

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-
Presbyterian Church, 10 Downing St.
Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

**DHW BIBLE CLASS
LESSON 3**

**DEUTERONOMY
CHAPTER 4**

INTRODUCTION

This chapter forms the final portion of Moses' first sermon. Having recounted how the LORD had led the children of Israel by His grace and providence, Moses told them the purpose and meaning of their experience with God in their long journey from Egypt to Sinai and now to the plains of Moab, at the boundary of the Promised Land. The content of his first sermon is the foundation for the rest of the book. Israel's attitude and response to the Word of God and her relationship with the LORD is of paramount importance for them to possess the land.

Moses presented the attributes of God and the obligations of all Israel to Him. The sermon can be divided into four sections. Following the four sections, a first reference to the cities of refuge is given (4: 41-43). The last part of the chapter is an introduction to Moses' second sermon.

A. Moses Called on All Israel to Fear and Obey the LORD their God (4:1-13).

1. The call to hear and obey God's commandments (4:1-2).
2. They should learn from their experiences (4:3-4).
3. The keeping of God's commandments would result in wisdom and understanding (4:5-8).
4. They must not only keep the commandments of God but teach their children too (4:9-13).

B. Moses Commanded Them To Worship Only The LORD God And Not Graven Images (4:14-24).

1. They must keep the commandments when they settle in the Promised Land (4:14).
2. They must not make any graven images of worship (4:15-19).
3. They must only worship the LORD their God (4:20-24).

C. Moses Warned Them Of the Dire Consequences of Disobeying God (4:25-31).

1. If they became corrupt after dwelling too long in the land, the LORD would scatter them among the nations (4:25-28).
2. But if they should seek the LORD their God with all their heart and soul, God would not forsake them but would be merciful (4:29-31).

OUTLINE

D. Moses Stressed the Importance of Israel's Understanding of the LORD (4:32-40)

1. Moses recalled how God chose and related to Israel (4:32-34).
2. Israel was given to know the living and true God (4:35-36).
3. God chose Israel because He loved Israel (4:37-38).
4. Moses repeated his call to Israel to recognize that the LORD is God (4:39).
5. Moses exhorted them to keep the commandments (4:40).

E. Moses Selected Three Refuge Cities on the Eastside of Jordan (4:41-43)

1. Three cities were chosen on the east side of Jordan to which the alleged killer could flee (4:41-42).
2. The three cities were Bezer, Ramoth, and Golan (4:43).

F. Introduction to Moses' Second Sermon (4:44-49)

1. Moses set the law of God before all Israel (4:44-45).
2. Israel came out of Egypt and now possessed the land east of Jordan (4:46-49).

**COMMENTARY
The Laws of God**

Moses' opening words "Now therefore hearken ..." linked what he had recounted to his present discourse. He called on Israel to (1) take the statutes and judgements seriously and (2) do them if they want to live and to possess the

land which God had promised their forefathers. The learning of the Law of God was not merely an academic exercise. The laws must be obeyed and applied if they wanted to live and be strong as a nation. They were warned not to add or subtract from what God had revealed to them. Reference was made to the incident that happened in Baal-peor where those who disobeyed God were punished and destroyed. But those who cleaved to the LORD did live even to that day.

Moses stressed that the knowledge of God's law was not enough. They must keep the law and in so doing, they would be blessed. They would become a wise and understanding people before all other nations. God gave this privileged and special position only to Israel. Israel faced the danger of forgetting the things that they had seen and learned. In order to counter this tendency, they must be alert and diligent. They should not only keep the statutes and judgements, but also teach their children and their grandchildren.

God is Without Physical Form

Moses recounted Israel's experience at Horeb where the LORD spoke to them from out of the midst of the fire. They heard His voice but they saw "no similitude," no physical form of God. The LORD gave them the Ten Commandments written on two tables of stones. Moses stressed that since they saw that God has no physical form, they must not make any kind of image to represent Him or worship the heavenly bodies like the sun, moon and stars which God created. God had taken them out of Egypt where

the gods were represented by various kinds of animals. It was imperative that they should not forget this second commandment for the LORD is a consuming fire and a jealous God. Moses took great care to issue this reminder because Israel was among many other nations in the land whose gods were represented by graven images and idols made by men. There would be the temptation to imitate the other nations and even greater temptation for their children and their children's children. Hence it was important, as Moses mentioned earlier, that they diligently teach their children and their children's children the laws of God.

They would be foolish to serve these idols, the product of man's hands, which could neither see, hear, eat, or smell. If they disobeyed, they would perish from off the land and their days on the earth as a nation would be cut short. God would scatter them among the other nations, and they would be few in numbers. Conversely, if they wholeheartedly sought after the LORD their God and were obedient, He would be merciful and He would not forsake or destroy them because He would remember His covenant made with their forefathers. The danger and consequences of idolatry of Israel would be serious.

The LORD Alone is God

Moses next pointed out the special position and privilege that Israel enjoyed as God's chosen nation. No man has heard the voice of God speaking from out of the midst of the fire as Israel had and lived! God had delivered Israel by performing great signs and wonders, and fighting their battles

in a mighty way before their very eyes when they were in Egypt. He did these to show and teach them that the LORD (Yahweh) is God, and there is none beside Him! And because He loved their forefathers and chose their descendants, brought them out of Egypt, and drove out other nations, giving the land to them for an inheritance. They must never forget this. Thus, it was incumbent upon them to keep God's laws and commandments so that it would go well with them, and with their children, that their days as a nation would be long and prosperous.

The theme of monotheism is apparent and significant. Israel's knowledge of the one living and true God is not a product of an evolution process of religious speculation. It was through direct revelation by God Himself to Israel. Israel was special not because it was great or morally better than the other nations. Israel was MADE special and not because it was special and God chose her. As in personal salvation, the sinner is totally depraved and does not deserve God's salvation. Salvation is all of grace, not of works. Hence before salvation there is nothing good in the person. But after salvation he becomes very special in the sight of God as he now bears the mark of being a son or daughter of the living God.

"Fire" was aptly used seven times as a key symbol to refer to the presence of God (4:11, 12, 15, 24, 33 and 36). If people respect and treat fire in the proper way, it would benefit them. On the other hand, if people mishandle it, it damages and destroys. God is a consuming fire. If people disobey God, they would be punished. But

if they obey and revere Him, they would be blessed.

Three Cities of Refuge

This is the first reference to the three cities of refuge. They were located on the east side of Jordan, namely, Bezer, Ramoth and Golan. Apart from the provision of a settlement for the Levites, these cities were places where mercies could be rendered to those who killed others unintentionally. The purpose of mentioning these three cities of refuge was probably to further stress the grace and mercy of the LORD.

SUMMARY

Three major themes stand out in this latter portion of Moses' first sermon. Firstly, God's laws must be practised and acted upon implicitly. In so doing, the people of God would be richly blessed. God's laws will single out those who are wise and understanding. Secondly, the tendency or temptation of man to make graven images for worship is no less real then than now. There is no excuse for a person who professes the name of Christ and the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to make an icon or statue of Jesus Christ or Mary, the earthly mother of Jesus, or the Apostles.

Thirdly, the existence of the one living and true God, none other than the LORD God (YAHWEH) of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, is taught here. The knowledge of God is a special revelation from God Himself. The line of three generations is very important. It is not Abraham, Isaac and Esau but Abraham, Isaac and Jacob!

We also learn that the teaching of God's commandments is the

duty and responsibility of all parents. It is therefore quite sad to see that some parents neglect this very important and sacred responsibility. If they want their children to be God-fearing, wise, good and respectful of parents and responsible to the community, it is imperative that they teach God's commandments to them from an early age, and pray hard that the Lord will be merciful and save them unto Himself.

AMEN.

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Deuteronomy 4:1-8; Matthew 5:1-16

TUESDAY: Deuteronomy 4:9-24; John 4:24; Luke 24:39

WEDNESDAY: Deuteronomy 4:25-31; James 1:25; 1 John 3:22

THURSDAY: Deuteronomy 4:32-40; 1 Peter 2:1-10

FRIDAY: Deuteronomy 4:41-49; Psalm 19:7; Psalm 24:1

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What was said about the Word of God and how would it affect the Israelites?

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2. What were the characteristics that distinguish Israel from the other nations?

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3. What did God do at Horeb (Sinai)?

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4. What is emphasized in verse 12? Why?

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5. What specific trespass was the people warned against and how was the warning reinforced?

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6. Under what kind of circumstances would we easily forget or remember God? How should we deal with them?

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7. Under what kind of circumstances would we easily forget or remember God? How should we deal with them?

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8. What was said about God's handling with Israel in these verses?

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9. How is our God different from other gods (4:1-39)?

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10. What fundamental point is emphasized in these verses? What practical significance do these words have for you?

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11. From this chapter, how would you summarize God's expectations of His people?

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12. Do you think it is difficult to know God accurately and fully through the Word?

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13. What food for thought can you glean from this chapter that is especially reassuring?

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