

YEAR OF THE MESSAGE: Moses
Law and Order: Divine Intent
Shema: Carve This on Your Door
Deuteronomy 6:1-9

Intro: Deuteronomy records three speeches by Moses as he prepares to pass the reins of leadership to Joshua. The people of Israel listen as they are camped on the banks of the Jordan River preparing to enter the Promised Land after 40 years of wandering in the wilderness.

Deuteronomy means “second law.” The Greek translation of Deuteronomy uses the word in Deut. 17:18 where the king is instructed to make a copy of the law—a “second law,” as the word breaks down literally. God wanted the king to know the law well. You have been reading it every day. The king was commanded to copy the law in long hand, letter by letter.

Jesus quotes from this book more than any other in the Old Testament.

I learn many valuable lessons from Moses. Here are two of them:

I. ARTICULATE YOUR GREAT EXPECTATIONS: “the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess”—v1

A. Moses is passing leadership to Joshua. Moses will not enter the Promised Land. He will die and be buried in the wilderness. God is going to do something new in the conquest of Canaan through his servant Joshua. Moses was the great deliverer of God’s people. He was the great law-giver. But Joshua will be the mighty military leader that will secure for them their portion in the land of promise.

This process of “passing the torch” to the new leadership is often a subject of some discussion in the Bible. The Book of Judges records a succession of charismatic leaders who arise for a time to lead Israel against her enemies. These leaders are often people with enormous limitations and moral failings, and the people suffer from their flaws.

The transition from the kingship of Saul to David to Solomon was fraught with difficulty. After Solomon two kings arose and divided Israel into north and south. Even the change from one prophetic voice to another could be a problem.

We should remember as we get older that leadership will inevitably pass to those of the coming generations. Making that transition of leadership is frequently a challenge for strong-willed men used to making decisions and wielding power. But if they are full of grace and humility, they will do all in their power to help their successors succeed.

B. Moses is speaking to the people with the voice of faith. This is obvious in two ways.

1. He calls God “the Lord your God” (6:1). He assumes and affirms that the people of Israel are bowing to the Lordship of the one true God. He is not just the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, or Moses. He is “your God.”

This is the true nature of the covenant with God. God made his covenant with Abraham initially. But the covenant belongs to all the succeeding generations of faith-filled people who desire to belong to God and call him their God.

We cannot be content to simply worship “the God of our fathers.” He must be our God as well. Worship of God is corporate, but it is also very personal. It demands a personal, intimate deep-seated acknowledgment from every individual. Paul said it this way, “If you confess with your mouth ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9).

2. He calls the Promised Land “the land that you will possess” (Deut. 5:33). Like a wise father, Moses is lifting the expectations of the people and their confidence in their God and in themselves. This is language that he uses throughout his speeches.

We can do this with people around us and especially with our children. We cannot say it too much, and we cannot say it enough. If we are wise parents and grandparents we will continually remind our children and grandchildren of the wonderful inheritance they have through the promises of God. We will expect them to secure those promises through faith and obedience. And we will convey our delight in their coming victories.

C. Moses is connecting FAITH and OBEDIENCE. He is affirming and describing their challenge of Faith as they move forward now where they failed to do so 40 years earlier.

1. They are trusting God as they move into this land. They are claiming his promise.

2. They are obeying God as they do this. This is the command of God, to take the land, and they are following God’s command as they do it. Obedience to the commands and decrees of God is an obligation of the covenant relationship with God.

3. Obedience will be a continual obligation in the Promised Land. If they are to enjoy long life and blessings of God in the Land of Promise, they must adhere to the instructions and laws that they have received.

This is our obligation as well. Jesus said, “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not the things that I say?” (Luke 6:46). If Jesus is our Savior and Lord, then every decision and every conversation are crafted to conform to his character and purpose in our lives both in their process and in the end result.

II. AIM FOR THE HEART: These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts—v6:6

If you hear anything, hear this.

A. Love the Lord your God with all your heart...v5

1. Love of God is volitional or it would not be a command.

Therefore it is required of us that we choose to love God.

2. Loving God with all our hearts means that love for him penetrates to the very core of our being.

B. Place the commands of God upon your hearts, not just on your brains or in your social order.

You can place the commands on your hearts in a variety of ways:

1. Impress them on your children. They become part of the family instruction and the family legacy. You set up daily contacts with God's instruction for your children.

2. Talk about them. You do this in every venue of life—walking, entertainment, exercise, eating, working, and leisure.

3. Tie them as symbols on your hands. We have one such symbol that reminds us of the law of God—the wedding band. We should see in our wedding bands—and the bands of others—the call to fidelity, honesty, and loyalty before God. Our wedding bands will help us remember what our obligations are, where they lie, and to whom we report.

If our hands are tied with the laws of God, then what we do—the work we do in the world—will honor him and conform to his will and purpose. This is the binding of the hands.

4. Bind them on your foreheads. We wear eyeglasses, many of us. Those double-lens eyeglasses should remind us that we must see all of life both through the lens of human reason and the lens of faith in God. Our vision is never complete if we are not seeking to capture the viewpoint of God upon our lives and circumstances.

The forehead protects the brain. Binding the laws of God on our forehead means that we do our thinking, planning, and intellectual work within the framework of God's oversight and sovereignty. We have a worldview that is informed by faith in Christ.

5. Write them on the doorframes. Like a welcome mat, the law of God is to be at home in our dwellingplace. Our homes are mission outposts for God's purposes in the world. We are honoring God in our homes, keeping his commandments in our homes, and possessing the Land of Promise in our homes.

The writing reminds us when we enter to whom we belong. It is the continual symbol of our loyalties.

6. Write them on your gates. The sign "Beware of Dog" is often on our gates if we have an angry pet or if we want people to think that we have an angry pet.

The law of God guards the house when it is written on the gates. Every visitor understands the holy and sacred nature of the covenant relationship with God and with one another. We are elevating the covenant relationships, and we are exalting the Savior in our lives. We should never be ashamed of our loyalty to Christ.

Conclusion: Jesus taught us that God was aiming at the heart all along. He never intended that his commands should simply be external trappings, little parchments rolled up and tied to the wrists or foreheads of men. The many reminders of our faith are important to us, but they are not the end which God seeks. He seeks to own our hearts. This is the point and purpose of all his commands. He wants to tether us to himself in a covenant of love.