

## Message #9

## Deuteronomy 4:32-49

If you ask most people today about what it is that makes a nation great, you are likely to get some interesting responses. A couple of years ago, for Independence Day in the United States, some research was done by a historian on what it is that makes a nation great. His conclusion was there are about nine things that make a nation great.

- 1) Democracy in which the people vote and have a say.
- 2) Separation of powers that hold each other in check.
- 3) Freedom of Speech.
- 4) Fair legal courts.
- 5) Affordable education.
- 6) Affordable health care.
- 7) Protection of air and water.
- 8) Employee rights.
- 9) Dedication to scientific data.

Democracy is nice as long as the majority of people are not godless fools.

Separation of powers is nice as long as the powers aren't corrupt.

Freedom of Speech is nice as long as there are some restrictions and guidelines.

Fair legal courts are nice if they are interested in truth and facts.

Affordable education is nice as long as one is serious about learning and will work for it.

Affordable health care is nice as long as one does not abuse the system.

Employee rights are nice as long as it doesn't infringe on Employer rights.

Dedication to scientific data is nice as long as one discerns difference between theory and fact.

Let's ask God the question and let's go to His word for the answer. God, what is it in your estimation that makes a nation great? Is it that list? Is it the size and power and wealth?

No, it is none of that. **What makes a nation great from God's perspective is a nation that is focused on Him and His righteous word. A great nation or great individual is one who is very serious about understanding and implementing God's word in every area of life.**

The nation that does that will be blessed by God. The truth is, if a nation were to be serious about actually understanding and obeying the word of God, they would not need a constitution or bill of rights.

Why did God go to all the trouble to bring His written word into existence? What is the point of giving sixty-six books that are filled with statutes, commandments and ordinances? Now the problem is most people in the world don't care about this. But His own people should. God's own people should want to carefully understand and apply God's word to their lives and that is the point driven home in Deuteronomy.

**GOD PERSONALLY LOVES HIS PEOPLE AND CHOSE HIS PEOPLE AND HE HAS GIVEN HIS PEOPLE HIS PRECIOUS WRITTEN WORD; AND IF HIS PEOPLE WILL OBEY IT, HE WILL CONTINUALLY MAKE THINGS GO WELL FOR HIS PEOPLE AND THEIR CHILDREN SO THAT THEY MAY LIVE AND ENJOY A GREAT LIFE.**

God wants to do great things for His people. God does not want His people living a miserable life and having a miserable existence. He has gone to the trouble to give His people His word so they may live a life filled with His good blessings.

Now in this text there are four main realizations Moses wanted God's people to have:

**REALIZATION #1** – The only true God who has created everything and everyone is Israel's Personal God and He has done things for her that He has not done for any other nation in this world. **4:32-39.**

God is the creator and God is the only God and He has done national things for Israel that He has done for no other nation in the world.

**What Moses and God wanted His people to realize is there is no other God but Me and I am your God.**

What Moses says here is the Sovereign God who has created everything is the God who has done things for Israel and decreed things for Israel that He has never ever done for any other nation in the world.

In **verse 32**, Moses challenges His people to “ask” about what happened in former days. His conclusion is since the creation of the heavens and the earth, **the greatest display of God's Sovereign Presence and Power has been what God did with Israel.**

Moses asks three questions:

**Question #1** - Has anything ever been done on this earth since God created it like He did for Israel? **4:32b**

Have you ever even heard of another nation in which God went and took one nation out of another nation by a series of miraculous plagues, and then parts a Sea so that Israel may walk right through the middle of a Sea and then drown the other nation chasing her? Have you ever in the history of the world heard of God doing that for any other nation? No Way!

**Question #2** - Has any other nation on this earth ever heard the voice of God? **4:33**

Has any other nation in the world ever heard the booming voice of God coming out of the midst of a burning fire? No Way!

**Question #3** - Has any other so-called god done the signs and wonders and by warfare terrifying things as God did for Israel? **4:34**

No way! Now why did God do that for Israel? Moses says five reasons:

**(Reason #1)** - God did mighty things for you so you would know there is no God but Him. **4:35**

Hear this and hear this well, there is no God but the God of the Bible and the God of the Bible is the God of Israel. There are not multiple deities. There is one and only one true God and it is the God of the Bible. Not the God of religion, the God of the Bible.

**(Reason #2)** - God let you hear His voice and see His great fire and hear His words for the purpose of making you a trained and disciplined people. **4:36**

God says I actually let you see the fire and hear My voice so you would say we need to be disciplined people who take God and His word seriously. The “discipline” here was not negative, it was to be positive.

**(Reason #3)** - God did these things because He loved you and chose you. **4:37a**

God says you don’t have this relationship with Me because you are a great group. You have this relationship with Me because I loved you and chose you.

The love of God and the election of God are wonderful, precious, encouraging doctrines. One who rejects election is rejecting a precious doctrine that displays God’s sovereign love and grace. The proof that God loves Israel is that He chose Israel. The proof that God loves us is that He chose us.

Now God cannot just save Israel or us by His love. In order to save us there must be something judicially done about our sin problem. So God commended His love toward us in that while we were sinners, Christ died for us. So the love of God put Jesus Christ on the cross so that all the righteous requirements could be met so we could be saved. God did that and then chose us. That is an amazing package of love and grace.

**(Reason #4)** - God Personally brought you out of Egypt to show His great power. **4:37b**

God wants His people to know that He is a powerful God. He has all power to do everything He wants to do. He displayed that great power to Israel when He brought her out of Egypt.

**(Reason #5)** - God drove out your enemies who were stronger than you to give Israel the Promised Land. **4:38**

**Verse 39** makes the point again that there is no other God but this God. There is no other God but the God of the Bible. God’s people need to “know” this.

That verb “know” (yada) means to think about this, esteem this in your heart and mind. God’s people need to be cemented in the fact that there is no God but the God of the Bible. He is the sovereign God of heaven above and of earth below.

**REALIZATION #2** – Realize that this is the God you want to obey because this is the sovereign God, who can cause all things go well for you forever. **4:40**

The sovereign God of the Bible is the God who can give you “the good life.” Moses says “keep” His “statutes” and “commandments” and God will see to it that you have a full, abundant and blessed life.

There are some key words to grasp here. The verb “keep” (shamar) means to carefully keep, guard, watch, attend and observe (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 837).

The word “statutes” (haqqim) refers to specific things God has decreed, inscribed and put into print. These are things specifically delineated (*Ibid.*, p. 301).

The word “commandments” (mitzvah) is one that refers to precepts of God that are taught (*Ibid.*, p. 501). Often times, these precepts center on things that should not be done or things that are prohibited.

So what Moses is saying to God’s people is that you need to carefully guard the written word of God in your lives and take it personally and seriously.

At the end of **verse 40** Moses gives a purpose clause or reason for the admonition. **The purpose of keeping the statutes and commandments is so that God will sovereignly see to it that things will go well for you in this life and you will live a long, enjoyable life.** Not only will He do that for you but also for your children.

God has a land that He will give to Israel “for all time.” God’s original intent was to put Israel in her land for all time. Israel had been guaranteed that Promised Land for all time. She obviously has not had that land and certainly does not have it now. Why? She didn’t follow through on what God wanted her to do.

**REALIZATION #3** – Realize God in His grace has given three cities of refuge east of the Jordan. **4:41-43**

Now this series of verses almost seems out of place. But what God is doing here is saying My grace makes provisions for My people to experience My blessings even when things aren’t perfect.

Here is a real Biblical look at three real Sanctuary cities. Moses only names three because he would not go to the west side of the Jordan. On the east side of the Jordan, Moses designated three cities: Bezer; Ramoth and Golan.

Bezer (20 miles east of NE corner of Dead Sea) was in the wilderness for the Reubenites; Ramoth (30 miles SE of Sea of Galilee) was in Gilead for the Gadites; and Golan (20 miles east of a center point on the east bank of the Sea of Galilee) was in Bashan for the Manassites. According to **verse 42** the reason for these cities was if someone unintentionally killed his neighbor and it was not an intentional homicide and there was no hatred or animosity involved, then he could flee to one of these cities and live.

Moses really develops this idea in Deuteronomy 19:2-13. Sometimes accidents do happen and sometimes someone dies because of an accident. The illustration given in Deuteronomy 19 is that a man went into the woods to cut wood and the iron head of the axe flew off and hit his friend and he dies. This certainly was not an intentional homicide. It was an accident. These cities were provided by God as a place of refuge for the person who did it.

A family member avenger of blood had a right to track down the person and even the score. These cities prevented him from killing one who was innocent.

**REALIZATION #4** – Realize that I am about to introduce to you the written words to which you need to pay careful attention. **4:44-49**

What Moses was about to do in the next chapters was to present the written word of God that should govern the lives of His people.

He identifies the word of God with the following nouns:

- 1) “Law” (torah) **v. 44** - Literally “the law” refers to “the full collection of principles and stipulations about to be promulgated by Moses” (Eugene Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, p. 137). So the law here refers to what Moses was about to present.
- 2) “testimonies” (edot) **v. 45** - precepts that God specifically reveals (Gesenius, p. 608).
- 3) “statutes” (huqqim) **v. 45** - inscribed things put into print.
- 4) “Ordinances” (mishpatim) **v. 45** - righteous judgments that are just, right and lawful (*Ibid.*, p. 519-520).

Now **verse 45** says that Moses set before the sons of Israel these things when they came out of Egypt. They had come out of the Egyptian area and were ready to go in the valley of the Jordan. They were ready to invade the Promised Land.

They were living in the land of Og, king of Bashan. The two kings of the Amorites were across the Jordan to the east. They were on the end of the Valley of Arnon, even as far as Mount Sion and the Sea of Arabah. So here they were a stone’s throw away from the Promised Land. The only question left to answer is whether or not they would take God’s word seriously.

If God’s people forget God’s word, they neglect their own well-being. God can make your dreams come true, but before He does, you will need to show Him you are serious about Him and His word.

The key to a long, blessed life is to take God's written word seriously. Carefully and accurately understand it and carefully and accurately obey it. So what really makes a nation great? What is it that makes an individual great? What makes one great is carefully and accurately knowing and applying God's word. Any nation or individual who purposes to do that will have a blessed life.