



TESTIFYING TO THE NEXT GENERATION

Deuteronomy 5–8

Neither God nor His Word change over time. But memories fade. New generations arise, and people forget the lessons of history. God’s revelation of Himself and His standards must be repeated, remembered, and taken to heart. This is what Israel needed, and we are no different.

Back in 2009 Continental Flight 3407 and Air France Flight 447 both ended in fatal crashes; one near Buffalo, New York, and the other one somewhere over the Atlantic Ocean. Some have argued that in each case the ultimate cause of the disaster was what they called, “skill fade.” In other words, over time, the pilots had begun to rely too heavily on flying by autopilot.¹

Well, Moses is determined not to let Israel fly by autopilot as they enter the promised land. He wants them alert, focused, and relying on the Lord.

Deuteronomy chapter 5 begins with Moses speaking to the nation:

“Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the rules that I speak in your hearing today, and you shall learn them and be careful to do them. The LORD our God made a covenant with us . . . Not with our fathers did the LORD make this covenant, but with us, who are all of us here alive today.” (verses 1-3)

This new generation needs to understand that the covenant is theirs to cherish and protect. Beginning in verse 6, Moses then restates the heart of that covenant, the Ten Commandments.

We have already studied the Ten Commandments back in the book of Exodus. But Moses is reminding the nation of these commandments because they are central to how the people are to relate to God and to one another. They are about to enter the promised land, and they need to remember that the Lord who brought them out of Egypt is the only true God. They also need to remember what God requires of them in relation to one another—honoring their par-



Procession of Hittite gods mounted on their emblem animals



ents, avoiding murder, adultery, theft, false witness, and covetousness.

Moses also reminds his people that when their fathers first heard God speak these words at Mount Sinai, they were overcome with fear. They became intensely aware of God's holiness and their sinfulness. Here in verse 25 Moses recalls their words: "If we hear the voice of the LORD our God anymore, we shall die." And with that, they asked Moses to be their mediator and relay God's words to them. This request for a mediator between God and sinners, of course, sets the stage for the coming of the perfect Mediator, Jesus Himself.

Listen to the Lord's heart in verse 29, as He responds to Israel's promise to obey:

"Oh that they had such a mind as this always, to fear me and to keep all my commandments, that it might go well with them and with their descendants forever!"

You can almost hear the heartbreak in the Lord's voice, knowing that ultimately, they will fail to obey Him.

The Mosaic covenant established at Mount Sinai made it clear that Israel's blessing in the promised land was conditioned on their obedience to the law. Moses says here in verse 32, "Be careful therefore to do as the LORD your God has commanded you." And he's quick to add the reason why in verse 33: "that it may go well with you, and that you may live long in the land."

And now, beginning in verse 4 of chapter 6, we have one of the most important passages to the Jewish people:

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."

"The LORD is one" means the Lord is *only* one. He is the only true and living God.

Moses tells Israel to pass down the truths of this unique, one-and-only God to each new generation.

"You shall teach them diligently to your children," he says in Deuteronomy 6:7. Israel's well-being and future depend on every generation being taught to live by the truths of the covenant.

In the rest of chapter 6, as well as chapters 7 and 8, Moses lays out for Israel a list of primary laws every Israelite generation must embrace. These are representative laws that are set forth in four sections or groups.

The first group of laws is found in verses 10-19 of chapter 6, where we read, "When the LORD your God brings you into the land . . . then take care lest you forget the LORD" (verses 10, 12). Verse 14 goes on to say, "You shall not go after other gods." To put it another way, "When you get into the promised land and you're surrounded by pagan cultures, don't follow them at all. Serve and worship only the God who brought you into the land."

The second section, here in verses 20 to 25, has to do with how to respond to the younger generation when they ask, "What is the meaning of the testimonies, and the statutes and the rules that the LORD our God has commanded you?" (verse 20). Simply put, "Why are we following these laws, and why are they so important?"

What's the answer? Verses 24-25 spell it out:

"The LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as we are this day. And it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to do all this commandment."

In other words, "This is how you get right with God and stay right with God: you follow the word of God."

The third group of laws covers all of Deuteronomy chapter 7. Here we read in the first two verses: "When the LORD your God brings you into the land . . . and clears away many nations before you . . . then you must devote them to complete destruction." Why? Verse 6 tells us: "For you are a people holy to the LORD your God."



“This is how you get right with God and stay right with God: you follow the word of God.”

We will deal with this in more detail when we get to the book of Joshua. But for now, let me just say that individuals among these nations *could* repent—and some *did*. But the nations on the whole stood in wicked defiance of God.

If they were allowed to remain in the land, they would corrupt Israel with their pagan religions, which were tantamount to demon worship and included child sacrifice and unspeakable immorality. Israel was acting as the judge and jury for a holy God who had warned these nations for centuries, and yet they chose to defy Him.

Now we come to the fourth section of laws here in chapter 8. Let's pick it up at verse 11:

“Take care . . . lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses . . . then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God . . . Beware lest you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.’”

(verses 11-12, 14, 17)

Here is a warning not to take the credit for blessings that come only from the Lord.

¹ See Nicholas Carr, “Automation Makes Us Dumb,” *The Wall Street Journal*, November 21, 2014, wsj.com.

This is how you keep from putting your life on autopilot and end up crashing: (let's highlight these points in some way)

- First of all, when the Lord commands you to obey Him, make sure you don't drag your feet.
- Second, when you are asked if it's worth serving the Lord, make sure you respond with the news of God's gracious work in our life.
- Finally, when you experience the Lord's blessings, make sure you guard against taking the credit for them.

Let's stay alert, obeying Him, passing on the truth about Him, and giving Him praise for everything He does. And the younger generation will get it. They will hear it from us, and they will join us in bringing glory to God.

Is your life an example of or distraction from God and His gospel? Whether you're a parent or relative of a child, what are you doing to pass on the truths of God's Word to future generations? Have you thanked those who influenced your spiritual journey?

What life-styles or attitudes would lead anyone to take credit away from God? What resources has God already given you to protect yourself against the temptation to take credit for the Lord's blessings? How is giving God credit a useful way to evangelize your yet to be saved family and friends?

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