

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Phylacteries: Reminders of Reminders

(Jerry Fite)

Jehovah wanted the Israelites to cherish, remember, teach, speak, and obey all His commandments revealed through Moses. They were to “*lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul*” (Deuteronomy 11:18). God’s words were to be “*for frontlets between your eyes*” (Deuteronomy 11:18). They were to “*write them on the door-posts of thy house, and upon thy gates*” (Deuteronomy 11:20). Parents were to share God’s words with their children by “*teaching them*” and “*talking of them*” in daily interaction with them (Deuteronomy 11:19). They were to show the proper love for God and cleave to Him by diligently keeping “*all this commandment which I command you, to do it...*” (Deuteronomy 11:22). God’s revealed word was centered in His peoples’ minds, cherished in their hearts, communicated by their mouths and carried out in their lives.

The Jews of Jesus’ day placed God’s words as frontlets between their eyes by putting them in a leather box connected with ribbon to wrap around their head. The piece of parchment with God’s words inscribed upon it was also put in another box and worn on the inner forearm by at-

taching it with ribbon spiraling across the forearm to finally connect to the top of the middle finger. Strategically placed, whenever the person bent their elbow, the box pointed to the heart.

Which of God’s words were put in a phylactery?

On the folded parchment, four passages were inscribed: Exodus 13:2-10; Exodus 13:11-16; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; and Deuteronomy 11:18-21. While these passages specifically taught the Jew they were to keep the passover feast, offer the ransom price for their firstborn, and teach their children God’s word; these passages were just reminders that taught God’s people to remember to do what God commanded. They were really reminders of reminders to remember.

When Jesus interacts with the Jews of His day, phylacteries were being enlarged for affect. Why? Jesus says, “*But all their works they do to be seen of men; for they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge their borders of their garments*” (Matthew 23:5). The fringes on the border of the garment were comprised of a cord of blue to remind them to “*...remember all the command-*

ments of Jehovah, and do them; (Numbers 15:39).

The phylacteries and the fringes were being enlarged to make one look like God’s word was even more important to him than it was to the other guy. But how does placing Scriptures reminding us to remember make us right with God? Only if we do what we are to remember will we be right with God: “*But be ye doers of the word, not hearers only*” (James 1:22).

Posting Exodus 13 on a door post would not save the firstborn if there were no blood applied. We will not be a blessed man if we post *Psalms One* on our refrigerator door, and still stand in the way of sinners, while we remind ourselves to meditate on God’s word daily. We will still be having fellowship with a false teacher’s evil works by giving him God’s speed regardless how loud we speak out about abiding in Christ’s doctrine (2 John 9-11). We can post on our Face Book page *Ephesians 6:4* and never be the father that pleases God if we do not speak of the Scriptures to our children (*Proverbs 1:8-9:18*). Take the string off your finger, and let us do what God reminds us to do!