

**Deuteronomy**  
**September 14, 2008**  
**“Covenant”**  
**Deuteronomy 4-5**

**I. You Must Obey!**

The end of the first speech/sermon given by Moses and the beginning of the second one are both concerned with the covenant and the need for the Israelites to obey God.

Why is obedience to God so important?

**II. Call for Obedience (4:1-40)**

Verse 1: Moses has spent three chapters reviewing history to show the importance of obeying. He will be spending much of this book reminding people of the laws of God so that they can obey them when they go into the land. “So that you may live” is a common theme in Deuteronomy...why?

Verse 2: In the history of the church, this verse along with Rev. 22:18-19 has been used a rule for handling canonical works.

**Rev 22:18-19**

**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.**

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Why must we follow absolutely the word of the Lord, not adding or detracting from it?

Verse 3: This event would have happened only a few weeks before this sermon as a result of Balaam’s counsel to Balak (see Num 25:1-9). Rev 2:14 also alludes to it:

**14 Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality.**

Why does Moses site this incident at this point?

Verse 4: The message of Deuteronomy throughout is that to obey is to live, but to disobey is to die. Why is this point important to God? Why is it mentioned here?

Verse 10: The reason that Moses keeps telling the people to remember and to teach is twofold. He is about to die and will not be their shepherd in the future. They are also going into the land and will

be living differently than the nomadic existence of the desert. As such, their lives are changing, but they need to keep the LORD's teaching in front of them. Even some "Christians" today are confounded by changing conditions to think incorrectly that God's word is not appropriate or needed for new situations.

- Verse 19: Coming out of Egypt, the first Israelites would have been familiar with all kinds of gods. The Egyptians had thousands of them, taking on nearly any form, including the sun and moon. From Ezekiel 24, we know that the Israelites had worshipped some of them while in Egypt.
- Verse 21: For the third time in four chapters, Moses comes back to his own sin. Again, there is the emphasis that we must obey God fully all the time. Moses' statement, "Because of you," causes some commentary writers to suggest that Moses received punishment for the guilt of the people. They probably did provoke Moses to sin, but in the end it was his sin and his sin only.
- Verse 22 Furthermore, since Moses cannot cross, they must do it without him. He has been their leader for 40 years, how can they possibly do it without him?
- Verse 24 What does it mean when the Bible says that the Lord is a jealous God?
- Verse 27 Prediction of the Diaspora!
- Verse 31 Despite the evil behavior of the Israelites, God will not forget His promises (see also Rom 11:25-30).
- Verse 32 The whole history of Israel is really a work of God.
- Verse 34 This verse has seven descriptions of the LORD's power in taking one nation out of another.
- Verse 40 Given all that God has done and is doing, the Israelites must keep their end of the covenant.

### **III. Cities of Refuge East of Jordan (Deut. 4:41-43)**

With trans-Jordan conquered, some aspects of the law can be put immediately into place. One such area is the cities of refuge. This will be discussed more fully in Deut. 19:2-13. One city of refuge is set up for each of the eastern tribes.

### **IV. Summary of Events Surrounding the Law (Deut. 4:44-49)**

This is an interlude section, basically summarizing Chapters 1-4, especially Chapter 4, and introducing/beginning Chapter 5. The word for "law" is *tora*. Later, the word would become synonymous with the Pentateuch. Here, it must relate to the covenant.

## V. Ten Commandments Revisited (Deut. 5:1-33)

It should be noted that Deut. 5 and Ex. 20 have minor variations in the giving of the Ten Commandments. These variations are not important and do not change the law. God spoke them in Ex. 20; Moses repeats them nearly word for word here. The law is supposed to be carried out completely.

Verse 3 This generation represented the initial fulfillment of the covenant even if it was made in the presence of the older generation. Basically the younger generation had kept its end of the bargain, and God had therefore kept His.

Verse 4 “Face to face” is an idiomatic expression. Clearly, the LORD did not speak to the people showing His face.

### Deut 4:12

**12 Then the LORD spoke to you out of the fire. You heard the sound of words but saw no form; there was only a voice.**

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Verse 6 It should be noted that before the law is given, God talks about His salvation to the Israelites. Indeed, if we look at Exodus, we see that the book is organized with 19 chapters of salvation before it gets to the law in Exodus 20.

Verse 7 Some say that this does not limit the possibility of other gods. Perhaps, but that depends on one’s definition of a god. Certainly, if the Lord is the supreme God, by definition, there can be no other like Him. In this way, the commandments also outlaw all other gods because they are less than the true God.

Verse 8 This would include images of the LORD as well as idols of other gods. God is imageless; by so being, we cannot fully attempt to grasp Him or limit Him.

Verse 9 God has devoted Himself to us; therefore, we must devote ourselves to Him. Worshiping the LORD in the form of an idol is not to worship the LORD at all.

Verse 11 This commandment includes misusing the name of the LORD, whether in blasphemy or any some other misuse, such as in magic or involvement in endeavors not aligned with what the LORD wants. Jews attempted to be innocent of this sin by writing G-d or L-rd, but this does not really reduce the chances of misusing the name of the Lord.

Verse 16 If a child does not honor the parent, the child cannot easily learn from the parents. If the child does not learn of God and the covenant, then he will be unable to follow God and will break

- the covenant. Therefore, he will be cursed and will thereby perish.
- Verse 21 The remarkable thing about this tenth and final statute is that it raises the issue of sin and disobedience from the level of physical act to that of attitude, thought, and desire.
- Verse 27 The emphasis is much more positive than in Exodus 20. Basically, the people reject the LORD's original proposal. They agree to obey Him, though, through Moses as intercessor. Their words in this verse are not inconsistent with this statement.
- Verse 28 If the people do what the LORD says, however they hear it that is good. Unfortunately, the people who said this would not keep their end of the bargain. At first chance, when Moses left them for longer than they thought that he should, they made an idol, apparently of the LORD.
- Verse 32 "Do not turn aside to the right or to the left" implies that we have to stay on the straight and narrow. We must do exactly what the LORD requires.

## **VI. Why is Obeying Important?**

From our NT vantage point, we know that obedience is extremely important, but even more important is the nature of the heart. If we do not worship the Lord in our heart, it does not matter what we do in public. We can covet without anyone seeing us do it.

In this book, Moses calls on past events, as a reminder of how past transgressions have harmed the community. Therefore, the Israelites have good reasons for listening to the LORD now.

Why is it a good thing that the Lord is a jealous God?