

Honored
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Allen Power

Deuteronomy 4:1-9

Opening: Do you remember the old Jay Leno routine, “Jaywalking?” What was the premise? One of his funniest/saddest segments was a “U.S. Citizenship quiz.” He asked people on the street who were born in this country to answer questions (“softball” questions) from the actual U.S. citizenship test. If they failed he recommended they be deported.

- What country did the US fight in the revolutionary war? “France?”
- What does the Emancipation Proclamation do? “Emancipation approximation?”
- In what month do we vote for President? “October? September?”
- What special group advises the President? “His inner group.” “The advisory council?”
- Who said, “Give me liberty or give me death?” “Bonaparte?”
- Who elects congress? “The President?” (An interesting answer this week!)
- How many stars on the flag? “Thirty two?” (Leno points to a flag)
Response: “It’s moving too fast to count them.”

In fairness, they would interview people for two hours so they cut out all those who responded correctly. But the point of the bit was how ignorant many of our own citizens are about the basics about our country.

We might laugh about people’s ignorance of civics, but today’s text addresses a different kind of ignorance that is not a laughing matter: biblical ignorance.

Big Idea: The good news is there is no biblical knowledge test for citizenship in Heaven. At the same time, scripture makes it plain that followers of Christ are expected to honor Him by KNOWING, BELIEVING, and OBEYING God’s word. We are also commanded to teach it to others.

- As we said last week, the book of Deuteronomy records a series of “farewell addresses” delivered by Moses to the Israelites before he died and they crossed into the Promised Land.
- He was reiterating what they needed to know in order to follow God’s will.
- In these verses Moses stressed the importance of KNOWING, BELIEVING, OBEYING, and TEACHING God’s word.

Deuteronomy 4:1–2 (ESV)

4 “And now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the rules that I am teaching you, and do them, that you may live, and go in and take possession of the land that the Lord, the God of your fathers, is giving you. ² You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you.

Deuteronomy 4:5–9 (ESV)

⁵ See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it.

⁶ Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’ ⁷ For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is to us, whenever we call upon him? ⁸ And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today?

⁹ “Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and your children’s children—

- Look at verse one: Moses said “listen” and “do (obey)” the “statutes and rules” God had given him to give to the people. This included the Ten Commandments as well as specific rules for living.
- Today we have a complete revelation of God’s word: the Bible.
- As “New Testament” followers of Christ, we know that we don’t achieve salvation by keeping rules or doing good deeds (works vs. grace.)
- However, knowing, believing, and obeying scripture is essential to honoring God because scripture teaches us about His character and commandments.
- We can’t worship, love, and follow God if we don’t know His character and his commandments. Jesus said in John 14:15 (ESV), “*If you love me, you will keep my commandments.*” To keep them we have to know them.
- Keeping rules does not save us but let’s use “law” as an illustration.
- Do you know the term, “*ignorance of the law is no excuse?*” **What does it mean in the legal system? Why is it a reasonable? Is it always a defense? How might this apply to knowing and obeying scripture?**
- Romans 14:10 and 12 says, “*For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; ¹² So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.*”ⁱ
- Those verses refer to saved followers of Christ. It has nothing to do with our sins because Christ paid for those. We WILL however be judged for how we lived our Christian life on earth.
- Imagine the conversation: “*Heavenly Father, I just didn’t know, that was in the Bible, no one ever told me!*” **“Did you go the church?”** “Yes.” **“Did they have sermons?”** “Yes.” **“Did you go to Sunday School?”** “Yes.” **“Did you own a Bible?”** Yes. **“How could you not know?”**
- Ignorance of God’s word will be no excuse. If that person has truly trusted Christ as Savior they will still be saved for eternity, but oh what a tragedy in the blessings and opportunities missed! I wonder if God might show on a big screen what might have been? I don’t know, but we get the point.
- Some might say, “It’s just not fair because understanding scripture is too hard!” In the first place, it is hard to understand if we never read it, but **why will that “scripture was too hard” argument not “wash” at the**

judgment seat? Back to our legal example, what if your excuse for not paying taxes was that the tax code is too complicated? How would the average reasonable person standard apply?

- Is scripture too hard to understand? Do you mean hard to understand things like love the Lord your God, love your neighbor, and forgive others?
- Verse two: Don't add to or take away from God's word. **If someone "adapts" scripture by adding or subtracting, what are they really saying they believe about scripture and about their trust in God?**
- Think about prescription medicine, if you dilute it you miss the effectiveness of it. If you "mix medicines" you might die!
- Moses used an example they had just seen with their eyes. 24,000 Israelite men engaged in worshiping the false god Baal including temple prostitution and God killed them with a plague. Those who honored God and His word were still alive. Revelation 22:18-19 has a similar warning.
- **What are examples today of adding to or subtracting from scripture?**
- Verses two and six tell us to "keep" the commandments of the Lord.
- **What does that word "keep" mean?**

The dictionary says the verb "keep" means to "*obey, comply, conform, follow, mind, observe*" and the opposite is to "*neglect*." It also means "*to notice or honor a day, occasion, or deed <keep the Sabbath by refraining from work>*"ⁱⁱ

- To "keep" God's commandments means to treasure and follow them.
- Treasuring God's word is more than just "hearing it."

Warren Wiersbe: "...hearing the Word of God involves much more than sound waves impacting the human ear. Hearing God's Word is a matter of focusing our whole being—mind, heart, and will—on the Lord, receiving what He says to us and obeying it. The Word of God must penetrate our hearts and become a part of our inner being if it is to change our lives."ⁱⁱⁱ

- Verses six through eight say that knowing and obeying God's word will give us "wisdom and understanding" in the sight of unbelievers.
- If we do our best to live by the commands of scripture we will stand out from the crowd. Deuteronomy 14:2 in the KJV says, "*the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people...*"^{iv} Now, none of us likes the idea of being "peculiar!" But better translations have clarified that term. In the NEW KJV it reads, "² For you *are* a holy people to the Lord your God, and the Lord has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples who *are* on the face of the earth. (Emphasis mine)
- Obeying God's word will make us stand out not as peculiar but as special.
- Look at what Moses said in about keeping God's commands in verse six:

⁶ Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' ⁷ For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is to us, whenever we call upon him? ⁸ And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today?

- Obeying God's commands in scripture may make us odd to unbelievers, **why might it have the opposite effect drawing them to us?**
- Obeying God's commands can draw others to us, not because we are so smart or holy but because our "God is so near to us" they will notice His power in our lives and want to know how they can have it too!
- One last point in verse nine.

⁹ "Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and your children's children—

- We're not only to KNOW (treasure), BELIEVE (in our hearts), and OBEY God's word. We are to teach them to others beginning with our children.
- What an important reminder for all of us in this age group. Some still have younger kids, some have teens, and some are getting into grandparenting.
- We have an awesome responsibility for that next generation. We'll talk more about this next week but here's a preview:

Deuteronomy 6:6–9 (ESV)

⁶ And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ⁸ You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹ You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

So, What's the Takeaway?

- What if we had to pass a quiz on the commands of Christ in order to get into Heaven? Would we make the cut?
- The good news is there is no biblical knowledge test for citizenship in Heaven. At the same time, scripture makes it plain that followers of Christ are expected to honor Him by KNOWING, BELIEVING, and OBEYING God's word. We are also commanded to teach it to others.
- The best news: 1 John 5:3 (ESV) says, *"³ For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome."* Living by God's word isn't a burden, it's a blessing!
- Quoting Wiersbe again, *"Obeying the Lord becomes a joyful privilege when you realize that His commandments are expressions of His love, assurances of His strength, invitations to His blessing, opportunities to grow and bring Him glory, and occasions to enjoy His love and fellowship as we seek to please Him. God's Word is the open door into the treasury of His grace."*^v
- This week, let's recommit our hearts to KNOWING, BELIEVING, and OBEYING God's word and looking for ways to share it with others.

ⁱ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Ro 14:10–12). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

ⁱⁱ Merriam-Webster, I. (1996). [*Merriam-Webster's collegiate thesaurus*](#). Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster.

ⁱⁱⁱ THE WIERSBE BIBLE COMMENTARY: OLD TESTAMENT ©
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^{iv} [*The Holy Bible: King James Version*](#). (2009). (Electronic Edition of the 1900 Authorized Version., Dt 14:2). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

^v THE WIERSBE BIBLE COMMENTARY: OLD TESTAMENT ©
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