

June 26, 2022

“Love God, Love People”
Lesson 4 of Unit

Deut. 10:12-22, 16:18-20

Intro

Loving God, who we cannot see, has to be different from loving people, whom we can see and interact with. For example, we can love people by meeting a need they have. But God lacks nothing, so we can't love Him in the same way we do with people.

Today's passage from Deuteronomy 10 is for those who strive to love God. In it, Moses is speaking to the generation which follows the ones prevented from entering the Promised Land. He gives the people the same legal requirements God expects, but more like a sermon and less like a legal code. Moses tells the people that there was nothing special about Israel that made God set it apart for the special purpose He has in mind for it. Israel was chosen by God's grace and favor alone. After telling them this, Moses presents to the people an overview of the life to which God has called His people.

Read Deuteronomy 10:12-22

1. vs. 12: Moses first gives the people four things they are to do: *fear, walk, love, serve*

These are not four distinct, different things

Rather, they all have something in common

What are they directing the people to do?

The answer comes in the next verse

2. vs. 13: All the previous four are connected to the next thing Moses commands the people to do:

Observe the Lord's commands

Israel cannot claim to *fear* the Lord, *walk* in His ways, *love* Him, or *serve* Him if they do not *observe* His commandments

In Deut. 6:5-6, loving God with all one's heart is connected with keeping His commands

In Deut. 11:13, obeying God's commandments is linked with loving God

This idea of obeying = loving is also in Deut. 13:3-4, 26:16-17 and 30:2-6, and 10

God's call to Israel is to carry out the mission He has set out for them

They are to be the nation through which the Christ comes into the world

They are to be a witness for God to all the nations

The way the nation will fulfill this mission is to love God (obey His commandments)

3. vs. 14-15: These two verses are Moses' reminder of God's greatness and Israel's favor from God
God owns the heavens and the earth and everything in them

What does that leave to Israel? Nothing—they own nothing on this earth

So why have they been chosen?

God “set His affection” on their forefathers first, and now on them

It was not because Israel has done anything outstanding to be chosen

Moses reminds the people not to take God's favor shown to them for granted

4. vs. 16: Moses gives the people God's command to "circumcise your hearts"

Physical circumcision began over 600 years before Moses spoke this

It was a covenant sign between God and His people

But apparently a mark of the flesh was not enough

Their forefathers were circumcised, and they were not allowed to enter the Promised Land

Physical circumcision has not been practiced for some time at this point

See Joshua 5:2-7

So God isn't saying, "Now that you've been physically circumcised, take the next step and be circumcised spiritually."

Spiritual circumcision must come first for this generation—

Physical circumcision will come later (Joshua 5)

In the NT, physical circumcision is irrelevant to one's spiritual condition

However, spiritual (heart) circumcision is a must / vital

See Rom. 2:28-29, Col. 2:11

Moses ends this verse by telling the people not to be "stiff-necked any longer"

Perhaps they have been unwilling to follow God wholeheartedly, as their fathers

People who seek to love God must be pliable to His will

5. vs. 17: Moses establishes two things about God in this verse

First, God is like no other "god" that people have known

Second, God is not like people

He doesn't see any person as better than another

He can't be influenced by any type of bribe

In other words, he isn't like humanity

Moses established God's character for the nation of Israel

This is the foundational point for the commands He calls them to live by

6. vs. 18: God is shown to be the protector and defender of those who are most vulnerable

The fatherless, The widow, The alien

The first two could suffer if the father/husband is dead—no one to provide for them

The alien is already not a member of the community initially

The powerful on this earth would push these people away

God says He loves the alien, giving Him food and clothing

7. vs. 19: God commands Israel to "love those who are aliens"

This isn't an optional choice for them; God commands it

The reason given shows why God commands it

"You yourselves were aliens in Egypt"

It's easy to forget that they once were treated poorly in Egypt

God says to love the alien so they don't forget being aliens themselves

8. vs. 20: Israel is here commanded to put God first in all

They are to fear Him and serve Him alone

They are to hold fast to Him

Any oaths they take are to be done in His name, not in any other name

God is to be the center of the Israelites world

Even though they are to “love the alien”, they are not to adopt alien gods

God is to be first and foremost in all they do

9. vs. 21: Moses reminds the Israelites of why God is to be the center of their world

“you saw with your own eyes”

Many people Moses is speaking to saw God’s deliverance from Egypt

God’s judgement was against the older generation, those 20 years of age and older

All those younger than 20 saw what God did

They are reminded to not forget what God has done for them

10. vs. 22: Moses now reminds Israel that God is faithful to keep His promises

70 went to Egypt in Genesis 46

Israel is now a multitude, just as God promised Abraham they would be (Gen. 15:5)

They are now about to enter the Promised Land

The implication is clear:

God has kept His promises to you. You are to keep the commands He gives you.

Read Deuteronomy 16:18-20

This second section reflects the other half of our lesson—“love people”. God gives directions on how to deal justly with others.

11. vs. 18: First is the setting up of a judicial system.

This will be present in towns of every tribe

The judges are to “judge the people fairly”

God understands humanity—we will not live so righteously as to not need judges

God expects these judges to use their power to serve those who come to them

12. vs. 19: God sets the standards for judges—they are the same as his own character (see 10:17)

Don’t show partiality, don’t accept bribes

Judges are presiding over the people on God’s behalf

Therefore, they must show the same qualities of God himself in judgement

13. vs. 20: The first phrase, “Follow justice and justice alone” is literally “Justice, justice, you shall pursue”

The literal phrase shows a sense of urgency, a pleading for justice to be followed

There is a conditional element to following justice in the second half of the verse

“that you may live and possess the land”

Following justice is a must for the people to continue to enjoy God’s blessing

God gave them the land for a purpose
He wants for form a people who will be just with others
These people are to be a showcase of God's justice to all the nations
If they forsake justice, they are forsaking His purpose

Application: To love God is to embrace His character, to seek His will, and to obey His commandments. This passage from Deuteronomy teaches this idea of what it means to love God. This is also central to New Testament faith. Jesus teaches this explicitly in John 14 and 15. In John's first letter, he shows that loving God can't be separated from loving Jesus, which can't be separated from keeping God's commands, which can't be separated from loving one another. Love God, love people.

Prayer: Father God, we are grateful to be called to be Your people. It is humbling that You want a relationship with us. Help us to love You in ways that You desire us to love, and to show that love and justice to the world, so they will come to know You. In Jesus' name, Amen.