

326 “ - thy sons and thy sons’ sons”

“Now therefore, hearken, O Israel ...” (Deuteronomy 4.1, KJV) are Moses’ words to God’s pilgrim people on the eve of their entrance into the long-promised land. His great concern throughout is that the people are to stay faithful to the Lord after Moses is taken from them.

So they are not to add to, or diminish from, all of Moses’ commands (v 2), because these are from the Lord Himself, being merely conveyed through Moses (vv 5-6a). In so doing, the children of Israel will witness to the surrounding nations as to the living God, and will be recognised by those nations as “this great nation ... a wise and understanding people” (vv 6-8).

Moses reminds them of their many blessings as God’s covenant people, and also – the “flip side” of that covenant – of the many responsibilities which God has placed upon them. We might assume that God, by choosing “Abraham and his seed” (Genesis 12.2 / Luke 1.55, 72-75) as His “peculiar people” (eg., Deuteronomy 14.2), thereby lost interest in the other peoples and nations in His creation. Not a bit of it! – for God “will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (I Timothy 2.4), be that under the covenant of law or under the covenant of grace (egs., Isaiah 45.22, 49.6, 55.1 / Ezekiel 18.23 / Luke 14.23 / John 3.14-17 / Romans 3.29-30 / II Corinthians 5.17-19 / ...).

Within this divine desire for all to be saved, the Lord God appointed the children of Israel to be His “visual aid” among the sinful nations in which they were set. So Moses’ constant urgings to them to keep God’s commandments had a double purpose: by remaining obedient to His commands, first, God’s chosen people would themselves be blessed and protected, and second, other nations would see the difference in their conduct, and, please God, would seek out the one true Creator God for themselves in repentance, faith and obedience.

We can also note in passing how the Lord Jesus Christ, of the tribe of Judah, is of course the apex of this “visual aid” role in Himself; and how the yet-to-be-fulfilled Bible prophecies speak of the Jews having a truly critical role once again during the years of the “great tribulation” that are yet to come (eg., Zechariah 12 / Revelation 7, & 11.1-12 / ...).

We now return to Deuteronomy 4.9 - “Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have

seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons ..." (KJV).

This Bible version, in helpfully distinguishing between the singular "thy" and the plural "your", shows us that these words are addressed to a singular body – the nation of Israel itself, in which all its individuals are therefore expected to comply. The adults are to take heed and remain diligent, so as to avoid forgetting "all that their eyes have seen" of God's faithfulness over the years, thus letting these truths "depart from thy – that is, the nation's – heart".

Crucially, the adults are to teach these past mercies and blessings to their "sons and sons' sons". There is so much for us as Christians today in these few old, precious, God-given words! – namely that "the Faith" is to be taught to our children first and foremost in the home, by the parents, and notably by the fathers, in terms of instruction and example (eg., Ephesians 6.1-4 / Colossians 3.20-21).

How much we have squandered of this vital precept by the modern-day assumption that the "teaching the Faith" is to take place primarily "at church" in children's groups, plus Family Services and the like. We all know what that tends to mean in practice in many places: spiritual instruction is on a haphazard basis, by well-meaning older adults, with few resources, to the children who happen to turn up on the day.

Is it any wonder that the teaching of the Faith can be so patchy and so ineffective? – leading to a great percentage of teenagers "voting with their feet" as soon as they have the freedom to do so.

In these deeply challenging times "the Faith" needs to be taught once again primarily and effectively in the home, for it is there that our children, being today's "sons and sons' sons" of Deuteronomy 4.9, can best learn by word and example, as the Lord makes clear in His Word.

So we pray for all who teach the Faith, but most of all for Christ-committed Mums and Dads and Grandpas and Grandmas – for these are the ones in the front line of Christian instruction.

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