



Deut 4:1-14

Learning the Fear of the Lord

NKJ Deuteronomy 4:1 "Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you to observe, that you may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers is giving you.

2 "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.

3 "Your eyes have seen what the LORD did at Baal Peor; for the LORD your God has destroyed from among you all the men who followed Baal of Peor.

4 "But you who held fast to the LORD your God are alive today, every one of you.

5 "Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should act according to them in the land which you go to possess.

6 "Therefore be careful to observe them; for this 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 God so near to it, as the LORD our God is to us, for whatever reason we may call upon Him?

8 "And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day?

9 " Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren,

10 "especially concerning the day you stood before the LORD your God in Horeb, when the LORD said to me, 'Gather the people to Me, and I will let them hear My words, that they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children.'

11 "Then you came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire to the midst of heaven, with darkness, cloud, and thick darkness.

12 "And the LORD spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of the words, but saw no form; you only heard a voice.

13 "So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone.

14 "And the LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that you might observe them in the land which you cross over to possess.

From the very beginning of the Bible we see that to disobey the commandments of the Lord is supremely foolish. God specifically told Adam and Eve that if they disobeyed his commandment not to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of God and evil, they would die. Nevertheless, they rebelled against Him, and to disobey Him by rebelling against his commandments is sin, and as Romans 6:23 tells us "the wages of sin is death." In your own experience you have probably seen for yourself, that the lives of those who live in disobedience to God do not go well, by any measure. In fact I would go so far as to say, the degree to which we as a people are miserable and reaping a bitter harvest is the degree to which we are deaf to the commandments of God.

I cannot think of one national blight that is not the result, directly or indirectly, of rebellion against God's commandments.

Moses knew very well, that the Israel would only flourish to the degree in which the obeyed God. So on the edge of the promised land, Moses is preaching to the people of God and exhorting them to listen and observe the commandments of the Lord, that they might live, and possess the land which God was giving them.

He had some pretty effective sermon illustrations that he could bring to bear in reinforcing that point. The first was the reminder that he has already given them, that because of their rebellion at Kadesh Barnea they had not been allowed to go in to the land and the previous generation had to wander in the

wilderness until they had all died off, and he himself was not going to be able to go in. That was the last generation, Moses also mentions in verse 3 Baal Peor, when *this* generation had been lead astray by the women of Moab and had worshipped their false Gods and entered into their debauched worship. As a result of that the 24,000 who had committed idolatry had been destroyed. He makes the point therefore in verse 3 and 4 that they themselves know that to obey the Lord is to live, and to disobey is to die.

Like any good preacher, Moses loves the people he shepherds and it is his desire that after they cross over the Jordan the people would hear the Lord, and believe, and live, and so later he is going to set before them an eloquent appeal. Turn if you would to Deut. 30:19

“I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them.”

So what he is telling them is **that key to life, and the key to possessing both the promised land and the heavenly country, the key even to their missionary activity, because they are supposed to be a nation of priests, and a shining example to the peoples**, is not their military, it is not having a good economy, or being more numerous, or having strong alliances, or strong rulers. The key is to love the lord their God, to hear his voice to believe it, and to obey and to cling to Him.

So he gives them several commands and encouragements to do that:

1) He tells them he has given them God’s commandments – God’s revelation, and that the most important part of those commandments was the moral law that was given to them at Horeb (or Mt. Sinai) that is why he says in verse 9 & 10 they are to take heed “especially concerning the day you stood before the LORD your God in Horeb.” And we will see in the next chapter why the Ten Commandments are the key to all of God’s other laws.

He warns them not to add to those laws or take away from them, because he knows they will be tempted to do that.

As they enter into the land, they will see the idolatries of the other peoples and want to add to their own practices, this is called syncretism and the church has always been tempted by this. We enter into a culture, and then the longer we are there, the more we will want to do what the people around us do. We saw that in the way Israel added the worship of false Gods, we see that by the way that the Roman Catholic church adopted feast days and practices from the pagan cultures that were assimilated into the church. But we have the same problem today. For instance, I have spent a long time discussing how the Lord's Day is being driven out of culture, and the world is doing all it can to remove that visible reminder of Christ, but we also see how the church is following their lead. But we needn't go merely to that commandment, we see it in the way we are adding the practices of the pop culture to our worship, how we are creating portrayals of God and so on. How we simply stop observing commandments we don't like, or add new ones we do. God may not like this form of adultery, but I do, so the commandment falls.

God's laws are a reflection of His Nature, when we change them, we are entering into idolatry. We say this is what God is like, and we create a God after our own image. Additionally, in the Old Testament the rituals God gave Israel pointed forward to Christ, their imaginations did not. So the more they added, the further they got away from God and His redemptive purposes. Since love of the true God, and faith in God's promised redeemer was the heart of biblical religion. The more they added and took away, the less likely it was that people would be saved. We too need to remember that this can and does happen in the modern age. After a while so much has been changed that a church no longer is a church but becomes as Jesus warned in Revelation, a "synagogue of Satan"

Rev. 22:18 For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book;

19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

Therefore they must be zealous to preserve the word, and not only to preserve it, but to pass it down, to communicate it to their children. Again and Again in the history of god's people and even in the present age, this has been the undoing of the church – that we have not taught our children the words and acts of our mighty God. That is why it is vital that your family have a time of family worship and daily be taking the children, and the grandchildren before it.

2) He tells them of the advantages they have gained from being the Lord's People, that they alone have His revelation, His oracles given to them. All the other nations have are dumb idols, but in worship they draw near to the living God, and in prayer they go to the throneroom of grace.

If they will obey God and manifest the reality of his commandments in their life, the surrounding nations cannot help be impressed, they will see that Israel's religion is real, while theirs is a fabrication. And then when they witness, their words will have power.

But if they don't live out the religion, the people's will not be impressed, they will be disgusted. The Gospel is often robbed of its power by the awful disobedience of God's people. They add an additional stumbling block and instead of being a witness to its reality, they become despised hypocrites.

Gen. 12:2 I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing.

3 I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Impressed by obedience – disgusted by disobedience. The lawlessness of God's people is seen as a reflection on God.

3) Finally we are given a vital key to true religion. God's Sinai as Christopher Wright put it, "was a cosmic audio-visual experience, but it was the audio that mattered." The religions of all other religions were sensual,

filled with things for the eye, and all manner of debaucheries, they “felt” their religion.

Our religion is based on revelation, Israel’s was an auditory religion, God was to be listened to and obeyed. As Wright again puts it *“The ear as the organ of understanding and obedience in relation to the spoken word of God was more religiously and ethically significant than the eye.”*

Ours is not a sensual religion of feelings, it is based as we see on the revelation given through Christ, both as he spoke through the prophets in the Old Testament, and then directly by coming himself as the final and perfect revelation of God’s will:

*NKJ Hebrews 1:1 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets,
2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;*

Jesus said that the biggest difference between the unbelieving and the believing was whether they heard and obeyed His voice saying in John 10:27-28 "My sheep **hear My voice**, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand."

Luke 6:47 "Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like:

48 "He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock.

49 "But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great."

It is not that we see Christ, or feel Christ, but that we hear, believe, and obey Christ as he speaks to us. Do you?