

February 18

Deuteronomy & Numbers

Notes from Daily Bible

In this second address, Moses begins an exposition of principal laws. Some of these laws are given for first time and some given again for further explanation or reemphasis.

Not just the Law of Moses, it is God who is their source.

Law came after the relationship (see Elvin's notes on 12.4 message)

Law designed to teach the I. to respect and honor God, make them holy and aware of their separateness as a specially chosen people and to learn respect for the rights of their neighbors.

Also for personal injury, hygiene, diet, sacrifice

Goal: lift the national consciousness and impose a high level of ethical conduct

"Happiness is the residue of Holiness and a holy life" (source unknown)

- I. Religious and Ceremonial Laws: other gods prohibited, idolatry prohibited
 - a. Laws against idolatry and paganism
 - i. Molech – Lev 20.1-5
 - ii. Separation from pagans and AVOID enticement 12.30
 - iii. Punishment for idolatry – 17.6
 - iv. Only one place of worship – 12.4

Yesterday we were focused on the word Remember. That is the theme and focus for Deuteronomy. Moses is challenging the Israelites to never forget who God is, what He has done, how faithful He has been and how needy they are for God – even when they enter into the Promised Land. Today we see that it is not just for their dependence on God to provide and protect, but also for worship.

They are going into a land with rain, where crops and livestock thrive. A truly promised land especially compared to what they have known for the past 40 years, life in a tent in the barren wilderness. Big change in their physical life, however, there is something more to entering into the Promised Land.

They have been wandering in the wilderness as nomads no place to settle down. They have been in the wilderness for 40 years waiting for an untrusting generation to die off. They had been alone, in the wilderness with no real outside temptation. No other cultures to associate with. No other culture with different beliefs than them. Yes, they knew about them, worshipping idols – but they didn't have a close association with them.

Going into the Promised Land changes that. They will be going into a land, attacking key cities, but not initially totally eradicating the whole population. There would be pockets of Canaanites with different beliefs and religious practices living next to them in their Promised Land.

I heard a message recently that said that God's grace preceded his Law. God's law is on how the relationship will work. God's law is not "live this way and you will be my people" but it is "you are my people – live this way!"

What you read today is about a relationship that God wants to have with Israel and that he knows what is best for them to live and prosper.

God says in Deut 12.30-31 "be careful not to be ensnared by inquiring about their gods, saying, How do these nations serve their gods? We will do the same. You must not worship the Lord your God in their way, because in worshiping their gods, they do all kinds of detestable things the Lord hates. They even burn their sons and daughters in the fire as sacrifices to their gods?"

God was saying that what would initially be shocking and despicable to the Israelites will eventually become accepted. They will become calloused.

Example: Canaanites worshiped the god Molech. There was the practice of sacrificing children. Yet we see later in I Kings 11.7 that Solomon built a temple for worshiping Molech on the Mount of Olives and that King Manasseh in II Kings 21.6 sacrificed his children to the god Molech. That is what brought the downfall of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. In Deut 12, God knew that simple curiosity would eventually bring down a nation.

I know you don't sacrifice children to Molech and worship pagan gods, but our heart is a idol factory. Timothy Keller in his book "Counterfeit Gods" says that an idol is whatever gives us meaning, purpose, value and worth in life. That it absorbs your heart and imagination and you seek for it to give you what only God can give.

Idolatry is a spiritual addiction, something we cannot live without. It is a must have, and that we are willing to break rules we once honored, which leads to terrible evil. Just like what Israel did.

Keller states, "The only way to free ourselves from the destructive influence of counterfeit gods is to turn back to the true one. The living God, who revealed himself both at Mount Sinai and on the Cross, is the only Lord who, if you find him, can truly fulfill you and if you fail him, can truly forgive you."

May you worship God alone – depend on him alone – and obey his laws knowing he loves you very, very much.

See you tomorrow!