

## Bible Study – Deuteronomy Chapter 4 – Warning against Idolatry

In our studies so far, Moses has recounted Israel's journey from Mount Sinai to the plains of Moab, which span almost 40 years. We have seen Israel's unbelief in God's ability to deliver and sustain them, even though He has demonstrated this every step of their journey since leaving Egypt.

As Moses continues to emphasize God's faithfulness to his chosen people, along with His mercy and grace, we now look at how the next generation of Israelites are to obey their God.

### Read Deuteronomy 4:1-14

Moses teaches the Israelites the statutes and rules (or ordinances) from God so they can conquer and enjoy life in the Promised Land. An end goal of living according to these statutes and rules is for the people living around them to praise God; a deity who lives near His chosen people and has given such righteous rules and statutes for living. Moses also recounts the covenant made with Israel at Horeb, reminding them of what is required from them.

**Q.** In verse 2, where else have we seen this command in the Bible? (cf. Deut. 12:32; Joshua 1:7; Proverbs 30:6; Revelation 22:18-19) Why is this command so important? How does this apply to us today?

**Q.** How have you kept the statutes and rules that God has given you to conduct your life? Would people praise God through your actions? How do you not be mistaken for just being a good or moral person?

**Q.** In verse 9-14, what is Moses reminding the Israelites with the recounting of the gathering at Horeb (or Mt. Sinai – cf. Exodus 19)? How should this be a reminder to us?

### Read Deuteronomy 4:15-31

Moses continues on and warns the Israelites not to make any images as 'aids' for their worship to God. This was a common practice of ancient Near Easterners when worshipping their gods. He lists objects and images on earth and in the heavenly realms that are not to be used as images of God. Moses again emphasizes how they are to remember what God has done for them as their motivation towards obedience and to explain that God is a jealous God. He finishes with a warning that if they disobey, they would be banished from the land, though God through his mercy and grace, would bring them back because of the covenant made with their ancestors.

**Note:** God's jealousy is His zeal for righteousness that springs from His holiness. The connotation of pettiness that is present in the English word 'jealousy' is absent from the Hebrew idea.

**Q.** In our present day, how can we make 'carved' images of God that would provoke his jealousy? How do we avoid this temptation? How else can we provoke God to jealousy? (cf. Colossians 3:5; Matthew 6:24)

**Q.** Moses states that because of his disobedience (because of the Israelites), he is not allowed to enter the Promised Land. How should this be a warning to us today?

### **Read Deuteronomy 4:32-40**

Moses asks rhetorical questions about what God has done for the Israelites, for the purposes of showing that there is no other god except God (Yahweh) alone. Moses goes on to answer those same questions, showing that it is Yahweh alone that has done all these things for the Israelites. Their response should be obedience to His law and statutes.

**Q.** How do we see God's love for the Israelites in this passage? What are some of his actions and words that demonstrate His love towards them?

**Q.** Considering God's love for his chosen people, how should that motivate your love for God? Does it change from what it is now?

### **Read Deuteronomy 4:41-49**

This is an interlude before the introduction of the law and expansion of the Ten Commandments to the Israelites. He sets out the cities of refuge on the East of the Jordan, where the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh, will eventually settle. Moses then sums up the law that is to be given to the people of Israel, remembering how God has brought them out of Egypt and onto the Plains of Moab.

Moses continues his exhortation to prepare the people for living in the land they are to possess. The address by Moses, and especially the exhortation to observe the Law faithfully, is one of the greatest revelations of God's character in the Old Testament. The total impression which God and Moses intended must have been awe and humble gratitude in the hearts of the Israelites. Moses mentions several times that by living according to the statutes and rules that God gave them, all would go well for them. However, in the same breath, Moses knows that Israel will not be able to hold fast to God's law, even with his own example of disobedience and judgment, and would therefore face God's punishment. This should be a clear warning to us that we need to always strive to be obedient to God's word, even in the age of grace. Though complete obedience is required of us, we know that Jesus is the only one that was able to fully obey the law completely, which is why He was the perfect sacrifice for our redemption. Therefore, remember to always put your trust in Christ to help you obey the word of God each day.