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Deuteronomy 4



Deuteronomy - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg discusses the importance of following God's laws in Deuteronomy 4, emphasizing the uniqueness and superiority of God compared to other deities. He also contrasts Israel's election with their failure to truly understand and serve Yahweh, noting that salvation is not necessarily unconditional. Gregg notes the significance of oral Torah for Jewish tradition, as well as the dangers of adding to or subtracting from the Word of God.

Transcript

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Speak no more to me of this matter. And then told him he could go up on Mount Nebo, Mount Pisgah, and see the land from there. And that's the best he's going to get.

But Joshua, he said in verse 28, would be the one who would lead the people into the land. Now, chapter four, he begins to exhort them from this history, and he will remind them also of even earlier things than the things he's mentioned, he's going to go back and remind them of things that Sinai. He says, now, oh, Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you to observe that you may live and go in and possess the land which Yahweh, God of your fathers, is giving you.

You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take anything from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord, your God, which I command you. This command is almost ironic in view of how the Jews later, the rabbis especially, added so many traditional things to the law of Moses. Most that don't add or subtract anything from these words I've given you so that you'll obey the commandment of the Lord.

Notice, first of all, that Moses indicated that what he is commanding them is the

commandment of the Lord of Yahweh. He says, you shall not add to the word that I command you or subtract so that you may keep the commandments of Yahweh, your God. So Moses makes it very clear that the things he's giving them are not his own ideas.

Moses didn't. Moses was not the genius behind these laws, and he was really quite impressed with these laws that we shall see in the next verses. In the next several verses, he points out that these laws are the most brilliant laws any people has ever received.

But Moses distances himself from any credit for them. He is not the one who created them. These are the commandments the Lord gave him and that Moses gave.

But then later on, the Jewish rabbis added traditional things more and more and more to the law of Moses. In fact, the Jews, even Orthodox Jews to this day, believe in an oral Torah as in addition to the written Torah. The Torah means law.

That's the Hebrew word for the law. And we have the written Torah in these five books of the penitent Genesis through Deuteronomy is called the Torah in the Hebrew Bible. That's the written Torah.

But Jewish tradition says that in addition to the written Torah, Moses gave a verbal Torah, an oral Torah to Joshua and to the elders of Israel, and that they passed it down through the proper channels to eventually the priesthood, and eventually this was a bequeathed to the rabbis so that the rabbis centuries after Moses time claimed that the traditions they were teaching were part of the oral Torah that Moses had passed down. And to this day, since the Jews today, the Orthodox Jews don't follow the teachings of Moses because they can't offer sacrifices and all those things that Moses commanded.

They follow the oral Torah, which is now written down in what's called the Talmud. And the Talmud is this oral Torah written down, but it wasn't written down till the third century A.D., but it was in the days of Jesus, the oral Torah, the traditions of the elders, as they called it, was treated as if it was equal to the law of Moses by the Jews. But Jesus didn't see it that way.

And you remember in Matthew, chapter 17, and it's parallel in Mark, chapter seven, that Jesus criticized the Pharisees because they taught for doctrine, the traditions of men and that they kept their traditions, in fact, so loyally that it often conflicted with their keeping the laws of God. And Jesus gives an actual example of this in Matthew 15, where he talks about how Moses said one thing and their traditions had developed in such a way as to actually cancel out obedience to Moses. In the 15th chapter of Matthew, for example, verse three, Jesus answered and said to them, why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your traditions? Now, notice the commandment of God.

And then he says, for God commanded saying, honor your father and your mother. Now, in Mark's parallel, in Mark seven, says for Moses commanded. But see, Moses and God are the same as far as the commands go.

The commands of Moses are the commands of God. And he says, for God commanded saying, honor your father and your mother and he who curses father or mother, let him be put to death. But you say whoever says to his father or mother, whatever profit.

You might have received from me has been dedicated to the temple, that person is released from honoring his father or mother. Thus, you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition. So they've added to the laws of Moses, Jesus said, even to the point where they by keeping their traditions.

They actually disobeyed the commandment of God, and that's what Moses was concerned about. Don't add to what I say so that you can keep the commandments of the Lord, your God. So this command of Moses in Deuteronomy four to really, you know, anticipated the problems that the rabbis were going to engage in and create by adding to Moses words and hindering obedience to the actual commandments of God that Jesus identified they had done.

By the way, in the church history, of course, Christians have done pretty much the same thing that the Jews did. In particular, the church of the Middle Ages had what they consider to be almost like an oral Torah also, because they believe that the traditions of the church councils of the ecumenical councils carry the same way to scripture, just like the Pharisees felt that the oral Torah or the tradition of the rabbis was equal in authority to the written scriptures of Moses. So the Roman Catholic Church taught that the traditions of the church are equal in authority of the Bible and Roman Catholics still hold that position that the decisions made by the council of the church are sort of a second Bible, as it were, you know, equal to the Bible.

So just as the Orthodox Jews have their oral Torah, which are traditions they added to the law of Moses. So the church added human traditions to the teachings of Christ and the Bible as a whole, so that many of those traditions ended up violating the commands of God, too. I mean, where Jesus said, call no man father.

And it then becomes actually the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church that you call the Pope and the priest father. And where I mean, there's just so many things that they do where the priests have to be celibate, whereas the Bible says the bishop must be the husband of one wife. You know, I mean, just the direct opposite of what the Bible teaches is now practiced to keep the traditions of the elders, as it were, in the Roman Catholic tradition.

And I don't say that to bash Roman Catholics, but we have to remember that the Roman Catholic was the only church around for much of history through at least half of the

church history. There was only the Roman Catholic Church. So we could say the church.

The church made the same mistakes that the Jews made, and of course, the Reformation was an attempt on the part of some people in the church to try to get rid of those traditions and go back to keeping just the scriptures. But but the church has done made the same mistakes that Israel made, which were warned against here, you shall not add to one to the word which I command you nor take anything from it. Now, that reminds us, of course, of something that is a warning given at the end of Revelation.

I'm sure it comes to your mind because it's well known. Revelation 22, 18 says, for I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book, if anyone adds to these things. God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of this book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life or the book of life from the holy city and so forth.

So don't add and don't take away. Now, this some people have understood this last statement in Revelation to be a closing of the canon of scripture, saying, OK, now that Revelation's written, people should not add any more books to the Bible. However, it's obvious that it's not talking about when it says don't add to this book.

It doesn't mean the book of the Bible. It doesn't mean the Bible means the book of Revelation. That's why he says the plagues of this book will be added to you.

Obviously, Revelation is the book that has the plague. And the rest of the New Testament doesn't. The statement does not mean don't write any more books.

After all, lots of books were written after Moses said, don't add anything to these words of mine. Lots of Old Testament books were written after that. And in fact, later on in Proverbs chapter 30, which was still not not by any means the last book of the Old Testament written, we have the same kind of warning about not adding to God's words are taken away in Proverbs 30, verse five and six.

Every word of God is pure. He is a shield to those who put their trust in him. Do not add to his words, lest he reprove you and you be found a liar.

So Solomon writes in Proverbs 30 and verses five and six, don't add to the to God's words. But clearly, many books of the Bible were written after that, including the whole New Testament. So this idea of don't add to his words is not even relevant to the subject of writing additional books of the Bible.

God can add to his words any time he wants to. And God is the one who added words after Moses time through the prophets and after Solomon's time through the apostles and so forth and the prophets. These statements about not adding or subtracting should not be taken as any having any relevance to the subject of the canon of Scripture.

Each book that's written from God is God adding to his words, not people adding to his words. But what is being said here is you should not add human rules and regulations. That go beyond what God has added, that would be legalism to add human rules and impose human traditions on people that God himself has not imposed.

That is what is forbidden by Moses and by Solomon and by the book of Revelation. Now, Deuteronomy 4.3, your eyes have seen what the Lord did at Baal Peor. Now, that's where they committed immorality with the Midianite slash Moabite women and were 24000 wiped out in a plague for the Lord.

Your God has destroyed from among you all the men who followed Baal of Peor. But you held fast to the Lord, your God, and are alive today, every one of you. Surely, I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the Lord, my God, commanded me that you should act according to them in the land which you go to possess.

Therefore, be careful to observe them, for this is your wisdom and your understanding. And the side of the peoples who will hear all these statutes and will say, surely this is a great nation or this great nation is a wise and understanding people. Now, see, Moses is saying that the laws of you are the epitome of wisdom.

Even the pagan nations will recognize that when they see you living according to these laws and say, wow, these people really understand what life is about. These people really have an astute and sophisticated grasp on justice. Now, Moses says that's because God's given you his laws and that is your wisdom.

That is your reputation. If you want to be a people who are better than, superior to, more godly than other people, you've got to follow these laws because you don't have this wisdom innately. This is a divine wisdom revealed in the law.

And when you keep these laws, that will be your wisdom in the southern nations. And people will see that you're superior. And by the way, the Jews really have.

Throughout history, although they have not followed the commands as well as they should, they have nonetheless been shown to be a very wise and influential people. Not in every case, of course, they've done their own share of foolish things, too. But the laws that they had, of course, have informed the legal systems and the cultures of many of the most advanced civilizations who have recognized in them the true standards of justice and wisdom.

And that's what Moses said to them. Now, this is your glory, Israel. Don't let this slip away.

Don't miss out on your opportunity to be the smartest, most understanding people around because you are following the understanding that God gives you. I remember in Psalm 119, where the psalmist said that he has more understanding even than the

ancients and more than his teachers and more than his enemies because he meditates on the law of God. And this is one of those places that speaks about how they will be a more understanding people as they heed these laws.

Psalms 119, verse 97 through 100, it says, Oh, how I love your law. It is my meditation all the day. He's talking about the same laws Moses is talking about.

You, through your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers for your testimonies or my meditation. I understand more than the ancients because I keep your precepts now because I meditate on God's law, because I keep them.

I meditate on them and I keep them. I am wiser than my enemies. That's handy.

It's good to be. I'm wiser than my teachers, apparently teachers who didn't meditate on the law of God and more than the ancients. Now, he doesn't say because I'm so smart, but because it's through your commandments I've been made wiser than others.

It's because I meditate on your law. It doesn't sound very humble for a man to say, I understand better than life, better than everybody. That doesn't sound humble, unless you're saying, but the only reason I do is because I'm listening to God.

You know, people sometimes say, you Christians are so arrogant because you think you're the only people, you know, who have the right way. And there's all these people in Islamic lands and Buddhist lands and Hindu lands, you know, and you say that they're all wrong and you're right. You know, what an arrogant thing for Christians to say.

You ever heard people make that objection? How arrogant you Christians are. Well, they're not getting it. We're not claiming that we're smarter than other people.

We're just believing what God said. You know, I guess it is smart to believe what God said rather than stupid to not believe what God said. But the point is, we're not even saying that the other people are stupid.

They might believe what God said if they heard it, too. But the question is not, are we making ourselves out to be something better than other people, but do we have a better source of philosophy of life than they have? Our source is the word of God, the commands of God. If we're following that, we can honestly say we are wiser, we're more informed, we are we have more we're more in touch with spiritual reality and even what justice and goodness is than other people are in so far as we are informed by the word of God.

Now, certainly not every Christian has shown himself to be, you know, the model of righteousness. But in fact, there's been many scandalous cases of Christians being more obnoxious and more hypocritical and more, you know, immoral than many of their non-

Christian neighbors, but only when they weren't observing the law of God. Jimmy Swaggart didn't get into trouble.

He got into by keeping the law of God. And these other fellows, Ted Haggard, didn't become a scandal because he was keeping the laws of God or keeping the commandments of Christ. Christians are not innately wiser than other people.

They are made wiser by their observance of the word of God, which is God's wisdom given to us. And so to the degree that we follow it, we will be the wisest of all people. To the degree that we don't, we're just like any other schmuck.

By the way, I grew up using the word schmuck and I didn't even know what it meant. I never tell you what it meant. Do you know what it means? It's a Yiddish word comes from New York Jews, mostly, I think.

I don't use it very much anymore. It's it slips out of my mouth. But that.

No, it has to do with the severed foreskin of a circumcised baby. That's what it has to do it. There's another word, schlemiel, they use and they use it in similar context.

But I'm not sure what it means. I don't think I will find out. But but I always heard people called schmuck.

It seemed like a harmless word for like a sort of like a jerk or something like that. But it turns out that's the Yiddish word for the severed foreskin. So I try not to use that word all the time anymore, but I thought it was a cute Yiddish word.

It is Yiddish. Verse seven, for what great nation is there that has God so near to it as Yahweh, our God, is to us for whatever reason we may call upon him. And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law, which I set before you this day? Now, notice two things.

God has given them the best laws to govern their lives on a regular basis, but he's also near to them to respond when they call upon him. So there's like two forms of guidance that Israel enjoyed that other nations did not have. One was the written word, the revelation of God to them in writing for Moses.

And the other was God himself, God's own accessibility to them, God's own availability if they call upon him. And of course, we have that, too. We have the word of God, which is probably what we need about ninety nine percent of the time to determine what we need to do, because the word of God does have the teachings of the word of God are enough to really govern almost everything you ever have to do.

And where there is a difficulty knowing what the Bible would say or what God would say, we can call on God himself because his spirit dwells in us. So just like Israel, we have

these privileges that set us apart from others. Verse nine, only take heed to yourself and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life and teach them to your children and your grandchildren, especially considering the day you stood before the Lord, your God in horror.

When the Lord said to me, gather the people to me and I will let them hear my words that they may learn to fear me all the days that they live on the earth and that they may teach their children. Then you came near and stood at the foot of the mountain. Some of Mount Sinai, which is called Horeb here.

And the mountain burned with fire to the midst of heaven. With darkness, clouds and thick darkness, thick darkness and darkness are two different things, apparently. And the Lord spoke to you out of the midst of the fire.

You heard the sound of the words, but you saw no form. Now, that's important. He's going to emphasize that again in a moment.

You only heard a voice. So he declared to you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform. That is the Ten Commandments.

And he wrote them on two tablets of stone. And Yahweh commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments that you might observe them in the land which you cross over to possess. Now, that business about how you saw no form, you only heard his voice.

By the way, hearing his voice from the mountain would have been impressive enough to actually hear an audible voice of God speaking out of the thunder and so forth. That actually scared the people, as we shall find. Of course, we saw it back in Exodus, too.

But he's going to go over that. How they came to know Moses. Why don't you talk to God and tell us what he says? We don't want to hear God's voice ourselves, which is kind of amazing.

I would really want to. I'd like to be there to see that. But I guess supernatural stuff was happening all the time around.

They didn't. There were I guess they weren't as hungry to see supernatural things as I would be. But he says, take careful heed, verse 15, to yourselves, for you saw no form when Yahweh spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire.

Lest you act corruptly and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any beast that is on the earth and the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the air, the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground or the likeness of any fish that is in the water beneath the earth. Now he's

saying you can't make any images of God because you don't know what he looks like. He revealed himself to you at Mount Sinai, but he deliberately did not appear in any form to you.

He was hidden behind thick clouds and fire and smoke and so forth so that you couldn't see what he looked like. And there was a reason for that. He wanted you to hear his voice and know his words, but he didn't want you to guess what he looked like or or know what he looked like.

Because then you'd be tempted to make images of him. So since you saw no form, you certainly cannot think that you could make an image of him since you don't know what he looks like. So don't make any images of male or female or animal or anything like that to represent Yahweh.

And remember that that's the mistake that Aaron had made. Aaron had made a golden calf to represent Yahweh, but that's not what Yahweh looks like. What does he look like? I guess we have to say he looks like Jesus, but we we really don't have any description even of Jesus physical features.

And then besides the warning against making images, verse 19, he says, take heed lest you lift up your eyes to heaven. And when you see the sun, the moon, the stars, all the hosts of heaven, you feel driven to worship them and serve them, which the Lord your God has given to all the peoples under the whole of heaven as a heritage. In other words, Yahweh has given himself to you alone.

The stars, the sun and moon, those are he gives that to everybody. Don't forsake the worship of your unique God for some deities that everybody sees and can worship. Of course, the sun, moon and stars are not deities, and he's not saying they are, but he's saying that they are the common heritage of all people.

Yahweh is not. Yahweh revealed himself to Israel and not everybody else. And so don't go from the unique privilege you have to something more generic that the nations do.

Worship the sun and moon and stars. Now, it's interesting, he said, that you might feel driven to worship them. I don't know if anyone here has ever felt that urge.

I have not. I know that C.S. Lewis said that when he went to places like Stonehenge and other places of the ancient Druid religions and so forth, that he said he felt this almost irresistible urge to worship the deities there. He didn't do it, but he sensed that temptation in him.

I thought, that's strange. I don't think I would feel that. But maybe there's demonic forces around these things.

But I mean, obviously, there must be something that urges people to worship them,

because why else would you do it? And people so universally around the world worship the sun. The sun God was the chief God in almost all the pagan religions. And the moon also, the stars.

And even in our modern Western scientific age, we have plenty of people who look to the stars for guidance on a daily basis. And the horoscopes and so forth. As if the stars on this planet somehow can have some kind of determinative effect on your faith.

Almost like they have the power of gods and goddesses to rule reality. Astrology is probably the main manifestation of this urge that apparently exists in people. Of course, we don't see the stars very often if we live in cities and stuff like that.

If we lived out under the sky more, maybe there'd be as you contemplate the stars. Maybe you would, if you didn't have a Christian worldview, be tempted to see them as deities. But it just seems so strange to us because we have been so enlightened by the word of God that to worship stars and sun and moon just seems so goofy.

It seems so, so juvenile, spiritually speaking. But people have done it all through history. And God knew that the Israelites would have an urge to it.

And they did, they did later worship the sun and the moon, the stars, along with almost every other deity they could find. Verse 20, but the Lord has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace out of Egypt to be his people, his inheritance, as you are this day. He refers to Egypt as the iron furnace.

I'm not sure exactly why that particular image. It was a furnace of affliction, certainly for them. Maybe it was because of an iron furnace, you know, something you could never break out of.

It's too strong. So he had to break them out. The same expression is used in Jeremiah 11 and verse four.

He speaks about the Egyptian bondage as the iron furnace that God delivered them from. Jeremiah 11, four. Furthermore, Yahweh was angry with me for your sakes and swore that I would not cross over the Jordan and that I would not enter the good land, which the Lord, your God is giving you as an inheritance.

But I must die in this land. I must not cross over the Jordan, but you shall cross over and possess that good land. Take heed to yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the Lord, your God, which he made with you.

And make for yourselves a carved image in the form of anything which is which the Lord, your God has forbidden you. For the Lord, your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God. Now, God had identified himself already as a jealous God at Mount Sinai, jealous like a husband's jealous over his wife.

And so if she commits adultery, it makes the husband jealous. And so also Israel is God's wife. And if she worships other gods, it makes God jealous.

But he says the Lord, your God is a consuming fire, which is obviously a line that's quoted in Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 29, which is our God is a consuming fire. He's talking about actually, in my opinion, in Hebrews, he's talking about the impending judgment on Israel in AD 70. And of course, this does suggest a judgment on Israel when he says God's a jealous God.

He's a consuming fire. If you worship idols, if you make me angry, then, you know, obviously you'll come under in my wrath. And the writer of Hebrews uses that phrase for God when threatening the impending doom of Israel in his day because of their well, because of their rejection of Christ.

When you get children and grandchildren and have grown old in the land and that corruptly and make carved image in the form of anything and do evil in the sight of the Lord, your God, to provoke him to anger. I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that you will soon utterly perish from the land which you cross over to Jordan to possess. You will not prolong your days in it, but will be utterly destroyed again.

We see the conditionality of their security with God. They can lose the land. They can shorten their stay there.

They can be, in fact, utterly destroyed and perish as a nation. And the Lord will scatter you among the peoples and you will be left few in number among the nations where the Lord will drive you. Has this been fulfilled? They certainly haven't scattered throughout the world.

Have they been left few in number? Perhaps relatively compared to other nations. But on the other hand, there are still quite a lot of people identified as Jewish people today. Of course, we don't know how many of them are really originally Israelite.

Because they have intermarried so thoroughly with the Gentiles over the past 2,000 years that it's really hard to keep track of where the real Jewish blood would be. Because almost all Jews have mixed bloodline and it's possible that if the truth were known, and we don't really know, we don't have any way to calculate this, I don't think, but if the truth were known, there might not be very many people who have pure Jewish blood anymore. So they might, in fact, be few in number among the nations.

Verse 28, And there you will serve God's, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear, nor eat nor smell. Now, Orthodox Jews don't do that. They don't serve false gods.

Orthodox Jews still are monotheistic and still are trying to serve Yahweh, although they are, like Paul said, they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. They don't

know how to serve Yahweh because they're not accepting his son and the Messiah. But nonetheless, they're not out there worshipping gods of stone and things like that.

But apart from the Orthodox Jews today, a lot of Jews, most Jews, are actually not religious people at all. The nation of Israel is not a religious nation. It's a secular nation.

And most of the Jews in the world are not living in Israel. They're living in New York City or similar places to that. And they are just secular Jews.

I heard a long time ago, the majority of Jews in the world are atheists. And they are just chasing the almighty dollar, just like anyone else. That's a god.

Paul said in Ephesians 5.5 that covetousness is idolatry. To love money is idolatry. So there's a sense in which this has been fulfilled of many of them.

Perhaps most of the Jews are just like any other secular person, chasing the same gods that the pagans chase. Certainly not making the Jews out to be worse than others in this respect. Our whole nation is prone to be chasing these secular, materialistic gods.

But the sad thing is, I mean, for the Jews is that they're not different. And that's what they were supposed to be. They're not supposed to be chasing the same gods as the pagans.

But that's how it largely is to this day. Now, verse 29, there's a promise made. But from there, you will seek the Lord, your God, and you will find him.

Now, many people understand this to be a prediction of a return of the Jews to God and to Israel in the last days. But there is an if here. It says if you seek him with all your heart and with all your soul.

Certainly what God is saying is you can find God again. Once you're exiled, once you've been under God's punishment, you're still alive. You're still breathing.

There's still a chance for you to seek God and to find him if you seek him with all your heart and all your soul. And when you are in distress and all these things come upon you in the latter days and the latter days, we think of the latter days of the last days, the end of the world, but latter days is just used in the scripture to mean times later than the time of the speaker. When you turn to the Lord, your God, and obey his voice for the Lord, your God is a merciful God.

He will not forsake you nor destroy you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers, which he swore to them. For ask now concerning the date. Well, it's not there for a moment.

This was true as long as the as long as the covenant that God swore to their fathers was true. Now, the covenant that God for the fathers could be the Abrahamic covenant, in which case that's still true. The Abrahamic covenant, according to Paul, is still valid.

And basically, Christ is the fulfillment of it. He is the seed of Abraham that was promised. And those who are in Christ, according to Galatians, are the heirs, according to that promise.

A Jew today who seeks God with all his whole heart will come to Christ. And will become a participant in the covenant that God made with their fathers, as with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They will not, of course, be identified with the Jewish religion any longer, because the Jewish religion does not accept Christ.

And he's the seed of Abraham. That was the promised one. So a Jew today who becomes a follower of God must do so the same way anyone else does through Christ.

Now, it is not the covenant made at Sinai that God would honor because that covenant is gone. God made that covenant provisionally, conditionally and temporarily, because Jeremiah said a new covenant would be coming that would replace it. And that new covenant came, according to the book of Hebrews, according to 2 Corinthians 3. Paul says that the new covenant has come and has replaced the old covenant of stone.

And now the old covenant is obsolete. So it is still possible for Jewish people to return to God, obviously, as many Jews have done so. And many more may still.

It would be wonderful if the majority of them someday would. We don't know. But if they do, they won't be returned to the Jewish religion.

There's nothing there. The sacrifices, the holy days, the ordinances, they've all been fulfilled in Christ. And to go back to those things is exactly what the writer of Hebrews was saying to his readers was a big mistake.

And there's no reason for them to go back to those things because a better thing has come. Verse 32. For ask now concerning the days that are past, which were before you, since the day that God created man on the earth, and ask from one end of heaven to the other, whether any great thing like this has happened or anything like it has been heard.

Did any people ever hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of fire as you have heard and live? Or did God ever try to go and take for himself a nation from the midst of another nation by trials and signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the Lord, your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? To you, it was shown that you might know that Yahweh himself is God. There is none other besides him. So they're the only people who've ever seen this kind of a manifestation of God.

He said, you can inquire from the days of the creation of Adam and Eve till now. He said, there's never been a parallel to this situation. You alone have had God appear and speak as he did to you and deliver you from another nation.

God never did that to another nation before. And he said he showed you that revelation of himself so that you might know him. And of course, obviously, to obey him out of heaven, he let you hear his voice that he might instruct you on earth.

He showed you his great fire and you heard his words out of the midst of fire. And because he loved your fathers, again, this is the first time there's a mention of God loving his people because he loved your fathers. Therefore, he chose their descendants after them.

And he brought you out of Egypt with his presence and his mighty power, driving out from before you nations greater and mightier than you to bring you in, to give you their land as an inheritance, as it is this day. Therefore, know this day and consider it in your heart that Yahweh himself is God in heaven above and in the earth beneath. There is no other.

You shall therefore keep his statutes and his commandments, which I command you today, and it will go well with you and with your children after you. And you may prolong your days in the land which Yahweh, your God, has given you for all time. That ends this discourse, really.

There's a couple of things in this section I want to mention. In verse 37, he says, because he loved your fathers, therefore, he chose their descendants after them. That is, this generation was chosen not because of their own merits that God somehow saw and wished to reward, but because of their father's merits, because of God's love for them.

There's a similar statement in Romans chapter 11, speaking about the Jews in Paul's day in Romans 11, 28. He says, concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election, they are beloved for the sake of their fathers. Now, the statement they are beloved for the sake of their fathers is very much like what Moses said to that second generation of Israelites out of Egypt in Deuteronomy 4, 37.

He loved your fathers. Therefore, he chose their descendants after them. And so because of God's love for Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, he had chosen their descendants after them to give them the promised land.

And Paul says in his own day, speaking about the Jewish situation, he says, concerning the gospel, they, meaning the Jews as a whole, are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election. Now, what does the election refer to? Well, if you just look back a few verses earlier in the same chapter in Romans 11, 7, Paul said, what then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks, but the election. That's what is the same word in the Greek as in verse 28.

The election have obtained it. Unfortunately, it's translated differently here in the New King James and even more differently in other translations. But just so you know, it's the

same word.

He says in verse seven, Israel has not obtained what it seeks, but the election have obtained it. So we've got a contrast between Israel on the one hand and the election on the other hand. Likewise, in verse 28, concerning the gospel, they, meaning Israel, are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election, they are beloved.

There's two groups of people here that Paul has in mind. There's Israel proper Israel, the nation, and then there's the election. He says Israel has not obtained it and they are enemies of the gospel.

But the election, they have obtained this righteousness and they are beloved for their father's sake. There is an elect remnant in Israel that are still beloved for their father's sake. Because of God's promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and to their seed, God has preserved some of their seed in the new covenant and they have come into the body of Christ and they are elect.

If you look at Isaiah 54, Isaiah 54 verses nine and 10. God is speaking to Israel, he says, for this is like the waters of Noah to me, for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah would no longer cover the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you for the mountains shall depart and the hills should be removed. But my kindness shall not depart from you, nor shall my covenant of peace be removed, says the Lord who has mercy on you.

This covenant of peace is the new covenant. And in the context to make it clear, Isaiah 53 talked about Jesus coming and dying, and Isaiah 54 is about the church. Isaiah 54 one is quoted by Paul in Galatians chapter four as being about the church.

And so this is talking about the new covenant. This is a covenant that will never pass away. But you see, God has made this promise to Israel that at least the remnant, because this is important to note in the in the prophets, the remnant of Israel is mentioned many times.

It is always the people that God is making promises to in the prophets, the nation of Judah and the nation of Israel are repeatedly castigated, condemned, threatened with destruction, and eventually God carries out those threats. But in the prophets, he always says, but to my remnant, this is what I will do. I will give them this and this and this.

So there's always a remnant in Israel to whom this is fulfilled. And Paul refers to that remnant in Romans 11 as the election. And they are contrasted with Israel, but they are in Israel.

It's sort of like Romans 9, 6, which says not all are Israel who are of Israel. He used the word Israel to mean the whole nation, but he also used the word Israel to mean someone else. It's not doesn't include the whole nation, the election, the remnant in Israel who

have come to faith.

Paul says in Romans 11, 28, that they are beloved for their father's sake. And that is, I think, a deliberate echo of Deuteronomy 4, 37, because he loved your fathers. Therefore, he chose their descendants after them.

And he brought you out of Egypt with his presence and with his mighty power. Now, also in the close of Moses discourse here in chapter four of Deuteronomy, he mentions this. He says at the end of verse 40, that you may prolong your days in the land which Yahweh, your God, has given you for all time.

That is, God is giving them this land for all time, unless, of course, they don't prolong their days there. It is a conditional promise. The idea is if they keep his covenant and do not do anything to shorten their tenure there in the land, then that is a promise that I could be there for all time.

However, he makes it very clear when he talks about prolonging their days there, that it's not necessarily unconditional. And we've seen before that he has said that the land could vomit them out just like it could vomit out the canines that were there before them if they do the same things. He's made it clear this is a promise for all time.

But he also makes it clear in the same statement that it's conditional. Now, verse 41, then Moses set apart three cities on this side of the Jordan toward the rising of the sun. That is the east side that the manslayer might flee there who kills his neighbor unintentionally without having hated him in time past and that by fleeing to one of these cities, he might live Bezer in the wilderness of the Plateau for the Rubenites, Ramah in Gilead for the Gadites and Golan in Bashan for the Menassites.

Now, notice it says it's for the Rubenites and for the Gadites and for the Menassites. Actually, he's taking these cities from them. He's requiring these tribes to donate a city.

And and yet he speaks of it as he's doing it as a favor to them. It's for the unintentional manslayer from them to flee for safety. So it's for their benefit.

And so he appointed these cities from among them for them. Now, these three were on the east side of the Jordan. There were later three others added on the west side.

The fact that those other three are not mentioned here, again, is another indication of the early date of writing that this was written in Moses day before they knew the names of the other three cities yet. They hadn't gotten over to Canaan yet to see what the other cities would be. So these are the ones that were chosen on the east side.

Now, verse forty four, in a sense, as it opens, it could be seen as a closing statement to what the discourse was we just read. However, it's more fitting as an introduction to the next discourse versus forty four through forty nine kind of introduced chapter five

because of its content. So this is the law which Moses set before the children of Israel.

Well, the discourse we just covered in chapter one through four didn't really lay out laws, not specific laws. It was more of a summary of their history and an exhortation for them to keep the laws. But it didn't really say what the laws were.

This next discourse that begins in chapter five goes all the way through chapter twenty six, contains many laws. And therefore, I think versus forty four through forty nine here, I think chapter five should have begun at this point. I think this is the place the chapter division should have been.

But since it didn't, we'll read these verses before we take our break, and then we'll when we come back next time, we'll come to chapter five. And this is the law which Moses set before the children of Israel. These are the testimonies, the statutes and the judgments which Moses spoke to the children of Israel after they came out of Egypt on this side of the Jordan in the valley opposite Beth Peor in the land of Sion, king of the Amorites who dwelt in Hezbon, whom Moses and the children of Israel defeated after they came out of Egypt.

And they took possession of his land and the land of Og, king of Bashan, two kings of the Amorites who were on this side of the Jordan toward the rising of the sun from a rower, which is on the bank of the River Arnon, even to Mount Sion, that is Hermon, not not not Zion, but not Sion, which is Mount Hermon and all the plain of the east side of the Jordan as far as the sea of the Arabah, which we saw is another name for the Dead Sea below the slopes of Pisgah, which is also called Nebo, which is where Moses would spend his his final breath. Now, all of that, I believe, is introducing chapter five, which begins. Moses called all Israel and said to them, and he does.

He starts by giving them the Ten Commandments again. So it is true. Verse 44.

This is the law which Moses set before the children of Israel is describing what follows chapter four, verse 44, rather than what is it's not summarizing what is before. And so we'll next time we'll come and begin. Certainly we will not take the entirety, but at one time, because it'll take many sessions, but we'll begin this lengthy discourse that begins in chapter five.