

Bible Study – Deuteronomy Chapter 9 & 10 – The Authority Commandments

In the last study, we looked at the notions of “remembering” and “do not forget”: Remembering the things God did for the Israelites (and the Christian) and not forgetting His commands. The latter half was important as we looked at the carved images the Israelites encountered and how they were to destroy them so that they would not be led astray from God. Tonight, we will look at the state of the Israel’s heart and the causes and dangers of living in this world while living for God.

Read Deuteronomy 9:1 – 6

Similar to chapter 7, where the Israelites were fearful of the inhabitants of the Promise Land, Moses singles out the Anakites, (one of the most feared people groups) who were to be devoted for destruction. This would be accomplished by God’s hand, while using the Israelites for this purpose. Moses warns the Israelites about self-righteousness and pride after this is accomplished. It is not because of the Israelites righteousness that they are to possess the land, but rather it is the wickedness of the nations that causes the inhabitants of the Promised Land to be driven out. He also adds that it is God confirming His promise to the patriarchs.

Q. Moses warns the Israelites not to think of themselves as more righteous than the people in the Promised Land, as they were not much better. What is the lesson or reminder that Moses is making here to the Israelites? Looking back, have there been times where you felt self righteous over others, especially over fellow brothers and sisters? How do we keep ourselves in check, to avoid self-righteousness or pride in our ‘holiness’ (Luke 18:9-14; Romans 12:3)?

Read Deuteronomy 9:7-29

Moses recounts Israel’s rebellious nature towards God since the exodus from Egypt. He brings up the incidents at Taberah (Numbers 11:1-3), Massah (Exodus 17:1-7), Kibroth-hattaavah (Numbers 11:4-35), and Kadesh-barnea (Numbers 14). The incident that Moses focuses on is at Horeb (or Mount Sinai) and how the Israelites built themselves a golden calf, a little over one month after making the covenant with God (Exodus 32). This brought God’s anger upon them, so much so that he was willing to wipe them out (v. 8, 14). It is only because of Moses intercession on their behalf that they were spared from annihilation.

Q. Moses focuses on the golden calf incident as this was a direct violation of the commands God gave to the Israelites concerning himself. We can see how the first two commandments are broken. How is the third commandment (Exodus 20:7) broken as well? What principle can you extract from this incident? How can you use that principle to govern how you observe this commandment?

Q. When Moses broke the two tablets, it symbolized the broken covenant between God and Israel due to their sin. Moses' intercessory prayer (one that 'reminds' the Lord of His promises until they are fulfilled) to God on behalf of Israel can be a model for us. From verses 25-29, pick out the four key points of that prayer. Does Moses' reaction (e.g. fear for the people) give you pause to think how serious your disobedience towards God is affecting your relationship with Him?

Read Deuteronomy 10:1 – 11

Moses shows how God is renewing the covenant with Israel by 'recreating' the ten commandments on a new set of tablets (Exodus 34:27-28), which were to be placed in a wooden ark (Exodus 25:10-22, 37:1-9). Moses also shows how God is still merciful and bestows grace upon His chosen people in light of their blatant idolatry. The main reason for this is His love for them, which is evidenced in how God raises up another high priest for Israel, the appointment of the Levites to minister and pronounce blessings, and to allow the Israelites to continue onwards to the Promised Land, despite their blatant disobedience to God.

Q. In this portion of scripture, we are shown evidence of God's grace and mercy to the Israelites as a result of Moses' prayer. How have you experienced God's grace in your life after failing to obey or love Him like you should? Have you been grateful for the mercy and grace that was shown to you?

Read Deuteronomy 10:12 – 22

Moses concludes his recital of the events by imploring the Israelites to fear the Lord as a way to live out their life. They are to do specific acts, such as walk in obedience, serve Him wholeheartedly, and to observe the commands and decrees. He goes on to show how much God loves the Israelites, by choosing them out of all nations to be the recipients of His affection. He also commands them to circumcise their hearts and to no longer be a stubborn and rebellious people because of who God is: The supreme being and one of justice. Moses concludes with the call to fear the Lord, giving the reasons of the wondrous and mighty acts He has performed to save Israel and the continuing fulfillment of his promise to the patriarchs, citing their growth as a nation.

Q. Moses calls for the Israelites to "Circumcise their hearts". How would you explain that term in your own words (Romans 2:25-29)? Why was it a necessary first step for the Israelites (and believers) to take (Jeremiah 4:4)? What does this say about salvation and sanctification? How does this practically look in the Christian's life?

Moses warns Israel to no longer be a stubborn people and to yield to the commandments and ordinances that God gave them so that they could live according to the way God intended for them. Moses also warns the Israelites not to think of themselves as righteous, that they made themselves acceptable in God's eyes, thereby lessen the need for God's mercy and grace, ultimately diminishing His name. This is something that Christians should be mindful of. We are all sinners, but by the grace of God, have been saved and now can live the life He intended for us. We are to be merciful and patient with those who are struggling to live a holy life. We should not think of ourselves higher than we ought (Romans 12:3), but to live in humility and know that it is only by the blood of Jesus Christ that makes us holy and righteous before God.