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## THE DYING MESSAGE OF A GREAT MAN

- *DEUT. 6:1-15. - SEPTEMBER 15. -*

**Golden Text: – "Beware lest thou forget the Lord."**

DEUTERONOMY is the title of one of the most important books of the Bible. From it evidently David and the other prophets of the Old Testament drew considerable of their inspiration, and from it our Lord and the apostles freely quoted. It may be said to be a grand summary of the whole Law of God. It presents to us a number of the orations of that great man of God and leader of Israel – the mediator of the Law Covenant. Its preparation may have been a gradual work on the part of Moses, but its delivery to the people of Israel was apparently reserved until shortly before his death, and about the time the Israelites were ready to pass over Jordan under the leadership of Joshua to take possession of the promised land. The grandeur of its language and figures of speech is freely conceded by all, and some have ranked its orations quite as highly as those of Demosthenes of ancient times and of Burke, the more modern. The evident object of the book was to impress upon the Israelites the glorious lessons of their past, and to inspire them with reverence for Jehovah their God, and thus to be to that people the voice of Moses and the voice of the Lord through Moses, encouraging and admonishing them and, through them, future generations.

Note carefully the loyalty of Moses to the Lord. He boasted not of Israel as "his people," as we frequently hear modern preachers do respecting their congregations – although Moses indeed might have been excusable had he used such language, because he [R4051 : page 262] was personally the mediator, the representative of the whole nation according to their covenant with the Lord at Sinai. Note well that his great work as a leader

passes comparatively unnoticed, and that his exhortations to Israel are all along the highest conceivable lines of duty towards God and responsibility to him for all the comforts and blessings of the past, as well as for all the hopes they cherished for the future. The preparation and delivery of this oration to Israel reminds us of the words of the Apostle Peter in connection with his epistle when he says, "Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though you know them, and be established in the present truth." (2 Pet. 1:12.) Not only did these orations of Deuteronomy have a valuable influence upon the Israelites at the important juncture of their passing from the guidance of an old leader to that of a younger one and into a new land, but Scriptural history tells us that six hundred years afterwards, when the nation had fallen into idolatry, when the Temple of Solomon was practically abandoned, and the religious worship of the people was at a very low ebb, the finding of this book, Deuteronomy, in the rubbish of the Temple, and the reading of it first in the ears of King Josiah and afterward at his command in the hearing of all the people, awakened one of the greatest revivals in the history of that nation, and led to the destruction of idols throughout the land and the reestablishment of divine worship. – 2 Kings 22:8-20.

### **PROPER FEAR OF THE LORD**

Our lesson of today is generally recognized as belonging to the second oration (Deut. 5:11). Some surmise that at the close of this oration the "Book of the Covenant" – the Law contained in Deut. 12:26 – was recited or read. Later the book was placed beside the Ark of the Testimony in the Holy of Holies, as described in Deuteronomy 31:24-29.

This lesson opens with the statement that the book is a summary of the divine commandments, the statutes and judgments which the Lord commanded to be taught and to be

performed in the land of promise. The word "judgments" here, as in many other places in the Scriptures, signifies decisions as to right and wrong. The object of these is stated (v. 2): "That thou mightest fear Jehovah thy God, to keep all his statutes." This was not only to apply to those who entered the land, but to extend to all their children, and their favor in the land and their continuance in it were made dependent thereon. The Apostle counsels us that perfect love casteth out fear, but the Scriptures also show us that the "fear [reverence] of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Nor are the two statements in disagreement, for a proper reverence carries with it a fear to displease or offend one who is loved and revered. Moreover, it is only the perfect love that fully casts out all fear, and the perfecting of love is a gradual matter. A beginning of love is not incompatible but quite harmonious with the spirit of deep reverence, and, as related to the Almighty, a feeling of reverential awe as respects his greatness and perfection and in contrast with our own littleness and imperfection. It is as the Christian grows in grace and knowledge that he is enabled to "perfect holiness in the reverence of the Lord" and at the same time to perfect his love – the latter eventually entirely swallowing up every feeling of fear, although reverence will remain an integral part of the love, for who could fully love God without reverencing him?

## **EARTHLY PROSPERITY AND REWARD**

There is no doubt about it that in this lesson (v. 3), and in many other parts of the Old Testament Scriptures, the Lord distinctly sets before that people earthly prosperity as reward for their obedience and loyalty to him and his laws. This to some has been a stumbling-block; and not recognizing the fact of the dispensational change from the Jewish Age to the Gospel Age, they have applied this promise equally to Spiritual Israel, and their error has resulted in confusion of mind, for it is plain to be seen by any one that earthly prosperity in the present age does not

attend the Spiritual Israelite, but rather, as the Apostle expressed it, "Yea, all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (2 Tim. 3:12.) Ah! how important it is, as the Apostle suggests to Timothy, that we learn to "rightly divide the Word of truth" – that we notice which Scriptures belong to the Jewish Age, which to the Gospel Age and which others still to the Millennial Age. Observing this rule, everything is plain. Fleshly Israel had earthly promises and not heavenly ones, while Spiritual Israel has heavenly promises, and merely the assurance of bread and water as respects their earthly interests, and no assurance beyond these as respects their temporal prosperity.

So far, therefore, as this teaching of earthly rewards is concerned, instead of reflecting against the book of Deuteronomy and its inspiration, it supports them. The promise to Natural Israel, that they would be blessed in basket and in store, in flocks and in herds, in long life and many children, finds its counterpart in Spiritual Israel on a higher plane. The heavenly Father was pleased to give Natural Israel earthly blessings because they were of the earthly seed, and because the dealings of their dispensation foreshadowed the divine dealings with the world during the Millennial Age in rewarding every good deed and punishing every misdemeanor. To God's people, begotten of the holy Spirit at Pentecost and since, belong the "exceeding great and precious promises," the heavenly glory, honor and immortality as members of the New Creation, spiritual. Your Father is more willing to give the holy Spirit to them that ask him than are earthly parents to give earthly good things to their children. Spiritual Israel, therefore, is to seek to grasp, to appreciate, to enjoy spiritual things by faith now, and, if faithful to the end, will enjoy these actually throughout eternity by participation in the First Resurrection as New Creatures.

As the opening statement of the most important of [R4051 : page 263] all truths, the great Prophet, Moses, cried to the people, "Hearken, O Israel!"

### **"JEHOVAH OUR GOD IS ONE – JEHOVAH"**

If this statement was true at the time of its utterance, it is still true; if its importance put it at the very top of the list of injunctions, it should still be regarded as the most important amongst the doctrines or teachings of the Lord's Word. Yet what do we see? We see as respects Fleshly Israel that they soon forgot the words of Moses, and time and again they were punished on the score of idolatry – for recognizing other gods, for forgetting the declaration that there is but the one, and his name Jehovah. Quite similarly we find amongst Christian people a tendency to forget this great integral truth that there is but one God and his name Jehovah. Our Roman Catholic friends make many gods: the Father, the Son, the holy Spirit, Saint Mary, all the apostles and saints, are gods of higher or lower dignity, with various degrees of reverence, and objects of adoration and prayer. And even Protestants, while rejecting many of the lesser gods of Romanism, yet, contrary to this Scripture and every other Scripture and without any reason, persistently declare that we have three Gods in one; nevertheless they reject this statement also and reverse it, saying, that there is one God in three persons! If we attempt to question them and to ask a reason for their hopes and beliefs on this subject they are silent, except to say that it is a great mystery, which neither they nor any one else can understand – how there could be three Gods in one person or one God in three persons. No reasonable mind could grasp this; it would be a mystery indeed. But why should we make a mystery out of the plain, simple statement of God's Word? Why not accept the inspired statement of Moses that there is but one God, and that he has not three names but one name, Jehovah.

Nothing in this need hinder us from recognizing our Lord Jesus as a god also, a "mighty God." Thus the Scriptures describe him, and clearly tell us of his greatness, his wisdom, his love, his power, his full harmony with the heavenly Father, Jehovah, and his full submission to his heavenly Father's will in all particulars. As he himself said, "Of mine own self I can do nothing," "My Father hath sent me," "I came not to do mine own will but the will of my Father"; and again, "The Father is greater than I." (John 5:30,36; 14:28.) Is it not the part of true wisdom and faith to take the inspired Word on this subject as on every subject, and not to trust to wild theorizings of our own or those of other men, which admittedly make confusion and mystery and darken the counsels of the Lord's Word? How beautiful the thought presented in the Scriptures in the language of the Apostle, "All things are of the Father – all things are by the Son." (I Cor. 8:6.) How beautiful the thought that the Son was the very "beginning of the creation of God," and that "by him all things were made," that he was the active agent and representative in all the great work, not only as respected man but angels also. The Bible teaching of the relationship between the Father and the Son honors both, does violence to neither Scripture nor reason, but leaves the teachable in a happy frame of mind, the more ready to be taught of the Lord on all subjects.

How beautiful the thought that Jehovah God presented to his first-begotten Son – our Lord Jesus, in his prehuman condition – the proposition that he should be the Redeemer of the world, and that this should be accomplished by the humbling of himself to man's nature, and then the further humbling of himself even to death, even the death of the cross; and that as a result of this humiliation and this evidence of loyalty to the Father, he should be raised from the dead to a plane of nature above and beyond his original glorious estate, made partaker of the divine nature, and share in all the glories of that nature. How grand the thought that the dear Redeemer did thus manifest his love and loyalty, and that

he is now exalted and is set down at the right hand of the majesty on high, awaiting the time when in the Father's name he shall take possession of the dominion of the world to rule, to [R4052 : page 263] bless with light and knowledge, and to uplift the willing and obedient from the mire of sin and death to all that was lost in Adam and redeemed at Calvary. Truly all who really hearken to the Word of the Lord are made both wiser and happier thereby. "The secret of Jehovah is with them that reverence him, and he will

### **"SHOW THEM HIS COVENANT"**

That wonderful Covenant, shown to all who are seeking the Word in honesty and sincerity, assures us that as our dear Redeemer humbled himself for our and the world's redemption and has been highly exalted, so, if similarly faithful, we may suffer with him now and by and by share his glory and be co-laborers with him in the Kingdom which is to bless all the families of the earth. O, what riches of grace! what loving kindness! what tender mercy! what evidences of divine wisdom, skill, justice, love and power! How this view of the Only Begotten of the Father shows him to us as our Redeemer and also as our Lord and Head, who by and by, according to his promise, will present us as his Bride, blameless and irreprovable before the Father in love. Viewed from this standpoint the recognition of Jesus, our dear Redeemer, the Sent of God, the Savior of the world, is not in derogation of the command of our text, "Jehovah, our God, is one"; for the Apostle assures us that, according to divine authority, all should reverence the Son even as they reverence the Father – not reverence him as the Father, but reverence him as the Son whom the Father has appointed heir of all things, and who, as the Father's associate, is to bless all the families of the earth, and who a thousand years later will deliver up the Kingdom to God, even the Father, that he may be all in all.

## THE CHIEF OR PRIMARY COMMANDMENT

After calling attention to the one true God, Jehovah, we are exhorted, "Thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul and with all thy [R4052 : page 264] might." This is the summary of the first great commandment, as approved by our Lord himself. (Matt. 22:37.) It is not in conflict with this that we love our Lord Jesus also, for the Apostle declares, "Every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him." (I John 5:1.) He who loveth the Father must love the Son also, who is the Father's express image and who has manifested to us in his own flesh the glorious character of the Father. As the Son loved the Father, prayed to the Father, and felt that he must be about the Father's business, and finally died in the accomplishment of the Father's will – the work unto which the Father had sent him – so with us, imbued with the Spirit of our dear Redeemer, our Head. We as his members must have such a reverence for the Father and for his will as is here specified. The nation of Israel could not love the Lord with all its heart, with its soul, with its might; this exhortation must be understood to be of an individual kind. Similarly the Church, Spiritual Israel, is not called upon to love the Lord with heart, soul, being, strength, but the individuals who are the Lord's and who are seeking to please him, to serve him, to lay down their lives in obedience to his will and in the forwarding of the divine purposes, are called upon so to do.

"And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart." It is not sufficient, as the Lord subsequently pointed out, that we should make a profession to be his people, for the "Lord looketh upon the heart." The complaint of the Lord through the Prophet against Spiritual Israel of today is the same as against Israel of old – "This people draw nigh unto me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me" – not all, but apparently the great majority. (Isa. 29:13; Matt. 15:8.) The lesson to us as



Spiritual Israelites is contained in the Apostle's words that this command of chief love shall be in our hearts. If so, this love for God will permeate everything; we will love him and his service better than we would love sin and its pleasures, better than we would love friends, kindred, houses or lands or any other thing; and whoever has this first great commandment in his heart and is living in harmony with it, will be sure also to have the second commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

### **THE FRUITS OF SUCH A LOVE**

That the Lord and Moses, his mouthpiece, did not seek to inculcate the mere nominal professions of love for God is clearly attested by the next verse, which declares respecting these divine commands, "Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." One whose mind and heart would be so filled with love for God and the glorious attributes of his character would indeed be a saint. What time would he have for sin or frivolity? What a model home his would be! how well instructed his children would be in the dealings of divine providence and all the gracious promises of the divine Word! What moderation of word and of act would result from this intimate fellowship with God, and yet how the light would shine out from such a life!

The highest attainments under this exhortation were not reached under the Jewish dispensation, as the Apostle most clearly sets forth. The Jew did recognize a grandeur in the Mosaic Law, but it was so far above him and all his abilities that he gradually drifted into mere outward and formalistic observance of its propositions. But the Apostle explains that the highest attainments under this Law may be made by Spiritual Israelites during this Gospel Age. He declares, "The righteousness of the

Law is fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." – Rom. 8:4.

In other words, although we are not more able to accurately keep that grand law than were the Jews, we who are in Christ, having his righteousness imputed as a covering for our blemishes and being made partakers of his holy Spirit, are able to approximate in spirit this grand position. And, although there are not many such "saints" in the world, we believe that WATCH TOWER readers represent a considerable number of those of whom the description in the verse before us is a fitting one. (v. 7.) And a still larger number are awakening to a realization of the true standard which the Lord has set for those who are following in the footsteps of Jesus. These are more and more watching and praying for the fulfilment in themselves of the Lord's will as here expressed. They are seeking to teach the divine statutes, laws of righteousness, etc., to their children by word and by example. They talk of them continually in their leisure moments, in the house, on the train, on the street – and thoughts of the Lord and his wonderful plan of salvation come first into their minds on awaking in the morning and are last in their thoughts as they retire to rest at night.

We are glad to testify that our increasing knowledge of the readers of this journal leads us to believe that they are in their hearts and in their lives seeking to approximate the condition of mind and heart here set forth as the ideal one, most pleasing to the Lord. At conventions this is particularly noticeable, and many have remarked that, with from five hundred to a thousand gathered from various parts, very rarely is there a word heard respecting business or pleasure or any other matter except as associated and connected with the Lord, his character, his plan and the service of his Truth. Strangers have commented upon this and marveled at it. Nevertheless, what else might we expect amongst those who are growing in grace and knowledge and love

– amongst those who are coming nearer and nearer to an appreciation of the divine standards and whose hearts are full of the desire to know and to do the divine will.

Nor would we discourage those who have not yet attained to anything like this, the proper standard for the Lord's people. Rather would we bid them be of [R4052 : page 265] good courage and continue the fight against the world, the flesh and the Adversary, and to continue to watch and to pray, and to strive to attain the conditions here set before us as those pleasing and acceptable to our Father in heaven. To have the desire of heart is the first condition, and to heroically carry this forward in all the affairs of life is the second step. The two constitute overcoming the world. Thus God works in us first of all to will aright, and subsequently as we become stronger in faith and knowledge and grace the spirit of the truth works in us to do his good pleasure, so that in all our ways we acknowledge him and request that he may direct our paths. The family worship, the *Heavenly Manna* at the table – if we give it as important a place as the earthly food – and the study of the divine plan are channels through which the divine blessing is more and more entering the hearts and lives of many of our readers, and we trust that the good work will continue to go on and progress. Proportionately each one is a burning and a shining light in his home or amongst his acquaintances, whether they acknowledge this or make little of it. His testimony is pleasing to God and hopeful to himself, and ere long the Lord's favor will be abundantly manifested.

## **THE JEWISH PHYLACTERIES**

Our Lord Jesus referred to a custom amongst the Jews of his day which still prevails – of binding the phylactery upon their foreheads and their arms, while making void the law of God through their traditions. The eighth verse is the foundation for this custom. It says, "Thou shalt bind them for a sign upon

thine [R4053 : page 265] hand and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes."

A phylactery is a little square leather box attached to a leather strap about a yard long. In the cubical leather box are placed parchments containing four passages of Scripture in four columns. (Exodus 13:1-16; Deut. 6:4,11,13-21.) These the Jews at times fastened upon the head, the box coming above and between the eyes; or again they fastened the box at the inside of the elbow, and wrapped the strap about the arm, holding the end in the hand. Poor Jews! they grasped with fervency an outward form, but, as the Lord pointed out, they missed the real kernel of the Law, namely, love out of a pure heart for God and for their neighbor. The wealthy and infidel Jews have of course abandoned this custom, but it is still in vogue amongst the most earnest or orthodox, who usually spend one hour in prayer every day and in putting on and off the phylactery.

There is a lesson for us in this failure of Natural Israel to catch the spirit of the divine command. Our Lord said that while they thus made an outward show their hearts had vicious thoughts, unloving, unkind thoughts, and hence they were merely drawing nigh to God with their lips in a formal manner and were not acceptable. We Spiritual Israelites do well to remember that, while we do not use the same outward forms, we might bow the knee and pray long and much and yet be far from acceptable to the Lord unless we allow his spirit of grace and truth to enter into our hearts and there produce that transformation which he tells us is alone pleasing and acceptable to him – a transformation which will make us less selfish, more generous, less proud, more humble, less children of this world, more the children of the Kingdom, seekers less of the things of this present time and more of the Kingdom of God and of the righteousness which it represents and will in due time enforce.

## OUR OUTGOINGS AND INCOMINGS

"And thou shalt write them upon the door-posts of thy house and upon thy gates." It is doubtful if the Lord meant this to be understood and practised literally. It is probable that, instead of introducing to the people phylacteries, the meaning of the Lord's word was that they should consider the divine laws as overshadowing everything that they saw and as affecting everything that they did with their arm (strength) and as affecting every affair of life, in the home and outside of it. However, if the spirit of the matter could have been retained by the Jews, their phylacteries, we presume, would have proved no interference to the divine blessing nor their method of complying with the last requirement (v. 9). They complied with the letter by fastening in a prominent place in the doorway what they termed "*mezuzah*." This is a square piece of paper or parchment inscribed with Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:13-21. It is rolled and placed in a small cylinder usually of wood or tin. It is the custom of the pious Jew to touch this with his finger on each occasion of his passing it, and say in Hebrew (Psa. 121:8), "The Lord preserve thy going out and thy coming in," etc.

The real thought which we attach to this injunction is that everything pertaining to us who are the Lord's, especially everything pertaining to the Church, which is the house, the family of God, is sacred to him and under his blessing, and we must confess him in every matter – "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

Next (vs. 10-12) Moses exhorts on the blessing and prosperity soon to come to them in the Lord's providence should they not turn their hearts away from the source of their blessing. And we as Spiritual Israelites – especially we who at this time are enjoying so much refreshment at the Lord's hand in spiritual things – should never forget while enjoying these that they have

all come to us through the Father. True, the Father, now as ever, uses means, agencies, Pilgrims, Colporteurs, books, tracts, etc., for bringing his grace and truth to his family, and everything that God is pleased to use for our blessing should be appreciated by us if we are in the proper attitude of heart and truly thankful to him. But neither the good things themselves nor those who bring them to us are to distract our attention from the great fact that all these blessings are of God, who giveth to us liberally, richly, and upbraideth us not for our seeking of them, but **[R4053 : page 266]** rather rewards us richly. As Israel was exhorted continually to remember how God had brought them out of the house of bondage, so we should continually remember how the Lord brought us out of the house of bondage – bondage to sin and error, and that this was accomplished through the great antitypical Moses, our Redeemer.

The closing verses of the lesson are exhortations again for reverence for the Lord and his name, and the repudiation of all other gods or rulers, and the assurance that instead of divine favor would come reprobation if we, after having been recipients of his favors and blessings and the spirit of adoption, should forget our obligations or turn from him unto sin. These lessons, so appropriate to Natural Israel, we recognize as still more appropriate, still more important, to us as New Creatures. Let us then take a valuable lesson, gird up the loins of our minds and strive patiently to the end of the way, when we shall be crowned if we faint not.

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