

## **“Snatching the Next Generation”**

Thomas P. Johnston, Ph.D.

A war more fervent than “Soldiers of Fortune,” “Halo 2,” or “Call of Duty” is being fought in the heavens and on the earth. It is a war for our spiritual sons and daughters. The fight is for the souls of men, and the focus of that fight is the next generation of pastors. And through the ministry of the next generation of pastors, our country!

God’s Word is not very generous toward the next generation. Jesus said, “However, when the Son of man comes, will He find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8). Paul said of the coming generation, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine” (2 Tim 4:3). On top of this, Jesus prophesied, “Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many” (Matt 24:11; cf. Matt 24:5, 24).

Is there hope for the next generation? Are they to be left to be taken alive by the Devil? Can they be snatched from the flames of prophesied and inevitable apostasy?

God spoke through his servant Moses of the problem of apostasy in Deuteronomy 31-32. And in a strange set of verses, when seen in their context, God gives an answer to this apostasy. God calls His people to a special camp meeting every seven years.

In copying the Book of Deuteronomy by hand, it became apparent to me that Deut 31:10-13 seemed out of place. In his arrangement of the “Second Law,” Moses had already discussed various feasts in chapter 16. In fact, Moses had also discussed the Sabbatical year in chapter 15. Yet sandwiched between the curses of Deuteronomy 28, the affirmations of the salvific work of God in chapters 29-30, and the prophecies of inevitable apostasy in Deuteronomy 31-32 comes an interesting paragraph. A paragraph where God describes a camp meeting to be held every seven years:

“Then Moses commanded them, saying, ‘At the end of every seven years, at the time of remission of debts, at the Feast of Booths, when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God at the place which He will choose, you shall read this law in front of all Israel in their hearing. Assemble the people, the men and the women and children and the alien who is in your town, so that they may hear and learn and fear the LORD your God, and be careful to observe all

the words of this law. Their children, who have not known, will hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as you live in the land which you are about to cross the Jordan to possess” (Deut 31:10-13).

God, in His Word, provided for a mechanism to allow the people of Israel to snatch the next generation for Him. This mechanism was to be a camp meeting every seven years. And at this camp meeting, was to be read the entire Book of Deuteronomy, non-stop, from cover-to-cover.

God the Holy Spirit, who resides within and upon the very words of the Bible, would supernaturally speak to the hearts of the next generation to give them a fear of the Lord. God promised that the next generation would learn the fear of the Lord from this unusual exercise.

Several questions jump out from the text. Why every seven years? Why not every year or twice a year, as has been done in single-church revivals? Why a multi-geographic camp meeting every seven years?

God, knowing the rebellious tendencies of the heart of man (Deut 31:20-21, 27, 29), has somehow foreordained that His very voice would be heard through the reading of the Book of Deuteronomy every seven years, so that the next generation would be awakened to hear His voice.

Notice, first of all, the unusual use of the phrase “listen to the voice of the LORD your God” in Deuteronomy. Interestingly, this phrase has virtually been eliminated from contemporary translations:

### On the Elimination of “The Voice of the Lord” in Deuteronomy

Verses	KJV (and NKJ)	NAS	NIV	HCSB
<b>Deut 5:25</b>	if we hear the voice of the LORD our God any more, then we shall die	if we hear the voice of the LORD our God any longer, then we shall die	and we will die if we hear the voice of the Lord our God any longer	and we will die if we hear the voice of the LORD our God any longer
<b>Deut 8:20</b>	because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the LORD your God	because you would not listen to the voice of the LORD your God	for not obeying the LORD your God	if you do not obey the LORD your God
<b>Deut 13:18</b>	When thou shalt hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God	if you will listen to the voice of the LORD your God	because you obey the LORD your God	This <i>will occur</i> if you obey the LORD your God
<b>Deut 15:5</b>	Only if thou carefully hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God	if only you listen obediently to the voice of the LORD your God	if only you fully obey the LORD your God	if only you obey the LORD your God
<b>Deut 18:16</b>	Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God	Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God	Let us not hear the voice of the LORD our God	Let us not continue to hear the voice of the LORD our God
<b>Deut 26:14</b>	<i>but</i> I have hearkened to the voice of the LORD my God	I have listened to the voice of the LORD my God	I have obeyed the LORD my God	I have obeyed the LORD my God
<b>Deut 27:10</b>	Thou shalt therefore obey the voice of the LORD thy God	You shall therefore obey the LORD your God	Obey the LORD your God	Obey the LORD your God
<b>Deut 28:1</b>	And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God	Now it shall be, if you will diligently obey the LORD your God	If you fully obey the LORD your God	Now if you faithfully obey the LORD your God
<b>Deut 28:2</b>	if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God	if you will obey the LORD your God	if you obey the LORD your God	because you obey the LORD your God
<b>Deut 28:15</b>	if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God	if you will not obey the LORD your God	if you do not obey the LORD your God	But if you do not obey the LORD your God
<b>Deut 28:45</b>	because thou hearkenedst not unto the voice of the LORD thy God	because you would not obey the LORD your God	because you did not obey the LORD your God	since you did not obey the LORD your God
<b>Deut 28:62</b>	because thou wouldest not obey the voice of the LORD thy God	because you did not obey the LORD your God	because you did not obey the LORD your God	because you did not obey the LORD your God
<b>Deut 30:8</b>	And thou shalt return and obey the voice of the LORD	And you shall again obey the LORD	You will again obey the LORD	Then you will again obey Him
<b>Deut 30:10</b>	If thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God	if you obey the LORD your God	if you obey the LORD your God	when you obey the LORD your God
<b>Uses of “Voice”</b>	<b>14/14</b>	<b>6/14</b>	<b>2/14</b>	<b>2/14</b>

A quick comparison of all the uses of “voice of the Lord” in the KJV yields 47 Old Testament uses. The same phrase in the NAS yields 35 OT uses. It would seem that 8/12 or 2/3 of the uses that are dropped out of the NAS come from the book of Deuteronomy.

While the entirety of the Bible is God-breathed (2 Tim 3:16), notice how God has supernaturally allowed that the Book of Deuteronomy contains a special potency, as regards His

voice! Was this not the potency that led to the revival in Nehemiah 8:8, when Ezra and others read the Book of the Law (Deuteronomy), and the people of Israel's hearts were cut to the quick? Was this not the potency of the voice of the Lord from which Jonathan Edwards preached "Sinners in the Hand of an Angry God" (based on Deut 32:35), expounding God's wrath upon His wayward people? Is it not this potency that we are lacking today?

The next generation of pastors desperately needs to experience a "voice of the LORD your God" revival. Maybe if they did so, they would not scorn the prophet and mock the evangelist. Perhaps we have not been obedient to the seven year command to read the Book of Deuteronomy to the people of God, so that the next generation could be safeguarded from inevitable apostasy.

Could God be calling His people to an old-fashioned camp meeting to hear nothing but the reading of the Book of Deuteronomy? Oh, let's not spurn the word of the LORD, or mock His commands. Have we not been told over and over that the 80% of Baptist youth never come back to church after going to college? Do we not see our dwindling and ailing congregations? What more do we need?

Imagine if one full day of the Southern Baptist Convention was devoted to various leaders reading one chapter after another of the Book of Deuteronomy? Imagine if this same thing happened in any State Convention or at a State Evangelism Conference? Imagine the "voice of the Lord" thundering again from the lips of our leaders? O Lord, send us revival! Do it, we pray.

"Will You be angry with us forever? Will you prolong Your anger from generation to generation? Will You not Yourself revive us again, that your people may rejoice in You?" (Psa 85:5-6).