

## For All Time

HN 13/02/05 pm

Reading: Deuteronomy 4:1-14, Hebrews 12

Study Text: Deuteronomy 4:9-14

Psalms: 1, 78:1-4, 78:5-8, 119:9-12

*Keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you (4:2).* The purpose in keeping the commands of God was twofold – firstly that you may live, that it may go well with you in the land which the Lord your God is giving you. And secondly that you may bear witness, that you may be a testimony to the nations around – and God, will be glorified in all the earth.

In this next section the basic message is that the commands of God are for all time. Their going in to possess the land was not the end but the beginning of their living as the people of God in the land he promised long ago.

God called Abraham over 700 years before this day. He gave the law to Moses some 40 years before at Mt Sinai. Although God progressively revealed his plans and purposes, his word did not change. His commands were not temporary but remained valid for all time – *that they may learn to fear Me **all the days they live on the earth** (4:10).* Because of this ongoing requirement to obey the commands of the Lord they must *teach them to their children and children's children.*

Surely one of the greatest tragedies in our society today is the failure of parents to teach their children how to live. School teachers are complaining because they have to teach children moral behaviour. They have to teach such basic things as health and hygiene, proper nutrition, not to mention sex and drug education. Such teaching belongs in the home but parents are failing. So the government is telling the schools they must teach children how to live.

But it is not working and will not work in this way. The same news report told of a 9 year old boy who had been caught over 30 times by the police for stealing and vandalism. No one could control this boy. No one could stop him living as a juvenile delinquent.

Parents are being told by the 'experts' that their children should not be disciplined. Your child is perfect and must be allowed to express him/herself. Many parents are deceived by all this stuff and confused by yet another scientific study – or else they are just plain selfish and neglect to teach their children.

The Scriptures clearly teach that children are born sinners and they need to be taught how to live – *folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him* (Proverbs 22:15). Above all they must be taught the word of God. And the responsibility for teaching the children falls primarily upon the parents – not society.

## Remember Horeb

Parents must remember their past, the things they have seen and the things they have been taught. Then they will be in a position to teach their children. *Take heed to yourself* said Moses *lest you forget the things your eyes have seen* (4:9). He had already reminded them what they had seen at Baal Peor (4:3). Now he reminds them of a greater event in their history – Mt Sinai.

There at the foot of that mountain they gathered with their parents to hear the word of the Lord. They were only young at the time but it was an unforgettable experience. The mountain came alive with fire, like a volcano, and darkness came over them as in a violent storm. And from the midst of the fire the Lord spoke. The people were all terrified. Even in the New Testament church this amazing day was remembered and was the subject of gospel teaching (Hebrews 12).

The voice they heard was Lord God declaring his covenant with his people. ‘I will be your God and you shall be my people. And as my people you will obey my commands’. The Lord gave Moses the Ten Commandments (words) which they were to *perform* or obey. These commands were an integral part of the covenant the Lord made with his people that day.

Some people like to compare this covenant with treaties which the nations of that day often made with one another. When a nation conquered another they might make a treaty with them. The victor (suzerain) would promise to protect the people he conquered (vassal) but the vassal in return would abide by the terms of the covenant – they would pay tribute and not rebel. A copy of the treaty would be taken by each party and placed in their temple. Some think the two tablets of Moses were like this – duplicates of the commandments.

This is all very interesting but we are not told that the two tablets were duplicates. We do know that they were put into the Ark of the Covenant. The important thing to remember is that it was the Lord who established this covenant with Israel. **He** *declared to you His covenant* (4:13). He gave these commands to His chosen people.

It was an act of grace that God came down upon Horeb and spoke to the people. He wanted them to be a wise and understanding people, a nation like no other. These commandments were not like the laws of other nations. They were not the laws of men but the laws given by the Lord your God.

*You heard the sound of the words but saw no form: you only heard a voice* (4:12). Why was Moses emphasizing this point? Well we will see in the next section where he warns them against making a carved image of any form. They saw no form. The Lord their God must not be worshipped with the aid of a carved image in the form of any figure in heaven or on earth. This was a lesson to be remembered from Horeb.

## Teach Your Children

Let us come back to the main thrust of this passage – the ongoing validity of the commandments and hence the need to teach them to your children. The Lord was not going to come to each generation as he came to them at Horeb to give new

commandments. He entrusted parents with the task of teaching their children his commands.

The Lord did come again of course when he sent his only Son, Jesus Christ into the world. He came down from heaven to establish a new covenant with the people of God – a covenant in his blood. *The word became flesh and lived among us and we beheld his glory* (John 1:14).

Well John, the apostles and many other beheld his glory. We have been taught these things by faithful parents. These things have been passed on to us that we might believe in Jesus Christ and pass them on to our children. We have been given the word of God; we have been given the sacraments that we might remember Jesus Christ who died on the cross for our sins.

Teach your children. Moses stressed this throughout this sermon that is the book of Deuteronomy. He was concerned for the people as they were about to enter the land and enjoy the blessings of the Lord in this good land. Let them not forget the Lord who gave them the land, let them not forget the covenant the Lord made with them at Horeb. Their children were included in that covenant and they had covenant responsibilities to teach their children the word of the Lord.

Look at 6:6f briefly, *And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.*<sup>7</sup> *You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.*<sup>8</sup> *You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.*<sup>9</sup> *You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*

Teach your children when you sit in your house, when you walk in the way, when you lie down and when you rise up. Family worship is very important. Share with your children the Christian world view. Let them see what it means to walk with the Lord.

Too many Christian parents are more concerned about their children's heads than their hearts, concerned about their grades and their plays more than their prayers.

Moreover, many leave it too late to start teaching their children the things of God. They wait until the child gets into trouble before they start discipline. Remember Proverbs 22:6 – *train up a child in the way that he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it.* It is never too soon to be teaching children the things of God.

Timothy knew the Holy Scriptures from childhood – Scriptures that *are able to make you wise for salvation through faith that is in Jesus Christ* (II Timothy 3:15). And what a blessing this young man was to the apostle Paul in the ministry of the gospel.

*Rev. Dr. Dennis K. Muldoon*