

Lament & Repent

Scripture Reading: Deuteronomy 4:1-9

The name “Deuteronomy” comes from a Greek word used in the Septuagint (The Jewish translation of the Old Testament in Greek). It means “Second Law,” or “Repeated Law.” It wasn’t just repetitious writings. When the law was first given to the nation Israel, virtually all of that generation died off, and did not enter the promised land (Numbers 26:63-65). This was because of their unbelief and rebellion. After wandering in the wilderness for forty years, waiting for the first generation to die, the second generation was not left to just read the same Scriptures that their parents were taught. They got their own personal delivery of the law with extra impassioned pleas to learn from the mistakes of their parents. “Remember,” “Don’t forget” were common instructions that were emphasized, over and over. The danger of the next generation repeating the errors of the first generation was great.

Deuteronomy 4:1-9 is a good sample of how God was using Moses to reinforce the importance of what had happened, what needed to happen now, and what would happen in the future, based on their choices and actions.

Deuteronomy 4:1-2 – Pay attention and do what God says. It is a life-and-death situation. Your lives and your children’s lives will be affected – even generations beyond that. People must not tamper with God’s word. No improvisations or generalities will be acceptable (Proverbs 30:5-6).

Deuteronomy 4:3-4 – Don’t forget the example of what happened in Baal-Peor (Numbers 25:1-18). Through whoredom and idolatry, Israel compromised themselves and brought down severe judgment from God. Thousands died. Learn from others the consequences of disobedience.

Deuteronomy 4:5-8 – Compliance with God’s law will give them a reputation for wisdom and understanding among other nations. God’s law, respected and obeyed, will raise a nation to greatness (Proverbs 14:34; 29:18).

Deuteronomy 4:9 – Constant vigilance is the price for that greatness. It is natural for man to forget and to wander from God’s ways. Success will require continual examination of heart and soul. It will require a diligent regimen of training and teaching children and grandchildren. There will be no room for laxness (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:18-21; Joshua 1:7-8; 24:15).

As the Law was repeated to the second generation of Israelites, God promised them wonderful blessings. He also warned them, very graphically, of individual and national judgment that would come upon them if they chose to disobey and forsake the LORD. A careful reading of Deuteronomy chapters 27 and 28 will make a strong impression (e.g. Deuteronomy 27:1-14, etc.). Because of man's fallen sin nature and because of the powerful influence of the world and of Satan, it would be a slippery path to receive God's blessings (Romans 7:7-13 [cp. Romans 5:20; 11:25, 30-31; 5:21]; Romans 8:1-4; 10:1-4 [cp. Romans 9:27-33] cp. Matthew 7:13-14; John 1:17). Israel would walk a fine line between life and death, between blessing and cursing (Deuteronomy 30:15-20). Many lessons from Israel's history are relevant to us today. See Romans 3:9-26; 10:1-13 [Romans 10:6-8 cp. Deuteronomy 30:11-14]; Galatians 3:10-13 [**Galatians 3:10** cp. Deuteronomy 27:26 & **Galatians 3:13** cp. Deuteronomy 21:23]; Galatians 3:21-24; I Corinthians 10:1-14; Hebrews 3:1 – 4:16.

Israel's history and its future are packed with lamentable events. That is to say that Israel has had and will have a lot of failure and chastisement of the Lord, giving them reasons to lament. Do we Christians understand what it means to lament?

The word "**Lamentation**" comes from a Hebrew word which means "a song of weeping." A Latin word, used in the Vulgate means, "loud cries." Jeremiah is called "the weeping prophet." He grieved and sorrowed for the hard things that the LORD was doing and would be doing to Judah because of their sin. Besides The Book of Jeremiah, the prophet also wrote another book, written as Hebrew poetry or song, called **The Book of Lamentations**. More on that later.

Jesus told us, "*Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.*" (Matthew 5:4). See Jesus' example (Luke 13:31-35; 19:41-44 cp. Matthew 26:36-44; Hebrews 5:7-9). Now consider Matthew 23:13-33. As Jesus pronounced the eight "woes" to the scribes and Pharisees, He did not speak out in harsh anger, but rather spoke in a sorrowful lament. As we grow spiritually, we need to know the place of godly sorrow in our lives (privately and publicly). See Ezekiel 9:4; Malachi 3:16-18; **I Corinthians 5:1-8 (Especially vs. 2); II Corinthians 7:4-16 (vs. 8 – "...I made you sorry with a letter..." cp. II Corinthians 2:4)**; Philipians 3:18-19 [cp. Acts 20:17-19,31]; James 4:1-10 (cp. Luke 6:20-26); I Peter 1:3-9; 5:1-11.

We need to consider our personal failure and grieve. We also need to consider the corporate failure and sorrow of Christians. We need to consider the failure and sorrow of our nation / the nations. We need to lay aside anger, wrath, vengeance, argumentativeness, proud judgment, depression, and desperation. We need to put on humility, meekness, godly sorrow, and learn how to grieve and lament unto the Lord. This heart exercise will help us to prevent foolish and fleshly mistakes and will help us to repent and do the right things in the spirit of love and grace.