

THE STRONG EXHORTATION TO THE SECOND GENERATION OF BELIEVERS: OBEY GOD’S LAWS AND ACKNOWLEDGE THE LORD – THAT HE ALONE IS GOD DEUTERONOMY 04:01–43

Introduction

Disrespect for authority is sweeping the earth today. People want few restrictions: they desire to do what they want, when they want, like they want. For years now there has been a continued deterioration of respect for such authority figures as...

- teachers
- ministers
- policemen
- politicians
- physicians
- business persons
- lawyers
- judges
- government employees

The slide of respect has slipped so far that even parents are dishonoured and treated disrespectfully. Parental disrespect is serious, very serious, but there is a disrespect that supersedes all bad behaviour toward others: the disrespect of God Himself. When a person shows dishonour to God, he does so to his own detriment. He is daring the judgment of God to fall upon him, and it will. Scripture declares this loudly and clearly.

God must be honoured, and He is honoured by being obeyed. To show respect for God is to show respect for His law, His commandments. This is the subject of this most important passage of Scripture: *The Strong Exhortation to the Second Generation of Israelite Believers: Obey God’s Laws and Acknowledge That the LORD — He and He Alone — Is God*, Deuteronomy 4:1-43.

- I. Listen to God’s laws and obey His laws: that you may live and inherit the promised land of God (a symbol of heaven, of spiritual conquest and rest) (vv. 1 -5).
- II. Remember the results of obedience: what happens when you carefully obey God’s law (vv. 6-8).
- III. Take heed! Be careful! Guard yourself closely! Do not forget your experience with the LORD nor the Ten Commandments (vv. 9-14).
- IV. Guard against all false gods and false worship (vv. 15-31).
- V. Acknowledge that the LORD — He and He alone — is God (vv. 32-40).
- VI. Remember God’s command to set up cities of refuge (Num 35:13-14): a picture of Christ, our refuge from death and from the storms and threats of life (vv. 41-43).

I. *Deuteronomy 04:01–05 Listen to God’s Laws and Obey His Laws: Inherit the Promised Land of God*

Listen to God’s laws and obey His laws. If a person listens and obeys, he will inherit the promised land of God.

Note the word “now” in verse 1. This refers back to what Moses had already preached:

- ⇒ The great hope but tragic failure that kept the first generation of Israelites out of the promised land — the sins of unbelief, grumbling and rebellion (see notes, Deut 1:6-2:15).
- ⇒ The triumphant victory and warning given by God to the second generation of Israelite believers (see notes, Deut 2:16-3:29).

“Now” — in light of the lessons learned in the past — listen to God’s laws and obey His laws. If you will listen and obey, you will not fall into sin and face the judgment of God as the first generation did. Rather, you will live a fruitful and productive life. Moreover, you will experience the power of God, conquering all the enemies who oppose you as you march into the promised land. You will be victorious and take possession of the promised land. You will know the spiritual conquest and rest of the inheritance promised by God. But note what Moses declared: to know such a fruitful and victorious life God’s people must do three things.

1. They must not add to nor subtract from God’s commandments, but simply obey them (v. 2). God has spoken, stated exactly what He wants to say to man. Nothing more, nothing less is needed. Man is not to tamper with God’s holy commandments, His Holy Word:

⇒ Man must not add his own ideas or thoughts to God’s Word nor the ideas and thoughts of other people.

⇒ Man must not take away from God’s Word, must not omit any statement or requirement of God’s Word.

⇒ Man is to accept God’s Holy Word just as it has been given by God. No person is to attempt to explain away God’s clear commandment in order to justify his sinful behaviour. The commandments of God are adequate, sufficient for life: they are exactly what man needs in order to live a fruitful and productive life, a victorious life conquering all of the enemies of life.

1 Th 2:13 And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.

Rev 22:18-19 I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this scroll: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this scroll. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

Deut 12:32 See that you do all I command you; do not add to it or take away from it.

2. God’s people must not commit the sins of Baal Peor, the sins of immorality and false worship (see notes, Num 25:1-18). This is a primary example of disobedience to God’s commandments. The sins committed at Baal Peor stand as a strong warning

against disobedience. While camped by the Jordan River, thousands had become involved with their pagan neighbours and indulged in sexual relationships. But this was not all: their pagan neighbours had eventually invited them to share in their worship services and socials. The result was inevitable: many of the Israelite believers began to participate in the false worship and commit the gross sin of idolatry. They became guilty not only of immorality but of idolatry as well. They broke the clear commandments of God against idolatry and adultery. They broke the heart of God. The result was the judgment, the chastisement of God's hand. Because of their disobedience, over twenty-four thousand Israelite believers died. It was in this particular rebellion that the last of the first generation died and passed off the scene of human history. Tragically, they had all died because of sin and the inevitable judgment of God against sin.

But this is not the whole story. Note that all who held fast to the LORD lived and escaped the judgment of God. In fact, note exactly what Scripture says: they were all — the obedient — still alive. They were all standing there listening to this sermon preached by Moses. The point is electrifying: the believer must obey the commandments of God. He must not commit the sins of Baal Peor, the sins of immorality and false worship. He must never follow in the footsteps of the disobedient. Disobedience arouses judgment. And judgment falls upon all the disobedient.

Mat 5:28 *“But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”*

Rom 1:18-23 *The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness. Since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.*

1 Cor 6:9-11 *Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*

1 Cor 6:18 *Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body.*

1 Th 4:3-5 *It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honourable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God.*

2 Th 1:7-9 *And give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power.*

Rev 21:8 *But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars — their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death.*

Isa 42:8 *"I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not yield my glory to another or my praise to idols."*

3. God's people must obey God's law even after reaching the promised land. Even after they achieve the spiritual victory and rest of the promised land, they must still continue to obey God's law. There was to be no room for complacency or worldly comfort and rest. So long as a believer was on the earth, he was to be diligent in his worship, in living a holy, distinctive life, and in bearing a strong testimony to his neighbours.

Mat 7:21 *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."*

Mat 7:24-25 *"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock."*

John 15:10 *"If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love."*

John 15:14 *"You are my friends, if you do what I command."*

Deut 26:16 *The LORD your God commands you this day to follow these decrees and laws; carefully observe them with all your heart and with all your soul.*

1 Sam 15:22 *But Samuel replied: "Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams."*

DEUTERONOMY 04:01–02 LAW; JUDGMENTS; COMMANDMENTS; TORAH

Several words are used in this chapter to describe the law of God. Each word is used to stress a different shade of meaning.

1. The word *statute* or *decree* (vv. 1, 45, choq or hoq) means a rule, regulation, decree, statute, commandment or law. The word has the force of being determined once for all, of being cut or chiselled in wood, metal or stone. The statute or decree is fixed, set as a law forever. It has the force of being issued by a king or some legal authority. The *statutes* of God's Word are determined and established forever by the King of the universe, the supreme legal authority over all.
2. The word *judgments* or *laws* (vv. 1, 45, mispal) means a judgment, a legal decision passed down by a judge (Wenham, Gordon J. *The Book of Leviticus*, p. 253); a just decision that must be kept; a law or regulation of true justice; a law that has to be obeyed in order for justice to be done.
3. The word *commandment* or *command* (v. 2, mitsvah or miswah) means a law, order, instruction, ordinance, rule, charge, commission, or command given by some authority, whether human or divine. When a commandment is given by God, it is to be done. The commandments of God are to be obeyed.
4. The word *testimonies* or *stipulations* (v. 45, edah or edut) means a testimony or witness that is given; a stipulation, regulation, or requirement that is demanded. The idea is this: the laws and commandments of God are testimonies to His nature. They are stipulations or requirements of His righteousness.
5. The word *law* (v. 44, Torah) means a precept, statute, regulation, or instruction. It includes the idea of teaching, pointing out, informing, instructing. The picture of the law is that of an arrow shot by an archer. The arrow flies straight to the target, straight to the goal, the objective. So it is with the law (Torah). The law points, directs a person straight to the goal of righteousness, to the objective of *right living*.

But note: the word *law* (Torah) means more than just statutes and regulations. Basically, the law (Torah) means all the instructions and teachings of God. (*The Nelson Study Bible, New King James Version*, p. 292. notes on Deut 1:5). It refers to the entire Pentateuch or Decalogue, (James Strong. *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, #8451) the first five books of the Bible. The law includes all that the LORD commanded (v. 3): the Ten Commandments, the civil and religious laws, and all the other instructions given by God to His people. It is the wonderful law of God (Torah) — the full instruction and teaching of God — that tells people how to live life to the fullest. □

II. *Deuteronomy 04:06–08 Remember the Results of Obedience*

Remember the results of obedience, what happens when you carefully obey God’s law. This is a strong charge: obey — be careful to obey God’s law. It is the law of God that sets God’s people apart and makes them distinctive, a holy and righteous people. When you, as one of God’s people, obey God’s law, three significant things happen. Note the Scripture and outline:

1. You will bear a strong testimony and witness to your neighbours (v. 6). The law of God is full of wisdom and understanding. Any person who studies God’s law clearly sees the wisdom lying behind the law, the impact the law would have upon human behaviour. Any people who would adopt and obey the Ten Commandments would be declared a great nation, a wise and understanding people. This was exactly what God was declaring to the Israelites: if they obeyed His law, they would bear a strong testimony and witness before the world. The world would declare that they were a great nation, a wise and understanding people. Note that Israel’s greatness was not to lie in military strength nor economic wealth; their greatness would lie in the great laws that governed their nation, even the law of God itself, in particular the Ten Commandments.

Psa 19:7 The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.

Prov 28:7 A discerning son heeds instruction.

Psa 19:8 The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

Psa 119:5 Oh, that my ways were steadfast in obeying your decrees!

Psa 119:130 The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.

Hosea 14:9 Who is wise? He will realize these things. Who is discerning? He will understand them. The ways of the LORD are right; the righteous walk in them, but the rebellious stumble in them.

Rom 7:12 So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.

Rom 11:33 Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!

Mat 7:24-27 “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

Heb 4:12 *For the word of God is living active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*

2. You will have the presence and the power of God when you pray (v. 7). Obedience will result in answered prayer. A personal, intimate relationship will be established with God. If a person kept the Ten Commandments, the presence and power of God would be with him, looking after and taking care of him.

John 15:7 *“If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.”*

1 John 3:22 *And receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him.*

2 Chr 7:14 *If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*

Psa 66:18 *If I had cherished sin in my heart, the LORD would not have listened.*

Isa 59:2 *But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.*

Jer 29:13 *You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.*

3. You will learn to cherish the law of God — all because the law was righteous and fair and just (v. 8). The law of God established fair and just treatment between neighbours. By obeying the law, every person will be treated fairly and justly. No partiality or favouritism will be shown; no lawlessness or violence will be tolerated; no unjust weight or treatment will be allowed.

Rom 7:12 *So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.*

1 Tim 1:8 *We know that the law is good if one uses it properly.*

Exo 12:49 *The same law applies both to the native-born and to the foreigner residing among you.*

Lev 24:22 *You are to have the same law for the foreigner and the native-born. I am the LORD your God.*

Num 15:16 *The same laws and regulations will apply both to you and to the foreigner residing among you.*

Psa 37:31 *The law of their God is in their hearts; their feet do not slip.*

Psa 40:8 *I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.*

Psa 119:47 *For I delight in your command because I love them.*

Psa 119:72 *The law from your mouth is more precious to me than thousands of pieces of silver and gold.*

Psa 119:97 Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.

Psa 119:140 Your promises have been thoroughly tested, and your servant loves them.

Jer 31:33 “This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,” declares the LORD. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people

III. Deuteronomy 04:09–14 Take Heed! Be Careful! Guard Yourself Closely!

Take heed! Be careful! Guard yourself closely! Do not forget your experiences with the LORD nor the Ten Commandments. Note that this warning is repeated again in verse 15 and verse 23: *Take heed! Be careful! Watch, guard yourself closely!* Four instructions are given in this warning:

1. First, do not let your experiences with the LORD nor the Ten Commandments slip from your heart (v. 9). The word for *slip* or *depart* (soor or surl) means to depart; to be removed; to be taken away, plucked away, cut off. The Israelite believers had been eyewitnesses of the miraculous salvation of God from Egypt and throughout the wilderness wanderings. They had never seen God with their eyes, but they had seen the works of God, such works as...

- God’s salvation and deliverance
- God’s guidance and direction
- God’s provision and care
- God’s protection and security

God had saved them from Egyptian slavery and set them free. Moreover, He had led them day by day through the forty years of wilderness wanderings. They had experienced God’s presence, guidance and provision day by day. God had given them victory over the enemies who had opposed their march to the promised land. But more than all this, God had given them a deep sense and consciousness of His presence and guidance day by day. They had the very Tabernacle of God’s holy presence in their midst and the pillar of cloud that symbolized His holy presence. Experience after experience with God had been given to the Israelite believers. Their very eyes had seen the mighty salvation and works of God. And God had given them His Holy Word and the Ten Commandments (see v. 13). Because they had been given so much, they must take heed! Be careful! Guard themselves closely! Never forget their experiences with the LORD nor the Ten Commandments. They must never let them slip from their hearts.

2. Second, teach God’s Word and commandments to your children and share your spiritual experiences with them (v. 9). Believers were responsible to teach and educate their children in the ways of the LORD. Note that each generation was to be taught, the children and then their children after them. Generation after generation was to be taught the Word of God, His saving power, provision and guidance day

by day. This would give continuity to the covenant, guaranteeing the continued obedience of God's people. Just as the parents did, the children would live holy and distinctive lives before the surrounding nations. They would be dynamic witnesses to the holy character and demands of the true God (Jehovah, Yahweh). They would be a living testimony to the truth of God's Holy Word and commandments, that they are the commandments from the only living God; therefore, they must be obeyed and taught to the children of all succeeding generations.

3. Third, remember the wonderful experience of God's presence at Mt. Sinai (vv. 10-12). There were two major illustrious experiences in the history of Israel: the exodus from Egypt and the giving of the law at Mt. Sinai. These are the two cardinal experiences that are most remembered throughout Scripture. As Moses preached to the people, he challenged them to remember the day they stood before the LORD and experienced the wonderful presence of God Himself. God gave a visible manifestation of His presence for two primary purposes:

=> to teach them to fear and reverence Him

=> to stir them to teach His Holy Word and commandments to their children

God's presence descended upon Mt. Sinai in a most glorious, frightening appearance. The descent of God's presence upon Mt. Sinai was symbolized in blazing fire with flames reaching up into the dark, black clouds and with deep darkness surrounding the mountain (v. 11). Then all of a sudden, God's booming voice spoke out of the fire (v. 12). Words were heard, but no form was seen. There was only a voice speaking out of the fire.

4. Fourth, remember and obey the covenant God proclaimed, the Ten Commandments (v. 13). The Ten Commandments were given by God Himself; therefore, God's people are to obey them. Note that they were written in permanent form upon two stone tablets. The permanence of the Ten Commandments stresses the importance of learning and obeying them. Also note that all the statutes and judgments or laws and decrees are mentioned; that is, the entire Word of God — all the commandments and laws of God — were to be obeyed by God's people as they entered and lived in the promised land.

Thought 1. There are three significant lessons for us in this point.

- (1) We must not let our experiences with the LORD nor His Word slip from our hearts.

We must never backslide, never slide away from God.

Luke 9:62 Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

1 Cor 10:12 So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!

Gal 1:6-9 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel — which is really no

gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!

Heb 10:38 *But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him.*

Rev 2:4 *“Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love.”*

Prov 14:14 *The faithless will be fully repaid for their ways.*

Isa 1:4 *Ah, sinful nation, a people loaded with guilt, a brood of evildoers, children given to corruption! They have forsaken the LORD; they have spurned the Holy One of Israel and turned their backs on him.*

Hos 11:7 *My people are determined to turn from me. Even though they call me God Most High, I will by no means exalt them.*

(2) We must teach the Word of God and the Ten Commandments to our children. We must teach them to walk in the ways of the LORD.

2 Tim 2:15 *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.*

Deut 4:9 *Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them.*

Deut 6:6-7 *These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.*

Deut 11:18-19 *Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them [God’s Word] to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.*

Prov 22:6 *Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.*

(3) We must obey the commandments of God. There is to be no exception: no person is exempt from any of the Ten Commandments.

John 14:21 *“Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.”*

John 14:23 *Jesus replied, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”*

John 15:10 *“If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love.”*

John 15:14 *“You are my friends, if you do what I command.”*

Rev 22:14 *Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.*

Prov 28:7 *A discerning son heeds instruction, but a companion of gluttons disgraces his father.*

IV. Deuteronomy 04:15–31 Guard Against All False Gods and False Worship

Guard against all false gods and false worship. This is a detailed warning against the dangers of idolatry and false worship. The warning was an absolute essential, for the Israelites had already corrupted themselves at the golden calf incident and at Baal Peor (see notes Exo 32:1-35; Num 25:1-18). All forms of wickedness, idolatry and false worship have swept the earth and influenced believers from the beginning of time. So it was to be with the Israelite believers: they were constantly going to be tempted by the false worship and customs of the surrounding nations. They must, therefore, take heed! Be careful! Watch themselves closely! Moses preached six reasons why the believer must guard against all false gods and false worship:

1. You must guard against idolatry and false worship because you have seen no form of God (v. 15). God did not appear in visible form at Mt. Sinai. In a spectacular display of majestic glory, God did speak to the people and they heard His voice. They even saw a blazing fire with flames reaching up into the very heavens — all in the midst of black clouds and deep darkness. But they saw no form, no image of God. Scripture declares that God is Spirit; therefore, no form, no image or idol, is ever to be made to represent God. God created man; man does not create God. Therefore, man must not devise false gods nor false worship.

John 4:24 *“God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth.”*

1 John 5:1 *Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well.*

Gen 01:27 *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*

2. You must guard against false gods and false worship because they will corrupt you (vv. 16-19). The word corrupt (shachath or sahat) means destroyed, decayed, spoiled, utterly wasted, ruined, corrupted, devastated, laid waste, struck down.

A strong warning is issued against the three specific forms of idolatry and false worship:

- => The worship of people (v. 16). Far too often a person admires, loves and becomes attached or devoted to another person more than to God. Hero worship is a common form of idolatry.

=> The worship of animals (vv. 17-18). Down through the centuries some people have worshipped animals, such as serpents, crocodiles and cows. Tragically, some people show more affection and attention to animals and pets than to other people and God.

The worship of nature (v. 19). There are people who take something within creation and make it an object of worship. But there are others who worship nature as a whole, who show more affection and attention to nature and the enjoyment of it than to other people and God. Note what Scripture says: believers must not be enticed to worship nature or the things of nature. The heavenly bodies — all of nature — was given by God to serve man, not man to serve nature.

Acts 17:29 Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone — an image made by man's design and skill.

Rom 1:20-23 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

1 John 5:21 Dear children, keep yourselves from idols.

Exo 20:4 You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.

Lev 26:1 Do not make idols or set up an image or a sacred stone for yourselves, and do not place a carved stone in your land to bow down before it. I am the LORD your God.

Deut 11:16 Be careful, or you will be enticed to turn away and worship other gods and bow down to them.

Isa 42:8 "I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not yield my glory to another or my praise to idols."

3. You must guard against false gods and false worship because God saved you to be His people, His special inheritance. God saved you out of the furnace of iron, out of the enslavement of Egypt (v. 20). Remember: Egypt is a symbol of the enslavement of the world. Being enslaved is a terrible experience: it is just like living in an iron furnace. But God had saved His people out of enslavement, saved them to be His very special people, His very special inheritance and possession.

John 15:16 "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit — fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name."

1 Pet 2:9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

Exo 19:5-6 “Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.”

Deut 7:6 For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.

Deut 14:2 For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. Out of all the peoples on the face of the earth, the LORD has chosen you to be his treasured possession.

Deut 26:18-19 And the LORD has declared this day that you are his people, his treasured possession as he promised, and that you are to keep all his commands. He has declared that he will set you in praise, fame and honour high above all the nations he has made and that you will be a people holy to the LORD your God, as he promised.

Psa 4:3 Know that the LORD has set apart his faithful servant for himself; the LORD hears when I call to him.

Psa 28:9 Save your people and bless your inheritance; be their shepherd and carry them forever. (see Psa 33:12; 68:9; 78:62-71; 79:1; 94:14; Joel 2:17; 3:2; Mica 7:14,18).

4. You must guard against idolatry and false worship because God judges those who sin. All who continue in sin will be barred from the promised land of God, never experiencing the spiritual conquest and rest promised by God. When the Israelite believers committed adultery and idolatry with their neighbours, they were barred from the promised land. Even Moses himself, the dear servant of God, was held accountable and was barred because of his terrible sin. (See notes, Num 20:1-13.) There is only one safeguard against judgment — that of obedience (vv. 23-24).
 - => The believer must not forget the covenant of the LORD, the Ten Commandments. He must obey them in order to escape the judgment of God (v. 23).
 - => The believer must not make any idol of God nor engage in any false worship. He must never worship a false god. False worship and idolatry will arouse the judgment of God (v. 23).
 - => The reason is clearly stated by Scripture: the LORD is a consuming fire, a jealous God. This is stern language, but idolatry and false worship are serious offenses against God. A person who commits idolatry and engages in false worship turns away from the very source of life, the Creator and Sovereign LORD of the universe. A person who rejects God — who denies and curses God — who rebels and raises his fist up in the face of God — who turns to the worship of false gods — that person dishonours God. That person is bound to arouse the jealousy of God and arouse the consuming fire of His judgment. Again, God judges those who sin. Therefore, if a person commits idolatry or false worship, he will face the judgment of God and be barred from the

promised land of God. Note the judgment that is to fall upon idolaters and false worshippers:

Rom 1:18, 29-31 *The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness.... They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless.*

Rom 14:12 *So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.*

1 Cor 6:9-10 *Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.*

Gal 5:19-21 *The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

Rev 21:8 *But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars — their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death.*

5. You must guard against false gods and false worship because of the strong warning and prophecy of God. If you commit these two terrible sins, you will be removed, barred from the promised land (vv. 25-28). Remember, Moses is standing before the people preaching this *strong warning* to them.
 - a. False worship will cause you to be judged even after you have lived in the promised land for a long time (v. 25). The warning is clear: once the people had settled down in the promised land, there was the danger that they would become comfortable, at ease and satisfied. The result? Complacency would creep into their lives and they would forget God.
 - b. False worship will cause heaven and earth to witness against you (vv. 26-28). All the beings within heaven and earth will be eyewitnesses of your idolatry and false worship, standing as witnesses against your terrible sins. Note the results:
 - ⇒ The idolaters and false worshippers would perish, be removed from the promised land (v. 26).
 - ⇒ The idolaters and false worshippers would be scattered among the peoples of the world with only a few surviving. This is a picture of believers returning to worldliness (v. 27).
 - ⇒ The idolaters and false worshippers would worship man-made gods that were lifeless, unable to see or hear or eat or smell (v. 28). In times of trouble and need,

the false gods would be unable to help. The sinful and disobedient would be left to themselves: they would have only the limited, frail help that other people could give. The only living and true God would not be available to meet their needs, for they would be separated, alienated from Him.

Rom 6:23 *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Heb 2:3 *How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him.*

Psa 66:18 *If I had cherished sin in my heart, the LORD would not have listened.*

Isa 59:2 *But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.*

Isa 64:7 *No one calls on your name or strives to lay hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us and made us waste away because of our sins.*

Ezek 18:4 *The soul who sins is the one who will die.*

6. You must guard against idolatry and false worship because of the glorious promise of God (vv. 29-31). There is hope for the rebel, for any who rebel against God, turning to false idols and false worship. Keep in mind that this is a prophecy concerning Israel, but it is applicable to any generation of believers.
 - a. God makes a wonderful promise to sinful rebels: if they will diligently seek Him with all of their hearts and souls, they will find Him (v. 29). The word “find” (matsa or masa) means to acquire, meet, get a hold upon, take hold of, discover, reach, attain. The idea is that the person who diligently seeks the LORD — who seeks Him with all his heart and soul — will find God. He will be accepted by God and brought into the very presence of God, for communion and fellowship with Him.
 - b. God makes another wonderful promise: when the sinful rebel suffers distress out in the world, he will repent and return to God. Repentance will give him a new beginning, a new start with God. The repentant sinner will worship God and worship Him alone. He will obey God.
 - c. God also gave the wonderful promise of His mercy (v. 31). God is merciful and He will not forget His covenant with Israel’s forefathers. He confirmed the covenant with an oath, swearing that He would fulfil His promise. Therefore, when any believer repents and turns to God, God will have mercy and save him. God saves all who truly repent and return to Him, worshipping Him and His dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. (See notes, Rom 1 1:1-10; 11:11-16; 11:17-24; 11:25-36.)

Acts 2:38 *Peter replied, “Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”*

Acts 3:19 *Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.*

1 John 1:9 *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

2 Chr 7:14 *If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*

Prov 28:13 *He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.*

Isa 55:7 *Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.*

Ezek 18:21 *But if a wicked man turns away from all the sins he has committed and keeps all my decrees and does what is just and right, he will surely live; he will not die.*

Ezek 18:31 *Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die, O house of Israel?*

V. Deuteronomy 04:32–40 Acknowledge the LORD; He and He Alone Is God

Acknowledge that the LORD — He and He alone — is God. All of a sudden, standing before the people and preaching with fire in his heart, Moses is gripped with a deep sense of God’s presence. The very person of God — just who God is in all of His wonderful person and wonderful works — floods the heart of Moses. He begins to wax eloquent and describe just who God is. Using a series of questions and statements, he declares that the dramatic revelation of God’s holy presence at Mt. Sinai was the greatest event in human history up to that time. Nowhere else has such an event ever taken place.

Note that this passage is poetic, one of the most beautiful passages in Scripture. The focus is on God, His wonderful nature and His works. Three eloquent questions are asked in the first three verses (vv. 32-34). And then statement after statement is made — all to reveal the person and works of God Himself. A brief reading of the Scripture and outline will show the reader how Moses heaps word upon word in order to reveal that the LORD — He and He alone — is God.

1. The LORD is the great Creator of man, the Creator who has done marvellous things for His people. God has done things never before done or heard about (v. 32). It is God who created man, and it is God who revealed Himself at Mt. Sinai and established His covenant, the Ten Commandments, with His people. Nothing like this event has ever happened before, not since the creation of man upon earth. In fact, a person could ask from one end of the heavens to the other whether such an important event had ever taken place, and the answer would be: “No!” God and God alone is the great Creator who has done marvellous things for His people, things never before done or heard about.
2. The LORD is the God of communication. God talks with man, reveals Himself by speaking with His people (v. 33). At Mt. Sinai, God spoke with His people out of

the fire. Note that they were not stricken dead, but they lived. The implication is striking: in an ordinary situation, the holiness of God would strike out and consume any person standing in the presence of God. But at Mt. Sinai, God's purpose was to give His commandments to His people in such a way that they would never forget the experience. Therefore, God allowed the people to see the revelation of His glory and majesty. The point is clear: God does reveal Himself and communicate with His people. He actually speaks, gives His Word to His people.

2 Tim 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.

2 Pet 1:21 For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

3. The LORD is the God of power and might and of miraculous works. God acts on behalf of His dear people: He works for them. These works were demonstrated in His dealings with Egypt when He delivered His people from slavery (v. 34).
4. The LORD is the only living and true God (Jehovah, Yahweh, v. 35). Note what Moses declared: the revelation of God was for one purpose and one purpose only — so that people might know that the LORD is God. There is no other God besides Him.
5. The LORD is the God of discipline and holiness (v. 36). God gave His commandments in order to discipline His people. The covenant, the Ten Commandments, provided discipline by showing the people how to live and by correcting them when they disobeyed. The blazing fire on the mount was a symbol of God's holiness. When God's presence first descended in the blazing fire upon the mountain, the people became terrified and trembled before the LORD. They were in danger of being consumed by the holiness of God, and they were forced to keep a great distance between themselves and God's holy presence (Exo 19:16-21).
6. The LORD is the God of love and salvation (v. 37). His love is proven by the deliverance of His people out of Egypt (a symbol of the world). God loves His dear people; therefore, He saves them from the enslavement of this world. And note how He saves them: by His presence and mighty power.
7. The LORD is the God who gives victory over all enemies and who guides His dear people to the promised land (v. 38). God alone can give a victorious life to a person; God alone can guide a person to the promised land. No other being — on earth or in heaven, physical or spiritual — can empower man enough to conquer all the enemies of life, enemies such as...
 - disease
 - sinful behaviour
 - depression
 - accident
 - death
 - discouragement
 - selfishness
 - loneliness
 - hopelessness
 - purposelessness
 - emptiness
 - helplessness

God alone has the power to conquer all the enemies of life. Therefore, a person must allow the Spirit of God to live in his heart. It is the power of God's Spirit — and His Spirit alone — that can empower us to conquer and be victorious as we march throughout life. It is God alone who holds the keys to the promised land, who can lead His people to the promised inheritance.

8. The LORD is Sovereign — He is God over all in heaven and on earth (v. 39). He and He alone is the only living and true God. Note the strong challenge and appeal of Moses: Know this fact! Acknowledge it! Take it to heart! Keep it firmly in mind! It is the LORD Himself who is the Sovereign God, who rules and reigns over all that is in heaven above and on earth below. There is no other.
9. The LORD is the God who demands obedience (v. 40). Therefore, the people of God must keep His laws and commandments. They must obey God. If they obey, the most wonderful result will take place:
 - => Things will go well with them. They will live a fruitful and productive life, a life full of love, joy and peace.
 - => They will live a long life in the promised land of God. They will possess a victorious life, know what it is to triumph and conquer all the trials and temptations that oppose life. They will know what it is to experience spiritual rest and comfort, confidence and assurance, satisfaction and fulfilment — all throughout life. This is the fruit of obedience, the life that results from obeying God.

Thought 1. We must acknowledge that the LORD — He and He alone — is God. There is none other. There is only one living and true God.

Exo 15:11 “Who among the gods is like you, O LORD? Who is like you — majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?”

2 Sam 7:22 “How great you are, Sovereign LORD! There is no one like you, and there is no God but you, as we have heard with our own ears.”

1 Kng 8:23 And said, “LORD, the God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth below — you who keep your covenant of love with your servants who continue wholeheartedly in your way.”

1 Chr 17:20 “There is no one like you, LORD, and there is no God but you, as we have heard with our own ears.”

Psa 89:6 For who in the skies above can compare with the LORD? Who is like the LORD among the heavenly beings?

Isa 40:18-23 With whom, then, will you compare God? To what image will you liken him? As for an idol, a metalworker casts it, and a goldsmith overlays it with gold and fashions silver chains for it. A person too poor to present such an offering selects wood that will not rot; they look for a skilled worker to set up an idol that will not topple. Do you not know? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the

beginning? Have you not understood since the earth was founded? He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers. He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in. He brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing.

VI. Deuteronomy 04:41–43 Set Up Cities of Refuge: A Picture of Christ, Our Refuge

Remember God’s command to set up cities of refuge. And remember, the cities of refuge are a picture of Christ, our refuge from death and from the storms and threats of life. (See notes, 1 Num 35:9-34.)

The cities of refuge were to be a place of safety for any person who was guilty of accidental manslaughter. The cities of refuge were off limits to any person who sought revenge (the avenger of blood). By law the guilty party was protected as long as he remained in the city. Six locations altogether were to be chosen, three in East Jordan and three in the promised land itself. Some time after Moses preached the message covered in this particular chapter, he set aside three cities of refuge in the land that had already been conquered, the territory of East Jordan. The cities of refuge in East Jordan were:

- ⇒ Bezer, which was to serve as a refuge for the tribe of Reuben
- ⇒ Gilead Ramoth, which was to serve as a refuge for the tribe of Gad
- ⇒ Golan, which was to serve as a refuge for the half-tribe of Manasseh

Thought 1. The LORD is our Refuge from the threats and storms of life. Scripture declares four wonderful truths about the protection the LORD gives us.

(1) The LORD is our Refuge.

Deut 33:27 *The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. He will drive out your enemy before you, saying, ‘Destroy him!’*

Psa 27:5 *For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent and set me high upon a rock.*

Psa 31:20 *“In the shelter of your presence you hide them from all human intrigues; you keep them safe in your dwelling from accusing tongues.”*

Psa 46:1 *“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.”*

Psa 71:3 *“Be my rock of refuge, to which I can always go; give the command to save me, for you are my rock and my fortress.”*

Prov 14:26 *Whoever fears the LORD has a secure fortress, and for their children it will be a refuge.*

Prov 18:10 *“The name of the LORD is a fortified tower; the righteous run to it and are safe.”*

Isa 25:4 *You have been a refuge for the poor, a refuge for the needy in his distress, a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat. For the breath of the ruthless is like a storm driving against a wall.*

(2) The LORD is our Hiding Place.

Psa 17:8 “Keep me as the apple of the eye; Hide me under the shadow of thy wings.”

Psa 27:5 For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent and set me high upon a rock.

Psa 31:20 “In the shelter of your presence you hide them from all human intrigues; you keep them safe in your dwelling from accusing tongues.”

Psa 32:7 You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.

Psa 64:2 “Hide me from the conspiracy of the wicked, from the plots of evildoers.”

Psa 119:114 You are my refuge and my shield; I have put my hope in your word.”

Psa 143:9 “Rescue me from mine enemies, LORD, for I hide myself in you.”

(3) The LORD is our Shield in protecting us.

Gen 15:1 After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.”

Psa 33:20 We wait in hope for the LORD; he is our help and our shield.

Psa 84:11 For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favour and honour; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless.

Psa 115:9 All you Israelites, trust in the LORD — he is their help and shield.

Prov 30:5 Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.

(4) The LORD is our Atoning Sacrifice who delivers us from the avenger of death.

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

John 11:26 “And whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

Rom 2:7 To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honour and immortality, he will give eternal life.

1 Cor 15:26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

1 Cor 15:53-54 For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”

2 Cor 5:1 Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.

1 Th 4:17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.

2 Tim 1:10 *But it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.*

Heb 2:9 *But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honour because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.*

Heb 2:14-15 *Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil — and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.*

Rev 21:4 *He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.*

Isa 25:8 *He will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth. The LORD has spoken. ■*

DEUTERONOMY 04:43 CITY OF BEZER

Bezer was a city of refuge established in the territory assigned to Reuben (Deut 4:43; Josh 20:8). Bezer, like the other cities of refuge, was established to be a place of safety for any person who was guilty of accidental manslaughter. Later on, it was given to the Levites as a city in which they could live (Josh 21:36). □

DEUTERONOMY 04:43 CITY OF GILEAD RAMOTH

Gilead Ramoth was a city of refuge established in the territory assigned to the tribe of Gad (Deut 4:43; Josh 20:8). Ramoth, like the other cities of refuge, was established to be a safe place for any person who was guilty of accidental manslaughter. It, too, was given to the Levites as a city in which they could live (Josh 21:29). Note that Ramoth is also known as Jarmuth. □

DEUTERONOMY 04:43 CITY OF GOLAN

Golan was a city of refuge established in the territory assigned to the half-tribe of Manasseh (Deut 4:43; Josh 20:8). Golan, like the other cities of refuge, was established as a place of shelter for any person who was guilty of accidental manslaughter. Later on, it became a Levitical city, a city in which the Levites lived (Josh 21:27). □