

Read the Whole Bible with Pastor

Monday (May 1) – Deuteronomy 6, 7

Deuteronomy 6 is a summary of Moses' message throughout the entire book. He warns Israel that God has promised blessings if they are obedient to His commandments. So, Moses instructs the people of Israel to keep the Word of God always at the center of their lives and conversation. This instruction is also important for us to heed. Though we have not been given the same specific promises of blessing for obedience, the call to keep God's Word and commandments at the center of our life and conversation remains important. Luther reflects on this in the Daily Prayers section of the Small Catechism, where he offers a structure through which we can do just this through morning, evening, and meal-time prayer and devotion.

One of the difficulties that many people have with the Old Testament is dealing with the violence which the Lord commanded His people to inflict upon other nations. How can a God of love be the cause of such violence? Deuteronomy 7 gives us an important perspective on this question. In verse 4 Moses explains why Israel must not intermarry with pagans: "for they would turn away your sons from following Me, to serve other gods." The Lord cares deeply for His people, and He warns them against the dangerous practices which would lead them away from Him. We will hear more about this topic tomorrow.

Tuesday (May 2) – Deuteronomy 8, 9

In chapter 8 Moses continues his instruction to remember the Lord, focusing specifically on the ways in which the Lord provided for Israel in the past. It is important that we, too, take time to remember all that the Lord has done for His people—both in reading the Scriptures to recall the Lord's salvation there, and in remembering the ways in which the Lord has provided for us in the past. Note especially verse 3, which our Lord Jesus quotes during His temptation in the wilderness (see Matthew 4:1-11). The Word of God is our source of life.

Why did the Lord command His Old Testament people to violence? Because God, the judge of all, was using the Israelites to punish the wickedness of the Canaanites (Deut. 9:5). In a similar manner, He would use the Babylonians to punish Israel's future wickedness (Ezekiel 39:21-24). God takes sin seriously, and He will use the governing authorities of this world to punish evildoers (Romans 13:1-7). Therefore, we must take God's commands seriously, flee from evil, and remain distinct from our pagan world, lest we be in danger of losing our salvation.

Wednesday (May 3) – Deuteronomy 10, 11

In these chapters, Moses gives further instructions and commands to the new generation of Israel for how they ought to live and not become like their fathers who continually rebelled against the Lord. In the midst of these commands lies the heart of the matter: "Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn" (Deut. 10:16). How does one circumcise his heart? Through the working of God's Spirit alone. This points us to Holy Baptism. It is only through the Lord's Spirit re-making our hearts that we are enabled to live a sanctified life.

Thursday (May 4) – Deuteronomy 12

Chapter 12 focuses on right worship. Nearly all the instructions given in this chapter related to worship of the Lord are given so that Israel would be distinct from the nations and worship their God in a distinct manner. While most of the specifics of Israel's way of worship do not apply to New Testament Christians (see John 4:19-26), the fact remains that the Lord still calls His people to be distinct from the world (see 1 Peter 2:9-10). Therefore, Christian worship should look and sound distinct from the worship of the world.

Friday (May 5) – Deuteronomy 13, 14

These chapters recognize how alluring the ways of the world truly are. Despite Moses' constant warning against following the ways of the pagan nations, Israel would be continually tempted to do so. Therefore the Lord gives strict boundaries to maintain their distinctiveness. It is dangerous to even flirt with pagan ways. We, too, must be careful to distance ourselves from the ways of our pagan world, lest we fall into the temptations of consumerism, hedonism, or egoism. These might seem like harmless self-indulgences, but they are true dangers to our salvation, for anything on which we depend most is our god. Martin Luther offers further reflection on this in the Large Catechism under the First Commandment.

Saturday (May 6) – Deuteronomy 15

Chapter 15 is about the Sabbatical Year. When most Christians think about the Third Commandment, they think about rest. However, for Israel, the Sabbath is much more than a day of rest once per week. The Sabbath is intended by God to be a lifestyle. Thus the Sabbatical Year is integral to Israel's life and fulfillment of the Third Commandment. The Sabbath day and year are about recognizing that everything belongs to the Lord and that He provides for His people. So, the Sabbatical Year also becomes a call to generosity. Since everything belongs to God and He has provided for me, one of His people, how can I not be generous with that which He has given me? Present-day Christians would do well to learn from this attitude and to give more generously and freely, knowing that the Lord will continue to provide.

Sunday (May 7) – Deuteronomy 16, 17

Much of chapter 16 deals with the key Israelite feasts. In the New Testament, two of these feasts become particularly important. Our Lord Jesus dies during Passover. He is the spotless lamb who atones for the sin of the world. Seven weeks after Passover was the Feast of Weeks, or, as it is called in the New Testament, "Pentecost." During the Pentecost after our Lord's death and resurrection, Jews from all over the world gathered to rejoice in the Lord (v. 11) and to remember the Exodus (v. 12). When the Holy Spirit came upon the Apostles, they began to preach a new exodus and a new joy in the Lord won by our Lord Jesus' death and resurrection.

In Chapter 17 the Lord gives instruction for Israel's future kings. Saul, David, Solomon, and those who followed them all failed to keep these commands. But Jesus is our perfect king who did not live for Himself, but died so that we might live forever in the new promised land.