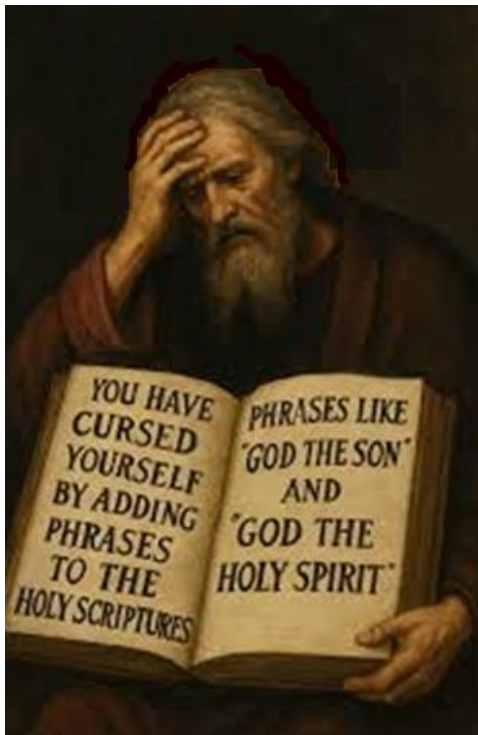




The image here is a cartoon showing the way in which people who claim to be Christians today, have either not read this chapter in Deuteronomy, or do not understand what they have read, - or have read it, and understand it, but believe that the rules of God do not apply to them.

The principles which God taught Israel as a nation in how they should serve and love God, and keep his commandments have not changed. The relevance of Deuteronomy, indeed, of the whole of the

Torah or Pentateuch as it is also known, the first five books of the Bible is not just as valid today, as the day Moses presented the words to the nation of Israel.

This fourth chapter of Deuteronomy, begins a new section of the book. In the previous three chapters, Moses was reminding the nation assembled before him, of their recent history, and the experiences which the previous generation had gone through. Moses was getting them ready for entry into the promised land and wanted them to be mindful of their previous failures, and to use the wisdom gained through experience to serve God better than those who went before, here in chapter four, he exhorts them, encouraging them, and urging them.

After this chapter 4 then from chapter 5 onwards would begin a long description of the statutes and commandments which the nation should carefully listen to.

This chapter 4 is stressing the importance and relevance of what is to follow.

As part of the importance they were informed:

2 *You shall not add* unto the word which I command you, neither shall you diminish ought from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.

This is a key verse which reminds us of other passages in scripture, which underlines a foundational principle. God's word is inspired. It must not be corrupted by changes, additions or subtractions of the inventions and imaginations of men. The Bible is consistent in this, from the start – here in Deuteronomy; and in the middle of the Bible:

Proverbs 30:6: *Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.*

And at the end of the Bible: Revelation 22:18: *For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:*

To demonstrate the truth of God's word, and to prove the truth in the curse which befalls those who add or take away from scripture, Moses reminds them of their own personal experience:

3: *Your eyes have seen* what the Lord did because of Baalpeor: for all the men that followed Baalpeor, the Lord thy God hath destroyed them from among you.

Could they deny what they have seen with their own eyes?! Seems obvious, such evidence surely cannot be denied! But we must not be so sure, human nature is easily deceived and very forgetful. Jesus observed: Luke 16:31: *And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.*

If something is seen, it does not enhance faith, and can easily be explained away. Hebrews 11:1: Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things **not seen**.

The men at Baal Peor had also seen the hand of God at work in their midst, and still did not believe God, and so perished by the plague. These satninding before Moses, saw with their own eyes those who dies of the plague, would it change them? Moses knew it wopuldnet, as he goes on to predict. However he did say:

*4: But you that did **cleave** unto the Lord your God are alive every one of you this day.* Cleave – Hebrew *dabek* to adhere, to stick closer.

That was the difference, those who stuck close – who joined themselves, who became as one with God were not led astray, and that was and is the spirit, and the only way to resist corruption.

Moses commended them in this, but urged them that in this spirit they were to continue as they advanced into the land – in obedience to those laws and statutes that he would remind them of.

Verse 6 is also a key verse for them and for us:

6 Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.

The Keeping and the Doing would be a direct manifestation of their Wisdom and Understanding – not to themselves but to those looking on, - which highlights the very reason why Israel were chosen as a nation in the first place: As an example and as a beacon, as a lesson and teaching to all the other nations – to manifest the glorious character of God, and His Wisdom, and Understanding. They were to be a living embodiment of the Law of God in action. When they did obey – we can see what affect it had on the nations – Moab, Midian, the Amorites, the Canaanites all were frightened and – just look at the observations and descriptions of Israel by Balaam the false prophet who was forced to describe Israel in such glowing terms in Numbers 24:5-9.

As Moses powerfully stated:

7-8: For what nation is there so great, who has God so near unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for?

And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?

Again Numbers 23:9 and 21 illustrate the point. Interestingly King David partly quotes this verse in 2 Samuel 7:23, clearly alluding to it, what a inestimable privilege – above all nations, all peoples, to be called and chosen to represent the Name of God, and assured such promises through the Holy Covenant – what honour, but - what also grave responsibility – not just for Israel after the flesh, but also Israel after the spirit – Let us be mindful of the teachings of Paul in Romans 11!

Verse 9: Moses says

Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently lest you forget the things you have seen and disregard them for the rest of your life; instead teach them to your children and grandchildren.

“Take heed” This phrase is found just 37 times in the Old Testament, but 10 times in Deuteronomy, and 3 times in this chapter: v9, 15 and 23. *Watch yourself and watch your soul very carefully!* is the Hebrew.

It is a personal responsibility – no one else can be blamed. Oh, - it is the human way, always to blame others, blame the past, blame circumstances – and thus to effectively blame God. We are who we are, because we ourselves are to blame. We fail because we allow it.

By watching ourselves carefully – controlling ourselves – taking responsibility (not allowing the indulgence of the words I can't help it!) we automatically take care of our soul - our very life. Jesus brought every thought into captivity (2 Corinthians 10:5) and in doing so took captivity captive (Psalm 68:18). The Lord Christ took heed to himself, and thus preserved his soul, his life.

Israel as a nation were called to do just that. They would live long in the land – and if they cleaved to the Lord would also have life more abundantly (John 10:10)

Next, Moses called their attention to the time of their main assembly, when they were to receive the law at the foot of the mountain called Horeb. They all gathered together in the families and tribes and witnessed the mount on fire, amidst the great darkness and blackness, and how they all heard the voice of God, they heard – but saw *no similitude* – no shape or appearance. They all witnessed the glory and burning of the fire, and experienced the shaking of the mount – and that was all too terrifying for them! Moses saw the similitude – see Numbers 12: 8 – in the form of an angel, and so did the Apostles in the form of the Son – see Hebrews 1:3.

It was because lack of faith and fear that the nation could not at that time draw near to God (even though later in Exodus 24:10 the elders also saw the similitude) But at that time it was the Voice that declared the Words of Truth

And Moses reminded them of the commandments which had been written on the two stones by the hand of God. At this point Moses decided not to remind them that these stones were subsequently smashed because of their dreadful idolatry – he was sure they knew what happened next! (Golden Calf incident)

But instead Moses went straight to the core of the matter – because they did not see the similitude of God, and heard only the Voice, they as humans, who suffer the awkward, backsliding, reprobate, obstinate and sheer perverse sinful nature would from then on attempt to worship a god which had no voice but would be in the similitude of something they could see!

In other words they refused to believe in something they couldn't see – even though the voice and the evidence was there, but then invented something from their own imagination that they could see but had no evidence and no life at all. What Israel did is exactly what evolutionist and atheists, Catholics and Muslims and all other apostates do – in short the vast and overwhelming majority of all human beings. Yes, even ourselves, who know the Truth and have

heard the Voice and seen the Evidence today we can worship – ourselves.

The privilege can soon be forgotten.

Moses reminded them how they had been taken from the intense heat of the persecution of Egypt, saved from certain death, to be a purchased people, a lost people enslaved, to now a *people of inheritance* – verse 20. What a transition, what a salvation, what a transformation – they had all seen it and lived it.

How could they deny their Saviour? This chapter is such a lesson on the fickleness of human nature.

Moses ruefully included himself in it, he also was subject to the failure of human nature – v21,22, how because God was angry with him, - for their sakes, he was to die before going into the land. But this would not and must not affect their resolve! They were verse 23 to ***Take heed unto yourselves.***

For says Moses: 24 ***For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God.***

Yes! they knew that – they had experienced it at the Mount!, *the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire* (Exodus 24:17). The Word of God was designed to burn away human nature, sinful thoughts, sinful actions human thought. The fire of affliction will perfect faith, for gold, which is a symbol of tried faith (1 Pet. 1:7) is never destroyed but only purified by fire. So God is still a consuming fire, and this verse is quoted by the Apostle in Hebrews 12:28-29, so we must take heed to ourselves.

Moses goes onto to explain the continued relevance of the Word of God, the Divine Presence, the consuming fire , and he uses words which are actually a prediction – a prophecy:

25,26 ***When thou shalt beget children, and children's children, and ye shall have remained long in the land, and shall corrupt yourselves, ... I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto ye go over***

Jordan to possess it; ye shall not prolong your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed.

Moses proceeds to predict how they will be scattered among the nations, and how they would return to the servitude in Egypt, in more ways than one, serving idols of wood and stone. He predicted how though that when they repent ***even in the latter days***, That God would not forsake them, and not forget the covenant which He made with them.

This is a precursor of the remarkable prophecy we see in detail of the history of the nation of Isarel mapped out as one continuous prophecy in chapter 28, but there is even enough here, to provide that evidence of the consuming fire of God, but His merciful kindness at the same time. – Even His similitude.

Moses after delivering this powerful and uplifting exhortation then demonstrated the truth of Gods word, and that He means what He says – by selecting three cities on the East of Jordan, amongst the land which had been taken by Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh, and allocated them to be three cities of refuge in fulfilment of the promise and commandment given.

The nation is witnessing this, could see evidence with their own eyes a fulfilment of an earlier prophecy, a commandment of the organisation which would take place upon them entering into their inheritance, and now – sure enough, just as they were about to go in – that organisation was commencing just as God had ordained.

Brother Terry