

The covenant which God cut with Israel was based around the commandments in a similar way to that of the Royal Covenant of the Messiah. No one can know Jesus unless they are engaged in keeping his commandments, only then can anyone truly appreciate and value him for what he has accomplished. Before the time of Messiah, there was the time of the Law.

Jesus certainly read this section as he quotes from it in the temptation in the wilderness in Matthew 4v4 and Luke 4v4. *“Man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD”*. He used its message to resist the trial of natural hunger, by focusing upon the spiritual aspects of nutrition. This appeal to the totality of the Word and should remind us all that we cannot be partial in our approach to the Bible. It is not up to us to decide which parts of scripture we support or which we will read, but that God has provided the whole of the Bible to communicate His mind to mankind.

It is all the commandments that must command our attention. The Law is not a loose conglomerate of disparate rulings but a cohesive entity of the expression of the divine mind. Seeking understanding by approaching the Bible in this way builds a more comprehensive picture of God's actions and intentions. Only if we are listening to what God is actually saying will we gain any understanding.

“All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do that you may live”. There is no qualification that it is acceptable to uphold a few, some, the majority of God's commandments, but a necessity to keep all of them. However the ability of men and women to keep all the commandments is suspect. Has God then placed an impossible goal for the nation of Israel to keep?

The essence of the answer must be that God knows that He is doing and that therefore there must be a way for this to be possible. The commandments contain a mechanism for dealing with failure. This inbuilt acceptance of human limitations is the realistic way that God treats the weakness of the flesh. The commandment to sacrifice for trespasses and sin recognises this. Keeping all the commandments then implies that the nation keeps the whole of the system as an integral structure not the need to be free of any error or mistakes.

By the time that Moses was delivering this information to the people of Israel there had already been many sins from individual transgressions like Nadab and Abihu to the wholesale rebellion at Kadesh Barnea. God was not mocking Israel for past failures, but motivating Israel to establishing the purpose of the nation, to manifest God in their midst to each other and also to the other nations at large. He was promising to bless the nation on the condition that the Law of Moses was implemented as the national means of delivering a godly society.

The Land promised is described as *“a good land”*. It is fruitful, and capable of hosting a large and growing population, and the danger which Moses warned the people about was that of complacency. *“When thou hast eaten and art full then thou shalt bless the LORD thy good for the good land which He hath given thee. Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God in not keeping His commandments”*. Affluence eats into faith. When

the belly is full God is put out of the mind and thoughts stray to other considerations, which are more self-serving.

During the previous forty years God provided His divine protection in the provision of Manna from heaven, the preservation of clothing and the prevention of various diseases and ailments. They were blessed as no other nation has been before or since.

The chapter ends with a threat to eradicate Israel – “*I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish*”. This is a serious warning. God has personally put His name. Did He ever have any real intention to destroy Israel? The determining factor is that Israel had to be different from other nations otherwise they would be destroyed because they would not be Israel, prince with God- but just another wayward nation. The comparison that is drawn is between “*the nations which the LORD destroyed before thy face*”. In a sense if they deserted God then they were already dead because their purpose to be His representatives would have collapsed.

The way for Israel to be different was to fully embrace the law of Moses through the keeping of the commandments. This was not some vague notion of goodness or kindness but the specifics of defined laws which the rest of the Book of Deuteronomy will go on to set out as the restating and clarification of God’s will for all His children but beginning with that nation. It was therefore to be a blueprint for a society to live in keeping with the standards which God had instigated.

All of God’s dealing with His people was for the purpose that “*He might humble thee, that He might prove thee, to do thee good **In the latter end***”. God works for the longer term. He knew whether or not Israel would live up to His requirements and was setting out how their ultimate fate would be determined.

The latter end of Israel is treated more fully in other passages. Here the positive blessings will be seen in the Kingdom age, when different commandments, those of the Messiah, will enable the substance of what God intended to do to benefit Israel would at last be fully realised.

As Jesus personally kept these requirements of honouring ALL the commandments, God will reward him with the fulfilment of these blessings in a very personal way. It is because he will be the inheritor of these boons that it is important that if others unable to keep all these commandments, or even honour the structure and system of these divine laws, without transgression or hypocrisy, attach themselves to him through being baptised onto his Name and to aspire to keep his commandments so that their place in this wonderful future can be realised also.