

Clough Deuteronomy Session 20  
Deuteronomy 6:1-25 Five Expressions of Disloyalty to God  
Fellowship Chapel; 20 Apr 10

Last time I introduced the terminology of a procedure called living in the Word, and I used that for just a way of summarizing the whole point of Deuteronomy 6, the first and great commandment. And so that coupled with the faith-rest drill, you'll see how it works today. So let me just review and you can follow on the handout so we can kind of review where we were last time to get a running start because we're going to start in Deuteronomy 6:10 and verse 10 down to verse 19 is a section that is... it's sort of a break. These ten verses represent a sort of parenthesis, that Moses is going on and he's talking about living in the Word, he's talking about how children are to be trained in the home, he talks about education, then he breaks in this section from verse 10 to verse 19 and then in verse 20 you'll notice that he starts resuming again with the people in the home, the home life. So before we get into that section I want to review once again some of the qualities of living in the Word of God.

We said that the essence of the Word of God, the first commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy soul and with all thy strength," and those terms mean specific things. So again, to review: whenever you see the word "heart" it's talking about the inner mental attitude, and that gets down into what we would call the depth psychology. In other words, we have a lot of traffic going through our brains every two minutes and when the Bible speaks of our heart it's talking about getting underneath all the traffic, some of the abiding principles that we use to live day by day. The word soul, nephesh, is talking about the overt, the observable behavior in the middle of the details of life. And the word strength, of course, was used in the first commandment, first and great commandment, because it takes effort, and we can't deny it takes effort. Yes, we say we walk by faith, but clearly Moses is saying it takes strength, effort.

We could summarize the essence of that command in verse 4 and 5 by saying this, that ultimately an abiding respect for the authority of Jehovah. That's what he's really getting at. The word love there means loyalty to Him. And you don't have loyalty if you don't have respect. So summarizing the aspects of God for which we should have respect is that He's our Creator, He is our Judge, and He is our Savior. That sort of summarizes the three main functions of God. As Creator, we owe our existence to Him and therefore He owns us and His knowledge is the source of our knowledge. And that's when God identified Himself in Exodus 20, the first time He spoke the Ten Words there He said I made everything in six days. So He's elevating His role as the Creator there. We know the Judge, we'll see a little bit of that tonight, where we are ultimately accountable to Him, that He is the One who is going to evaluate us, not our peers, and not our boyfriends, girlfriends or whatever, but it's going to be God who does the final evaluation and we have to live according to that. And then as Savior He is the only capable Savior. It's not the government, it's not a government program and it's not some human being leader, great leaders though there are, but Yahweh Himself is the Savior. So that's the general respect.

Then we come, as we did last time, in verses 6-9 and we're talking about there how the Word of God gets in your heart. Notice in verse 6 it says, "These words which I command you today shall be in your heart." So obviously the question arises, well how does the Word get into our heart. How do we assimilate God's written revelation, because notice in verse 6, "these words which I command you, see it's Moses doing the commanding here because God stopped talking. He gave Ten Words in public that could be recorded and then He stopped, and the text makes a point of that. God stopped talking; from that point on He talks through a mediator. And so except for those Ten Words on Mount Sinai, and here's one of the blanks in the handout, God only speaks to us through an appointed Mediator, a fundamental point. The Scriptures, written by the prophets, written about Jesus, written by the Apostles, that is a mediatory way of seeing God.

And that's important because today we have, as paganism once again arises in virulent form in our society, it's always had features to it. And you don't have to be a profound student of history to see this but usually paganism involves mysticism. Now there's a good kind of mysticism in the sense that all of us who have been believers for any length of time can know that certain points in our life, it's as though God has spoken to us. It's just a thought comes into our mind, we identify it as Scriptural, and it's like a guidance or it's like an intuition. We're not talking about that because that is being evaluated by the objective standards of Scripture. What we're talking about is unregulated, uncritical, unacceptance of whatever goes on in our wandering minds. And what happens is that when mysticism is allowed to dominate the mind you come up with nothing more than human speculations, you come up with all kinds of imagined views of who God is. And it's interesting, if you hang around long enough you'll see that the pictures that arise out of this mysticism take on more and more the form of the people that are doing the imagining, and some how justify what they're doing.

So we don't want to get into that, and yet today in our evangelical circles we have an inroad, it's sort of a New-Agey kind of thing that's coming in, and the only way, the stand we have to say is that nothing can contradict the absolute truths of the Scriptures. And Moses is going to make a point of this as he goes on. But first in verse 6 he's saying these words I'm commanding you, I want them in your heart. Not just the concepts, I want the words, I want the details, he says, in our heart.

And then he goes on and he tells them in verse 7 that you will talk in terms of them all the day and in all the different activities, in the house, outside the house, and that means that assimilation requires intensive and comprehensive training in youth under the authority of parents who themselves have already attained the capacity to live daily within the framework of the Word of God. That's what verses 7 and 8 are talking about. It's talking about a functioning family unit. That is the educational conduit in societies. The government, when it gets involved, should be an adjunct to the family. But the family is the primary divine authority for transmitting culture and biblical truths. And the reason for that is because that's where we spend most of our time; that's where the learning moments happen. Every parent knows that you can't predict when a learning moment happens. It just happens some times. And we have to be quick enough to take advantage of that because usually when those learning moments happen that's when our children are most ears because

something's happened in their life and they want a little guidance or they want somebody to talk to them, and that's the moment... that's better than a classroom situation because that's the learning time.

So this is why God knows what He's doing here, verses 7-8, talking about the home life, talking about the family, talking the importance, the supreme importance of that. And the training, as we talk in terms of that when you're "in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, when you rise up," obviously it's talking about a comprehensive thing. That's why in the outline we have this training involves thinking, analyzing, discussing and managing the details of life within the framework of Scripture. It's not just telling Bible stories 24 hours a day. That's not what this is about. What it's about is going about your regular or ordinary life but interpreting the events as they occur in terms of the Word of God. There's a meaning to our existence. Events aren't random, they are planned under God's sovereignty. We don't always know the plan but we ought to have enough sense of the Scriptures so we know how to navigate in the middle of this. And it's not always easy to do.

And you'll notice it also says that it shall be "a sign on your hand" and "frontlets between your eyes," and later on the rabbis took this to mean... and Orthodox Jews still do this, you'll see them, they have a little thing right here in their forehead, and they will have tassels on their wrist. That's because they have made literal what this is and as we showed last time from Exodus 13 that it's an idiom, it's an idiomatic expression. It has to do with your eyes and it has to do with your hands because your eyes are what look at situations and the eyes are giving you a perspective. It's not just talking about the eyeballs, the word "eyes" here means your sight, how you interpret, not just the video but how you interpret the video. So it's your perspective. What it's saying is "it shall be frontlets between your eyes" means that the Word of God should dominate your perspective. Think what Jesus said, remember He said if your eye be single the whole body shall be full of light. He's not talking about your optic vision, He's talking about what your eyes do, the function of them.

And then it says you "you shall write them...", "they shall be as frontlets between your eyes," but "as a sign on your hand," and the hand is what they farmed with, it's what they plowed the land with, it's what the carpenters banged their hammers and used their saws, they didn't have power saws so they worked with their hands. So that's talking about activity, production, things we do things we build, and the Word of God should be involved with that.

And then it says, "You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." That's another idiom. The "doorposts" are your home, that's your house, that's where you live and that should be known in that place. And then it says "your gates," it's not talking about a fence gate; the word "gate" there is talking about local government; it's talking about the elders that get by the gate of the city, that's why it's called the gate, and that's where they have their elder meetings. And so it's talking about the older men who would supervise the community dynamics, the Word of God should be involved in that process. So you can see it's a comprehensive thing.

And then we went on and said, actually it's up in verses 1-3, the benefits of living in the Word is simply that for Israel the benefit was they'd stay in the land, they wouldn't get thrown out in discipline. And it's a sobering thing, because it says if a population cannot live in the Word 24 hours a day, day after day, week after week, we are going to lose it... we are going to lose it. And that's historically what happened. Israel was thrown out of the land because of their failure in this area. And for the church it's not staying in the land, for the church it's the blessings that we can carry into eternity are not going to be anything that we do, it's going to be those things that we do as unto the Lord, in obedience to Him. Now we don't want wood, hay and stubble to be burned up, we want the precious things that will endure for eternity. So John says, "the world passes away and the lust thereof, but he that does the will of God abides forever." So it's thinking of the eternal perspective of your existence and my existence.

Now we come to this section from verses 10-19. In this section, when I started I thought we could just whip through this, and I got another... I guess the Lord stopped me on that one because when I started dealing with the details of the text in verses 10-19 I began to see that Moses is packing a lot of stuff in these exhortations here. So in order to pull it back out and then try to convert from the language of the 2nd millennium, Ancient Near East, to our vocabulary and our vernacular I wanted to break it up into sections so we can kind of map the truths from them over to us. Otherwise it comes off like an old religious story and there's more to it than just an old religious story. So follow me, look first at verses 10, 11 and 12. It's pretty straight forward but I want to draw something out of that. "So it shall be, when the LORD your God brings you into the land of which He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you large and beautiful cities which you did not build, [11] houses full of all good things, which you did not fill, hewn-out wells which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant-when you have eaten and are full, [12] then beware, lest you forget the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage."

Well, obviously you see him repeating something there and obviously Moses is wanting them to realize that there is establishment grace that set them up. Notice the things that he says, the cities they inherited, they were all built, the only city they really destroyed there, God destroyed, was Jericho and then they burned some of the others but the point was that they had cities. Now think about this a minute. What were they living in prior to this time? They were moving around the desert, they didn't have any houses, they had tents. So something is different here. In other words, when you go into the land you're going to have houses. And the neat thing is that you won't have to build them; you'll be able to use the houses that you are going to get from your conquest.

And then he say, "houses full of all good things," so there's furnishings, these houses come furnished, they were little things, when you see the archeological digs... some day I hope to get my friend, Randy, Dr. Price, here, who's developing an archeological course at Liberty University, but Randy has these neat pictures of the stuff that he's dug up and I mean, these rooms are pretty small; these people weren't any six foot, seven foot people here. Some of these rooms look like what we call a closet,

they're that small. So don't get the idea that this is the mansions that we see around here going for 1.2 million dollars; the houses in verse 11 are very humble dwellings by our standards, but they're small and everybody used those.

"...hewn out wells which you did not dig," so all the wells were dug. And why is that important to them? Because many of them were ranchers and they had livestock and so they needed water, not just for themselves but to sustain their business. And then "olive trees which you did not plant," so there's your farming. So you had production. Now one of the things we'll see later when we get more into the economics of this whole operation, you'll see that God initialized the entire economy of this society. When they walked out of Egypt they basically got all their back wages for the years in slavery. So they had enough money, silver and gold, to start businesses and to start up a civilization. Civilizations require capital, they require assets, they require resources. You can't get a functioning society without an economic base. So God thought about that and so here is their economic base.

Now the problem, however, is found when you get down into verse 12, "lest you forget," who brought you out? lest you forget who it was that gave you initializing grace. So in our notes we quote that "The Word of God is anchored in objective history," forgetting, see they're forgetting an actual historical thing that happened. "The Word of God is anchored in objective history. No other religion is so anchored because they don't have a revelation of the True God who makes and keeps contracts." Let me repeat that. There's a reason why religions outside of the Bible don't pay attention to the flow of history. Jeek has told me many times that in the Koran it's not like reading the Bible where you go through streams and centuries of history controlled by a self-coherent behavior pattern on the part of God, God binding Himself to contractual agreements. So I'll repeat that: "No other religion is so anchored because they don't have a revelation of the True God who makes and keeps contracts." That's why Jews were the first historians; the Greeks were not the first historians that you'll always get in history class. The Jews anticipated Greek historiography by centuries because the Jews had a reason to study history because history was His story. That's why they were involved in history, to track the behavior of God, when God promised. You see how it starts out in verse 10, it says "when the LORD your God brings you into the land of which He swore to" whom, "to your fathers." So here we are centuries later and Moses connects the conquest backwards centuries before to a promise with Abraham.

So the problem then is, if we lose our historical memory it opens us up to pagan reconstructions of history, to revisions of history. And you have all, barring those of you who have been trained in Christian schools, all of us have basically learned from out grade school, a view of history that's profoundly pagan, because the views of history that we have are views that have been carefully scrubbed. So Jesus isn't the dynamic person who dominates history, it's just Julius Caesar or someone. We never hear of the Mount Sinai situation, you may be exposed to the Code of Hammurabi, and a couple of Ancient Near East treaties, but we don't bother, of course, with the most clear one, which is the Old Testament. So right from the getgo our whole education is screwed up when it comes to

history. So it behooves us to think about this danger, forgetting history.

Living in the Word involves repetition of historical narratives. That's what goes in that blank, repetition of historical narratives; you see this again and again and again in Scripture. In the little boxes that I have I've tried to remind us of the fact that there are counter measures that we can do. So in the danger of forgetting history, if you look in that box, right under it, there's two functions that every church does, at least every orthodox church does, and that's communion and baptism. Now those are not intended to be magical ceremonies; each one of those ceremonies is a historical memory, it's to go over this, and over this and over this and over this and over it, again and again and again to preserve historical memory. It also means that we need to study the Bible in its historical context. So when I come to the framework here, and I'm looking at... we look at these events, we ought to be able to, within 3 minutes, 2 minutes, we ought to be able to mentally scan the Bible from one end to the other. It's a closed set of events. Now we may not, you know, remember every single event but we ought to, when we become sufficiently familiar with Scripture, be able to tell this story, quickly to ourselves, that there's a sequence of coherent events, all programmed, all moving toward a goal. History is moving toward a culmination.

So that's the tool, those are the tools to keep from forgetting history. But when Moses says you've forgotten Him, what he's warning us is that is a bad thing to happen to a person's spiritual life. Christianity is, and the whole biblical faith is involved in history because we have revelation that is historical.

Then we come further on to verse 13 and now Moses picks up something else. "You shall fear the LORD your God and serve Him, and take oaths in His name." Now that's interesting, why does he bring up oaths in the middle of this discourse. Well, that gets solved in what we have seen earlier because we have said that history has a design and one of the primary levels down here, besides heart allegiance, is the integrity of communication, that we consistently state truth. Language should fit reality. We should not do what the Greeks did after Socrates and Plato and Aristotle died off and they went into what we call the Sophist period, and Sophists were pessimists that you could ever attain truth, so immediately they were thinking, and they said okay, if language, which is a wonderful tool we have, language, and they spoke this wonderful classical Greek, we have this wonderful tool of language, we're so proud of our Greek language. So now we know that we can't really attain truth with that language, now we will use the language politically to manipulate, and we have the rise or rhetoric. Rhetoric was the key center of the curriculum of the sophists because they taught young people how to use language to persuade. They could care less whether it was persuading someone for truth or persuading someone for falsehood, that was irrelevant; the issue was whether you could persuade. So there's the manipulative use of language. And it continues today.

Now what Moses is getting at in verse 13, "You will fear the LORD your God and serve Him and you will take oaths in His name." A judicial proceeding, or a contractual agreement where you take an oath is a very important event in life. And when you take an oath what are you trying to

do? You're trying to establish credibility, because this is important, in a judicial proceeding it could be someone's life at stake here, whether they are going to be capitally executed or not. So perjury is extremely important and it's a use of language that's up there, right front and center, because that, of all the activities in life, that's where you want language to conform to reality, because you're in deep do-do if that doesn't happen, at least the person involved in the trial is. And businessmen who are involved in contracts, because oaths would be used in contractual terminology.

You can't run a business; if you don't have integrity of communication, if the accountants don't have integrity for their number, you cannot run a business. This is what's going on now with Wall Street, Goldman Sachs and the rest of them. What was going on here, and look at the devastation that has reeked itself on the, not just our economy but the economy of the world. These guys are college graduates, some of them have Master's Degrees in accounting. But people, technology and intellect do not substitute for character. And you can have someone with a Master's degree and he can be a super accountant or he can be a great CEO and he can be a scoundrel, and he can destroy people. As for example, the people at Enron destroyed hundreds and thousands of their employees 401K because they were deceitful, they used language in the form of bogus accounting to cover up stuff and twist them.

So when you see this little "oath" here don't just write it off, oh, that's interesting, that's way back in the religious thing, no, no, no, no, think about what corresponds to that today. It's the integrity of language at very serious business levels. You see, in the Ancient East why this was an issue was an oath deity, when someone swore an oath they swore to keep a contract with integrity or it was a judicial proceeding, when someone swore in the name of a god, the thought in the Ancient East was that that god would see to it that that oath was enforced. So if you, in effect, if you would give your testimony, I swear this is true in the name of Yahweh, the way that would have been taken is if you're telling a lie Yahweh is going to go kick your butt. That's the connotation of this. So you can see they're really focused on truthfulness here. So that's the second way, we can lose the integrity in language and the box there, the corrective, the tool to avoid that, is to make sure in our personal life that when we say something we mean it; gossip, maligning and that kind of stuff, "PC language" are just ways of manipulating and we've just got to get that out of our language. When we say something we say what is true. And if people don't like it, well that's another story, we can say it as gracious as we can but we still have to say what's truth.

Okay, let's go on to the next one in verses 14-15; see, Moses continues. Verse 14, "You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are all around you. [15] For the LORD your God is a jealous God among you), lest the anger of the LORD your God be aroused against you and destroy you from the face of the earth," or face of the land here. Now what's going on here? Who were the gods of the people all around them? It was the Baals, Baal wasn't just a god but you'd have local Baals, sort of like in Roman Catholicism you have lady so and so of this place, or lady so and so of another place, and you wonder, wait a minute, there's only one virgin Mary, how come we've got a lady of this, a lady of that, or a lady of something else. It's the same kind of pagan way of the

Baals, they had a Baal of this and a Baal of that. Remember the story we went into, the Baal of Peor, that was a local Baal there.

Now what's the deal with Baals? The deal is that Baals were nature deities so on the outline, if you go down to point 3, the counterpart today, in other words, what's the counterpart to this: Allowing pagan notions of cosmology and sources of k to replace Biblical cosmology and divine design," that's what we do, and it's going after other gods. Why is it going after other gods? Because you're redoing your theology, you're manufacturing a worldview that is incompatible with the God of Scripture and therefore you necessarily are going to be reinventing God to fit your cosmology. So that's why I list it down here, here's what happens:

The "baals" of Canaanite paganism were Nature deities. Creation with order... they were replacing so I've tried to list for you some specific replacements so this makes sense for us as modern people, coming back out of, you know, the 1500-1400 BC period. They were replacing creation, which the Bible teaches, which Noah taught them, which Moses taught them, because after all, Moses apparently complied Genesis, so they're taking creation, that is the truth, and they are replacing it with order-emerging-from chaos idea. That's modern, but it's also ancient because if you read the mythologies there's always this chaos and so forth, and out of the chaos comes the gods and the goddesses.

What do we have today, out of a chance universe we suddenly get order. We're doing the same thing, except today we dress it up with mathematical equations and we use a scientific vocabulary but the substance of what we are doing doesn't differ that much from ancient Baalism. In fact, I've said this to several people and they say well, gosh, you graduated from MIT and you had all this science and you've worked over here and you've done modeling, computer modeling and so on, how can you believe the Bible? And sometimes I get frustrated with that comment and if I want a quickie I'll say "well, I don't worship Baal, that's why, I worship the God of Scripture. And that's always good for a further conversation because they don't like to be accused of worshipping Baal and I said well, yes you are. What do you mean I am? And then that opens the discussion up to you're worshipping nature.

Then, the second point, they're replacing a personal Creator with impersonal Fate or Tablets of Destiny. See the idea was that you had gods and goddesses, but the gods and goddesses themselves were controlled by a mysterious fate. If you ever get a chance to see Stanley Cooper's famous movie, 2001: A Space Odyssey, Kubrick knew what he was doing. Frances Schaeffer pointed this out and he had a lot of Christians go to see that film; it was already old by that time but the point was that Kubrick was a very good director because Kubrick knew the philosophical points that he wanted to get across in the film, and his films are all, if you go there with your mind and not just look at the special effect, but you go there and you think about what's on that screen you can see interesting things. But 2001: A Space Odyssey is talking about man becoming enmeshed in a machine and the first picture, as the movie opens, the first few frames of the movie that the producer wants to set you up and in this Kubrick is trying to get the idea across that evolution, because he has an ape throwing a club and it becomes a man with a computer. So here's the tool



making ape who is evolving into a man but behind that process of bringing order out of chaos he has this mysterious thing in space and the camera moves up close and closer to it and it's a tablet like the Ten Commandments. It's interesting because he can't get another visual in that film that connotes something like that so he has to borrow a tablet, and he has this tablet and at the end of the movie, after all is said and done you have the tablet again. So here he is, the idea that fate, the ancient name for fate, before the Greeks, was tablets, the tablets of destiny, you see that vocabulary in a lot of the mythologies.

So you have to have something if you're going to replace a personal creator. But notice what's happened, you've replaced a personal creator with an impersonal fate. Now what does that do to personality? See, it makes a personality just be a random bubble; a personality is ultimately meaningless because it's just... you know, we have two legs and two hands and apes have tails and we don't, we have personalities and animals don't and so it's just a feature, that's all. But as Christians we know that the reason we are that personality is because we're made in God's image because He's the Creator. Something fundamentally is lost here.

Then we go further on, Sovereign Lord, the Sovereign Lord is replaced with squabbling gods and goddesses, and that's very similar to our modern state where we see a purposeless universe. See, in the ancient world, when a city-state fell to military invasion or the economy went to pot, where there was a natural disaster for that community, the way that was usually interpreted was that the god of this city state lost out in the councils. So let's say Assyria invades Israel, the way the Assyrians would interpret the fall of, say the Northern Kingdom, is that the gods of Syria beat the gods of Israel. The problem is in paganism they could never be sure that next week some other god wouldn't defeat their gods. In other words, none of their gods had an abiding sovereignty, there was no ultimate order there, there was just a temporary thing, sort of a god de jour, a god of the day. You can't live your life this way. This is a horrible way to live. You never know what's coming on the next day, so there's a price to pay... a price to pay here. So when Moses says, "Thou shalt not go after other gods," these are the kind of things he means.

And finally, divine revelation is replaced, now the divine revelation preserved in Scripture, with imagined deities and powers. This is the basis of modern philosophy, ever since the Enlightenment you see this. I always pick on the Enlightenment because I think it's so funny that it's called the "Enlightenment." It's really the "endarkenment," it's a turning aside, making man autonomous. But this is the cost to pay and when Moses is talking, "you shall not go after other gods, the gods of the people who are all around you." In other words, they're going to be infiltrated with false theologies. And it's our same thing today, it's no different. We live surrounded by anti-biblical notions.

So that's why in the box of number 3 I quote 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, "We do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." Now that's Paul, and Paul was a well-educated man. Paul studied for years. When he went out into a debate this guy, I would think that Paul

probably had most of the Old Testament memorized. This is the kind of guy these people were. And it was lethal to get into a debate with Paul, because you could not out quote Scripture with a guy like this. He had thought through the issues and that's why before he went on mission trips... he didn't just become a Christian on Tuesday and go on a mission on Friday. Paul became a Christian and trained, and trained, and studied and studied until he was prepared and then he went out on missions and he was very fruitful because he was prepared.

So we need "due diligence" as I point out in that box, living in the Word means we have to do "due diligence on the great ideas that permeate our education, our media, and the society around us, critiquing our thinking by the standards of Scripture. That takes effort. That takes time. This is why I try to counsel frustrated college students sometimes, it is so frustrating on the college campus because it's like you've got all these semester hours and you've got to get this done, you've got to get this course, you've got to get this assignment done, and it's like trying to take a drink out of a fire hydrant. You don't have time to do this while you're in college. All you can do is have a holding action and try to learn as much as you can while you're there, try to engage a little bit in the questions, try to get a good bibliography so some day when you get time you can read some of this stuff for yourself slowly and comprehensively, and then digest that. But it's just this is the problem you have in a college situation.

Okay, now verse 16, now he moves to something else and now he's going to talk about a history incident. And this is an interesting one and we're going to go to that incident and see what happens, but before we go there we want to deal with a word, and it's a funny way Moses has of narrating this failure; it's one of the great failure events. "You shall not tempt the LORD your God as you tempted Him in Massah." Now what is he getting at there? Let's look. C. S. Lewis, someone collected his essays and put them in a book called God and the Doctor. And Lewis made this statement, and I think this is a very interesting one, and this is the substance of what is going on here in this passage. "The ancient man approached God (or the gods) as the accused person approaches his judge. For the modern man the roles are reversed. He is the judge: God is in the dock." The "dock" is an English term for a trial.

And I think Lewis put it very well here; now we are going to decide about the character of God. Now doesn't that strike and smack something that went on in the garden of Eden, that when God gave a command to Adam and Eve, "thou shalt not eat," and Satan said go ahead and eat, we have two commands that are opposed; they both can't be right. And when Adam and Eve decide that they're going to eat it to test it they've already abandoned submission to the authority of Scripture because in testing it what they're actually saying is that the word of the creature has the same authority as the Word of the Creator. Well, if you say that and really mean it then you've already denied the God of Scripture because it's His authority and the creature's authority, but to treat them as equal, as co-equal and we can't tell which is true so we want to run an experiment to find out, then we have already altered the basis of our faith.

So let's turn over to this NASAH incident and see if we can reconstruct what happened there and why Moses keeps talking about it as a test of God.

So turn backwards to Exodus 17, seven verses in Exodus 17 tell us about this. Exodus 17:1, this is before Sinai, they're wandering around the wilderness "Then all the congregation of the children of Israel set out on their journey from the Wilderness of Sin, according to the commandment of the LORD," now notice "according," look at that clause or that phrase, "according to the commandment of Yahweh. So why are they there? Because God led them there. "...and they camped in Rephidim; but there was no water for the people to drink." Now right here God is putting them in a test to see what they're going to do, see if they can use that faith-rest drill. So let's in our heads run through that drill, that process, it's not something magic, it's just putting together in a simple three step the mental process of trying to deal with a crisis situation.

The first thing that they should have done was to grab any promise of Scripture that they had, they had the basic Noahic Bible, some memory of what God had done, they had plenty of that, more than we do, they experienced it, some promise from memory, something in the heart, plus you've got to grab hold of something. So you've got to get stability in the middle of a rocky situation. So the first thing you reach out to grab a fragment of God's truth, whatever happens to be available in your memory at the time because you don't have time to run to the Bible to open it up, it's going to be whatever you happen to have in your memory bank. So you wind up grabbing that; that's step one. Then after you get that fragment or that promise you take a sponge, it's like a sponge and you just sit there and you squeeze it until you get truth enough out of it, you don't just take it but you've got to squeeze it to get the truth out of it that you can use to handle whatever the situation is. Now this doesn't always tell you what to do but what it does do, it quiets you down from panic situation. So that's step 2.

So here they have no water. But they also know what? They know the history of the Abrahamic promise, they know that four centuries ago God promised to do this, to take care of them and He's kept His promise; they know that. They could have started there and said well, God, through Abraham, promised He was going to do this, He got us out of Egypt, He destroyed what amounts today to a mobile armored corps of the entire Egyptian army, wiped them out, we walked dry through the Red Sea, we saw all of the things that happened. Now this is their memory bank. But notice what happens here. They get into a crisis, they get into a test, into a trial, they panic and it's like their memory zeroed out. They don't have a clue. So they never get to step one in the faith-rest drill here. They can't even get to step one. They don't get to the squeeze the sponge, they haven't even got to the thing. So now what happens.

In verses 2 and 3 we have a very interesting phraseology, and this is why Moses later is talking about this as you are testing God. I didn't get this immediately but after I started looking at the text I see it comes out of here. Verse 2, "Therefore, the people contended with Moses, and said, 'Give us water, that we may drink.'" That's interesting, they're arguing, fussing, blaming Moses. "So Moses said" back "to them, 'Why do you contend with me? Why do you tempt the LORD?'" Now let's take those two sentences apart for a minute. First of all, if you look up the word "contend" it's the word RIV, R-I-V, now in Hebrew the word R-I-V can mean quarrel, yes, but it means a serious kind of quarrel that can lead to a lawsuit. This is why when there was a lawsuit filed, as in Deuteronomy

32, as in Malachi, as in Isaiah 1, as in some of the prophets, they always use R-I-V, God has a RIV with you people. And then they would go in about a big long testimony and so forth. So if you mentally load that word "contend" it's a stronger word than contend, it means to have a fundamental disagreement here that involves an ethical judgment. So they are going after Moses.

Then Moses says, "Why do you content," "Why do you RIV against me?" And then parallel, "Why do you test Yahweh?" Now at first it looks like they're just going after Moses, but Moses, when he responds to them, he says you're testing Yahweh. Now why is it when they file lawsuit and attack Moses, Moses says you're attacking God. Because who is Moses? What is his function? He is the mediator standing between the people and Yahweh. So if they're attacking Moses they are attacking Yahweh because they are attacking Yahweh's representative. So this is why this whole event is a test of Yahweh.

Now the interesting thing is, let's look at the word test, NASAH. Hold the place, turn to Exodus 20:20 and you'll see how that word is used. You look at Exodus 20:20, "And Moses said to the people, 'Do not fear; for God has come to test you, that His fear may be before you.'" So the idea of testing means to push a person into a situation to force a response. And God will often do that to us. He puts a trial in our life, we don't like the trials but He sticks our nose in it, so to speak, and we think He's being a mean daddy when He does it, but He really has a curriculum in mind. So that's what the test is. Except, back in chapter 17, what Moses is arguing is you are testing God, you are saying that God is not faithful and He has to prove Himself to you because your theology is so screwed up, you are so far out of it spiritually that you are going to push the button, panic button, you're trying to force God's hand, you doubt that He is with us when He is the faithful One with the covenant. That's why this has that name.

Well, then you know the story, the people thirsted there for water, the people complained against Moses, it's sort of humorous here, notice what they say. Who was it that brought them out of the desert, by the way? What does the passage say? God brought them out. But who do they say here... see, [17:3] "why is it you have brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?" So they're going after Moses because Moses is... they can't get God, He's not around, so they go after His representative. [4] "So Moses cried out to the LORD," here's the great leader, he's getting heat and he turns right around, just directly rebutting the people, Moses is a humble man and he goes back to God. He says Lord, come on now, "So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, 'What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me?'" [5] And the LORD said to Moses, 'Go before the people, and take some of your elders,' you know, if the people want to start throwing rocks get the elders out here with you, it's not a one-man show. "Also take in your hand your rod which you struck the river and go. [6] Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock in Horeb, and you shall strike the rock and water will come out of it, that the people may drink.' And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. [7] So he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah," and the idea there is, I quote a Hebrew scholar on the handout for that area, G. T. Manley, 'The Hebrew thought embraces in one complex idea the event, the place, and the description.'

So the whole situation there at that one place is now not called Rephidim, it's called Massah, Meribah; Massah means the test, Meribah means your grips and complaints. So the location takes on a label from what happened there. It's like if you go to Texas and you say I went to the Alamo, every died-in-the-wool Texan, when they think of the Alamo they're not just talking about the location Alamo, they're talking about Sam Houston stood against the entire Mexican army and they did a standoff there, that was a very famous, famous incident in Texas history. So Alamo means more than Alamo, it means what happened at Alamo. That's this label.

So coming back now to Deuteronomy 6, Moses is arguing that you've got to be careful that you don't despise God and this... for standing in judgment over God. That's the problem, that's item number four, and as I put it in the box, a great promise from the Word of God to handle that tendency is 1 Peter 5:6-7, "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." It's a wonderful promise. And you notice how it starts, "Humble yourself," that's exactly reverse of what the people did. They decided they were going to evaluate God.

All right, the last one is found in verses 17-19 and it says that "You shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, His testimonies, and His statutes which He has commanded you. [18] And you shall do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD, that it may be well with you, and that you may go in and possess the good land which the LORD swore to your fathers, [19] To cast out all your enemies before you, as the LORD has spoken." So he's saying here now that there's a consistency. Notice he says... and he uses a new word in verse 17, we haven't seen this one too much, see where it says "you shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD," we've seen that one before, but look at the next one, "his testimonies." Now why would Moses bring up a new noun?

"His testimonies," what is a testimony? A testimony is pointing to a historic incident so what Moses is arguing is you've got to know your history, you've got to see there is a consistency to God. The testimony testifies to God's faithfulness, and that prevents disregarding consistency and that's why in the box I have 1 Corinthians 10:12-13, "Therefore, let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No testing has taken you such as is common to man," that means historical precedents have already been set up, see this is why it's so important to go back through Scripture and know the events. This, by the way, is a nice picture of what the desert looks like, so when they talk about no water you can imagine a million people walking around that mess and trying to figure out where the cattle are going to get water, where they're going to get water, you can't cook, you can't do anything, so that's the situation. That's what they face. And of course this is the example of all the events and the consistency, there is a consistency through this of God's behavior and that's what is necessary to prevent disregarding that consistency.

So now we come to the last section, verses 20-25 and here we return to where we left off back in verse 9 when we were talking about how does the Word of God get in our hearts. In verse 20 it starts out: "When your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What is the meaning of the testimonies,

the statutes, and the judgments which the LORD our God has commanded you?" and of course, this is an example, children can't be put off forever, as they grow they want bigger answer because they're asking bigger questions and they need to have answers. So the Bible is not against that, it encourages that because the bigger the question that you ask from Scripture the bigger the answer is it gives you back and the larger your faith becomes because you realize, after you deal with all the questions, there are only three or four basic questions in life, there's hundreds of permutations and variations but after you've seen a few of the key questions it's the same old, same old thing comes up all again, and it gives you that confidence that the Scriptures mean what they say.

So if the son asks you what's the meaning, because he hasn't been there, the son is the next generation here and so, [21] "then you shall say to your son," so here Moses is training the parents on what they do when these questions are raised. Look you do? He narrates the divine flow of history; that's reality. He's not dealing with just ideas, he's not dealing with floating doctrines that are divorced from history, he says we were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, "and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand, [22] and the LORD showed signs and wonders before our eyes," see there's the "testimonies," that's a testimonial nature of history. He sent "signs and wonders 1... great and severe, against Egypt, Pharaoh, and all his household. [23] Then He brought us out from there, that He might bring us in, to give us the land of which He swore to our fathers." See that "swore to our fathers," what does that mean. Covenant consistency. History unfolds according to God's plan. History is not as Henry Ford said—the sequence of one darned thing after another. History has an unfolding nature to it. "...which He swore to our fathers, [24] And the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God," and look why, look why here, "to fear the LORD our God, for our" what? See what it says, "for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as it is this day." And that goes back to that idea of a chiasm. Remember what we said, you have the chiastic structure of the Ten Commandments, what's the sentence? Life is to be respected and preserved. That's what the whole thing is about. God wants our good, even in the fallen world He wants our good.

And finally it concludes in verse 25 "Then," when you do that, "it will be righteousness for us," that's sanctimonial, sanctification righteousness, phase 2 righteousness, "if we are careful to observe all these commandment before the LORD our God, as He commanded us." Now I said this section dealt with heart more than NEPHESE, more the internal than the external. In this verse 25 there's a key phrase there that tells you that this is a heart issue. Do you see what it is? Look at verse 25, "it will be righteousness for us if we are careful to observe all these commandments," and what is the phrase, "before the LORD," in other words, in His presence. It's a heart awareness that we are being watched, that we are being evaluated, that He is learning as to whether... we're under test, not Him, whether we are faithful, whether we're living in His Word, in accordance with His Word, then it will be our righteousness. So it's the heart life, it's the heart attitude.

So to conclude this section, we're finished with Deuteronomy 6, we've looked at this living in the Word is a way of life. Look at your outline, the conclusion very quickly; fulfilling the first commandment involves

consistent training in the Word of God as a comprehensive authority, that blank means comprehensive authority in every area of living, not just a "religious compartment." And I've listed there the five things that Moses has just expounded that can divert us from that and we've watched and we've looked and review the set of tools that we have to avoid that situation happening.

Next week we'll be on chapter 7.