

## LESSON FOUR 4:1-43

### B. SIGNIFICANCE OF PAST EVENTS (4:1-40)

#### 1. BLESSINGS PROMISED FOR THOSE WHO HEED GOD'S ALL-SUFFICIENT LAW (4:1-8)

##### a. PROSPERITY (4:1-4)

And now, O Israel, hearken unto the statutes and unto the ordinances, which I teach you, to do them; that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which Jehovah, the God of your fathers, giveth you. 2 Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish from it, that ye may keep the commandments of Jehovah your God which I command you. 3 Your eyes have seen what Jehovah did because of Baal-peor; for all the men that follow Baal-peor, Jehovah thy God hath destroyed them from the midst of thee. 4 But ye that did cleave unto Jehovah your God are alive every one of you this day.

##### b. RESPECT OF THE NATIONS (4:5-8)

5 Behold, I have taught you statutes and ordinances, even as Jehovah my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the midst of the land whither ye go in to possess it. 6 Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, that shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. 7 For what great nation is there, that hath a god so nigh unto them, as Jehovah our God is whensoever we call upon him? 8 And what great nation is there, that hath statutes and ordinances so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS 4:1-8

66. What relationship was there between the statutes of Jehovah and the possession of the land?
67. Name two possible reasons (excuses) for adding to the word of God.
68. Who was "Baal-peor"? What happened to him?
69. How did Moses accomplish the monumental task of teaching the whole nation of Israel?
70. What was the cause or reason for the respect from other nations? Name three nations thus affected.
71. What one quality of Jehovah especially appealed to the other nations?

## AMPLIFIED TRANSLATION 4:1-8

Now listen and give heed, O Israel, to the statutes and ordinances which I teach you, and do them, that you may live, and go in and possess the land which the Lord, the God of your fathers, gives you.

2 You shall not add to the word which I command you, neither shall you diminish it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.

3 Your eyes still see what the Lord did because of Baal-peor; for all the men who followed the Baal of Peor the Lord your God has destroyed from among you; [Num. 25:1-9.]

4 But you who clung fast to the Lord your God are alive, every one of you, this day.

5 Behold, I have taught you statutes and ordinances as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land which you are entering to possess.

6 So keep them and do them; for that is 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 who has a god so near to them as the Lord our God is to us in all things for which we call upon Him?

8 And what large and important nation has statutes and ordinances so upright and just as all this law which I set before you today?

## COMMENT 4:1-8

Prosperity and the respect of the nations round about—what else could a nation desire for its faithfulness? It was all promised—and during those relatively few years in Israel's history when they *did* turn wholeheartedly to God, these blessings immediately followed. But how much more often was Israel rather in near poverty, and the laughing-stock of the nations—all because of his disobedience and faithlessness!

How our own nation needs to heed this lesson. Recently, many reports have come back to our country of the low esteem with which our country is held by other nations. A Russian leader, upon visiting Hollywood, said his atheistic country had higher morals than ours. American tourists and servicemen abroad are known, far too often, for their licentiousness and immorality rather than their devotion to the Christ of God. Can America any longer be called, even by stretching the imagination, a "Christian" nation? Obviously not. And yet, this is our

hypocritical claim. There is only one possible end of such a nation—the curse of God and degradation in the eyes of other nations. May we, too, remember that Israel became “a hiss and a byword” of the nations round about. And why? Because God’s law and works were *forgotten!*

HEARKEN . . . DO THEM: THAT YE MAY LIVE (v. 1)—A necessity for God’s smile upon our lives, whether under the Old Testament or New. We must first give diligence to *know* and *understand* God’s law; but after that we have a *moral* and *spiritual* responsibility of OBEEDIENCE. Again and again is this responsibility enjoined in Deuteronomy. Moses’ words were more than those of a mere informative lecture—he was preaching a sermon!

YE SHALL NOT ADD UNTO THE WORD . . . NEITHER DIMINISH (v. 2)  
—Cf. 12:32. This has been God’s law in all ages: Prov. 30:5,6, Rev. 22:18,19. His law is perfect and complete: Ps. 19:7, 119:160, II Tim. 3:16,17; Jas. 1:25, supplying, through Christ, “all things that pertain to life and godliness” (II Pet. 1:3). To add to it is to mar its perfection—and to usurp the place of God, the giver of light and truth.

YOUR EYES HAVE SEEN WHAT JEHOVAH DID BECAUSE OF BAAL-PEOR (v. 3)—See Num. 25:1-13. The memory of that recent event, with the plague that followed killing twenty-four thousand Israelites, must surely have been fresh in their minds.

Baal, the sun god, was worshipped in the Canaanite countries “under two aspects, beneficent and destructive. On the one hand he gave light and warmth to his worshippers; on the other hand the fierce heats of summer destroyed the vegetation he had himself brought into being. Hence human victims were sacrificed to him in order to appease his anger in time of plague or other trouble, the victim being usually the firstborn of the sacrificer and being burnt alive” (I.S.B.E.).

The names of Baal took on different forms in different localities, as also did his worship. Each locality had its own Baal or divine “Lord” who often took his name from the city or place to which he belonged. So here we have Baal-Peor, the god of the Moabite mountains, who took his name from mount Peor (Num. 23:28). His worship, as often in the case of idolatry, was accompanied by sensual rites. As recorded in Numbers, Moab and Midian were in league against Israel at this time. The Midianitish women, through the counsel of Balaam, the backslidden prophet, had induced many men of Israel to sin. Thus Moses says, “Have ye saved all the [Midianitish] women alive? Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against Jehovah

in the matter of Peor, and so the plague was among the congregation of Jehovah<sup>b</sup> (Num. 31:15,16).

KEEP THEREFORE AND DO THEM; FOR THIS IS YOUR WISDOM AND YOUR UNDERSTANDING IN THE SIGHT OF THE PEOPLES (v. 6)—Even nations that would themselves reject the law Israel espoused, would nevertheless respect the people who faithfully kept it. They would say, SURELY THIS GREAT NATION IS A WISE AND UNDERSTANDING PEOPLE (v. 6)—*if* they kept the law of God and served him with all their heart (6:5).

## 2. THE TEMPTATION TO FORGET GOD'S UNIQUE REVELATION (4:9-31)

### a. GOD APPEARED AT HOREB BY WORD, NOT BY PHYSICAL FORM (4:9-14)

9 Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes saw, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life; but make them known unto thy children and thy children's children; 10 the day that thou stoodest before Jehovah thy God in Horeb, when Jehovah said unto me, Assemble me the people, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children. 11 And ye came near and stood under the mountain; and the mountain burned with fire unto the heart of heaven, with darkness, cloud, and thick darkness. 12 And Jehovah spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of words, but ye saw no form; only *ye heard* a voice. 13 And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even the ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone. 14 And Jehovah commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and ordinances, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go over to possess it.

## THOUGHT QUESTIONS 4:9-14

72. How would one fulfill the injunction to "keep thy soul diligently"?
73. Is there a difference between "the soul" and "the heart"? Discuss.
74. What is meant in the expression "they may learn to *fear* me"?
75. Why was it necessary to use the physical manifestations of darkness, cloud, fire, earthquake.
76. How shall we understand references to God's "face" and "back" in Numbers 33:17-23, i.e., in light of the fact that God has not form?

## AMPLIFIED TRANSLATION 4:9-14

9 Only take heed, and guard your life diligently, lest you forget the things which your eyes have seen and lest they depart from your [mind and] heart all the days of your life; teach them to your children, and your children's children;

10 Especially how on the day that you stood before the Lord your God in Horeb, the Lord said to me, Gather the people together to Me, and I will make them hear My words, that they may learn (reverently) to fear Me all the days they live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children.

11 And you came near and stood at the foot of the mountain; and the mountain burned with fire to the heart of Heaven, with darkness, cloud, and thick gloom.

12 And the Lord spoke to you out of the midst of the fire; you heard the voice of the words, but saw no form; there was only a voice.

13 And He declared to you His covenant, which He commanded you to perform, the ten commandments; and He wrote them on two tables of stone.

14 And the Lord commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and precepts, that you might do them in the land which you are going over to possess.

## COMMENT 4:9-14

TAKE HEED TO THYSELF, AND KEEP THY SOUL DILIGENTLY (v. 9)—  
Note the personal responsibility! "Take heed to thyself . . ." (I Tim. 4:16, Cf. Acts 20:28).

LEST THOU FORGET THE THINGS WHICH THINE EYES SAW (v. 9)—  
Another exhortation that is also given time and again as we proceed in this book. How easy to forget the blessings and chastisements of God, simply by not being *reminded* of them, or not making them known to the present generation.

These people had *seen* and *experienced* many miraculous and wonderful blessings from God. Their clothes and shoes did not wear out; their food was provided by God each day; the ones who had been young when they left Egypt had seen his powerful hand as they crossed the Red Sea, and again as they were encamped at mount Sinai (v. 10). The plagues God brought upon them for their disobedience should also have been vividly remembered. But how very quickly it was all forgotten! See II Pet. 1:9, 13 3:1.

BUT MAKE THEM KNOWN UNTO THY CHILDREN (v. 9)—See 6:4-9, 11:18-21

AND THE MOUNTAIN [SINAI] BURNED WITH FIRE UNTO THE HEART OF HEAVEN (v. 11)—See 5:5, Ex. 19:18, 20:18, Heb. 12:18.

YE HEARD THE VOICE OF WORDS, BUT YE SAW NO FORM (v. 12, see also v. 15)—No one has ever seen God, who is spirit: Jn. 1:18, 6:46, I Tim. 6:16, Heb. 11:27, I Jn. 4:12,13. The above scriptures are plain and outspoken on this point, and we take such expressions as God's "face" and "back" with reference to the events on Sinai (Ex. 33:17-23) to be anthropomorphic or figurative—especially when the Holy Spirit *here* expressly states with reference to it that "ye saw no form."

#### b. WARNING AGAINST MAKING PHYSICAL REPRESENTATIONS OF GOD OR GODS (4:15-24)

15 Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of form on the day that Jehovah spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire; 16 lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female, 17 the likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged bird that flieth in the heavens, 18 the likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the water under the earth; 19 and lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun and the moon and the stars, even all the host of heaven, thou be drawn away and worship them, and serve them, which Jehovah thy God hath allotted unto all the peoples under the whole heaven. 20 But Jehovah hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be unto him a people of inheritance, as at this day. 21 Furthermore Jehovah was angry with me for your sakes, and sware that I should not go over the Jordan, and that I should not go in unto that good land, which Jehovah thy God giveth thee for an inheritance: 22 but I must die in this land, I must not go over the Jordan; but ye shall go over, and possess that good land. 23 Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of Jehovah your God, which he made with you, and make you a graven image in the form of any thing which Jehovah thy God hath forbidden thee. 24 For Jehovah thy God is a devouring fire, a jealous God.

## THOUGHT QUESTIONS 4:15-24

77. After hearing Jehovah God and participating in His power and provision, how could these people possibly make a likeness of man or woman and worship it?
78. Why was Moses so elaborate in his prohibitions against idolatry?
79. What is involved in the expression "iron furnace"? Does this mean the Israelites worked in iron furnaces in Egypt?
80. Once again: Does Moses blame Israel for his sin? Cf. Verse 21.
81. What promised punishment was given for those who forget the covenant of God? Cf. verse 24.

## AMPLIFIED TRANSLATION 4:15-24

15 Therefore take good heed to yourselves; since you saw no form of Him on the day the Lord spoke to you on Horeb out of the midst of the fire,

16 Beware lest you become corrupt by making for yourself [to worship] a graven image in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female,

17 The likeness of any beast that is on the earth, or of any winged fowl that flies in the air,

18 The likeness of anything that creeps on the ground, or of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth.

19 And beware lest you lift up your eyes to the heavens, and when you see the sun, moon, and stars, even all the host of the heavens, you be drawn away and worship them and serve them, things which the Lord your God has allotted to all nations under the whole heavens.

20 But the Lord has taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be to Him a people of his own possession, as this day.

21 Furthermore the Lord was angry with me because of you, and He swore that I should not go over the Jordan, and that I should not enter the good land, which the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance.

22 But I must die in this land, I must not cross the Jordan; but you shall go over and possess that good land.

23 Take heed to yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the Lord your God, which He made with you, and make you a graven image in the form of anything, which the Lord your God has forbidden you.

24 For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.

## COMMENT 4:15-24

YE SAW NO MANNER OF FORM (v. 15)—See under v. 12.

LEST YE CORRUPT YOURSELVES, AND MAKE YOU A GRAVEN IMAGE IN THE FORM OF ANY FIGURE (v. 16)—They saw no form of any kind—no physical representation of God whatever—thus were given no “excuse” for making any type of image.

Note the list of living things and other objects Israel is forbidden to worship (vv. 16-19):

(1) “the likeness of male or female” (v. 16)—idols were often of both sexes; e.g. in Egypt, Osiris and Isis; in Canaan, Baal and Astarte.

(2) “the likeness of any beast” (v. 17)—How could Israel forget the golden calf at Sinai? And the calves of Jeroboam are a later example.

(3) “the likeness of any winged bird” (v. 17)—Horus, the hawk, was worshipped in ancient Egypt. The ibis and the crane were also deified.

(4) “. . . the likeness of anything that creepeth on the ground” (v. 18)—the crocodile, frog, and beetle were worshipped in Egypt. The serpent was frequently worshipped in ancient times—“the most universally revered of all creatures” (I.S.B.E.). Israel’s brazen serpent was erected at God’s command to stay the plague (Num. 21:8). But when it later became an object of worship, Hezekiah destroyed it (II K. 18:1-8).

(5) “the likeness of any fish” (v. 18)—In Egypt, all the fish of the Nile river were deified. And the Philistine’s god Dagon was represented in figures that were half man, half fish.

(6) “sun . . . moon . . . stars” (v. 19)—Objects of worship in many ancient nations: “in the earliest Egyptian texts the sun appears as divine and the moon as “the bull among the stars” (I.S.B.E.). Ra was the sun-god, and in other forms worshipped as Khepera and Atmu. Then there was Nut, the god of the heavens, and her husband Geb; Shu, the god of space, etc. Similar gods existed among the Babylonians, while Baal was the sun-god of Canaan and surrounding nations. The name “Sunday” comes to us from the Teutons, who held the first day of the week as sacred to the sun. The ancient Greeks believed that the sun god Apollo drove the sun chariot through the sky . . . So we could continue through the cultures of the Incas of Peru, Persia, northern India, Scandanavia, the Mayas, peoples of Central and South America, and the American Indian. For obvious reasons, the sun seems especially to have been worshipped by agricultural peoples.

The worship of the moon is prominently illustrated in Ur of the



Chaldees, where the Ziggurat, the huge temple-tower erected for its worship, has been unearthed by archaeologists.

BROUGHT YOU FORTH OUT OF THE IRON FURNACE, OF EGYPT (v. 20)  
 —See also I K. 8:51, Jer. 11:4. "From this mention of the word *iron furnace* there can be little doubt that the Israelites were employed in Egypt in the most laborious works of *metallurgy*. Digging, smelting, and forging of *iron* in so hot a climate must have been oppressive work indeed" (Clarke). Others would make this "iron furnace figurative. "The 'iron furnace' is used metaphorically for affliction, chastisement (Deut. 4:20; Ezek. 22:18-22)"—I.S.B.E. We do, indeed have brass and iron used figuratively of barrenness in 28:23, 24, and a "yoke of iron" is used in 28:48 to picture slavery or bondage. But even if we have here a figurative expression, it must have been a figure with which Israel was familiar. The argument that iron was not a well-known metal at this time is not valid. In 3:11 we saw that Og's bedstead was cast of iron, and Josh. 17:16, 18 the Canaanites are not only said to have had chariots of iron, but to have had them in great numbers.

I MUST NOT GO OVER THE JORDAN (v. 22)—See under 1:37.

c. PUNISHMENT FOR IDOLATRY: BANISHMENT  
 FROM THE LAND (4:25-28)

25 When thou shalt beget children, and children's children, and ye shall have been long in the land, and shall corrupt yourselves, and make a graven image in the form of any thing, and shall do that which is evil in the sight of Jehovah thy God, to provoke him to anger; 26 I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto ye go over the Jordan to possess it; ye shall not prolong your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed. 27 And Jehovah will scatter you among the peoples, and ye shall be left few in number among the nations, whither Jehovah shall lead you away. 28 And there ye shall serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see, nor hear, nor eat nor smell.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS 4:25-28

82. Please notice the use of the words "corrupt yourselves," as related to the wholeness of man. To depart from God is to involve oneself in the deterioration of the whole self.
83. Are we to conclude that physical prosperity is a by-product of obedience to God? Discuss.

84. Isn't there irony in vs. 28? i.e. in the object of the service of God's people.

AMPLIFIED TRANSLATION 4:25-28

25 When children shall be born to you, and children's children, and you have grown old in the land, if you corrupt yourselves by making a graven image in the form of anything, and do evil in the sight of the Lord your God, provoking Him to anger.

26 I call Heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that you shall soon utterly perish from off the land which you are going over the Jordan to possess; you will not live long upon it, but will be utterly destroyed.

27 And the Lord will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations to which the Lord will drive you.

28 There you will serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell.

COMMENT 4:25-28

JEHOVAH WILL SCATTER YOU AMONG THE PEOPLES (v. 27)—Cf. 28:64, 29:25-28. See also our comments and more complete discussion under 28:7 ff.

YE SHALL SERVE GODS, THE WORK OF MEN'S HANDS, WOOD AND STONE (v. 28)—In contrast to the one, true, invisible, *living* God, who is spirit (Jn. 4:24). Moses had just emphasized the living nature of the invisible God, v. 12 (where see references), v. 15.

d. REPENTANCE WILL REVEAL GOD'S GRACE (4:29-31)

29 But from thence ye shall seek Jehovah thy God, and thou shalt find him, when thou searchest after him with all thy heart and with all thy soul. 30 When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, in the latter days thou shalt return to Jehovah thy God, and hearken unto his voice: 31 for Jehovah thy God is a merciful God; he will not fail thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he sware unto them.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS 4:29-31

85. Are verses 25-28 a prophesy of banishment from Palestine? Are verses 29-31 a promise of return? When fulfilled?
86. Just what is meant in vs. 29 in the expression "finding God"?

## AMPLIFIED TRANSLATION 4:29-31

29 But if from there you will seek [inquire of and require as necessity] the Lord your God, you will find Him, if you [truly] seek Him with all your heart (and mind) and soul and life.

30 When you are in tribulation, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, if you turn to the Lord your God, and are obedient to His voice,

31 For the Lord your God is a merciful God, he will not fail you, or destroy you, or forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore to them.

## COMMENT 4:29-31

WITH ALL THY HEART AND WITH ALL THY SOUL (v. 29)—Such has always and ever will be necessary before the Lord is pleased. God demands the *entire being*—every fibre—and is never satisfied with anything less. Note that this is an *Old Testament concept* as well as New, See 6:4, 5; 10:12, 13; Cf. Luke 10:27, Rom. 12:1.

### 3. THE GLORY AND GREATNESS OF ISRAEL'S GOD (4:32-40)

32 For ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and from the one end of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been *any such thing* as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it? 33 Did ever a people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live? 34 Or hath God assayed to go and take him a nation from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by an outstretched arm, and by great terrors, according to all that Jehovah your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? 35 Unto thee it was showed, that thou mightest know that Jehovah he is God; there is none else beside him. 36 Out of heaven he made thee to hear his voice, that he might instruct thee: and upon earth he made thee to see his great fire; and thou heardest his words out of the midst of the fire. 37 And because he loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them, and brought thee out with his presence, with his great power, out of Egypt; 38 to drive out nations from before thee greater and mightier than thou, to bring thee in, to give thee their land for an inheritance, as at this day. 39 Know therefore this day, and lay it to thy heart, that

Jehovah he is God in heaven above and upon the earth beneath; there is none else. 40 And thou shalt keep his statutes, and his commandments, which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days in the land, which Jehovah thy God giveth thee, for ever.

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS 4:32-40

87. Why "ask now for the days that are past"?
88. What was peculiarly unique about God's dealings with Israel? Name three.
89. What several purposes were accomplished in delivering Israel from Egypt?
90. The giving of the law on mount Sinai is very graphically described here, please note verse 36.
91. Please review your own past life and review three incidents that encourage you to trust God for the future.
92. What benefits occur to the faithful? Read verse 40 for an answer.

### AMPLIFIED TRANSLATION 4:32-40

32 For ask now of the days that are past, which were before you, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and from the one end of the heavens to the other, whether any such a great thing as this has ever occurred or been heard of anywhere?

33 Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as you heard, and live?

34 Or has God ever tried to go and take for Himself a nation from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs, by wonders, by war, by a mighty hand, by an outstretched arm, and by great terrors, as the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?

35 To you it was shown, that you might realize and have personal knowledge that the Lord is God; there is no other besides Him.

36 Out of Heaven He made you hear His voice, that He might correct, discipline and admonish you; and on earth He made you see His great fire, and you heard His words out of the midst of the fire.

37 And because He loved your fathers, He chose their descendants after them, and brought you out with His own presence, by His mighty power from Egypt,

38 Driving out nations from before you, greater and mightier than yourselves, to bring you in, to give you their land for an inheritance, as this day;

39 Know, recognize and understand therefore this day, and turn your [mind and] heart to it, that the Lord is God in the heavens above, and upon the earth beneath; there is no other.

40 Therefore you shall keep His statutes and His commandments, which I command you this day, that it may go well with you and your children after you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which the Lord your God gives you for ever.

### COMMENT 4:32-40

God's glory and greatness are revealed here in several ways:

- a. His dealings with Israel are unique (vv. 32-34, 36)
- b. He is the *only* true and living God (vv. 35, 39)
- c. He has loved and chosen Israel (v. 37)
- d. He has preserved them (v. 38)
- e. He offers a blessed future (v. 40)

All of these truths argued for Israel's faithfulness! No other nation had such advantages and blessings as *they*. With every blessing and advantage God gives us, a divine responsibility is in our hands to use such to his glory. It was so then, it is so now.

ASK NOW OF THE DAYS THAT ARE PAST (v. 32)—Cf. 32:7. Look back into your own history, yea, go back even to the creation of man, and *see* how he has dealt with his own people. It will do you good. It will edify your soul. You will see that God's own people have always been the object of special privileges, mercies, and blessings.

Such meditation and reflection is also profitable for every Christian. "Ask now of the days that are past"—look back into the pages of scripture, and then down through history, and even into your *own* past, and see if it is not true that you have not been blessed abundantly by the hand of God.

DID EVER A PEOPLE HEAR THE VOICE OF GOD SPEAKING . . . AND LIVE? (v. 33)—"It seems to have been a general belief that if God *appeared* to men, it was for the purpose of destroying them; and indeed most of the extraordinary manifestations of God were in the way of *judgment*; but here it was different; God did appear in a sovereign and extra-ordinary manner; but it was for the deliverance and support of the people. 1. They heard his voice speaking with them in a distinct, articulate manner. 2. They saw the fire, the symbol of his presence, the appearances of which demonstrated it to be supernatural. 3. Notwithstanding God appeared so terrible, yet no person was destroyed, for he came, not to *destroy*, but to *save*." (Clarke)

UNTO THEE IT WAS SHOWED, THAT THOU MIGHTEST KNOW THAT JEHOVAH HE IS GOD: THERE IS NONE ELSE (v. 35)—Note also v. 39. This conclusion *should* have been obvious from all the many wonderful and mighty works God had performed in their presence, from the time of their deliverance from Egypt to the present hour. Both the Egyptians and Israel should have seen the uniqueness and power of the one true God when Israel was delivered from bondage (Ex. 8:10, 9:14). And when one thinks of the constant and continual display of miracles from God Israel viewed in the wilderness, we stand amazed that they would no sooner cross the Jordan than be engrossed in the basest idolatry. But has it changed much today? How often and how quickly have those who have received the greatest blessings gone back to the pit from which they were digged and the rock from whence they were hewn!

THAT THOU MAYEST PROLONG THY DAYS IN THE LAND (v. 40)—That is, that they as a nation would not be conquered or exterminated by a foreign power. See 5:33. Moses has primary reference here to a long *national* life, rather than a long *individual* life. But, (as in 4:1, 5:16; Ex. 20:12; Eph. 6:3) the concept of a long individual life may also be implied. The whole idea of the above verses is that if Israel would be *obedient*, there would be peace, prosperity, and health for God's people. This thought is expressed often in Deuteronomy (8:1, 16:20, etc.)

### APPENDIX: APPOINTMENT OF EASTERN CITIES OF REFUGE (4:41-43)

41 Then Moses set apart three cities beyond the Jordan toward the sunrising; 42 that the manslayer might flee thither, that slayeth his neighbor unawares, and hated him not in time past; and that fleeing unto one of these cities he might live: 43 *namely*, Bezer in the wilderness, in the plain country, for the Reubenites; and Ramoth in Gilead, for the Gadites; and Golan in Bashan, for the Manassites.

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS 4:41-43

93. Read Numbers 35:9-15 and Deuteronomy 19:1-13 and Joshua 20:1-6 to help in understanding these verses.
94. In what sense are these verses an appendix?
95. State briefly the reason for the cities of refuge.
96. Do we have a city of refuge for protection against spiritual death?

## AMPLIFIED TRANSLATION 4:41-43

41 Then Moses set apart three cities [of refuge] beyond the Jordan to the east,

42 That the manslayer might flee there, who slay his neighbor unintentionally, and had not previously been at enmity with him, that fleeing to one of the cities he might save his life:

43 Bezer in the wilderness on the tableland for the Reubenites, and Ramoth in Gilead for the Gadites, and Golan in Bashan for the Manassites.

COMMENT<sup>r</sup> 4:41-43

We have called this section an appendix because of its obvious parenthetical nature. Moses gives instruction concerning all six of the cities of refuge in Chapter 19, and from what is said *there* it appears that that passage comes before this one chronologically. The phrase "Then Moses set apart . . ." etc. would then simply be understood to mean *at the time Israel was still on the plains of Moab* and before their leader's death, the east side refuge-cities were set aside.

As the above verses stand, however, it certainly appears that the phrase "Then Moses set apart . . ." etc. is where it is for an obvious reason—to specify that at *this* time (between the first and second discourses) these cities were set apart by Moses.

Many suppose that not only these verses, but vv. 44-49 are the work of a later editor. Clarke states: "I SUPPOSE the last nine verses of this chapter to have been added by either Joshua or Ezra." (See the special studies at the conclusion of this volume on the subject of "editing.") There is nothing to *necessitate*, however, the assumption that some other than Moses wrote these lines. The fact that he speaks of himself does not pose as a barrier, for he does this throughout the book (v. 44, 5:1, 27:1, 11, etc.) unless, of course, we consider all such statements "editorial additions."

The reason for the appointment of these cities is given in 19:1-13 and Num. 35:9-15. There were three on each side of the Jordan. They were not designed for the permanent exile of murderer, but as a refuge till he could stand before the congregation for judgment. After the death of the high priest, the man who slayed another "unwittingly" could return to his own city (Ex. 21:13, Josh. 20:1-6).

The west-side cities are named in Josh. 20:7: Kedesh in Galilee of Naphtail, Shechem in Ephraim, and Kiriath-Arba (Hebron) in Judah.

## SUMMARY OF CHAPTER FOUR

*Exhortations to obedience, 1. Nothing to be added to or taken from the testimonies of God, 2. The people are exhorted to recollect how God had destroyed the ungodly among them, 3; and preserved those who were faithful, 4. The excellence of the Divine law, 5, 6. No nation in the world could boast of any such statutes, judgments, &c., 7, 8. They are exhorted to obedience by the wonderful manifestations of God in their behalf, 9-13. Moses exhorts them to beware of idolatry, and to make no likeness of any thing in heaven or earth as an object of adoration, 14-20. He informs them that he must die in that land as God had refused to let him go into the promised land, being angry with him on their account, 21, 22. Repeats his exhortation to obedience, 23, 24. Predicts the judgments of God against them, should they turn to idolatry, 25-28. Promises of God's mercy to the penitent, 29-31. The grand and unparalleled privileges of the Israelites, 32-40. Moses severs three cities on the east side of Jordan for cities of refuge, 41, 42. Their names, 43. When and where Moses gave these statutes and judgments to Israel, 44-49.*

## QUESTIONS, LESSON FOUR (4:1-43)

1. In the forepart of this lesson (vv. 1-8) two great blessings are promised if Israel is obedient. Do you remember them?
2. What was the Baal-peor incident, and how was it punished?
3. What did Israel *not* see when they heard the voice of God at Sinai?
4. In this lesson Israel was forbidden to worship all sorts of things in the heavens or upon the earth. Which of the various forms of idolatry mentioned, do you think offered the strongest temptation? Why?
5. God's graciousness toward Israel was assured if they would repent. Repent to *what extent* (v. 29)?
6. In vv. 32-40 we discussed how the glory and greatness of God was revealed to Israel. Five ways were mentioned. Can you recall at least three?
7. What effect should the miracles have had upon Israel (v. 34, 35)?
8. What baseless fear did Israel have when they heard the voice of God?
9. Explain the true purpose of the cities of refuge.