

People of God, the book of Deuteronomy is a sermon by Moses. Its name literally means Second Law. God had given the law the first time in Exodus, and here in Deuteronomy, Moses gives the law again a second time. But this time he gives it to the new generation of Israelites who were getting ready to enter to the land of Canaan. The first generation of Israelites that received the law the first time in Exodus, they did not believe God and did not follow the law of God, and so they perished in the wilderness, and did not enter into the Promised land. But now their children are gathered together on the other side of the Jordan River getting ready to enter the land, and Moses gives them his final instructions to teach them how they are to live in order to be successful in conquering the land, and remaining in it.

Their success is based upon their faithfulness to the teachings and commandments and instructions and statutes that God gave them. If they live by righteousness and do justice, then they will indeed live and they will be a light of wisdom and understanding to the surrounding nations. But if they neglect the word of God, and go after the ways of the nations, they will be cast out of the land.

In chapters 1-3 Moses recounts their 40 year history through the wilderness since the first time God gave them the law at Mt. Horeb. And here in chapter 4 is the beginning of a new section where Moses gives exhortations to the people as to why they should make sure they keep the law of God. We are only looking at the first 9 verses today of chapter 4. Let's examine the content of those verses briefly.

1. Moses commands them to listen to the statutes and laws that he is about to teach them. They are their life. In fact, the conquering of the land is contingent upon God's people living in obedience to His statutes and just decrees.

2. Moses tells them that they are not to ignore parts of it they don't like, they are not to add to or go beyond what the word itself says.
3. Moses then provides an example of what happens when there is disobedience – he references the incident from Numbers 25 at Baal-Peor where God struck down 24,000 of his people with a plague who ignored God's word about proper sexual relations and slept around with Moabite women. Phineas put an end to the plague when he killed an Israelite and a Moabite woman with his spear as they were having relations together. The point is, if there is one thing God does not tolerate and which will bring the wrath of God upon the people it is sexual sin.
4. But those who followed God's word are alive today, and did not die. Thus the nature of the Covenant is Blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience.
5. Moses again commands that God's word be obeyed when they enter into the land.
6. God's word and Israel's obedience to God's Word is their wisdom and understanding in the sight of the surrounding people. This will make them a great nation.
7. What other great nation has a god so near to them that he answers when they call upon him? Our God, Moses teaches, is so near to His people that His law, His word is in our hearts, and he will listen when we cry out to him.
8. And what other great nation has such righteous statutes and rules as God's people? – None.
9. Therefore, diligently keep watch and guard over your soul, so you do not forget the things that God has done for you, and make all these things known to your children and children's children. This is how we ensure God's blessings for the future.

If the Bible teaches us anything it should be this, that our religion is a religion of conquest. But for many Christians, Christianity is a religion of escape. We tend to think of the Gospel mainly in terms of Jesus dying for our sins so that way when we die or get raptured, we can finally be freed from this horrible sinful world, and be in heaven safe and sound. Salvation becomes escapism.

But we need to be more balanced in our understanding of salvation, and see that we have been saved not just so that when we die we go to heaven, but so that we would be equipped to do good works and prepare ourselves to inherit the eternal promised land. Our salvation now is primarily practice for us to learn how to rule and reign under the rule of God now, so that when we do inherit the New Heavens and Earth in the consummation, we will have had the experience and to know how to build the kingdom of God even there in perfection.

And so, our duties and responsibilities to obey God's laws and statutes and ordinances and instructions while we are here on earth before we die is a crucial aspect of our salvation. And that balance comes by keeping before us the pattern of the story of the in the OT.

The story of the Exodus, the giving of the law of God on Mt Sinai, the wilderness wandering, and the conquest of the Canaan under Joshua. This same basic story is the same exact pattern for the New Covenant salvation in Christ.

God delivered Israel out from Egyptian bondage and slavery, culminating in the final plague of the Passover. Israel was saved from the angel of death when they shed the blood of the lamb and put it on the door posts of their house.

Jesus Christ is the Passover lamb of God whose blood was shed to take away the sins of the world. And we know from Luke 9:31 that Jesus spoke

with Moses and Elijah on the Mt. of Transfiguration about his coming "Exodus" that he was about to accomplish in Jerusalem. This is obviously talking about His death.

50 days after Israel came out of Egypt they received the Law of God on Mt. Sinai. God descended upon the Mt. in fire and thunder and wind, and Moses was given the law of God written upon stone tablets by His own finger. This day is known as Pentecost.

Likewise, 50 days after Jesus accomplished His greater Exodus, the disciples gathered in the upper room and the presence of God descended upon them in the sound of mighty rushing wind, and tongues of fire descended upon their heads. The promise of the New Covenant in Jer. 31 was that God would make a new covenant with his people, not like the covenant he made with Israel on Mt Sinai, one that was written on tablets of stone. This time the law would be written by the Holy Spirit on their very hearts. And so Pentecost is the time when the Law of God was given again, but this time internally.

Well, Israel, continued to violate God's law which was written on stone, and so they wandered in the wilderness for forty years until that generation of unbelieving Jews died. They did not believe God's promises and grumbled against Moses, and did not enter into God's rest.

Likewise, the forty years between the Exodus that Jesus accomplished in Jerusalem (which is mystically Egypt) and the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD, that was the time of the wilderness wandering when that first generation of unbelieving Jews refused to believe in Jesus and so they died, and did not enter into the Fullness of the New Covenant Land in Christ, and as Hebrews says, quoting Ps. 95 – God in his wrath swore that they would not enter into His rest, either.

In Deuteronomy, Moses is giving the law of God to the new generation of Israelites who were born during the wilderness wandering so that as they go into the land under the leadership of Joshua, they will have wise laws to live by. In fact, their conquering of the land was contingent upon their obedience to God's word. When they obeyed the nations would see how wise and understanding they were. And they would have been a light to the world.

Likewise, the Church, as it enters into a new phase of history coming out of the Old Covenant under Moses, and following the lead of the greater Joshua, Jesus, they take the Gospel with them into all the world and they are to do what with it? Make disciples of all nations, teaching them to obey everything Christ's commands. The mission of evangelism corresponds to the conquest of Canaan under Joshua. They are therefore to disciple all the nations to obey Christ's commands.

And we see under Joshua the City of Jericho was destroyed as the first fruits of the promise of the whole land of Canaan, so to did Jesus destroy Jerusalem in AD 70 as the first fruits of the promise that the whole world would belong to God's people.

And so, when we understand that that is the pattern, we should then have a better understanding of what we are supposed to be doing today. We have a narrative context to place ourselves in. We are not to just get souls saved, as important as that is. We are not to escape from the responsibilities of life in the world and await the rapture. No. We are in the phase of redemptive history that relates to the conquering of the land under Joshua.

That is where we are at in the story. And so this passage in Deuteronomy gives us fresh insight into the importance of our obedience to the whole word of God, as it pertain to the success of the Great Commission, as well as our lives. The laws and commands and statutes and judgments which God gave to Moses, are the Israelites source of life. They need to know this

as they get ready to enter into the land. And we need to know this as we are already in the New Covenant, and have been for 2,000 years.

In fact, their possession of the land and their longevity in it, is contingent upon whether they will choose to obey the law of God as their very source of life, or not. And the same is true for us. Now thankfully, We have Jesus Christ who is the faithful Israelite who performed all of God's covenant perfectly, and he is conquering his enemies as we speak. Our victory is based upon his victory, and that should give us hope and encouragement. The success of the kingdom of God is actually not wholly dependent upon you. It is dependent upon Christ.

But we are called to live by the wonderful truth of Gal. 2:20 – *"I have been crucified with Christ, It is no longer I who live, it is Christ who lives in me. And the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loves and give himself up for me."* You are living Christ's victorious life even now by faith, and so your obedience is His obedience, and your sins have already been punished and are dead and gone. So that means people of God, we are going from glory to glory, victory to victory, conquest to conquest. Because of Christ.

Now, while all that is true, we would be foolish to think that there were not still some temporal consequences of our sins, or eternal consequences for those who do not repent. The incident of God killing 24,000 people of Israel because of the sin of sexual immorality and idolatry at Baal-Peor is God's proof that those who disregard and take lightly the word of God will die, but those who believe and obey will live.

You see, the law of God is not only to be their life, but it is also their wisdom and understanding in the sight of the unbelieving peoples around them. When the unbelievers would hear of all these statutes and see the way in which the Israelites had organized and governed their nation according to God's instruction, it would have been for them such great

wisdom that the unbelieving peoples would have taken notice and said, *"Surely this is a wise and understanding people."*

It may come as a shock to some that human community becomes stable and ordered when God's commands are obeyed. And therefore the word of God ought to be the basis upon which we order our communities. The characteristics of being "wise and understanding" are elsewhere applied to rulers in the Bible, such as Joseph, and Solomon in particular. So we need our rulers to be wise and understanding. But here Moses applies these royal characteristics of wisdom and understanding to the people as whole, which makes sense, since they are a royal nation. Every person is to functionally be their own king under the King of kings, as they learn to self-govern themselves according to the word of God. A self governing people who fear the Lord above all things is indeed a wise and understanding people, and who have the blessings of God upon them.

Now, as we consider the conquest, we should understand that it was not just about killing the inhabitants of the land, and destroying idolatry and wiping out all wicked practices, but it was also about converting the people to a new standard of righteous living, and teaching them the administration of true justice and self government according to the word of God. At least, that is what was supposed to happened. That was the plan.

Likewise, People of God, in the New Covenant, we do not just convert people with the Gospel, and get them saved. We are to also teach them how to live according to the law of God written upon their hearts by the Holy Spirit now that they are saved. We are to instruct and disciple the nations into moral righteousness and justice according to the wisdom of the law and the gospel of God. This is to be our fundamental duty this side of heaven. This is the Great Commission. And as we will see in the last verse, this begins with our own children.

Now, as we look around at our nation, which one of you will say about the rules and regulations and laws that we live by as a society and nation, *"Surely this is a wise and understanding people"?*

People of God, we are a nation of fools. Every single aspect of our land is falling apart before eyes. The social and moral and religious and political and economic and financial, education, media, and entertainment, medical and agricultural fabric of our common life is being torn to shreds. It is becoming increasingly more difficult to find a single aspect of our social life together that is not proving to be antithetical to the good of this people.

And so we need to believe with all our hearts the importance of obedience, which is how we demonstrate our love for God – with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. But also, we need to understand that the whole Bible is our life. We are not just NT Christians, but we are whole Bible Christians. We do not get to pick and choose which parts we like more than others. We shouldn't have any problem passages. We don't need to be ashamed of the word of God, and try to get around difficult passages. That kind of attitude just shows that we do not believe that God's word is divine wisdom and gives us understanding. It only proves that we place more trust and confidence in worldly wisdom and our own thoughts.

Jesus told us, ²⁴ "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: ²⁵ and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

²⁶ "But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: ²⁷ and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."

The reason our nation is in free fall right now before our eyes is precisely because Christians have cherry picked obedience, have not cared much for meditating upon the law of God and His covenant judgments in the OC. We have not sought to apply our faith to every single area of life, and we did not believe that the Law of God was good and wise, nor is it our wisdom and understanding before the people. We have embraced secularism and worldly philosophies. We rejected the authority of the whole of God's word, and so we have reaped the whirlwind, as God himself promised we would, in the OC. We have not built our house upon the rock of Christ's word, and so great is our fall.

But People of God, what we need to do now, once we recognize the problem, is to seek solutions. We need to repent, reset, and rebuild. There are plenty of websites and internet personalities and talk shows that are dedicated to talking about how bad things, that are dedicated to deconstruction and being critical of what is going on. And I admit, I tend to sometimes fall into that trap as well. And if you get sucked up into it for too long you can get, what is called black pill. That means you get so discouraged that you think there aren't any solutions to the problems, and so you stop looking for solutions. And the solutions you do find you don't actually think they will help anyway, so what's the point.

But we don't need despair, we need hope. We need solutions. We need wisdom in the coming years. We need to be like the Sons of Issachar who knew the times and who knew what to do.

And that is what I want us to do. We need to look at where God has given us insight and influence and interest and giftings and we need to be working to apply the whole of the word of God to our particular stations in life.

Do you work in information technology? Then seek to apply the law and wisdom of God somehow to that. Do you work in real estate and construction, then study the word of God and find how you can expand the kingdom of God. Do you work in law enforcement? What does the law of God say about that topic? What about banking? Lord knows we need a whole new banking system run by Christians who fear God and who will not seek to enslave the people. Are you a nurse or doctor? Lord knows we need a whole new medical system. Are you involved in politics? Then seek to apply God's covenant law word there. Education? We have wisdom. Whatever your business, whatever your trade, skill, interest, we are supposed to be conquering the land with our universal obedience to God's law. And when we do a better job than the unbelievers, our actions will speak for us, and they will come to us and say, surely you are a wise and understanding people. Help us.

Now, the application of the law of God to modern life is needless to say an immense topic, and would need to be developed more fully over many years. Now, let me say this as a necessary and important word of clarification and qualification, and then provide a couple examples.

When I talk about obeying the law of God, I am not advocating a necessary one for one straight across the board application of the Old Covenant Law into the New Covenant Age. The coming of Jesus Christ did change certain things in the way in which certain laws and statutes and ordinances are now to be applied, and some of these laws and statutes and ordinances were only for Old Covenant Israel, and these expressly do not apply to us now in the particular and specific details of those laws. The principles that those laws certainly are applicable, but the exact law or ordinance as it is stated is not necessarily to be applied.

One very simple example of that would be the command to not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain. The principle of that law as applied by the Apostle Paul is, you pay a person for his work. The laborer is worthy of his wages.

Or, another fun law is, you are not to boil a young goat in its mothers milk. Now some have said you are therefore not to mix meat and dairy together. I think the principle is more significant – you are to take that which is meant for life and use it as a means of death.

So, our current health system could come under scrutiny with such a law, and it could indeed benefit from such wisdom. As well as much of our food production and resources. Putting toxic chemicals into our food and water is against the law of God. Forcing vaccinations upon people that have toxic chemicals in it which could cause death and serious health problems, in the name of health, is a violation of that law. All these and many more are violations of the principle that comes from not boiling a young goat in its others milk.

Now I mention this because I want you to become like the blessed man in Psalm 1 – whose full delight is in the law – torah – the instruction of the Lord, and on His torah he meditates day and night. He then becomes like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in due season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does he prospers.

You see People of God, the Lord desires us to grow into maturity and bear fruit. God wants us to meditate upon the torah, his instruction, and his stories and his proverbs and his allegories and his poetry, prophecies and gospels and epistles so that by continual thinking and meditating and reflecting upon these things and finding ways to apply the whole of the word to our lives, we come to greater and greater wisdom and understanding.

You do not grow into maturity and wisdom and understanding when someone gives you all the answers. There is an effort that has to be exerted, to figure out how the word of God applies to us. No doubt, there are some weird things in the Bible, and I think God wants it that way so we have to put in the work to come to greater understanding wisdom. And when we do that, the word becomes internalized, and we will be able to see greater and greater ways to be obedient and live according to the wisdom of God.

Now the problem that we all face though is that we live in an age of fast food and cell phones and we are easily distracted and we want things right now. But perhaps we are not as wise and understanding as our ancestors were precisely because we don't take the time to meditate in great depth upon the word. We are looking for the quick fix.

Paul says in Hebrews 5 that if Christians are going to grow in maturity they must grow in their skillfulness in the word of righteousness. *Solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.*

This is how we *attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.* We need to be in the word of God and not just reading it, but meditating upon it.

Thinking deeply about a single passage and how to apply it is more important than reading 10 chapters and doing nothing with it.

I believe that when we take bible study seriously and begin to really learn how to live out our faith in Christ in all of life, then our wisdom and understanding will be sought after. But most importantly, this is the way in

which we can pass on the wisdom of God to our children and children's children. We need to build on the solid rock of Christ's word, so these little ones will have an inheritance for them to pass down to their children. If every generation considers it their fundamental duty to provide an inheritance of Godly and Biblical wisdom for the children, then we will be soon on our way to discipling this nation to obey all that Christ commanded us, one family at a time.

And then what is written in the second chapter of the Prophet Isaiah will come to pass:

*² Now it shall come to pass in the latter days
That the mountain of the house of the LORD
Shall be established on the top of the mountains,
And shall be exalted above the hills;
And all nations shall flow to it.
³ Many people shall come and say,
"Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
To the house of the God of Jacob;
He will teach us His ways,
And we shall walk in His paths."
For out of Zion shall go forth the law,
And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
⁴ He shall judge between the nations,
And rebuke many people;
They shall beat their swords into plowshares,
And their spears into pruning hooks;
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
Neither shall they learn war anymore.*

And so come People of God, let us walk in the ways of the Lord and live.
Amen.