

LOVING THE LORD

In Deuteronomy 30 we read about the children of Israel on the verge of crossing the Jordan River, and entering into the Land of Canaan. This was the land God promised to give them. It took only several days for them to reach this point when they left Egypt. However, because of Israel's constant rebellion and disobedience to the Lord, these several days dragged on to forty years. Many died in the wilderness.

The time had now come for the people of Israel to enter in and possess the land. But before the people would embark on their journey, the Lord called the people together for a meeting. The purpose was for the Lord to renew in them a commitment to follow Him. The children of Israel were going into a new, and unfamiliar country. A land they never lived in before. This would mean they will face severe tests and trials. The Lord's message to them and to us today is: Loving The Lord.

There are three thoughts that flow out of this theme, and that is what I would like to consider with you today.

1. LOVING THE LORD IS ALL OR NOTHING

We read in verse 2, "...and shalt obey his voice according to **all** that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with **all** thine heart, and with **all** thy soul..." Repeated in verse 10.

Christ reinforces this fact in

Matthew 6:24 "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

The same thing is said in James 1:8:

"A double minded man is unstable in all his ways."

For the Israelites, they were entering Canaan, a land full of idols and great wickedness. It was imperative that the people of God separate themselves from the practices and customs of the Canaanites, and follow the Lord.

History records for us that Israel did not follow the Lord.

“The early period of Israelite settlement was characterized by a tendency towards syncretism with the Canaanite religion to which the Israelites were attracted (e.g., Judg 2:2). The Bible frequently has to issue warnings against Canaanite worship and customs (Ex 23:23-24) and forbid relations with them (Deut 7:1ff). Their religion was characterized by numerous gods, loosely arranged in pairs.

The chief god El and his consort Asherah, parents of the gods, were replaced by the vigorous young god Baal.

Baal was the god of storm and weather, and as such also cast his protection over vegetation and fertility. In practice the Canaanite religion was predominantly preoccupied with fertility, and its main myth centers around the kingship of Baal, initially wrested from the chaotic primeval water, and defended a new each year against drought and sterility.”

Listen to a piece written by a writer by the name of Matt Barber:

Ritualistic Baal worship, in sum, looked a little like this: Adults would gather around the altar of Baal. Infants would then be burned alive as a sacrificial offering to the deity. The ritual of convenience was intended to produce economic prosperity by prompting Baal to bring rain for the fertility of “mother earth.”

The natural consequences of such behavior – pregnancy and childbirth – and the associated financial burdens of “unplanned parenthood” were easily offset. One could either choose to engage in homosexual conduct or – with child sacrifice available on demand – could simply take part in another fertility ceremony to “terminate” the unwanted child.

Modern liberalism deviates little from its ancient predecessor. While its macabre rituals have been sanitized with flowery and euphemistic terms of art, its core tenets and practices remain eerily similar. The worship of “fertility” has been replaced with worship

of “reproductive freedom” or “choice.” Child sacrifice via burnt offering has been updated, ever so slightly, to become child sacrifice by way of abortion.

The ritualistic promotion, practice and celebration of both heterosexual and homosexual immorality and promiscuity have been carefully whitewashed – yet wholeheartedly embraced – by the cults of radical feminism, militant “gay rights” and “comprehensive sex education.” And, the pantheistic worship of “mother earth” has been substituted – in name only – for radical environmentalism.

Do you see now why following the Lord is all or nothing! It can't be otherwise.

Therefore All or Nothing involves serious personal examination

“Consider Your Ways,” Haggai 1:5

2 Corinthians 13:5 “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?”

Psalm 26:2 “Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart.”

1 Corinthians 11:28 “But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.”

All or Nothing involves total commitment

We read in verse 2, “...and shalt obey his voice according to **all** that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with **all** thine heart, and with **all** thy soul...” Repeated in verse 10.

Total Commitment involves both duty and desire. We need to follow the Lord. That is our duty. But we want to follow the Lord. That is our desire.

There is no such thing as Perfect Commitment. Christians still sin. But we no longer serve Satan. Christ is our new master and we desire to please Him.

Following the Lord involves glorifying him during the week. At home. At church. At work. At events. Everywhere! We are called to follow the Lord, and by his grace and strength we do.

Loving the Lord is All or Nothing

2. LOVING THE LORD IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH

Read verses 15, 19 and 20

15 “See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil;”

19-20 “I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: “That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.”

The Lord says the same thing in Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 21:8 “And unto this people thou shalt say, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I set before you the way of **life**, and the way of **death**.”

Following the Lord is a serious matter. It is not something that you think upon casually or lightly. The welfare of your soul depends upon it. Life and death, heaven and hell are at stake.

Christ conquered death at the cross. Those who follow the Lord have everlasting life.

Romans 5:21 “That as sin hath reigned unto **death**, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal **life** by Jesus Christ our Lord.”

2 Timothy 1:10 “But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished **death**, and hath brought **life** and immortality to light through the gospel.”

Loving the Lord is the difference between life and death.

3. LOVING THE LORD REQUIRES A WORK OF GRACE IN THE HEART

6And the LORD thy God will **circumcise** thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with **all** thine heart, and with **all** thy soul, that thou mayest live.

The first time we read of the rite of circumcision is found in Genesis 17:10 when God said to Abraham, “...Every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; an it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.”

In the Old Testament circumcision was an outward sign of the covenant between God and His people. It was also a seal of an inward grace. Paul uses the idea of circumcision in Philippians 3:3, not in the sense of removing the foreskin of a Jewish male but of removing the corruption of sin from the human heart.

Philippians 3:3 “For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.”

Colossians 2:11 “In whom also ye are circumcised

with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:”

Therefore, when the Lord says in verse 6, “And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart,” it is a work of grace by God and not a work of man. Man can’t follow the Lord because his nature is corrupt and sinful. Man needs a new nature. A heart transplant.

We read in John 3:3-6 Jesus speaking to Nicodemus “Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”

Following the Lord requires a work of grace in the heart.

Loving the Lord is the message to God's people in Deuteronomy 30. It is all or nothing. It is the difference between life and death, heaven and hell. It is a work of Sovereign grace in the heart. May the Lord help us to follow Him more closely in a wicked and sinful world.

LET US PRAY!