

Love and Obey the Lord

Deuteronomy 11

Deuteronomy 11:1-7 - *“Therefore you shall love the Lord your God, and keep His charge, His statutes, His judgments, and His commandments always. ² Know today that I do not speak with your children, who have not known and who have not seen the chastening of the Lord your God, His greatness and His mighty hand and His outstretched arm— ³ His signs and His acts which He did in the midst of Egypt, to Pharaoh king of Egypt, and to all his land; ⁴ what He did to the army of Egypt, to their horses and their chariots: how He made the waters of the Red Sea overflow them as they pursued you, and how the Lord has destroyed them to this day; ⁵ what He did for you in the wilderness until you came to this place; ⁶ and what He did to Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben: how the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, their households, their tents, and all the substance that was in their possession, in the midst of all Israel— ⁷ but your eyes have seen every great act of the Lord which He did.”*

Background Notes

The specific audience that Moses was addressing in this section of his address was the generation that was under 20 years of age at the time of the Exodus - before the beginning of the 40 years of wandering (v2). Remember, those who were 20 years and older at the Exodus had already died, because of their rebellion and unbelief at Kadesh Barnea. Moses was **not** addressing those of the brand new generation (*“your children”* v2) who were born during the wilderness wanderings. The “middle” generation to whom Moses spoke directly in this address had seen the miracles in Egypt, and they had seen what God did to Pharaoh’s army in the Red Sea, even though they were under the age of 20 at the time (v4). They had seen God’s discipline of Dathan and Abiram (v6) at the time of Korah’s rebellion (Numbers 16), when God caused an earthquake to swallow up those who took part in the rebellion.

Therefore, because of all that they had seen, and knowing the stipulations of the Covenant, they were told that they should love and obey the Lord (v8). The requirements of their commitment stated clearly in Deuteronomy 10:12-13: *“And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes which I command you today for your good?”*

The Lord promised that if Israel followed these straightforward requirements of the Covenant, they would be strong, and they would live long in the Land that God was giving them (v8-9). This was a good land, “flowing with milk and honey”! It was not like Egypt – flat desert, only productive if the waters of the Nile were channeled mechanically for irrigation. (This is still true today.) No! This Land of Promise had hills and valleys, and it was watered by the rains of heaven (v11). The Lord took care of this special Land in a special way (v12).

Is verse 12 still true today? Yes! The Lord cares for the Land of Israel in a special way! Israel is “a land for which the Lord your God cares; the eyes of the Lord your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the very end of the year.”

Deuteronomy 11:26-32 - “Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse: ²⁷ the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you today; ²⁸ and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside from the way which I command you today, to go after other gods which you have not known. ²⁹ Now it shall be, when the Lord your God has brought you into the land which you go to possess, that you shall put the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal. ³⁰ Are they not on the other side of the Jordan, toward the setting sun, in the land of the Canaanites who dwell in the plain opposite Gilgal, beside the terebinth trees of Moreh? ³¹ For you will cross over the Jordan and go in to possess the land which the Lord your God is giving you, and you will possess it and dwell in it. ³² And you shall be careful to observe all the statutes and judgments which I set before you today.”

When the children of Israel crossed over the Jordan River and came into the Land, God instructed them to ratify the Covenant by going to the center of the Land - to Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. There half of Israel was to stand on the slopes of Mount Gerizim to represent the blessings of the law, and half of Israel to stand on the slopes of Mount Ebal to represent the curses of the Law. The Levites and Moses were to stand between the tribes for the reading of the stipulations of the Covenant. These directions were given again in Deuteronomy 27, and they were carried out in Joshua 8.

Doctrinal Points

1. Believers should know that obedience results in blessing.

Deuteronomy 11:13-15 and 22-25 - “And it shall be that if you earnestly obey My commandments which I command you today, to love the Lord your God and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul, ¹⁴ then I will give you the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the latter rain, that you may gather in your grain, your new wine, and your oil. ¹⁵ And I will send grass in your fields for your livestock, so you may eat and be filled.”

²² “For if you carefully keep all these commandments which I command you to do—to love the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, and to hold fast to Him— ²³ then the Lord will drive out all these nations from before you, and you will dispossess greater and mightier nations than yourselves. ²⁴ Every place on which the sole of your foot treads shall be yours: from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the River Euphrates, even to the Western Sea, shall be your territory. ²⁵ No man shall be able to stand against you; the Lord your God will put the dread of you and the fear of you upon all the land where you tread, just as He has said to you.”

These verses promised that if Israel would obey the Lord, they would be blessed. The Lord would literally send rain on the land, their harvests would be bountiful, and their flocks and herds would be abundant. Furthermore, God would take care of all their enemies! No one would be able to defeat God's people. All they had to do was go in and possess the Promised Land. This Land had already been given to them under the Abrahamic Covenant. It extended all the way from Egypt to Lebanon, and from the Mediterranean Sea to the Euphrates River.

This doctrinal point can be applied to all believers, not just Israel. **The result of obedience is blessing!** Christians are not promised the blessing of productive crops and large flocks and herds, but we are promised **every spiritual blessing** that Heaven has to offer! Read Ephesians 1. Some Christians think that the more obedient you are as a Christian, the more the Lord will test your faith, and the more the Lord will require of you. Listen - even if this happens, our lives will be more blessed and more joyful as a result of our obedience! This is a biblical truth. Believers should know that obedience results in blessing.

Believers should know disobedience results in discipline.

Deuteronomy 11:16-17 - *“Take heed to yourselves, lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them, ¹⁷lest the Lord’s anger be aroused against you, and He shut up the heavens so that there be no rain, and the land yield no produce, and you perish quickly from the good land which the Lord is giving you.”*

If Israel obeyed the Lord, they would be blessed - but if Israel disobeyed and turned away from the Lord, they would be disciplined. God would withhold the annual rains. The Land would be unproductive, and the people would perish, and they would be banished from the good Land of Promise. All this took place, because the children of Israel did disobey the Lord and turned away from the Lord to worship idols. God had to discipline His people with captivity and exile, and they were scattered among the nations of the world.

The same biblical principle operates today. God must discipline His disobedient children - and believers need to be aware of this. What kind of Heavenly **Father** would He be if He did not discipline **His children** when we disobey? Read Hebrews 12:6-8. Believers should be aware that disobedience results in discipline.

Practical Applications

1. Don't make literal what should be taken figuratively!

Deuteronomy 11:18-21 - *“Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ¹⁹You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. ²⁰And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, ²¹that your days and the days of your children*

may be multiplied in the land of which the Lord swore to your fathers to give them, like the days of the heavens above the earth.”

To this day, Orthodox Jews still use *phylacteries* - small leather boxes containing Scripture. The phylacteries are bound to their foreheads and forearms with leather straps, in order to **literally** obey verse 18. They also fasten *mezuzot*, small boxes containing Scripture, to their doorframes, in **literal** interpretation verse 20.

Meanwhile, their hearts are far from the Lord, and they are far from recognizing their Messiah. The problem is that they are interpreting Scripture in a **literal** way, when God meant it to be taken in a **figurative** way. In these verses, God meant that they should keep the Word of God in their hearts and minds - 24/7/365! They were to obey it, and they were to teach their children to obey it.

For believers today, an example of taking literally what should be taken figuratively would be interpreting the bread and the wine of the Lord's Supper as the **literal** body and blood of the Lord. Don't make literal what should be taken figuratively!

2. Don't make figurative what should be taken literally!

“Then I will give you the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the latter rain, that you may gather in your grain, your new wine, and your oil” (v14).

Should this verse be interpreted literally or figuratively? This promise is **literal**. The Lord meant that if the children of Israel would follow Him, He would **literally** send an “early rain” and a “later rain” on the land of Israel every year. To “spiritualize” this latter rain to mean that a “latter rain” is somehow “second blessing of the Holy Spirit” – that would be **bad hermeneutics!** The latter rain of Deuteronomy 11:14 is the promise of **literal** rain on the **literal** land of Israel. It is not a promise of the baptism of the Holy Spirit as a second blessing for the Christian.

Yes, there are Old Testament “types” that are pictures or illustrations of New Testament truths, but Old Testament types are pictures of **doctrines that are clearly taught in the New Testament**. The idea of a personal baptism of the Holy Spirit coming at some time after salvation is **not** taught in the New Testament.

Don't make figurative what should be taken literally!