

Exegetical Notes, Deuteronomy 4:1-14

**“Watch Yourselves Closely”**

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**Deuteronomy 4:1-14**

**Verses 1-2**

***Now, Israel, hear the decrees and laws I am about to teach you. Follow them so that you may live and may go in and take possession of the land the LORD, the God of your ancestors, is giving you. <sup>2</sup> Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the LORD your God that I give you.***

- As Israel was ready to enter the promised land, Moses commanded them to “hear” the decrees and laws which God had given them. Israel will demonstrate having heard by her obedience to the laws of God.
- Israel is warned to add nothing to God’s word. She cannot add additional laws to the laws of God. But, she cannot neglect any of the laws which God has given. (See Revelation 22:18-20)
- The promise of hearing and keeping the word of the Lord is possession of the land. If Israel will not accept the covenant (see verse 13) which God is offering her, she cannot have the promised land. The choice is given by God, but Israel must agree to the conditions.

**Verses 3-4**

***You saw with your own eyes what the LORD did at Baal Peor. The LORD your God destroyed from among you everyone who followed the Baal of Peor, <sup>4</sup> but all of you who held fast to the LORD your God are still alive today.***

- The story is found in Numbers 25:1-9. Balaam, the false prophet who wanted to curse Israel for profit, but was stopped from doing so, urged the leaders of Shittim to tempt the leaders of Israel to join them worshipping their god, Baal. This worship involved cultic prostitution. So when Israel’s leaders joined in worshipping the god, Baal, at a place named Peor, they engaged in sexual activity with the priestesses of Baal. There was a double

sin involved. First, they worshipped another god. Second, they engaged in adultery. The penalty for either crime was execution. Moses ordered that the Israeli leaders who had participated be put to death according to the law of God. According to 1 Corinthians 10:8, 23,000 men died “that day.” Numbers 25:9 says that the total who died was 24,000.

- Those who did not join in the rebellion at Baal Peor lived.

### Verses 5-8

***See, I have taught you decrees and laws as the LORD my God commanded me, so that you may follow them in the land you are entering to take possession of it.***

***<sup>6</sup> Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, “Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.” <sup>7</sup> What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the LORD our God is near us whenever we pray to him? <sup>8</sup> And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today?***

- The people of Israel cannot claim to be ignorant of the law. Moses has taught it to them as he was commanded to do. (see verse 14)
- They are to obey the law if they want to possess the land God is offering them.
- If they obey the law, they will appear wise to other people because God will answer their prayers. Keeping God’s law would distinguish the people of YHWH from all the other peoples on the earth.

### Verses 9-14

***<sup>9</sup> Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live.***

***Teach them to your children and to their children after them. <sup>10</sup> Remember the day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, when he said to me,***

***“Assemble the people before me to hear my words so that they may learn to revere me as long as they live in the land and may teach them to their children.”***

***<sup>11</sup> You came near and stood at the foot of the mountain while it blazed with fire to the very heavens, with black clouds and deep darkness. <sup>12</sup> Then the LORD***

***spoke to you out of the fire. You heard the sound of words but saw no form; there was only a voice. <sup>13</sup> He declared to you his covenant, the Ten***

***Commandments, which he commanded you to follow and then wrote them on two stone tablets. <sup>14</sup> And the LORD directed me at that time to teach you the***

***decrees and laws you are to follow in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess.***

- Israel is commanded to watch her behavior so as to be careful to follow the law of God. She must not forget the command of God. Additionally, she must remember the powerful details of how God gave her the law.
- For the story of the giving of the law, see Exodus 19. The law was given as the basis for the relationship between God and Israel. Signs of God's power were demonstrated as described in today's text. The people of Israel saw the signs God gave and accepted his offer to be their God. God will bless them with the promised land if they follow the law as summed up in the 10 Commandments (See Exodus 20:1-17).

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *Watch Yourselves Closely*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by Dr. Jensen and *Cornerstone Fellowship*.)