

A JEALOUS GOD >>>

DEUTERONOMY 4:1 – 49

~ Our Spiritual Safari expedition through the entire Word of God finds ourselves in a time period roughly fourteen hundred years before the Lord Jesus Christ came to the earth in our third report from the fourth chapter of Deuteronomy. I would add this caveat: that estimate may or may not be to the five hundredth power. Anyways - we are still sitting around the campfire with Moses reviewing the wilderness wanderings of the first generation of the children of Israel; and he is giving his final instructions to the elders of the twelve tribes from this second generation that have arrived again at Kadesh. They are on the east bank of the Jordan River and have come to Mount Nebo. Only two of these elders had made the entire journey with Moses: Joshua and Caleb. Everyone else who had made the exodus from Egypt with Moses is part of a pile of bleaching bones in the vast and treacherous wilderness. The new generation is preparing to enter the Promised Land as Moses attempts to stress to them LOVE and OBEDIENCE.

Most people do not correlate love with the Old Testament – but love is a supreme theme – even way back here at this time in which we are studying. God loved these people, and they were invoked to obey Him because of that; but only IF – IF – IF they loved Him, too. I can't nail this down any tighter with words, my beloved. That's a pretty big "IF" for most self-professing believers. Moses is actually pleading with these people by giving them all the reasons they are to obey God. Let me summarize three of those reasons we will find in this study:

I. Israel belonged to God. God will reveal that He desires to preserve and prosper them as a nation; and individually, too. The only basis upon which God can bless anyone is obedience. We have to go all the way to chapter fourteen verse two to discover why God claims them as belonging to Him. These are the children of God; a chosen people that belong to Him. However, our sin can raise an umbrella that prevents us from ever experiencing the love of God. If you choose to live in disobedience, you will never experience the love of God – I can assure you of that. Of course, God

still loves you, and His love was demonstrated in no uncertain terms at the cross of Christ, but we're going to have to come in faith as believers to truly experience the love God has for us.

II. *God had so marvelously blessed them that it would seem normal and natural for them to want to be thankful and obedient.*

III. *God loved them – period – as stated in verse thirty-seven of this chapter. That is the first time in the Bible that God tells anyone that He loves them. Of course, the love of God for His creatures has been demonstrated since way back at verse one of Genesis; but God hasn't even hinted at mentioning anything about loving mankind thus far. Here, God gives the motive for everything he has done for them up until this day that we are studying. God is saying the deliverance from Egypt is nothing compared to the great and mighty things He is going to do for them IF – IF – IF they will reciprocate His love and obey Him now. This is something that every single person who calls themselves a believer must recognize – God loves you.*

So, we are given three worthy motives for us to obey God – and there are more; but these are the motives that this particular study will reveal. Obedience to God, friends, is the very first law in our Christian life. The lost man today has an ABSOLUTE innate hatred for God – make no mistake. Man does not naturally desire to obey God and follow His commands. In fact, mankind is very much opposed to all things Godly, and man has absolutely turned his back on the True and Living God in this hour in which we live. Man resists God with all his natural might and power. We find that theme of resistance all the way through the rest of the Word of God and right through to our modern day – right NOW. Only the Word of God can break down your resistance to God – nothing else – you can just write that down....

1 Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers giveth you.

2 Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.

3 Your eyes have seen what the LORD did because of Baalpeor: for all the men that followed Baalpeor, the LORD thy God hath destroyed them from among you.

~ Our safari carefully considered Balaam being called upon by Balak to curse the children of Israel; and I'm sure many of these elders sitting around this campfire with Moses remembered that little episode very, very well from when they were small children. We learned how Balaam's advice to the king of Moab was not to curse them - but to join them. Balaam told Balak, "... since you can't beat them, embrace them." Well, that's exactly what old man Balak did; and that is the same philosophy mankind continues to use today – particularly in the church. The Moabites intermarried with the children of Israel and were highly successful at introducing false worship into the camp. Balaam knew the result would be the judgment of God; and, my friends, that just so happens to be exactly what and how it went down. A large part of this current generation had even been wiped out in God's judgment. Moses is attempting to bring them this example as a dire warning. A brief review of the twenty-fifth chapter of the book of Numbers might help bring yourself current....

4 But ye that did cleave unto the LORD your God are alive every one of you this day.

~ That's a good enough reason to me for obedience unto God. Keep in mind that this discourse is preparation for the children of Israel to enter the Promised Land and live as God's chosen people. God reminds them again and again to observe and keep His statutes. If they want to be blessed and be a blessing to other nations when they are in the land, then His commandments are simply going to have to be learned, understood, acknowledged, followed and held dear in their hearts. Jesus said, "... if you love Me, keep My commands" - I believe He would also say, "... if you don't

love Me - don't bother." Moreover, Israel was to be a witness of the True and Living God to the entire world....

5 Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it.

6 Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.

~ There are many passages and even single verses in Deuteronomy that are too easy to pass by and miss completely. When God says "keep therefore and do them" – well, I have to believe God means exactly that. God is going to say that again and again and again as we travel along. To thoroughly illustrate that point, we're going to get a little technical. The way Israel was told to witness to the world is exactly the opposite from the way the church is to witness to the world today. The church is told, "go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel." That is the instruction given to every believer today. As true and sincere Christians, we should have something to do with taking the entire Word of God to the entire world – right now. On the other hand, the nation Israel was NEVER told to go out to the world. In fact, they were to send out an invitation for others to come to them in Jerusalem. The nation Israel was to tell other nations to "come up to the house of the Lord and worship Him." If only Israel had been faithful to God, the other nations would have heard them and would have done as the Queen of Sheba did – she went up to the house of the Lord from the ends of the earth. The queens' trip to see Solomon was not a luxury first class ticket on a jet, either; no, friends, it was an arduous, treacherous and highly dangerous venture through the jungle and across the desert. Obedience would result in God's promise of blessing. The Queen of Sheba desired that....

7 For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for?

8 And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?

9 Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons;

~ The burden God gave Israel was a teaching ministry. They were told to teach their grandchildren all about the laws of the True and Living God. The greatest undertaking our nation today – the United States of America – has is that of the education of our young people. That just happens to be our greatest failure, too. Look in any city, town, hamlet college or university today and you will clearly see the dismal failure of this nation. I don't blame any particular institution or school, though - because the root problem lies in the home life. We have completely and woefully failed in teaching our sons and daughters and their sons and daughters anything from the Bible that is proper, correct and complete. God never told us to send them off to be educated by someone else, friends. This is our abject failure as a collective body of people; and this is the burden that still remains on every single father and mother breathing God's free air right now as I type this report and as you read it.

If you're going to bring a little one into this world – guess what? – God is going to hold YOU responsible for that child! If you have not correctly communicated the love of God to your little ones, you are going to have a literal monster running around in our society and YOU just happen to be responsible. I don't think I can make this any clearer and I don't think God could spell it out any more succinctly. Today, America is a COMPLETE AND TOTAL failure, and WE are responsible for it. I see all of you little Jesus people blaming the president and big business and everyone and everything else under the sun – well, God says, "you're an idiot." Don't like that talk from me? – Too bad! God said that - not me - and if that's too much, you are going to have an impossible time digesting the rest of this study. I'm sure many will stop reading right here....

10 Specially the day that thou stoodest before the LORD thy God in Horeb, when the LORD said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children.

11 And ye came near and stood under the mountain; and the mountain burned with fire unto the midst of heaven, with darkness, clouds, and thick darkness.

12 And the LORD spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice.

~ Here, we cross paths with another critical truth to see. Please read this report with the utmost carefulness, friends. The Lord Jesus Christ has made it more than clear to us that God is a Spirit and that we worship Him in Spirit and in truth. That, by de facto, includes the command not to manufacture ANY likeness of God whatsoever. The Lord Jesus came to this earth, and He became a man. However, there is no physical description of Him given or even hinted at anywhere – not one hair, eye or any other descriptor of any kind is offered.

Now, if you haven't already reached the conclusion that I am a totally fanatical, straight-edged square – you probably will here as I make my next statement: I do not believe we should EVER manufacture a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. Some of you are very sweet and pious people and you have already told me that a picture just helps you worship Him. My friends who say that – you are a strange breed, indeed; because men NEVER paint a picture of Jesus unless they no longer find Him in their hearts. Actually, we do have a physical description of Jesus - given in Revelation chapter one. I've never seen that picture painted. You need to get Christ into your heart today and not some picture of Him nailed to a canvas. This just happens to be one tremendous and eternal truth God lays down in this section of Scripture....

13 And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even Ten Commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone.

14 And the LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go over to possess it.

15 Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the LORD spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire:

16 Lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female,

17 The likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air,

18 The likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth:

19 And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the LORD thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven.

20 But the LORD hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, even out of Egypt, to be unto him a people of inheritance, as ye are this day.

21 Furthermore the LORD was angry with me for your sakes, and sware that I should not go over Jordan, and that I should not go in unto that good land, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance:

22 But I must die in this land, I must not go over Jordan: but ye shall go over, and possess that good land.

23 Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the LORD your God, which he made with you, and make you a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, which the LORD thy God hath forbidden thee.

24 For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God.

25 When thou shalt beget children, and children's children, and ye shall have remained long in the land, and shall corrupt yourselves, and make a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, and shall do evil in the sight of the LORD thy God, to provoke him to anger:

26 I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto ye go over Jordan to possess it; ye shall not prolong your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed.

27 And the LORD shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the LORD shall lead you.

~ I wonder how much they appreciated this prophecy of Moses. The Israelites just happen to be scattered all over this world today because they did the things God expressly forbade them from doing, friends. They are back in that land today as a nation – BUT – NOT in fulfillment of prophecy – not even close. They are in dire and desperate trouble. God did NOT bring them there today; you may be absolutely positive. God put Israel into that land at the time in which we are studying, and God will later put Israel out of the land after the Babylonian captivity. Their present-day return is IN NO WAY a fulfillment of prophecy; because God says when Israel returns to the land in fulfillment of prophecy, the desert will blossom like a rose. Now, I know they have been planting some trees over there, but that desert is just as dry and dusty as it has ever been. ALSO, God says when Israel returns in fulfillment of prophecy, they will dwell in peace and safety. They live in constant fear right now from multiple outside forces. THIRD: The Word of God says SPECIFICALLY that when they return to that land in fulfillment of prophecy they will worship the True and Living God! Now, friends, if you

think for one moment that Israel worships the Lord Jesus Christ and regards the Bible as the inspired Word of God, then you just have no clue about understanding the nation Israel. A relatively small handful may have returned – BUT – it is NO WAY a fulfillment of eschatological events; that is simply impossible! IF – IF – IF Israel would turn back and seek God with all their hearts and all their minds and all their souls, then they could possess a healed land according to Scripture – but not until then. The only fulfillment of prophecy we are seeing in the nation Israel right now is that of judgment. Period....

28 And there ye shall serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell.

29 But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul.

30 When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the LORD thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice;

~ This is the first mention in the Bible of the Great Tribulation that will ultimately come to this earth. The “latter days” is an Old Testament expression that always refers to the Great Tribulation period. The condition for missing the tribulation is obedience unto His voice! If that were the end of this lesson, we might conclude that God was a big bully and uncaring and all of that; but let’s press on to understanding. The only reason this little nation has not been wholly consumed is because God is merciful. That happens to be the reason you and I have not been consumed, too, by the way. If we’re saved, it’s not because we are a nice little Sunday school boy or girl; no, we’re saved by the mercy of God, and that’s the reason for the preservation of Israel....

31 (For the LORD thy God is a merciful God;) he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he sware unto them.

32 For ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and ask from the one side of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it?

33 Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live?

34 Or hath God assayed to go and take him a nation from the midst of another nation, by temptations, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?

35 Unto thee it was shewed, that thou mightest know that the LORD he is God; there is none else beside him.

36 Out of heaven he made thee to hear his voice, that he might instruct thee: and upon earth he shewed thee his great fire; and thou heardest his words out of the midst of the fire.

37 And because he loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them, and brought thee out in his sight with his mighty power out of Egypt;

~ This second generation of the children of Israel knows what happened to their fathers, and God doesn't intend to let them forget. God has been very gracious to them. God mentions His love a second time because they really need to hear it again for encouragement. Strangely, there's just no explanation for this at this time. There was really no good thing in the children of Israel – but there is good in God. God saves us because He loves us, but He doesn't just save us by love; no, we're saved by grace. God doesn't open the back doors of Heaven in the middle of the night and slip those in who rejected Christ. A sacrifice for our sins – according to the laws of a Holy God – had to be made; and has been made. We know now that the death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross was that sacrifice for us. God

gave His son so that whosoever will may come; it doesn't make any difference who you are or what you have done – His salvation offer is legitimate and it's open to you. Whosoever shall believe Him shall not perish but have everlasting life....

38 To drive out nations from before thee greater and mightier than thou art, to bring thee in, to give thee their land for an inheritance, as it is this day.

39 Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the LORD he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else.

40 Thou shalt keep therefore his statutes, and his commandments, which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days upon the earth, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, for ever.

41 Then Moses severed three cities on this side Jordan toward the sunrising;

42 That the slayer might flee thither, which should kill his neighbour unawares, and hated him not in times past; and that fleeing unto one of these cities he might live:

43 Namely, Bezer in the wilderness, in the plain country, of the Reubenites; and Ramoth in Gilead, of the Gadites; and Golan in Bashan, of the Manassites.

44 And this is the law which Moses set before the children of Israel:

45 These are the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which Moses spake unto the children of Israel, after they came forth out of Egypt,

46 On this side Jordan, in the valley over against Bethpeor, in the land of Sihon king of the Amorites, who dwelt at Heshbon, whom Moses and the children of Israel smote, after they were come forth out of Egypt:

47 And they possessed his land, and the land of Og king of Bashan, two kings of the Amorites, which were on this side Jordan toward the sunrising;

48 From Aroer, which is by the bank of the river Arnon, even unto mount Sion, which is Hermon,

49 And all the plain on this side Jordan eastward, even unto the sea of the plain, under the springs of Pisgah.

~ Moses gave them these testimonies and statutes from God; and we now arrive at another restating of the law in the next chapter. Our Spiritual Safari is on one bumpy road tonight: and we've been down it before. I'm sorry it's not as nice as John was. The emphasis throughout will remain on love and obedience – even as we walk through the next several chapters – where we'll see a repetition, but with an interpretation of the Ten Commandments. I do hope you're reading carefully and not missing any of this, safari friends.

Remember, the first generation that received the original Ten Commandments are all dead now; as dead as they can possibly be. These are their children to whom Moses is speaking in this discourse around the campfire. I think they may have fueled it with coal? - and Moses gives this interpretation of the Mosaic Law in the light of the forty years' experience they have had with it in the wilderness. We are considering an often neglected – often dismissed – most misunderstood – section of Scripture that is nothing less than imperative to our overall understanding of the Word of God. Two can only walk together if they be agreed. Pray that we can continue on together from here ~

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