

Session 6

November 20, 2022

COMMUNICATE GOD'S WORD

Deuteronomy 6:1-9

“Out-of-date” and “old fashioned.”

These adjectives are bad enough when applied to the clothes we wear. But when we hear them used to describe today's church, we collectively cringe. The result is a church that is continually trying to re-vitalize (or sometimes re-invent?) itself to appeal to the newest next generation of young people. There is certainly nothing wrong with changing our models and methods of ministry to be more effective in reaching young people. The problem occurs when we somehow sacrifice God's *message* on the altar of man's *methodology*. So, *how* we present the message of God's word is important...and open for debate. But *what* we present must never change.

As Moses prepared the weary wilderness crowd to finally enter the Promised Land, he reiterated the absolute necessity of learning, obeying, and applying God's word in their own lives, and sharing His covenant promises with the generations to come. In this week's focal passage, three key words come to mind.

Promise (vv. 1-3). With the forty years of wilderness wandering drawing to a close, it was time for Moses to prepare God's people to take possession of the land promised to Abraham and their forefathers centuries before. Their future was dependent upon a covenant relationship God had established with them. Three general principles are emphasized. First, there is *obedience*. Unlike the unconditional covenant made with Abraham in Genesis 12, this one is conditional. God will keep His end of the bargain, but only if His people *follow* His commands (v. 1), *keep* them (v. 2), and *carefully follow* them (v. 3). The second principle is *reward*. For their obedience to God's commands, the people would enjoy long life (v. 2), prosperity (v. 3), and fruitfulness in “a land flowing with milk and honey” (v. 3). The third principle is *continuity*. The promises were made by the God of their *fathers* (v. 3), and obedience was expected from *them*, their *children*, and their *grandchildren* (v. 2). For reflection: *Read Numbers 14:18. What common theme do you notice? What does this say about God's view of the “generations?”*

Profession (vv. 4-5). This well-known Scripture is called the *Shema* (literally “hear”). Eventually, it would be combined with some other verses forming a prayer that Jewish families recited twice a day. Even Jesus used it as the basis of His Great Commandment (Mark 12:29-31). Here, the declaration serves three purposes. The first is theological. Until Christianity was established by Christ in the first century, Judaism was the only monotheistic religion (that is, they believed in only one God). Surrounded by pagan nations who followed a multitude of different gods, verse 5 reminded the Jews that there was one true God (the Lord) and that only His chosen people recognized Him as such. The second purpose is more practical. It demanded full and unwavering devotion to Him and to Him alone (v. 6). Finally, the placement of the *Shema* in this context served as a pathway to ultimate obedience outlined in the next section. How could anyone demonstrate such love for the Lord in such a comprehensive way? By absorbing the word of God and obeying it. For reflection: *Romans 1 teaches that God has revealed Himself to mankind in a few other ways. Why do you think the word of God takes precedence over those other forms of revelation?*

Promotion (vv. 6-9). To love the Lord your God with all your heart, you must have the revelation that God gave of Himself in your heart. And that revelation is the word of God! (v. 6). The key idea here is Scripture *saturation*. With what? The word of God. When? All the time! When you lie down and when you get up. Where? Everywhere! In your house and along the roadway. How? By talking about the Scriptures continually and displaying them prominently. Why? So that you can maintain your end of God's covenant and receive all of the prosperity He has promised. For reflection: *The Shema is particularly Jewish, and the context is for His chosen people Israel. But are these principles transferable? How might we apply them today? Is this valid?*