

MARCH 26

Deuteronomy 5-6

This is another treat today. As I read each paragraph, everything rings so true and seems to apply to me walking in this dying world. These people were not saved by obeying the law, but they were saved, like Abraham, in the promise of God to Abraham. With faith in that promise, their eyes would have been opened and their hearts aflame with the love of God. As you and I read this with our faith in Christ, our hearts automatically connect to the grace of God and the wonder of His love for us. It is interesting to me that in the story of the rich man and Lazarus, Abraham tells the rich man about sending Lazarus from the dead to his brothers, *If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.* (Luke 16:31) If a person was not moved to God, in love and gratefulness, by what we read today, neither would a miracle have convinced them.

Deuteronomy 5

As you read all of this find some words to mark. We already mentioned, *the Lord your God*. If nothing else stands out or captures your interest, look for the word *possess*.

Vs. 1-5 This generation might have thought that the covenant back 40 years ago at Mt. Sinai was with their fathers, but God doesn't make covenants with dead people. Many of these people were children back then, but more importantly they are the ones who are alive now and who have been educated, nurtured and preserved by God to enjoy the promise to Abraham. Moses reminds the people of the miraculous awe of that day. For those who had been there, I'll bet they still remembered it vividly and visually.

As a disciple, what do you remember about the time and events shortly before you came to Christ?

Vs. 6-15 The first four of the Ten Commandments have to do with the relationship with God. Notice that this section begins (v. 6) and ends (v. 15) with their deliverance from Egypt and God as their Savior. All of the motivation for loving and obeying God was built on His love for them. How could they have another god? How could they make an image, since God only revealed Himself in power and with His voice? How could they use His name in a worthless manner? How could they resist taking a day of rest to remember His love and deliverance and to remember that He sustained and provided for them?

As disciples, the importance of our honest, heartfelt gratitude for our salvation cannot be overstated. In Luke 7:47 Jesus said, "He who is forgiven little, loves little." That is totally based on our perception of our need and the value of what Jesus did for us. Our understanding of this will determine how much we love Jesus back and how we labor in the harvest.

Vs. 16-21 All of these commandments are related to our neighbor, but without the relationship to God, they are just humanitarian. Notice that the love of God flows into the honor of their parents, which in turn has a connection to how long the people would remain in the land.

V. 21 The opposite of this was abiding in God and contentment with His care and provision. That is the same for us today.

Vs. 22-27 These words and this event were permanently "burned" into their minds. The event showed the glory and power of God without presenting an image of Him. This was like nothing that had ever happened on earth. It happened to them as the children of Abraham. It wasn't just a scary event. It was an amazing privilege.

Again, think back on the privilege of what happened to you around the time you trusted Christ as Savior.

Vs. 28-31 The effect of that event was expressed by God in v. 29. Amazingly, that entire event didn't help the fathers of these people, but it did help these people. This generation standing here was probably the godliest generation of Israel. Moses' ministry at that time and during the 40 years was to teach the people.

Vs. 32-33 Now Moses will teach the people one final time. He urges them to be careful to obey. God wanted Israel to possess the land and not lose it. Everything said here was out of love for their blessing and success.

What a great chapter. When I read v. 33, it makes me think that in God's work to redeem mankind, nothing has changed. In our lives following Christ, God still wants us to be blessed and bearing fruit for Him. Look again at yesterday's reading in Luke 6:46. We hear and follow, even today, because we are captivated by His love and salvation.

Deuteronomy 6

This chapter is full of good stuff. Take your time and look for repetition and recurring themes. As a disciple, write down every principle you think is important for you, your church, or that "other guy."

Vs. 1-3 Look at the purposes for what Moses is about to say to them. Notice the importance of teaching their children. Notice the importance of hearing God and being careful.

Vs. 4-9 Verses 4-6 are called the Shema of Israel. Shema means to hear. Notice the importance of love. This love is based on their gratitude for their own salvation. That is just like us.

V. 6 This is to bear weight upon their hearts because of God's work for them and the importance of these words.

V. 7 Always, everywhere and forever, parents were supposed to be talking to their children about God.

Vs. 8-9 This is symbolic, not literal. God's Word was to control all their actions (the hand) and everything they thought (the forehead). God's Word was also to control their private lives (the house) and their public lives (the gates). God never meant that they were to fulfill this command literally by tying verse boxes to their hands and foreheads as you see orthodox Jews doing with phylacteries.

Vs. 10-15 God was going to give them the land as a gift because of the promise. They didn't earn it or deserve it. Faith in the promise to Abraham would save them.

Vs. 12-13 Here again is the importance of remembering their salvation.

Vs. 14-15 How could they serve other gods? But they will and God will punish them.

Vs. 16-19 Jesus quotes this in His confrontation with Satan in the wilderness. Here, to test God was to not obey and to treat the commandments as sort of binding. They were to follow God and thrust the people out of the land. Instead, the next generation will begin making treaties with the people.

Vs. 20-25 Telling the story of their deliverance and salvation was to have guided their teaching of their children. This wouldn't have been academic if each person were genuinely in love with God and grateful for their salvation. This was all to be driven by love. Because of this love, obeying the commands of a loving God would have been easier to understand and to follow. The failure to come was first in the hearts of the parents, and then the parents got so involved with living that they forgot to share the message, with a heart of love, with their children.

Notice that this chapter almost ends the same as the last chapter.

As you read chapter 6, maybe you feel, as I do, that this is as true for us as it was for the people of Israel. A failure to love God for our salvation and a failure to communicate this to our children

makes everything we do today a short-term gain, or not a gain at all. The basic core of making disciples begins at home. And as Jesus said, a disciple is not above his teacher. If the parents are fully in love and grateful and devoted to following Christ in the harvest, so will the little disciples be. Tragically, both in Israel then and in the church today, this is not the case.

Luke 7:11-35

Vs. 11-17 This event is only in Luke. There are a couple things that I get from this story. First, Jesus was led by the Spirit just like we are. Jesus didn't know He would find this going on, but as He saw it, moved with compassion, He knew what the Father wanted Him to do.

I wonder when the guy sat up alive if he just continued where he had left off and said, "And like I was saying..."

This event apparently was one of the things that caused John the Baptist to doubt. Jesus was leading the life of the Messiah who was freeing captives of sin, not captives of government. John had been sitting in prison under a tyrant a long time and was losing perspective.

Vs. 18-23 Matthew also has this encounter. Jesus' answer to John was to focus on how Jesus fulfilled all the Scripture concerning the Messiah, rather than concentrating on his own circumstances. The works that the Father had given Jesus to do confirmed that Jesus was sent from the Father. John the Baptist would have understood the Scripture and the origin of the signs.

Vs. 24-28 Jesus was trying to get the crowd to think about their fascination with John. They went *into the wilderness* because his message was authoritative, not political. They went because his lifestyle was hard and illustrated the urgency of the times and his message. He wasn't just a prophet, but he fulfilled Scripture as the forerunner of the Messiah. John was the conclusion of the law and the prophets. He was the greatest man born of that entire period. Think of the people who lived then, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Daniel, Job, etc. Although John's ministry was short, his task and privilege made him the greatest of that entire era on earth.

But as the new covenant is infinitely better than the old covenant, the followers of Christ have an even greater privilege.

Vs. 29-30 Apparently, as Jesus expressed this, there was an emotional response, sort of a stirring of heart at the truth Jesus just revealed. The people and tax collectors were awed that they had actually participated in a big event by submitting to John's baptism. The Pharisees and scribes (lawyers) just hardened their hearts.

Vs. 31-32 Jesus is actually rebuking that entire generation of people for the childish way they treated this great, historical, redemptive event. They had wanted John and Jesus to conform to them and criticized both.

Vs. 33-35 Though John and Jesus were opposites in appearance and habit, they both confirmed the wisdom and deeds of God.

Not a big point, but in Matthew it says John came neither eating nor drinking. Here, maybe for the sake of accuracy and because of legalistic Jewish Christians who followed Paul "correcting" his teaching and who taught the Gentiles abstinence, Luke says that John ate no bread and drank no wine. It is clear in this context that Jesus drank wine. Jesus was the opposite of John in these details. He not only ate rich food, but He also drank wine. The word for drunkard is "wine drinker." This would have been a rebuttal to legalistic teachers telling the Gentiles that they needed more abstinence in their faith. Paul warned Timothy about such teachers, *who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.* (1 Tim. 4:3)

Psalm 68:19-35

I suppose it is hard for us to embrace the sense of God's victory over oppression unless we are oppressed. It is hard to rejoice in His victory over enemies unless we have lost family and friends to these enemies. In the western world we are insulated, for the most part, and so we read this from David as primal raving from a primitive, uncultured age. The same God who tells us to love our enemies inspired this in David.

Vs. 19-20 Just like in Deuteronomy, God is a God of salvation. That is the basis of our love, our obedience and our sacrifice for Him.

Vs. 21-23 God will bring justice, vengeance and vindication. This almost has a sense of the final battle at the end of the Tribulation.

Vs. 24-27 The procession of God's people coming from the south (Ben and Judah) and from the north (Zeb and Naphtali) are coming to God in the joy of victory.

Vs. 28-31 The nations (in the Millennium) will come before God in submission.

Vs. 32-35 Every knee will bow and God will receive the praise of all nations and all men.

In light of the unrest in the Middle East in recent years, it is interesting to read here, and elsewhere, that Egypt will come to God and will know Christ.

Proverbs 11:29-31

Good words for *the wise of heart*. Think of these verses in terms of what we just read in Deuteronomy. Those who loved God for their salvation would make this the atmosphere of their homes and families, and that in turn would save and preserve the nation.