 10:23 I know, O LORD, that a man's way is not in himself; Nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps.

Note the following principles:

(1) Knowledge without obedience is never enough.

(2) Knowledge that is without obedience is only partial knowledge. Indeed, it is knowledge without understanding. It constitutes information without spiritual understanding and insight.

(3) To truly know the Lord is to desire to obey, and then to obey! To have met with the living God is to change. That means obedience. Otherwise, we have merely had an encounter with ourselves religiously and emotionally. Parents who refuse to obey God themselves are teaching their children disobedience. The clearest and loudest words our children ever hear, are those of our own example.

Children who live with critical parents learn to be critical.

Children whose parents scream and argue learn to do the same.

Children whose parents find all kinds of excuses to miss Bible class

and church will find it easy to do the same.

Children whose parents are not involved in ministry and concerned for others, will likewise be indifferent to the needs around them.

When Woodrow Wilson was president of Princeton University, he spoke these words to a parent's group:

I get many letters from you parents about your children. You want to know why we people up here in Princeton can't make more out of them and do more for them. Let me tell you the reason we can't. It may shock you just a little, but I am not trying to be rude. The reason is that they are your sons, reared in your homes, blood of your blood, bone of your bone. They have absorbed the ideals of your homes. You have formed and fashioned them. They are your sons. In those malleable, moldable years of their lives you have forever left your imprint upon them. (Tan, #4174, p. 960).

The Nature of Obedience:

Love for God

(6:5-6)

5 *“And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.*

6 *And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; ...”*

The Extent of Love

We are to love the Lord totally, “with all our heart,” and to give ourselves to Him unreservedly. This is the tough one, not because the Lord is so hard to love, but because we are so prone to self love and selfish pursuits. We are so like the old hymn says, “Prone to wander Lord I feel it, Prone to leave the God I love.”

When we struggle to obey, it is simply and plainly the age old problem of ‘conflicting masters,’ and ‘treasures of our hearts.’

Matthew 6:19-24 “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 “But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; 21 for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. 22 “The lamp of the body is the eye; if therefore your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. 23 “But if your eye is bad, your

whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! 24 “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. (NASB)

We need, therefore, to re-evaluate our values and our priorities. We might consider these two questions:

How real is God to me?

Is my relationship with Him merely intellectual?

The secret to loving the Lord is knowing Him. And the secret to knowing Him is Bible study and prayer. If we do not love the Lord and make Him the supreme priority of our lives, the chances are very high that neither will our children. And, only our love for the Lord will cause us to make the training of our children, or godly parenting, a priority in our lives. Otherwise, we will tend to neglect our children for our own pleasures, or business, or other personal pursuits.

How often have we not read of men or women who have made it big in business, in the theater, in sports, or even in ministry, yet dismally failed with their children. Dads, our children may become successful by the world’s standards, but if they do not end up living for Jesus Christ, in love with Him and concerned for His values, then, in God’s eyes they are failures and it just may be because we have failed in our responsibility. We need to be reminded that children have their own volition and can turn away from godly parenting, but too often it is because we ourselves have failed to live for the Lord as we should.

Proverbs 15:17 Better is a dish of vegetables where love is, Than a fattened ox and hatred with it.

Proverbs 17:1 Better is a dry morsel and quietness with it Than a house full of feasting with strife.

Do you believe what these Proverbs say? Where are your priorities, dad?

The Nature of Love

“These things are to be on your heart.” “These things” refer to the things of God and God’s Word. To “be on your heart” means “to be on your mind, in the center of your thoughts, and the object of your devotion.” It means our relationship to God and our obedience to His Word is contrasted to the tablets of stone. It means our relationship is not to be merely legal and mechanical, but spiritual and reflective. Love and obedience are:

Spiritual—not mechanical

Central—Not peripheral

Primary—Not secondary

This means we learn to live and think in terms of biblical principles and the realities of God in everything we do. The word of God becomes the grid and framework for every aspect of life, for home, work, worship, or play (cf. 2 Cor. 10:4, 5).

All of this forms the foundation for the next point:

The Propagation of Obedience:

Teach and Model the Word

(6:7-9)

7 and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.

8 “And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. 9 “And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Deuteronomy 6:20-25 “When your son asks you in time to come, saying, ‘What do the testimonies and the statutes and the judgments mean which the LORD our God commanded you?’

21 then you shall say to your son, ‘We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt; and the LORD brought us from Egypt with a mighty hand.

22 ‘Moreover, the LORD showed great and distressing signs and wonders before our eyes against Egypt, Pharaoh and all his household;

23 and He brought us out from there in order to bring us in, to give us the land which He had sworn to our fathers. ‘

- 24 *“So the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD OUR God for our good always and for our survival, as it is today.*
- 25 *“And it will be righteousness for us if we are careful to observe all this commandment before the LORD our God, just as He commanded us.”*

This forms a natural progression. We aren't capable of truly teaching until we are first following, hearing, obeying, loving, and being occupied with the Lord ourselves. We must model the Word as we teach it.

There are five ways the text shows us this teaching is to be done.

- (1) Diligently—though parents have many other important tasks and responsibilities, none are more important with greater implications than this responsibility. It must not be taken lightly.
- (2) Incisively, Accurately—this is included in the word “diligently” which means “to sharpen” and then “to teach clearly, accurately, incisively.” Our teaching must be clear and precise, not in vague generalities.
- (3) Repeatedly—these verses indicate teaching is not a once-in-a-while or a one-time effort. It goes on all the time. The secret to learning is repetition.
- (4) Naturally—it is to be done when we sit, walk, lie down, and rise up. In other words, we are to look for teaching opportunities by word and by example through the everyday activities of life in the home. Also, compare verses 20 and following for the practical outworking of these things through the natural curiosity of children. The home is the natural God-given place to communicate and display the Word of God. It's the place “where life makes up its mind.”
- (5) Personally—(cf. 4:9). What our children learn in Sunday school and church is important, but we can't rely on this alone. This passage is speaking to parents, not the church. Training is first and foremost the responsibility of the parents (cf. Eph. 6:4 addressed to fathers). Again, this stresses modeling. What one says is rarely as influential as what one does.

As mentioned in the first part of this lesson, when parents listen, obey and love, they provide a model for children which reinforces what is being said in the home.”

Warnings Regarding Obedience:

Don't be like the World

(6:10-19)

10 *“Then it shall come about when the LORD your God brings you into the land which He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you, great and splendid cities which you did not build,*

11 *and houses full of all good things which you did not fill, and hewn cisterns which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant, and you shall eat and be satisfied,*

12 *then watch yourself, lest you forget the LORD who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.*

13 *“You shall fear only the LORD your God; and you shall worship Him, and swear by His name.*

14 *“You shall not follow other gods, any of the gods of the peoples who surround you,*

15 *for the LORD your God in the midst of you is a jealous God; otherwise the anger of the LORD your God will be kindled against you, and He will wipe you off the face of the earth.*

16 *“You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested Him at Massah.*

17 *“You should diligently keep*

10 *“Then it shall come about when the LORD your God brings you into the land which He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you, great and splendid cities which you did not build,*

11 *and houses full of all good things which you did not fill, and hewn cisterns which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant, and you shall eat and be satisfied,*

12 *then watch yourself, lest you forget the LORD who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.*

13 *“You shall fear only the LORD your God; and you shall worship Him, and swear by His name.*

14 *“You shall not follow other gods, any of the gods of the peoples who surround you,*

15 *for the LORD your God in the midst of you is a jealous God;*

otherwise the anger of the LORD your God will be kindled against you, and He will wipe you off the face of the earth.

- (1) This is a warning against loving the world (vss. 10-15). There is in this warning what seems to be almost an axiom. We rarely absorb cultural advances without also absorbing moral and spiritual values as well. The land of Canaan was advanced in material culture. Cities were well laid out, and houses showed good design and construction. Floors of buildings were often paved or plastered. Drainage systems had been developed. Workers were skilled in the use of copper, lead, and gold. Pottery was among the finest anywhere in the world. Extensive trade was conducted with foreign countries, including Egypt, Northern Mesopotamia, and Cyprus. In technical knowledge, the Canaanites were much more advanced than the Israelites who had spent the past forty years in nomadic conditions of the desert.

History show that less developed cultures are normally absorbed by those more advanced. In years which followed, Israel did not become absorbed by Canaan, but she did experience profound influence. Had this involved only material culture, such as pottery manufacture, city construction, or methods of farming, there could even have been benefit; but when it came to include ways of thinking, ideas, and especially religious belief and practice, the harm was great (Leon Wood, *A Survey of Israel's History*, Zondervan p. 169).

There is a spiritual principle here: In prosperity people tend to forget God and instead put their trust in material things. This in itself is bad enough, but another problem always results—we absorb the viewpoints and attitudes of the world around us

- (2) This is a warning against testing the Lord by rebellion and disobedience (vss. 16-17). This will eventually result in personal and national discipline, always.
- (3) This is a warning against losing sight of godly goals, a warning against failing to live purposely for God (vss. 18-19). We must never lose sight of why we are here. We are not simply here as earthdwellers to pursue our own selfish goals. Rather we are pilgrims. The minute we lose sight of the 'pilgrim' mentality,

we are in danger of becoming absorbed with the world. The result is that we fail as parents, because we have first failed as God's children ourselves.

Jonathan Edwards was the son of a godly home. His father was a preacher and before him his mother's father. Note the history of the offspring of this godly man:

More than 400 of them have been traced, and they include 14 college presidents, and 100 professors, 100 of them have been ministers of the Gospel, missionaries, and theological teachers. More than 100 of them were lawyers and judges. Out of the whole number 60 have been doctors, and as many more, authors of high rank, or editors of journals.

In fact, almost every conspicuous American industry has had as its promoters one or more of the offspring of the Edward's stock since the remote ancestor was married in the closing half of the seventeenth century. (Tan, #4182, p. 962).

DEUTERONOMY: THE LAW THAT DELIVERS

by Ray C. Stedman

Deuteronomy is the last of the five books by Moses. It is a pastime of scholars today and a supposed mark of intelligence to raise the question of whether or not Moses actually wrote these books. There are those who maintain that Moses really wasn't the writer, but that the Pentateuch was made up by some unknown editor who went through ancient books and abstracted various parts, putting them together in a collection.

They say we now have nothing more than a collection of writings by unknown authors whose names have been totally lost to us, and that Moses' name was simply added as the author. This is what is called the documentary theory of scriptures; anyone who studies comparative religions in high school or college will probably be exposed to it.

Fortunately, it is a theory that has already been very well answered and exposed as false. Amazingly, though, it is still being taught in many places as though it were true. I remember that Dr. Ironside told me years ago of listening to an outstanding liberal speaker at the University of California at Berkeley who said something like this to the listening young men:

Young gentlemen, I am regarded, at least in some circles, as an authority on the documentary hypothesis of the Old Testament books of the Pentateuch and many questions are asked me regarding the so-called books of Moses. Much is being said today about the assured results of higher criticism and the critics tell us that it is now certain that Moses did not write the books ascribed to his name. But I want to say that after having examined all the evidence very, very carefully, and having worked in this field for many years, my conclusion is that if the five books of Moses were not written by him, they must have been written by somebody else named Moses.

The ordinary and usual concept that these are the books of Moses is a very authentic one. The book of Deuteronomy is the last great word from the mighty man of God, just before his death. It begins

with a word about Moses and that he delivered these words to Israel beyond the Jordan, in Arabah wilderness, and it closes with the account of the death of Moses. It says that God ordered Moses to go up into Mount Nebo which overlooked the promised land. But because of his disobedience to God in striking the rock with a rod instead of speaking to bring forth water for the people in the wilderness, he was not permitted to enter the land himself. But he went up into the mountain and saw the land. And although there was not a single sign of deterioration in his physical body, he died, and God buried him there; no man knows where Moses is buried.

But before he left, he preached this tremendous message that we have recorded in the book of Deuteronomy. This great sermon was delivered at the end of forty years of wandering in the wilderness. This was a new generation of people who were camped just across the Jordan River, not far from the City of Jericho. The message looks ahead to the life that will be theirs when they have entered into the land. They are through with the wilderness and ready to enter the land of Canaan.

Now let me remind you that these five books of Moses are what might be called God's visual aids to demonstrate what is happening to us in our own spiritual life. As God leads the people of Israel out of Egypt through the wilderness into the land of Canaan, they reproduce in all their journey the exact same problems, same obstacles, same enemies, and the same victories that we will be encountering all through the journey of our spiritual life.

The bondage depicted by Israel as slaves of Egypt is the same as the bondage to the world we experienced before we were Christians. And the land of Canaan, flowing with milk and honey, pictures a life filled with continual victory, which can be ours in Christ. All this is God's way of picturing for us what is happening in our individual lives.

If you read your Old Testament with this key in hand, it becomes a simply luminous book. Every story in it has a direct relationship to you and there are marvelous lessons to be learned. In my own experience, I could not understand the mighty truths declared in the New Testament until I saw them visually demonstrated in the Old Testament. As these stories come to life for us and we see how they

apply to our own experience, then the New Testament truths which are so familiar to our ears become living, vibrant, vital experiences.

Moses' great sermon in Deuteronomy falls into three divisions. (Every good preacher has three points to his message.) The first four chapters review God's love and care of Israel in the wilderness. Most of these people waiting to enter the land had gone through only part of the wilderness journey. They were only children when, forty years earlier, Israel had stood at Kadesh-barnea and refused to enter into the land. Many of them are now just young men and women -- twenty or thirty years of age. They need to be reminded of what God has done during the wilderness journey.

So Moses' first task is to recite to them the wonderful care and love of God watching over them, as he led them with a pillar of fire by night and the cloud by day, and guided them through the trackless, howling desert. He tells how God brought water from the rock to slake their thirst in a vast and waterless area. And how he delivered them from their enemies again and again; how he fed them with manna that did not fail. Imagine it! For forty years God fed more than two million people every day with manna that fell from heaven. What marvelous evidence of his loving concern for this people.

The second division is a great resume of the law. The Ten Commandments appear in the Bible for the second time here, beginning with chapter five, verse 27. Here are the laws on divorce, on faithlessness and the penalty that was extracted if any were caught in some suspicious situation. Here are the penalties for idolatry, and for sorcery and the warnings of God against falling into the terrible, terrible deeds practiced by the tribes that then inhabited the land.

It is essential to understand that the land into which these people were coming was inhabited by people who were utterly given over to lewd and obscene practices. The book of Deuteronomy is a mighty revelation that God expected his people to live in the midst of a sex-saturated society, among people who were completely committed to the most vile practices. I think this is encouraging to us who are being asked to live in just such a society today. And yet God expected his people to keep themselves completely from these

things and to be a holy people in the midst of sex-mad nations. Then, at the end of this section, there is a recapitulation of the sanitary laws, which are also found largely in the book of Leviticus. The third division of the book, chapters 27 through 34, is a mighty revelation of the future, both in terms of blessings and of curses upon Israel. The twenty-eighth chapter is one of the most amazing prophecies ever recorded. This prophetic passage is fully as complete and remarkable in its detail as any other prophecy in scripture. It is a prediction of the entire history of the Jewish people, even, after they ceased to be a nation and were scattered over the face of the earth. Here you can find the entire record of all that Israel has gone through in these long, long centuries.

First, there is the prediction of the Babylonian dispersion; when Israel would fail to heed the prophets and turn to other gods, God would send them out into captivity. This happened, as you know, under Nebuchadnezzar.

Then there is the prediction of their return to the land and how, after centuries, they would fall again into the terrible sin of rejecting the Messiah. A strange nation would come in from the west, the Romans, who would be hard and cruel people. They would burn the cities, destroy the inhabitants and disperse them again, to the ends of the earth.

Israel would wander for many, many centuries as a people without a land, but God would at last gather them again and there would be an ultimate restoration. All of this is precisely predicted in the twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy. There are predicted blessings for the obedience of the people -- wonderful blessings. And there are curses that would come upon them if they disobeyed the word of God.

The key to this book is in its name: Deuteronomy means "the second law." The first giving of the law was in the twentieth chapter of the book of Exodus, where you have the Ten Commandments. Why was it necessary for the Holy Spirit to give the law twice? Why do you find the Ten Commandments once in Exodus and again in Deuteronomy? And all the sanitary regulations and the dietary regulations are reproduced in Deuteronomy. Why?

From the book of Romans in the New Testament we learn that the law of God has two functions. In Paul's great argument in Romans, the law is also brought in twice. It is introduced first in chapter one and then again in chapter seven. And in the third chapter there is a specific statement of what the law was designed to do.

Most of us think God gave the law to the human race to keep us from doing wrong and to make us do right. If you ask the man on the street what was the purpose of the Ten Commandments, he would probably say, "It is to keep us from doing wrong." But this is not the reason the law was given. God never dreamed for a moment that the law would keep anybody from doing wrong. The reason the law was given is set forth in Romans: "Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law..." Why? "... so that every mouth may be stopped. and the whole world may be held accountable to God." (Romans 3: 19)

That is the reason the law was given in the first place. It was given to man to reveal the sinfulness of his acts. Because there is this amazing faculty about the human heart: we never think that what we are doing is wrong. It is always what the other fellow does that is wrong, isn't it? It's remarkable the different expressions we have for this. We have a whole category of words that use apply to things we do and quite a different set for what everybody else does. Others have prejudices -- we have convictions. Others are stingy -- we are very thrifty. Others try to keep up with the Joneses -- we are simply trying to get ahead. And so it goes all the way down the line. Now what does the law do? Well, the law comes in and applies the same terms to everyone. The law says, "You shall not murder. You shall not steal. You shall not covet. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your strength and have no other gods." And the law is absolutely impartial in its application. When we are confronted with the law of God, we can no longer deceive ourselves. We have to admit that what we are doing is wrong. God said that the law was given so that every mouth might be stopped. There is nobody who dares to stand up to God and say, "Well, others may be wrong, but right here you've got someone that leads a good, clean, moral life." The law says "No! All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23)

Therefore, the cross of Christ becomes the answer to what man did. What Jesus did on the cross is the answer to what we have done. He bore our sins in his own body on the tree. That is set forth so beautifully in the books of Exodus and Leviticus in the sacrifices of the lamb, the goat, the oxen, the calf and the other animals. They are pictures of the blood Jesus Christ shed for the transgressions and sins we have done. There is no way for a sinful man to deal with a holy God except by some payment, some ransom, or some justification being rendered to him for man's sins. It is the law that makes us aware that we need to make this payment.

But the law comes in again in Romans seven. Once our sins are settled, isn't that enough? Once we discover through the law that we have done what is wrong in God's sight and are guilty before him, isn't that enough? No!! There is another purpose of the Law. Paul says,

What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet, if it had not been for the law, I should not have known sin. (Romans 7:7)

It is not sins here, but sin. Not what I have done, but what I am. If it had not been for the law, I would not have known that I am under the grip and influence of an alien, satanic philosophy which is in itself sin.

I should not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet." But sin, finding opportunity in the commandment, wrought in me all kinds of covetousness. (Romans. 7:7-8)

Paul continues:

Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? [Was it the law that did this?] By no means! It was sin, working death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure. (Romans 7:13)

He says, not only do I realize that I have done things which merit the just wrath of God, but that I am a sinner indeed and have received Jesus Christ as having paid the price on the cross, thus settling the debt for my sins.

But it is also through the law that I understand that I not only do things that are wrong, but what I am is wrong in God's sight. The answer to this, we discover from the book of Romans, is in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. He died to pay for our sins. But further Paul writes:

For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. (Romans 5:10)

I learn that it is the presence of a living Savior within my heart, who dwells within me and who makes available to me everything that he is that is the answer to what I am. I need what he did because of what I have done. But I need what he is because of what I am. This is what the book of Deuteronomy illustrates for us.

If you read carefully through Deuteronomy you will find two themes running throughout this entire discourse that are not found in Leviticus or Exodus. The first great theme is of man's utter weakness and inability, even though he is cleansed to do anything in himself to please God. There is nothing he can do in himself. His sincere, dedicated efforts to please avail nothing.

"The mind that is set on the flesh" cannot please God, as Paul puts it. (Romans 8:7) Right along with this is a wonderful parallel theme -- the theme of God's abiding presence. God himself is the answer to the demands of the law in us. He himself takes up residence with us in order that he might meet the demands in himself. What he demands of us, he himself supplies.

Let's look at a few passages so that you may see this yourself. First in Deuteronomy six you have the theme of man's weakness. Moses says:

When your son asks you in time to come, "What is the meaning of the testimonies and the statutes and the ordinances which the Lord our God has commanded you?" (Deuteronomy 6:20)

In other words, why do you do these things? Why do you go through all these ceremonies? Why do you kill these lambs and goats and sheep? Why do you go up to the tabernacle? What is the purpose of all this? When your son asks you that, what do you say?

Then you shall say to your son, "We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt." (Deuteronomy 6:21a RSV)

That is where we begin. That is what we are. We are no better than slaves.

"We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt; and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand; and the Lord showed signs and wonders, great and grievous, against Egypt and against Pharaoh and all his household, before our eyes; and he brought us out from there, that he might bring us in and give us the land." (Deuteronomy 21-23 RSV)

He brought us out so that he might bring us into the land. These are all symbols by which God is teaching us what it takes to get us out of Egypt and into the land. That was the explanation they were to make to their sons.

Further on Moses explains:

*For you are a people holy to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his own possession...
(Deuteronomy 7:6a RSV)*

*A people for his own possession where he himself will dwell.
...out of all the peoples that are on the face of the earth. It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love upon you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples; but it is because the Lord Jesus loves you, and is keeping the oath which he swore to your fathers, that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.
(Deuteronomy 7:6b-8 RSV)*

It wasn't anything in you; you have nothing. It was God who did it -
- not man.

And in chapter nine, there is this elaboration:

Do not say in your heart, after the Lord your God has thrust them out before you, 'It is because of my righteousness that the Lord has brought me in to possess this land'...Not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart are you going in to

possess their land; but because of the wickedness of these nations the Lord your God is driving them out from before you...Know therefore, that the Lord your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness; for you are a stubborn people. (Deuteronomy 9:4, 9:6RSV)

Near the end of the book, in Chapter 29, Moses said:

"You know how we dwelt in the land of Egypt, and how we came through the midst of the nations through which you passed; and you have seen their detestable things, their idols of wood and stone, of silver and gold, which were among them. Beware lest there be among you a man or woman or family or tribe, whose heart turns away this day from the Lord our God to go and serve the gods of those nations..." (Deuteronomy 29:16-18a RSV)

After forty years of training in the wilderness he says, "Watch out. You never get to the place where you can stand on your own. Never.

"...lest there be among you a root bearing poisonous and bitter fruit, one who, when he hears the words of this sworn covenant, blesses himself In his heart, saying, 'I shall be safe, though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart.' This would lead to the sweeping away of moist and dry alike. The Lord would not pardon him, but rather the anger of the Lord and his jealousy would smoke against that man, and the curses written in this book would settle upon him, and the Lord would blot out his name from under heaven." (Deuteronomy 29:18b-20 RSV)

You see man never gets to stand in his own strength. God never makes us so strong that we no longer need him. Never. We are continually dependent upon him. This is the great lesson taught in Deuteronomy, just as it is also taught in Romans five through eight. Accompanying this theme is that of God's abiding presence as the strength of the believer. Back in chapter seven:

"If you say in your heart, 'These nations are greater than I; how can I dispossess them?' You shall not be afraid of them, but you shall remember what the Lord your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt..." (Deuteronomy 7:17-18 RSV)

When you are up against problems in life -- giants, difficulties, and various trials you say to yourself, "I don't have any strength in myself. I can't do this." What should you remember? That God does it. God is in you. God is there to meet that problem. God is there for living. He is there for the problem of your life.

"...remember what the Lord your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt, the great trials which your eyes saw, the signs, the wonders, the mighty hand, and the outstretched arm, by which the Lord your God brought you out; so will Lord your God do to all the peoples of whom you are afraid. Moreover the Lord your God will send hornets among them, until those who are left and hide themselves from you are destroyed. You shall not be in dread of them; for the Lord your God is in the midst of you, a great and terrible God." (Deuteronomy 7:18b-21 RSV)

What a statement! Then in chapter eight:

"And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know; that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but that man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord." (Deuteronomy 8:3)

Does that sound familiar to you? Those are the very words Jesus used in the wilderness when he explained to the devil why he did not would not and even could not -- in that ultimate sense of obedience -- turn the stones to bread. He said "You don't understand how I live. I don't live by doing remarkable signs to make everyone look up in amazement. Man doesn't live like that. Man lives not 'by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.' But God is in me. That is what makes me strong." (Matthew 4:1-4)

Again the theme of God's presence:

"You are the sons of the Lord your God; [therefore] you shall not cut yourselves or make any baldness on your foreheads for the dead. For you are a people holy to the Lord your God, and the Lord has chosen you to be a people for his own possession..." (Deuteronomy 14:1-2a RSV)

There he lives. There he dwells.

"...out of all the peoples that are on the face of the earth." (Deuteronomy 14: 2b RSV)

Even in the midst of the sanitary regulations for Israel, where he is giving orders to the people, governing the uttermost limits of their life he says:

"You shall have a place outside the camp and you shall go out to it; and you shall have a stick with your weapons; and when you sit down outside, you shall dig a hole with it, and turn back and cover up your excrement." (Deuteronomy 23:12, 13)

Why?

"Because the Lord your God walks in the midst of your camp, to save you and to give up your enemies before you, therefore your camp must be holy, that he may not see anything indecent among you, and turn away from you." (Deuteronomy 23:14)

The presence of the living God is the secret of a satisfying life.

Chapter 30 contains one of the most remarkable passages in the Bible. Here is a marvelous explanation of the "dynamic" that keeps the law. What is it that makes it possible for a man to obey the law? In the first part of this chapter, Moses recounts the law again. He tells the people of the blessings that will come and warns of cursings if they disobey. Then he says (Deuteronomy. 30:14):

"For this commandment which I command you this day is not too hard for you..." (Deuteronomy 30:11a RSV)

Every man who falls short says, "It is no use. The law is too hard for me. I can't do that." Moses says it is not too hard for you.

"...neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will go up for us to heaven, and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will go over the sea for us, and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?'" (Deuteronomy 30:11b-13 RSV)

That is, who can bring this near to us so that it will come into our very lives? Now listen to what he says:

"But the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it." (Deuteronomy 30:14 RSV)

What does that mean but the indwelling life of God himself! And these very words are picked up by the apostle Paul when he writes about the two occasions when the law was given -- the first law in Exodus and the second law in Deuteronomy:

Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on the law shall live by it. (Romans 10: 5)

But Israel found it utterly impossible to live by the law on that basis. Now Paul says, again quoting from Moses -- this time in Deuteronomy:

But the righteousness based on faith says, Do not say in your heart, "Who will ascend into heaven?" (that is, to bring Christ down)... But what does it say? The word is near you on your lips and in your heart (that is, the word of faith which we preach); because, if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." (Romans 10:6a, 10:8-9)

There it is. The two great things are the death of the Lord Jesus and the raising again from the dead, making his life available to others. This is what Paul calls "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:2) fulfilling by another principle the righteousness which the law demands.

You know that old illustration of the plane -- the law of gravity continually holds us down to our seat, but the law of aerodynamics overcomes the law of gravity. It doesn't cancel it out. It simply overcomes it. You simply step into a plane and sit down. You don't have to cling to your seat; you don't have to hang on to the sides of the plane in order to stay aloft once you are in the air. You just rest on the fact that there is a law at work that is keeping you from fulfilling the law of gravity. If you were ever to get to the place where you thought you had it learned and you said to the

stewardess, "Will you open the door please? I think I will go on by myself," you would be very literally "jumping to a conclusion!"

But in this quiet, continual, confident resting on the fact that God is the ample provision of all that he requires from us, there is the ability to fulfill the righteousness which the law demands. And that is what the book of Deuteronomy teaches. The Israelites are taught the principle, at least in shadow, of how to live in the land. The only book that could possibly follow this is the book of Joshua in which the people are led into the land.

Prayer:

Our Father, what marvelous truths you have unfolded to us in this great word. How feebly we apprehend it, but teach us, Lord; teach us by your Holy Spirit. Teach us, young and old alike. Teach us to be dissatisfied with life in the wilderness. Lord, make us to be fed up with this continual barrenness, this empty, frustrating experience of trying to do something on our own, and struggling and failing all the time.

Make us desperately ready to listen, and to heed this delivering word, Lord: how we can be set free from this wretched man and made to walk in fullness of your Spirit so that the righteousness which the law demands might be fulfilled in us. Not by us, but by the Lord Jesus working through us in his blessed, risen life. We pray in his name, Amen.

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