

Deuteronomy 4 - Thursday, May 5th, 2011

(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.

- Now this is what I call good preaching! Moses tells the Israelites to listen to his teaching if they want to live in and possess the Promised-Land.
- Furthermore, he tells them that they must not only listen to it, but also observe it. In other words, they need to heed that which they hear taught.
- Hmm... Does this sound a little bit like a word we've heard somewhere in the New Testament? Sounds a little bit like the Epistle of James.

James 1:22-25 NIV Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. (23) Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror (24) and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. (25) But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.

(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.

- This is interesting, Moses sort of raises the bar of heeding God's Word, by issuing a warning to neither add or delete any word from God's Word.
- This is interesting because it speaks to how, and why, man adds or deletes the Word when they read it. In so doing, there's no need, to heed it.
- This too sounds eerily similar to that which we have recorded much later in the last chapter of the last book of the Bible, the book of Revelation.

Revelation 22:18-19 NIV (18) I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. (19) And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

- Also, there's something else that's packaged together in just these first two verses. Notice in the first verse how Moses says; "that you may live."
- Like this next generation of Israelites, if we want to live the life that Jesus promised us, it has to come vis-a-vis obeying and observing His Word.
- Here's what I'm thinking; this both implies and explains why it is that we as believers in Jesus, don't enter into that life promised to us by Jesus.

John 10:10 NIV **The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.**

- Here, Jesus is using a figure of speech in describing himself as the gate for the sheep who enter through Him and find a full and safe pasture.
- Conversely, the enemy comes to steal kill and destroy that which Jesus, as the good Shepherd, comes to give, namely a full and blessed life.
- Satan knows that the way to accomplish this, is to remove the source of God's fullness in our lives, which is the Word of God for our lives.

Psalms 16:11 NKJV You will show me the path of life; In Your presence *is* fullness of joy; At Your right hand *are* pleasures forevermore.

(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.

- This is what I absolutely love about teaching God's Word. Moses, in teaching God's Word to them, uses an example from God's Word for them.
- The example being what happened to the men who followed Baal of Peor. They brought the curse that Balaam couldn't bring, upon themselves.
- How? By the deception and seduction of the Midianite women, causing them to disobey the Word they heard, costing 24,000 men their lives.

(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?

- Moses now peels back the layer of the life or death importance of observing God's commands so as to reveal the layer of why it's so important.
- The righteous judgments of God's law when observed become a "light," in the "sight," of the people who "hear" them, with God so "near" them.
- This is huge for a number of reasons not the least of which is, their God is not distant from His people, because of His great love for His people.

(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.

- You might say that Moses is teaching the Israelites about some really good parenting advice, not just for parents, but for grandparents as well.
- This advice just so happens to be the best advice any parent could ever be given; teach your children the Word of God, so they will fear God.
- We're even told how we are to do this; they need to hear about the nature of God, and the law of God, specifically, the Ten Commandments.
- In addition to this, we should connect the Word of the Lord, to life experiences in our walk with the Lord, to help their understanding of the Lord.

(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. (15) "Take careful heed to yourselves, for you saw no form when the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire, (16) lest you act corruptly and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of any figure: the likeness of male or female, (17) the likeness of any animal that *is* on the earth or the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the air, (18) the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground or the likeness of any fish that *is* in the water beneath the earth. (19) And *take heed*, lest you lift your eyes to heaven, and *when* you see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, you feel driven to worship them and serve them, which the LORD your God has given to all the peoples under the whole heaven as a heritage. (20) But the LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be His people, an inheritance, as you are this day.

- Moses rounds a corner and now warns them against the practices of making carved images in the form of any figure whether man or animal.
- This passage here in Deuteronomy intersects with a familiar passage we had just recently studied on Sunday mornings in the book of Romans.

Romans 1:22-25 NKJV Professing to be wise, they became fools, (23) and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. (24) Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, (25) who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

(21) Furthermore the LORD was angry with me for your sakes, and swore that I would not cross over the Jordan, and that I would not enter the good land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance. (22) But I must die in this land, I must not cross over the Jordan; but you shall cross over and possess that good land. (23) Take heed to yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the LORD your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of anything which the LORD your God has forbidden you. (24) For the LORD your God *is* a consuming fire, a jealous God.

- Moses is repeating himself again by telling them about being forbidden to enter the land because the Lord was angry with him for their sakes.
- While he's not necessarily saying that it was their fault, he is saying that it's not God's fault because He is a consuming fire, a jealous God.
- I believe this speaks to the meekness of Moses because he is able to use his disobedience as an example to teach about their obedience.

(25) "When you beget children and grandchildren and have grown old in the land, and act corruptly and make a carved image in the form of anything, and do evil in the sight of the LORD your God to provoke Him to anger, (26) I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that you will soon utterly perish from the land which you cross over the Jordan to possess; you will not prolong *your* days in it, but will be utterly destroyed. (27) And the LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the LORD will drive you. (28) And there you will serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell.

- Israel's history bears this out. We need look no further than back to the 6th century B.C. when God allowed the Babylonian siege and captivity.
- Also, it's important to note that the prophetic forewarning was given them concerning the corrupted and perverted worship of graven images.
- If there ever was a perverted practice of this pagan worship it was in Babylon, which may be why God would choose to use the Babylonians.

- Perhaps teaching and getting into Romans is teaching and getting into me, but I see yet another intersect with what Paul wrote in that Epistle.
- When the Apostle tells them, no less than three times, how God has given man over to his sin, it carries with it the same thought as with Moses.
- God will have to give them over, allow them to, and abandon them for, the practicing of perverted sinfulness in their disobedience and defiance.

- For the Romans it was the perversion of unthinkable sexual immorality, for the Babylonians, it was the abomination of unspeakable idol worship.
- Dare I say, that for the United States of America, we may, today, be even now witnessing this very dynamic playing out before our very eyes.
- I would suggest to you, if God is the same yesterday, today and forever, and He is, then He is bound to do today, that which He did in that day.