

Dickson  
**Teacher's Bible**

**DEUTERONOMY**



Roger E. Dickson

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# DEUTERONOMY

## WRITER

This book is Moses' farewell address to the nation of Israel. It was written as Moses' last words to the nation (See 1:1,5; 4:44,45; 31:24-26; see intro. to Gn). Since Jesus attributed to Moses the writing of the law (Gn – Dt), this is certified evidence that Moses was the writer (See Jn 5:35-47).

Because of some detailed prophecies that Moses made in this book, liberal theologians have assumed that Deuteronomy could not have been written by Moses who died around 1,400 B.C. These theologians assume that the book was an accumulation of various prophets who lived sometime near the discovery of the book of the law (Gn – Dt) in the reconstruction of the temple in 621 B.C. In this year a copy of the book of the law was discovered by Hilkiah while doing renovations on the temple. The book was brought to King Josiah who subsequently initiated great reforms throughout Israel (See 2 Kg 22:8 – 23:25; 2 Ch 34:14 – 35:19). Because of the accuracy of the prophecies of the book that refer to the condition of Israel prior to 621 B.C. when the northern tribes were taken into captivity, liberal theologians assume that portions of the book were written by various writers who lived in the time of this apostasy of Israel. But such beliefs in reference to the book assume that the prophecies were historical records, not prophecies of God in reference to the future of Israel.

These critics of the Mosaic authorship of Deuteronomy also base their assumptions on the fact that various parts of the book were written with different writing styles of the Hebrew language. But they fail to see a common characteristic of inspiration in reference to the Spirit's direction in the writing of an author of inspired Scripture. The Holy Spirit allowed writers to use their own styles of writing in producing Scripture. When Scripture was written over a long period of time, therefore, the style of the writer would change. The Spirit did not inspire Scripture to be written by a dictatorial method of writing, that is, dictating the literary style of the author. We also do not assume that Moses sat down one day and wrote in one setting all the book of Deuteronomy. We only assume that he completed all the book immediately before Israel's entrance into Canaan. He spoke the words of this book on the east side of the Jordan in the wilderness (1:1). However, the book could have been written throughout the years of the wilderness wandering. He was forty years in the wilderness with Israel. He had forty years to write Genesis through Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy was the last book, but this book could have been written in segments over a period of months or years, thus presenting the different styles of composition in writing. Simply because the styles of composition are different in any book of Scripture does not assume that the book was written by different people. It only manifests that the Holy Spirit allowed the inspired writers to inscribe Scrip-

ture according to the writer's own style of writing.

## BOOK

The key verse of this book would be 6:5: *“And you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”* The laws of Deuteronomy were probably written sometime near the close of Israel's forty years of wandering in the wilderness and prior to Moses' death on Mt. Nebo east of the Jordan (See 1:3; 31:24-26). The laws of Deuteronomy were spoken to a new generation of Israel, the generation of sons and daughters of those who originally came out of Egyptian captivity. Many of those who were about to enter into the promised land had heard only stories about the plagues of Egypt and the crossing of the Red Sea. They had not experienced the events at the foot of Mt. Sinai and much of the wandering through the wilderness. This was a book, therefore, that was written to a young generation of Israelites who needed to be reminded of the God their fathers personally experienced in their deliverance from Egyptian captivity and the giving of the law at Mt. Sinai.

The name “Deuteronomy” means “second law.” The name was ascribed to it by the translators of the Septuagint and was adopted by Jerome in the Latin Vulgate. It was not a new law for Israel, but a repetition of the laws that were given at Mt. Sinai. However, in the repetition of the law, Moses explained and amplified various portions of the laws that were given about forty years before. Deuteronomy is thus more than a restatement of the former laws. Moses expounded further on the laws that were originally given at Sinai to a new generation of Israel that was about to enter Canaan. By doing this he applied the law that was given forty years before to this new generation of Israel. In this way, Moses prepared the people for entering the land of promise. He reaffirmed the covenant conditions and promises that God had made with their fathers. He reminded the people what God had historically done for the nation, and thus, he spiritually prepared them to accept and live by the civil and moral laws of God. Moses emphasized the nation's obligation to submit to the conditions of the covenant that God had made with Israel at the foot of Mt. Sinai. If they did not submit throughout their generations to come, the nation would be sent into captivity.

Deuteronomy is unique. It is a record of God's plan of redemption from beginning to end. It concludes God's historical record of mankind from the beginning that is recorded in Genesis, until the time the Redeemer would come into the world. Recorded in this book were the final principles by which the nation of Israel was to live, and thus preserve the seedline through whom the Savior would come into the world. Because of its importance in reference to this eternal plan of redemption, Deuteronomy is quoted about 85 times in the New Testament. Only six New Testament books do not have quotes from this book.

**Introductory Address  
To Learn From The Past  
(1:1 – 4:43)**

**Outline:** (1) Introduction (1:1-5), (2) Travel ex-

periences (1:6-46), (3) Confrontations (2:1-23), (4) Initial conquests (2:24 – 3:29), (5) Admonitions (4:1-40), (6) Refuge cities east of the Jordan (4:41-43)

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

**1:1-5** Moses spoke these words to Israel “*on this side of the Jordan in the wilderness*” (1:1). Some Bible students assume that possibly Joshua added these initial words to the book after Israel crossed the Jordan River. Regardless of their origin, the location where the words were spoken was “in the wilderness.” The wilderness that is identified here could refer to any area from Mt. Sinai to the valley just east of the Jordan before Israel crossed over into Canaan. **Eleven days’ journey:** If one normally walked from Mt. Sinai to Canaan, it would take only eleven days. But because of the refusal of Israel to initially take the land, it took them 38 years of wilderness living to make the journey. They sacrificed eleven days of walking for 40 years of wandering because they refused to be obedient to the will of the Lord to immediately take the land after they left Mt. Sinai (Compare Hb 11:1-11). **Horeb:** This was another name for Mt. Sinai. **All that the Lord had given him:** This statement needed to be made here for generations to come. Moses was revered as the greatest prophet of Israel until the coming of the Messiah. It would be assumed, therefore, that in the years to come false prophets would claim that God spoke through them as He spoke through Moses. Moses here, however, shuts the

book on any commandments that might come to Israel through false prophets. No more revelation of the law for Israel was given after this final declaration that was written in this book. “The law,” Genesis through Deuteronomy, therefore, was sealed. Moses had written all that had been declared to them, and all that the Lord revealed for Israel. This law was to carry Israel throughout almost 1,400 years of history. **Declare this law:** The word for “law” is *torah*. *Torah* is used here to refer to the totality of the law of God that came through Moses, though in other places it can refer to specific teachings (See Pv 1:8). *Torah* eventually became the name that was given by the Jews to the first five books of the Bible, which is also known as the Pentateuch (See Er 7:6).

### TRAVEL EXPERIENCES

**1:6-8** See Ex 18:18-26. **The plain:** This was the Jordan Valley, the northern part of the Arabah that ended at the Dead Sea. **The Negev:** Reference is to “the south,” the wilderness area south of Judah. **Amorites:** This great nation of people came into the area of Canaan from the north and settled primarily on the eastern side of the Jordan. It would be the greatest nation that Israel would conquer, and thus conquering it gave them confidence to conquer any of the tribes

of the Canaanites. **Canaanites:** The Canaanites were dwelling in the land at the time of the arrival of Israel, and had been there since the days of Abraham. The term refers to all the tribal groups within the land, and not to all the people as a composite nation of people. **I have set the land before you:** As a gift from God, the land was to be possessed by Israel because Israel's destiny was salvational in reference to the Redeemer coming into the world. Israel's possession of the land was in fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham (See Gn 12:1-3). The reason for the possession of the land was for the preservation of the seedline nation. The reason for the preservation of the nation was to prepare mankind for the coming of the Savior of the world. This small parcel of land, therefore, had eternal implications for mankind. Once the purpose for the possession was completed, the land was to become just another parcel of land throughout the world. Israel would thus lose its right to the possession of the land as God's special gift to them once the eternal purpose for giving of the land was fulfilled. Since the purpose for Israel has been fulfilled in Christ (Gl 3:26-29), then Israel's divine right to the land is no longer valid.

**1:9-18 God had multiplied you:** They had been multiplied into a great nation at the time they stood east of the Jordan. They would throughout history be multiplied as the stars of heaven. This was the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham that He would make of his seed a great nation (See Gn 15:5). **Choose wise men:** The burden of leadership was

too great for Moses for this great number of people. Because he assumed that the people could choose their own leaders, he allowed them the responsibility to select leaders (Compare At 6:1-6). **You will not respect persons in judgment:** The primary qualification of a leader is to be fair in all judgments. Bribes distort justice, and thus disqualify one from being a leader. For this reason, those who are greedy for money can never be leaders for God for their judgments are tainted with the love of money.

**1:19-25 Great and terrible wilderness:** This was the condition of the Sinai Peninsula at the time of the wandering of Israel. **Kadesh Barnea:** This location is not known, though it plays an important role in the geography of the history of Israel. It would have been somewhere near the southern border of Israel. **Go up and possess:** The exhortation of Moses was that Israel immediately take possession of the land. Doing so would manifest their faith in God. The command to immediately take the land, however, was rejected by the people. Such was considered rebellion against God. **We will send men before us:** As the text here reads, this was the plan of the Israelites, not God or Moses. Moses expected that they go up against the Canaanites without any report from spies. If they had done such, then their faith in God would have been manifested. This saying "pleased Moses" only in the fact that Moses went along with the plan of the people. God allowed them to send the spies without His approval. The spies reported that it was a good land, but their

little faith was not strong enough to go forward with their new knowledge of the strength of the inhabitants of the land. They thus rebelled by not going up immediately and taking the land. Rebellion comes when men have little faith to trust in the work of God in their lives.

**1:26-33** See Nm 13:1 – 14:45. **Rebelled:** Their rebellion was in the fact that they did not immediately go up and take the land because of their unbelief. God allowed the sending of the spies. However, their refusal to go up immediately was called rebellion because it was God's command that they immediately take the land. Their lack of faith to trust in God that He would be with them in their confrontation with the Canaanites was considered rebellion. **The people are great and taller than we:** This report of the spies was correct. But the fact that the Canaanites were great and taller would have been the opportunity for God to prove that He was with His people when they conquered them, which they eventually did 38 years later. **You did not believe:** This one statement portrays the reason why the Israelites were disciplined with 38 years in the wilderness. They did not become atheists. Their faith in God was simply not strong enough to carry them into action against the Canaanites. Their infant faith was not strong enough to listen to the encouragement of Moses to immediately take control of the land of milk and honey after receiving the law on Mt. Sinai. Regardless of their unbelief, however, God treated the people as a father who would carry his son. God carried them across

the wilderness, choosing where they would camp throughout their 38 years of wilderness living.

**1:34-46 This evil generation:** Their omission of God's law to take the land was as bad as their commission against His law. They were thus an evil generation in the eyes of God because they were a nation of little faith. The generation that came out of Egypt thus disinherited themselves because they omitted the command to go up and take the land. One point is here proved in reference to the miraculous work of God. This generation of Israel had experienced the great wonders of God, the plagues of Egypt, and the crossing of the Red Sea. The miracles of God were sufficient to produce faith, but it was not a faith that was strong enough to take the Israelites against the great nations of the Canaanites. This little faith must be developed in the heart of man apart from the presence of the open miracles of God. It can be acquired only when men experience the providential work of God in their lives as they trust in Him by walking by faith. **Wholly followed the Lord:** The two exceptions to the unbelief of the nation were Joshua and Caleb (Nm 14:10). In this case, these two men, who fully complied with the will of God because of their faith, would eventually be rewarded greatly before all Israel. For generations to come, therefore, their heritage would be an illustration of faith that seeks to take action. They were given an inheritance in the land. Caleb eventually received the portion that he had surveyed as one of the spies (Ja 14:9-12). Joshua



was given the privilege of leading the Israelites into Canaan in the place of Moses. Great men of faith are always rewarded. **Angry with me:** Moses did not exclude himself from the results of unbelief. As all good leaders, they are the first to confess their unbelief. Because of the complaints of the people, he, in his frustration, did not sanctify the Lord at Meribah (See Nm 20:10-12), but lashed out with a bitter spirit against the people (See Ps 106:32,33). **I am not among you:** When the Israelites realized that they were banned from the land, they again rebelled against the will of God. They sought to enter the land on their own strength, for God said He would not be with them. He thus commanded them not to go up, but in disobedience they did. They paid the price by the loss of lives, for the Amorites chased them as if bees were after them.

**Amorites:** Numbers 14:45 mentions that the Amalekites and the Canaanites chased them, but here reference is to the Amorites. The terms "Amorites" and "Canaanites" are sometimes used interchangeably in the historical account of these events. **The Lord would not hear-ken:** Their weeping was more about remorse over their loss, than true repentance. They wept over their own failures, not over the fact that the Lord was not with them. They still had to learn that they were an insignificant and inexperienced army, and thus, they could do nothing against the inhabitants of the land without the help of God. In fact, their small stature as a people and inexperience in battle would be the occasion by which God would prove to the nations in the years to come that He helped them to conquer the land.

## CHAPTER 2

### CONFRONTATIONS

**2:1-15** See Nm 21:4. **Esau for a possession:** Israel was commanded to refrain from any engagement of war with Edom, for Edom was a kinsman to Israel. God had given the land of the Edomites, the descendants of Esau, Jacob's brother, as a possession. For this reason Israel was not to annex any of the territory that belonged to the Edomites, for it was a God-given possession. **Do not distress the Moabites:** As He commanded Israel not to afflict the Edomites, so He commanded that they should not be hostile toward the Moabites. **Giants:**

The Rephaim were a people of great stature. They inhabited portions of Palestine at the time Israel was in the wilderness. Goliath was possibly a descendant of this race of people. **Anakims:** These people were also known for their great stature. Seeing these people who inhabited the land of Canaan certainly brought fear to the Israelites who were a people of short stature. **Horims:** These were possibly a great civilized people who populated part of Palestine. **The Brook Zered:** This was a dry river bed that was the border between Edom and Moab (See Nm 21:12). From the time Israel left

Kadesh Barnea to the time they passed over the brook Zered into Moabite territory, a period of 38 years had passed.

**2:16-23 Ammonites:** As with Edom and Moab, Israel was to treat the Ammonites as brethren. The Ammonites were also called Zamzummims, a word which means “a distant and confused noise.” They were also a people of great stature. Nevertheless, they were dispossessed from the land by the strength of the Lord working in an Israelite army of soldiers who were small in stature. The fact that the smaller people of Israel were able to dispossess the Anakims and Ammonites from the land is evidence that Israel did not work alone in this effort. The nations around surely concluded that the God of Israel was working with Israel to take the land because of the conquering power of a small and inexperienced army of Israelites. Add to this the fact that all the people who descended from the seed of Abraham knew that the land had been promised to the sons of Jacob (Gn 12:1-3). Nevertheless, Ammonites fought to retain the land. They knew that they were fighting against the will of the God of Abraham who gave the land to Israel. When Israel eventually took the land, then they would understand that they were fighting a losing battle, for they fought against the will of God that the land be given to the heritage of Abraham through Jacob. ***They dispossessed them and dwelt in their place:*** A great historical lesson is learned here. The inhabitants of the land at the time Israel arrived, the Ammonites, had themselves dispossessed other nations before them. None of the people who re-

sided in the area were original people to the land. As one nation dispossessed another throughout history until the arrival of Israel, social confusion existed in the land. However, when Israel dispossessed the existing nations upon their arrival, they themselves were not dispossessed until 722/21 B.C. (Assyrian captivity) and 586 B.C. (Babylonian captivity). And then, they were dispossessed only when God empowered the Assyrian and Babylonian armies to take the Israelites into captivity because of Israel's idolatrous rebellion. Because Israel was able to stay in the land for such a long time is proof that they stayed only because of the power of God. Only when they eventually rebelled against God were they dispossessed from the land.

### INITIAL CONQUESTS

**2:24-37** See Nm 21:21-25. The victory over Sihon and Og, the Amorites, was the beginning of the conquest of Canaan. The conquest of this great nation was a signal to Israel that God was working in their army to conquer a great people. ***Put ... the fear of you upon the nations:*** Not only did the victory of the great nation of the Amorites bring fear into the hearts of the inhabitants of Canaan, it also increased the morale of the army of Israel, for at the time the Amorites were a great nation. ***Sihon:*** Moses certainly knew the negative response that would come from Sihon. Nevertheless, he still approached him for peace since he dwelt on the eastern side of the Jordan. ***God hardened his spirit:*** As with the Pharaoh of Egypt, Moses'



request became the opportunity for Sihon to harden his heart against the will of God. For this reason, God took the credit for hardening his heart. When God's will becomes the opportunity for one to rebel, then God's will has hardened the heart of the rebellious. Sihon's response thus illustrated the heart of all those who dwelt in the land of Canaan. They had hardened themselves against God to the point that there was no moral return to the will of God. They were on a course of social disintegration. Their iniquity had reached its fullness as God had previously stated to Abraham when he was in the land over 400 hundred years before (See Gn 15:16). As Sodom and Gomorrah, the Canaanites were at the point of no return to the morals of God. Their immoral culture, therefore, had to be eradicated from the history of humanity. ***We left none to remain:*** Critics have used this work of God against the inhabitants of the land as an accusation to prove that the God of the Jews and Christians is a mean and harsh God. But this accusation ignores the eternal plan of God with reference to Israel. In His instructions, even the little ones were to be destroyed from the land according to the will of God. But the point is in the fact that these cultures had digressed to total immoral degradation. They were far from repentance. If these immoral and idolatrous cultures were not eradicated from the land, then Israel, God's seed-line nation to bring the Messiah into the world, would have been infested with sin. The fact that Israel did not totally eradicate these immoral cultures in obedience

to God proves the point. Israel was eventually infested with the idolatrous immorality of the peoples they did not destroy, and as a consequence, they themselves had to be driven from the land. God was left with only a remnant of Israel with which to work in order to fulfill the promise that was made to Abraham to bless all nations through his seed. At this time, God's eternal plan of redemption for the salvation of all men was more important than the existence of the immoral and idolatrous tribal cultures of the land of Canaan. ***Little ones:*** The argument is always made as to why even the children were to be killed. We must consider that Israel was not a settled nation, and thus they had no gardens to provide for a great orphanage of children. The parents of the children were unrepentant, and thus the children had to suffer the consequences of their parents' sins. If the children were spared, Israel would have brought itself into social chaos and famine. The manna and quail ceased when they entered the land. Israel could not become a nation of orphans. She also could not violate the purity of the lineage of each family. It was God's purpose to begin the nation in Canaan as a pure race of people to whom He would give the inheritance of the land. At the time, they could not have taken care of thousands of orphans. We must also keep in mind that it was better for the children to return to the salvation of God in heaven, than to grow up in the immoral cultures of the Canaanites, who in many cases offered their own children as sacrifices to their pagan gods.

## CHAPTER 3

**3:1-11** See Nm 21:33-35. **Og:** Og, the king of Bashan, was totally defeated by the army of Israel. The result was a great encouragement to Israel, for the nation celebrated this victory. Og was the last obstacle to entering Canaan (See Ne 9:22; Ps 135:11; 136:19,20). **Sixty cities:** This number did not include surrounding towns and villages. Moses stated that these were well fortified cities, and thus this was a long and hard victory. We could assume that there were at least sixty battles in this conquest over Og. Og was one of the first nations of giants to fall to Israel. The strength of the cities and the stature of the people of the nation of Og manifests the strength that was given to each individual soldier of Israel. When an Israelite soldier stood against a giant of Bashan, we must assume that God could empower the individual soldiers with the physical strength to overcome giants. This is the only answer we have for the victorious Israelites who were of small stature. **Bedstead:** This bed measured thirteen and a half feet long (about 4 meters) and six feet wide (about 2 meters). The reason Moses gave us these dimensions was to establish a record for history concerning the size of the people of Bashan that Israel overcame in physical battle. The size of the bedstead signifies the amount of physical empowerment that God gave to the Israelite soldiers in their war against these giants.

**3:12-22** See Nm 32:1-42. Since the land of Og was a vast land that was suit-

able for pasture, it was taken by the tribes of Reuben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh. At this time, however, only the wives, children and livestock of these tribes remained in the land. The fighting men were obligated to continue with their brethren in the eradication of the nations from the land of Canaan west of the Jordan.

**3:23-29** See Nm 27:12-23. **Let me go over:** This was Moses' prayer to the Lord, which prayer the Lord only gave half an answer. He only allowed Moses to see the land from Pisgah, but not to go over and experience the land. **The Lord was angry:** Moses had been given the privilege of leading Israel from Egypt to this point, and thus shouldered the great responsibility of leadership. With such responsibility comes great judgment, which judgment was brought upon him for striking a rock for water at Meribah. We can thus understand Moses' prohibition from entering the land by understanding that leaders are to be held accountable for things the people are often allowed to do. "*My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we will receive the stricter judgment*" (Js 3:1). The burden of a leader is that his actions will be carried to an extreme by those who follow him. Therefore, the leader must be very cautious concerning his behavior. Leaders lead by their behavior, as well as their instructions. It is a wise leader who behaves according to the will of God, and instructs men to so live.

## CHAPTER 4

### ADMONITIONS

**4:1-8 Harken ... do:** This would be the first commandment to Israel. They must listen to God and carry out His will. Listening, without obedience, is not sufficient. True listening is carried out in behavior. **Statutes:** These would be the initial revelations of God that were written and established as principles by which men must live. **Judgments:** These would be the revealed decisions of God concerning specific matters as to how Israel carried out the written statutes of God in their lives. **Commandments:** These would be all direct instructions of God concerning the conduct of one's life. Reference would be to specific things God told the people either to do or not to do. **You will not add ... nor ... diminish:** This is a perpetual principle in reference to the law of God (See comments Gl 1:6-9; Rv 22:18,19). Any religious tradition that is bound on the consciences of men would be considered adding to the law of God (See comments Mk 7:1-9). Any written religious law of man that would bring men into the bondage of one another would be considered adding to the law of God. **Baal:** This word means "lord." Peor would be the identity of the local baal ("lord"). When men create in their own minds a spiritual being to which they feel conscience-driven to give account, then a lord (baal) has been created. A baal is the result of men giving up a knowledge of the one true and living God for a "lord" they have created after their own imagination. They are

thus "lords" to themselves, doing that which is right in their own eyes. Created baals often sanctioned the immoral behavior of those who created them. For this reason, the baals of Canaan were often hideous imaginations of men who sometimes even offered their children in sacrifice for worship. **Wise and understanding people:** The nation of Israel was to be a testimony to the existence of the one true and living God. When the nations around Israel observed their behavior, they would conclude that their existence and laws were not from man, but from One beyond the imagination of men (Compare comments At 17:22-31). Unfortunately, throughout their history Israel did not continue to submit to the will of God, and thus blasphemed God among the nations by their idolatrous behavior.

**4:9-14 Teach ... your sons:** God's direction in the past is encouragement to focus one's life on the future. Israel's personal experiences of God's direct leading in the past was to be passed on to their children. God's work among them in the past forty years was to be a witness that He worked in their lives to bring them into the land of Canaan. **You heard the voice:** Though they did not hear the words from God that only Moses heard, they did hear the great sound from God on the mountain. Moses told them that they must never forget what they heard, and thus pass the awesome and terrifying experience on to successive generations. The generations of Israel must

understand that the “voice” was proof that Moses did not invent the law of God from his own imagination. He was only the mediator through whom God spoke His laws for Israel.

**4:15-24** The imagined gods that men would create after their own image must never be represented by any work of man's hands. **Graven image:** No representation of any imagined gods was to be carved in either stone or wood. No representation of the sexual organs of man or woman was to be made that would incite heathen worship and immorality. Unlike the Egyptians from whom they came, Israel was not to make any representation of any animal as an object of worship. **Sun ... moon ... stars:** Again, unlike the Egyptians, the heavenly bodies were not to be objects of worship. They were not to worship the creation. **God has allotted to all nations:** Though difficult to understand, the meaning here could possibly be a reference to the principles revealed in passages as Romans 1:20 and Psalm 8. The heavenly bodies manifested the glory of God, which glory the religious people of the world could see, and by which conclude that there was a God. Because they had no direct revelation from God as did Israel, they stopped at the sun, moon and stars in their search for God. They could not see beyond the wonders of heaven to deduct that there was a living God beyond the physical sun, moon and stars. They thus worshiped the creation rather than the Creator (See comments Rm 1:13-32; see At 14:16,17; 17:30). **Iron furnace:** This metaphor refers to the time of bondage in

Egypt. It was a time of great affliction (1 Kg 8:51; Is 48:10; Jr 11:4). **Lest you forget the covenant:** The evidence of their forgetting the covenant would be making any graven image, which image meant that they had created other lords (baals) in their lives than the One who gave them laws by which to direct their lives.

**4:25-31** This prophecy certainly haunted those Israelites who were carried away years later into the Assyrian (722/21 B.C.) and Babylonian (586 B.C) captivities. The prophecy is here spoken in a verb tense that reveals that God knew they would forsake His covenant by refusing to live according to the law of the covenant. This prophecy was not given to establish their fate, but to reveal that God knew what they would do. God could know their future without having predestined them to live according to the pronouncement of this prophecy. His foreknowledge does not necessitate predestination. **Remain long in the land:** The condition for remaining in the land was their obedience to the law of the covenant. Once they rebelled against the law of God, then they had no right to the land. This principle carried over into the coming of the law of God that would be revealed through the Messiah, through whom God speaks today (Hb 1:1,2). Since Israel refused the Messiah, they cannot claim to have a divine right to the land of Canaan. The message that the Messiah brought was that Israel was to be dissolved into the one body that He would establish (Gl 3:26-29). The promise of the land was fulfilled in the coming of the Messiah in that there was no

more need for a preserved nation to bring the Messiah, the Christ, into the world. And since there was no more need for the unique nation of Israel, there was no more need for the special land for the nation. The spiritual nation of God, the church, is now in all the world, not in a specific part of the world as was Israel (See Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15,16). **He will not forsake you:** This promise reached far into the future when Israel would be in the bondage of Assyria and Babylon. After their captivity, He would bring a remnant of all twelve tribes back to the land of promise in order to prepare them for the coming of the Messiah. The condition for God remembering them, however, was that they must have a repentant heart.

**4:32-40 This great thing:** Never in the history of mankind on earth had God before or after performed a work as that which He did with the nation of Israel. The nation stands as a testimony to the existence of God since no nation on its own power could have accomplished such great feats that Israel did throughout their history. These words are written in the Bible to give us a testimony to the existence of God who worked specifically with the nation of Israel. God gave birth to them through Abraham, brought them out of the bondage of one of the most powerful nations of the world,

Egypt, and then brought them into a land that He promised them centuries before. Israel was a national miracle of God.

## REFUGE CITIES EAST OF THE JORDAN

**4:41-43** As a historical note, the interjection here of designating three refuge cities on the east side of the Jordan is given (See comments 19:3; Nm 35:6,11-34). These cities would be accessible to the tribes of Reuben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh who dwelt on the east side of the Jordan.

### Review Of God's Laws For Israel (4:44 – 26:19)

**Outline:** (1) Introduction to national history (4:44-49), (2) Law and responsibility (5:1 – 11:32), (3) Worship and holy living (12:1 – 26:19)

## INTRODUCTION TO NATIONAL HISTORY

**4:44-49 Testimonies:** These would be God's instructions in reference to the moral and religious duties of the people. **Statutes ... judgments:** See comments 4:1-8. **This side of the Jordan:** See 1:1,5; 3:29. Reference is to the land originally controlled by the Moabites (See Nm 21:26). Here it is identified as the land of Sihon, the king of the Amorites whom Israel had just defeated.

# CHAPTER 5

## LAW AND RESPONSIBILITY

**5:1-5** Moses' emphasis in the context of chapters 5-11 is to exhort Israel to maintain the law of the covenant.

God's covenant would mean nothing if they did not adhere to the conditions of the covenant. In this context, therefore, he rehearsed the very foundation upon

which the covenant was based, the ten commandments. God gave this rehearsal because He knew where they would go as a nation throughout their history. The generation who heard the words of Moses at this time would adhere to God's instructions. However, the generations to come would slowly move away from God. Eventually, in the centuries to come, they would be driven from the land because they had forsaken the law of God. The nation's right to possess the land of promise was conditioned on their obedience to the law of God. Once they rebelled against God's law, they gave up their right to the land.

**5:6-21** See comments Ex 20:1-17. Though there are some differences between the statements of the ten commandments in this context here and those that are given in Exodus 20:1-17, we must understand that the Spirit here adds interpretations for this generation of Israelites as they prepare to live in Canaan. The generation that was at the foot of Mt. Sinai, when the commandments were first given, had died in the wilderness. The generation to whom Moses was directing the words of Deuteronomy was a new generation that was preparing to enter Canaan. **No other gods before Me:** It was not that other gods existed. They existed only in the minds of those who would create a god after their own imagination. This statement, therefore, is warning them against following after their own religious imaginations in order to establish their own religious codes. **You will not make ... any graven image:** Once one creates in his mind a god who

sanctions his behavior after his own lusts, then he fabricates an image of this god. No image was to be made in Israel that would stimulate worship of one's own thinking. God does not want His people to be stimulated to worship by physical things or places lest they begin to worship the things and places. Those who would create their own religions must remember that their children will always digress further away from God than their parents (See Ez 18:14-17). Every generation that becomes less knowledgeable of God will take another step away from God until a society has digressed into total moral degradation. **You will not take the name of the Lord ... in vain:** God's name should never be invoked in making a vain oath. If one would affirm his oath on the foundation of the name of God in order to convince others of his intents that are actually false, then he has violated the sanctity of the name of God. **Keep the Sabbath day:** The meaning of the word "Sabbath" teaches the purpose for keeping the day. One is to "cease" from work on this day. The creation was God's illustration that men work for six days and rest on the seventh (Ex 20:11). In doing this, one was sanctifying the Sabbath. But for Israel, keeping the Sabbath was a sign of their covenant with God. The Sabbath and circumcision were the two signs of the covenant, and thus, the nations around Israel were reminded that Israel was in a covenant relationship with God when they saw Israel keeping the Sabbath. It was not simply a sign to the nations around Israel, but primarily a sign to God that Israel was keeping the



covenant. Thus the Sabbath was not given as a religious day, but as a day where there would be mutual respect between the citizens of society. Employers could not work their employees without respect for them. And respect for employees was carried out when they were given the Sabbath for rest. The Sabbath was made for man in order to give him rest, not man for the Sabbath. **Honor your father and your mother:** This commandment refers to the foundation upon which society is built. The children's honor of their parents is the signal of a healthy society. **You will not kill:** Or, "you will not murder." The Hebrew word here for "kill" (*ratsach*) is always used to refer to murder. **You will not commit adultery:** Adultery is a sign that society is breaking down, because it is a signal of failed marriages. **You will not steal:** When citizens have no respect for the property of others, society moves into chaos. Stealing means that one has no respect for others, and thus feels no social responsibility. **You will not bear false witness:** Orderly societies cannot exist where there is lying and perjury. Society must exist wherein all speak truth to one another (Ep 4:25). All these commandments, therefore, are given for social order. **You will not covet your neighbor's wife:** This commandment deals with the heart of man. Coveting a neighbor's wife is an indication of a failed relationship with one's own wife.

If marriage is not held in high esteem in a society, then social chaos will prevail, which chaos will digress a society into moral degradation. It is for this reason that the ten commandments were the backbone of the society of Israel.

**5:22-33 The voice:** Men too often flippantly state that God spoke to them. Such careless use of a statement in reference to God personally communicating to a man is contrary to the reaction of those who actually heard God. On this occasion when God spoke, common men were so terrified that they asked for a mediator who only had been sanctioned by God to be a mediator between Himself and man. No one would be so presumptuous as to claim that God personally spoke to him, and then remain alive, for these on this occasion feared that they would die even from hearing the voice of God. When God speaks, therefore, the result is overpowering to fragile men on earth (See Dn 10:5-19; Mt 28:2-4; At 9:3-9; Rv 1:17). As is illustrated with the case of Moses, no man has the right to come into the personal communication presence with God unless personally invited in by God. Those who would claim to have personal revelation of truth from God are presumptuous, and thus not to be followed. They are presumptuous because God now speaks through Jesus who speaks through His written word (Jn 12:48; Hb 1:1,2; 2 Tm 3:16,17).

## CHAPTER 6

**6:1-9** The contents of verses 4 & 5 was called the *Shema* by the Jews. **The**

**Lord:** This is from the Hebrew *Yahweh*, meaning "He is" or "He becomes." It

was the Jew's sacred word for God. The word was considered so sacred that they would not pronounce it with their lips. They used the word *Adonai*, "my Lord." **One:** God is one, though He has manifested Himself throughout human history in three different ways, through the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. As deity, God has manifested His eternal being as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in order to accomplish the eternal purpose for the creation of all things. **Heart ... soul ... might:** This is the totality of the human personality. The emphasis, therefore, is that the totality of man must be given to God. One must not "visit" God occasionally in times of trouble and need. He must be the central focus of one's existence. All of one's life must be consumed with the presence of God.

**6:10-19** When given a gift for which one did not work, it is easy to take the gift for granted. In Israel's case, they were blessed with the material things of a land of milk and honey. Satan's best weapon against the spiritual nature of man is to focus man on the physical. Materialism became Israel's downfall as the nation began to move away from focusing on the spiritual. After forty years in the wilderness we would assume that they were initially overwhelmed by the bountiful nature of the land. But after occupying the land for decades, they be-

gan to focus on their own skills of productivity. As a consequence, they lost their focus on God. **Fear the Lord your God:** Satan was delivered this statement when he tempted Jesus in the wilderness (Mt 4:10; Lk 4:8). There is no obedience if there is no fear of God who can destroy both soul and body in hell (Mt 10:28). **A jealous God among you:** God will stand for no competition in the minds of men. He will not compete with the minds of those who seek to create their own gods in order to go their own way. **You will not tempt the Lord:** Jesus referred to this statement when Satan sought to force His hand to work a miracle (Mt 4:7; Lk 4:12). Men tempt God by calling on Him to do a miracle in order that we might believe in Him. We tempt Him to perform a miracle in order that He might earn our obedience.

**6:20-25** It is the duty of the parents to pass on to their children the way God has worked in their lives. Children witness their parents' appreciation for all that God has done for them. This appreciation for God's work is a part of the spiritual heritage that parents leave with their children. **It will be our righteousness:** Obedience to the law of God is righteousness. The law, therefore, is the righteousness of the people when the people obey it in response to His grace and mercy.

## CHAPTER 7

**7:1-5** See Ex 34:11-16. All studies concerning Israel's occupation of the land must be taken in the context of God's eternal purpose. His purpose is the sal-

vation of man. His eternal plan of redemption necessitated the Son of God coming into the world for man's salvation, which blessing was promised to our

father of faith, Abraham (Gn 12:1-3). Bringing the Son of God, Jesus Christ, the Messiah, into the world necessitated the preservation of the seedline of Abraham, for God blessed him because of his faith. His seedline was the nation of Israel, and thus for the preservation of the nation of Israel a land had to be procured wherein the nation could reside until the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham. The land was Canaan, and thus the Canaanites had to go. In order that Israel maintain her identity, God's commands in reference to her driving out the nations and maintaining her national purity, had to be strictly obeyed. When we come to this context of the Bible, we must understand God's background plan of redemption in order to understand the specifics of His commands to Israel in reference to the dispossession of the nations within the land of promise. At this time, Israel did not understand the eternal plan of redemption that would come through the seed of Abraham. However, we have the entire picture in the Bible in the recorded history of what at this time transpired in reference to Israel's wars against the occupying nations of Canaan, as well as their struggles against the influence of the gods of the nations around them. **The Hittites:** These sons of Heth had grown into a very powerful nation of people. From 1,800 to 900 B.C. this nation of people resided in the northern extremities of Palestine and extended into present day Turkey. **The Gergashites:** This little known civilization probably resided in the area just west of the Jordan (Ja 24:11). **The Amorites:** As identi-

fied in 1:7, this nation of people resided on the east side of the Jordan and northern parts of Canaan. **The Canaanites:** All of the nations that are here listed were descendants of Canaan, the grandson of Noah (Gn 10:15-18; see 1:7). **The Perizzites:** These may have been relatives of the Rephaim, the giants of the land (Ja 17:15). They dwelt in the hill country of Palestine. **The Hivites:** This tribe of people dwelt in the far northern regions of Palestine around Mt. Hermon and Lebanon (Ja 11:3; Jg 3:3). **The Jebusites:** This was a people who resided in the southern area of Palestine around present day Jerusalem. The original name of the area, where Jerusalem was eventually established, was named Jebus. **Utterly destroy them:** This was a unique event in history, never to be repeated or condoned by the action of any other nation. It was unique in the fact that God was at work laying the foundation for His eternal plan of redemption by the preservation of Israel. When Abraham was in the land of Canaan almost 500 years earlier, the iniquity of the inhabitants of the land at that time had not yet digressed to the point of no moral return (Gn 15:16; see Dt 7:5; 18:9-12; Lv 18:21-25). But at this time when Israel was about to enter the land, the iniquity of the Canaanites was full grown. They were thus ready for the judgment of God by the proxy of the armies of Israel. They were civilizations that had given up their right to cohabit the world with other peoples, and thus they had to be eliminated, not simply dispossessed from their land. This was true especially because

they were in the proximity of the seed-line nation of Israel through whom God would bring the Redeemer into the world. Under no circumstances were the inhabitants of Canaan, who maintained the wicked culture that is mentioned in this context, to survive history. The Israelites were not to marry them (See Nm 25:1-9), neither were any remnants of their idolatrous relics of worship to be preserved. As examples of the judgment of God against sin, they were to be destroyed. **Groves:** Even their places of worship, the groves of trees, were to be cut down. No reminder of the religion of these people was to be preserved. They had totally rejected God, and thus, they were to be totally stricken from the history of mankind.

**7:6-11** Israel was holy because she had been separated by God from the world of nations. She was a special people in that she was God's own possession for the special purpose of fulfilling the eternal plan of redemption. However, in order that Israel not pride herself because of her recent victories, God said that He did not choose Israel because of who she was. He chose her because of His promise to her fathers. His message here is to prove to Israel that He is faithful to His promises. If the people are faithful to His commandments, He would be faithful to His promise to make her prosper as a nation.

**7:12-15** Obedience would have its fruit. Israel's obedience would result in her multiplication as a nation, productivity of the land, and her livestock. Unlike Egypt which was plagued with disease,

Israel would be blessed to be a healthy nation free from plagues.

**7:16-26** In order to strengthen the morale of Israel, God reminded the nation of how He worked in the past in order to bring victory to Israel. Their past victories, because of His power in them as a nation, was evidence of their victories yet to come in the future. The Canaanites perished because of their abominations, and thus, Israel must never involve herself in such abominations. If the Israelites fell into such sins, then they themselves would be driven from the land. God's point was that the occupying nations were destroyed from the land because of their abominations. This helps us understand Genesis 15:16. God did not arbitrarily remove the Canaanites from Palestine in order to make room for Israel. If this were the case, He could have done this centuries before when Abraham was in the land. Genesis 15:16 states that at the time Abraham was in the land, the iniquity of the Canaanites was not yet full. Therefore, Abraham's descendants were moved into Egypt until the iniquity of the Canaanites increased to the point of being an abomination to God. When this time came, the Canaanite nations were to be removed and the land was to be given to Israel as a possession. Israel's possession of the land, therefore, was not because of her righteousness, or because God considered her favorite over the Canaanites. Her time for possessing the land had simply come because of the abomination of the Canaanites. Now if Israel ever became an abomination to the Lord, then

she would be removed from the land as were the Canaanites. Unfortunately, this is what eventually happened.

## CHAPTER 8

**8:1-10 *So that you may live:*** Through obedience to God's commandments we are prepared to live with one another. It is necessary, therefore, that God give us commandments lest we seek to establish our own social rules after our own desires. ***He humbled you:*** God's discipline in reference to our failure to keep His commandments is an opportunity to grow in humility. When we reap what we sow, we are disciplined to bring our lives into conformity to the direction of the commandments of God. We do not despise the chastening of the Lord (Hb 12:6-11). ***Manna:*** Since the Israelites were made to depend totally on God during their disciplining of forty years in the wilderness, they were humbled by having to live on the same diet every day. ***Not ... by bread alone:*** Israel learned that life was not for the purpose of living for that which sustains life, but for being spiritually sustained by worship of God (See Mt 4:4; Lk 4:4). The totality of our lives must be focused on God. ***Clothing did not wear out:*** This could be what is simply stated, or that God made all provisions for them in the wilderness to have the necessary materials by which to continually replace their clothing. The literal interpretation would be a continual miracle before the people throughout their wilderness wanderings.

**8:11-20 *My power and the might of my hand:*** The industrious character of the people would eventually lead them

to forget the cause of their blessings. In this way, their material prosperity would be a curse. It was God who made it possible for the land to produce for the people. However, in their diligence to work the land, they would forget that it was God who made all things grow for their prosperity. In an environment and economy of material prosperity, however, there is always the temptation to forget God. Throughout their generations, the Israelites took for granted all that they received from God, and thus prided themselves in their own accomplishments. Their allegiance which should have remained focused on God, turned to a focus on themselves as a result of their skills to produce from the land. ***It is He who is giving you power to get wealth:*** The remedy for materialism is to remember Him from whom all blessings flow. Since Israel eventually fell by going after false gods that were created after their own imagination, their sin was that they forgot who gave them what they had. The materialist creates a god who originates from within himself, and thus, he humanistically worships his own ability to perform and produce. The humanist focuses on the ability of man to perform, but the saint focuses on God who brings power to one's efforts to work to the glory of God. When we are blessed, therefore, all glory must be given to God who gave us the gifts to produce, but also gave increase to the work of our hands. Our rec-

ognition of the fruits of our hands, therefore, is an opportunity to be grateful to

God for working in our lives.

## CHAPTER 9

### 9:1-6 *Because of my righteousness:*

This is the temptation that faces every person. After they had conquered the nations that possessed the land, the Israelites would be tempted to say that they had conquered the Canaanites with their own might. They needed to remember that it was because of the grace of God who empowered each soldier of their army that they were able to conquer the Canaanites. They did not conquer the land by their own strength, nor because they were a righteous people. They were allowed to conquer the land by the power of God. They were allowed by God because of the wickedness of the Canaanites and because of the empowering might of the Lord to fulfill His promise to Abraham (Gn 12:1-3). Their victory over the Canaanites, because of the wickedness of the Canaanites, should be a warning to them and all nations, that when a nation gives up on God, God gives up on it (Gn 15:16). If Israel ever gave up on God, she also would be driven from the land as she drove the Canaanites from the land.

**9:7-29** See Ex 32:7-29; 34:1-4. Lest Israel become arrogant in her coming conquests, she must remember how easy it was for her fathers to rebel at Mt. Sinai (Horeb) in making the golden calf (Ex 32,33). **Tablets of stone:** When Moses broke the tablets of stone because of the sin of the people, it was a symbol of breaking the covenant between God and Israel. The ten commandments written

on the stone tablets were the conditions for the covenant. The covenant was thus broken when the conditions were broken by the people who sinned by reverting to the false gods of Egypt (See Ex 32:19).

***I will destroy them:*** Because Israel sinned at the foot of Mt. Sinai, God was willing to start a new nation from the seed of Moses. However, this plea to Moses by the people to intercede for Israel was answered by Moses as he pled for their forgiveness. Moses' intercession focused on an appeal to God's love and mercy, and His faithfulness to keep His promise to Abraham. If His promise was not kept, the Egyptians would mock the supposed "false god" of the Israelites who led them into the wilderness to die. We must keep in mind, however, that God was willing to carry out His threat. Time means nothing to God. He was willing to wait until another nation could be produced from the seed of Moses in order to settle the land of Canaan and deliver the Messiah to the world. If He had the fullness of time in mind that was stated by Paul in Galatians 4:4, then He had 1,400 more years to develop another nation before the Messiah would come into the world. It took Him about 600 years to build the nation of Israel and bring this nation to the border east of the Jordan. He had plenty of time, therefore, to do the same with another nation from Moses. God was patient concerning the fulfillment of His plan of redemption.



## CHAPTER 10

**10:1-11** *Cut out for yourselves:* God cut out the first tablets of stone on which the commandments were written. But after the Israelites rebelled, Moses broke the original set of stones, signifying Israel's breaking of the conditions of the covenant. After their repentance, God called on them to cut out their own tablets of stone on which He would again write the commandments. ***Ark I had made:*** This ark of wood would have been something made by Moses. The final ark was made by Bezaleel which was the permanent structure that contained the tablets when the tabernacle and its furnishings were completed (See Ex 37:1). Verses 6-9 are an historical insertion. Aaron died in Mosera, which was probably somewhere near the foot of Mt. Hor. ***At that time:*** While they were still at the foot of Mt. Sinai, Israel rebelled. But it was also while they were at Mt. Sinai that the Levites were separated from the people to be priests on behalf of the people (See Nm 3:5-37). ***The Lord is his inheritance:*** The Levites would receive no inheritance of land in Canaan, and thus were not responsible for cultivating the land. They received the Lord as their inheritance, which meant that they were to be supported by the other tribes. The Levites received cities throughout the land, and the pasture lands around the cities. The people could thus come to these cities with their offerings for the spiritual ministry that was provided by the Levites.

**10:12-22** *What does the Lord your*

*God require of you:* Micah also asked this question (Mc 6:8). The answer is that God requires five things: (1) We must fear God's awesome being. (2) We must obediently walk according to His will. (3) We must respond to His being with love. (4) Our lives must be one of service for His glory. (5) We must know and obey His commandments. Compliance with all that God requires results in our well-being on earth among ourselves. ***Heaven ... earth:*** When we understand that all the galaxies of the heavens to the minute particles of existence on earth originated from God, and that He is over all, then our response to Him is obedience to His will (See comments Cl 1:16-18). ***Circumcise:*** Circumcision should be the response of Israel. This circumcision was not only of the flesh, but of the heart in that the Israelites were to change their personality from being stiffnecked to being obedient (Dt 30:6). ***Love the stranger:*** This is Israel's great commission. They were to be a nation that reached out to those who were not Israelites, but had been deceived by the false religions of men. If one knows the one true and living God, it would only be natural to reach out to others who had been deceived by the false gods of men. As a nation of priests, Israel was to be a national priesthood to the world. They were to behave as God who does not want any to perish (2 Pt 3:9). ***He is your praise:*** Because of who He is, the God of all things, He is the object of our praise. For this reason, it is absurd to create a

god after one's imagination and a religion that appeals to our base desires.

## CHAPTER 11

**11:1-7** There is no separation between true love of God and obedience to His commandments (1 Jn 2:3-6; 4:7-11,19; 5:3). God loved Israel by bringing her out of bondage. God expected action on Israel's part in response to His love for giving them freedom. ***Your eyes have seen every great act of the Lord which He did:*** There were still some in Israel who were old enough to remember their experiences of the great miracles of God in delivering Israel from Egyptian bondage. Since they experienced such a miraculous deliverance, they should respond by obedience, showing an example to their children who were born in the wilderness. The nation also experienced rebellion within the camp of Israel through the efforts of Dathan and Abiram. Before the entire nation, God destroyed those who were rebellious against His authority on earth. God's judgments on the parents with such great events, therefore, should stir obedience in the lives of the children who were present at the time Moses spoke these words east of the Jordan.

**11:8-12** ***So that you may be strong:*** The condition for a healthy and wealthy nation that would dwell long in the land was obedience to the commandments of God. ***Not as the land of Egypt:*** In Egypt, a desert land, they had to continually build irrigation systems from the Nile River in order to produce crops. But in Canaan there would be sufficient natural

rain where they would not have to work additionally to grow crops by the construction of irrigation systems. They had moved from a desert region that had to be irrigated from the Nile River to a region that had natural rainfall.

**11:13-17** ***He will shut up heaven:*** If they were disobedient to the will of God, then God would use drought to motivate repentance. Their obedience would bring the continual blessing of the early and latter rains, but God would bring drought upon the land if they ignored His commandments (See Js 5:17,18).

**11:18-21** This section emphasizes the responsibility of parents in reference to teaching their children the word of God. In order to guarantee that this generation of children not fall away from the commandments of God, the parents were to continually teach their children. It was the responsibility of the parents, not the Levites, to teach the children. As the parents were not to turn their responsibility of teaching their children the Bible over to the Levites, neither are Christians to turn their children over to others for the major part of their learning of the Bible. The Israelite children occasionally learned from the Levites when the parents took offerings for fellowship meals to the Levites in the cities, but on the farms the parents were to be educating continually their children in the word of God.

**11:22-32** When Israel came into the

land, a national pledge was to be made. This pledge to be obedient to the commandments of God was not only a national commitment to the will of God for the generation that made it, but also a pledge for all generations that would follow throughout the history of Israel. **Mt. Gerizim:** From Gerizim the blessings of the covenant were to be read. **Mt. Ebal:** From Ebal the cursings of God were to

be read (See 27:11-26). These were the cursings they would experience if they became disobedient to the commandments of God. The blessings and cursings would reemphasize the principle that is taught throughout these words. If they remained faithful, they would be blessed. If they forsook the will of God, they would be cursed, and eventually driven from the land of promise.

## CHAPTER 12

### WORSHIP AND HOLY LIVING

#### 12:1-32 *High mountains ... hills:*

Because the Canaanites thought that they were closer to their god on high mountains and hills, there they established their places of worship. **Green tree:** The Canaanites also established groves of trees as places of worship. The Israelites did not destroy these groves when they entered the land, and thus they became a snare to Israel (See Jr 2:20; Ez 18:6; Hs 4:13). **You will not act like this toward the Lord your God:** Israel was not to build shrines, plant groves or make idols in reference to their worship of God. Once one either builds a temple or carves an idol to his god, he has either located his god in some place or sculptured him after one's imagination. What made Israel different from the nations around them was that they were to make no images of God, neither build any temples in which to locate Him. Unfortunately, all such things they eventually did because of the influence of the people around them and because they did not completely banish the Canaanites from the land. **The place:** We must keep in

mind that it is not stated that "the place" would be in a permanent location. The place was probably revealed annually by God to be in the area of a different tribe. The place would be moved every year in order to show no favoritism among the tribes, for God is not a respecter of persons. What is commanded in this context is an annual tribal reunion in order to promote continued unity in Israel. God knew that when the tribes settled in their particular areas they would have the tendency to estrange themselves from one another. He thus stated that He would establish a place annually among the tribal territories where they would bring their offerings. The men of the nation were to appear there three times a year at the Passover, Pentecost and the feast of Tabernacles (See Ex 23:14-17; 34:18-23). The primary purpose for this tribal reunion was to maintain unity in the nation. However, we cannot help but interpret that God was here also laying the foundation for world evangelism in the future after the coming of the Messiah. God knew that they would eventually sin. Because of their sin of rebellion He

would scatter them throughout the world by the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. However, a remnant would return to the land after seventy years of Babylonian captivity. Nevertheless, a portion of the Israelites would remain scattered throughout the world. Representatives of these scattered Israelites came to Jerusalem every year for Passover and Pentecost (See At 2:5-13). At the Pentecost of A.D. 30, Peter preached the death and resurrection of the crucified Messiah, the Son of God (At 2:36). When this message was initially taken back to the other Israelites from where these initial pilgrims had come, they encouraged their friends and family to go to “the place” (Jerusalem) where they had heard the message of the gospel. This was the prophecy of Isaiah 2:1-4. The gospel would subsequently go into all the world as a result of these visitors coming to Jerusalem on an annual basis for every Passover and Pentecost, where they would learn at the apostles’ feet, and then return throughout the world from where they had come. In these commands in reference to coming to “the place,” God established an annual event in Israel that would become the foundation upon which world evangelism would be accomplished 1,400 years from the time of these events. ***For His habitation:*** All that God was commanding here was the place where the offerings were to take place, not the construction of a facility, as the temple. In this context it would seem contradictory for God to give instructions concerning the total destruction of all places that were used as wor-

ship by the Canaanites, and at the same time give instructions that the Israelites were to construct their own place of worship. The only thing that we could assume that would be built at the place was an altar upon which the burnt offerings were to be made. But the building of an elaborate sanctuary in place of the tabernacle is stated nowhere in this context. Since the tabernacle was to be a mobile sanctuary that could and would be moved among the tribal territories in order to maintain the work of the priests among all the tribes, no official permanent sanctuary was to be built. Only the place where the reunion would occur would be revealed by God on an annual basis. The movement of the tabernacle, for which there was given great detail in its construction, was to manifest that God was not showing favoritism to any one tribe. It is obvious that the details for construction and movement of the tabernacle were not for the purpose of its existence for only the 38 years of their wilderness wandering. The instructions concerning the tabernacle were given on the basis that it be used and moved throughout their history until the Messiah came. And it was used in such a manner for about 400 years before David initiated the idea that a permanent sanctuary be built in Jerusalem in the place of the tabernacle. The temple was thus allowed by God to be built, as He allowed the Israelites to establish a king over themselves as the nations around them. Its construction was a concession, not a commandment. ***If the place ... is too far:*** If the place for the annual offerings was in the tribal area of

an extreme southern or northern area, then they could kill and eat their offerings at the gates of villages near to them. The fact that God uses “if” in reference to the place indicates that the establishment of the place would be different on each occasion it was established (see 14:24). At times the place would be far, but on other occasions, it would be close. And since the place was to be different each year, it would not be too far for some of the people all the time. It is for this reason that reference to “the place” should not be used to assume that God intended to build permanently a sanctuary in one location that would marginalize some of the people to always be too far away. What they eventually did was to do what God did not intend. They built a permanent structure that was always too far away for the northern tribes. Many years after these statements, Jeroboam in his rebellion, after the construction of the temple in Jerusalem by his father, Solomon, established places of offering in Bethel and Dan. He did this because the building of the temple in Jerusalem consigned the northern tribes to be far from the permanent place of offering in Jerusalem (See 1 Kg 12:25-33). Jeroboam would have never had a reason for establishing these places of sacrifice if the annual movement of the tabernacle had continued throughout the tribal territories. But the building of the

temple in one place excluded others, as all permanent purpose-built sanctuaries do. ***The nations which you go to dispossess:*** When considering earlier statements in reference to the Canaanites, this statement would mean that Israel was to destroy the Canaanites. In view of what is said here, it seems that God may have given an option to the Canaanites. They could live by allowing Israel to dispossess them from the land of Palestine. If they did not migrate to another land, then they were to be completely destroyed. They were thus given the choice of fighting against God in His will to bring Israel into the land, or they could flee from Israel to other lands and live. But if they refused to flee, they were to be destroyed. God knew they would not flee, and thus, He gave Israel the command to completely destroy them. ***Their sons and their daughters they have burned:*** The Canaanites had digressed to the moral low of offering their children in sacrifice to their false gods. Therefore, before we would make a moral judgment of God's command to destroy completely the Canaanites, we must keep this fact in mind. The Canaanites were in a state of self-destruction when Israel arrived at the Jordan with God's command to annihilate them. If they were not completely destroyed, their self-destructive culture would infest Israel, and thus lead them astray from the will of God.

## CHAPTER 13

**13:1-5 *If there arises among you a prophet:*** This is the first of three cases of apostasy that are mentioned in this

chapter. This first case would be a false prophet who would give what would appear to be a sign or make a prediction

that would appear to be a fulfilled prophecy. Since he would be a false prophet because he did not speak according to the will of God, then his signs and predictions would be false (See 1 Kg 22:6-8,20-23; Jr 6:13; 28:1-17). God allows no false prophet to command the power of the supernatural, neither does He allow such to see the future. **God is testing you:** God permitted such false prophets to exist in order to test the people to see if they would follow His commands. For this reason, preaching the commands of God, His word, is the first test as to whether a prophet is true or false. A prophet would pass the test of being a true prophet, not on the basis of a sign or prophecy of a future event, but on the basis of whether he was speaking according to the word of God (See Is 8:19,20). Any preacher, therefore, who would presume to be a representative for God should first be judged on the basis of his speaking according to the word of God, not by his performances. One can determine if a miracle is true or false based on whether the one who performed the supposed miracle is preaching the truth. **Put to death:** God was serious about men rising up to draw people away after themselves (Compare At 20:29,30). Since God is this serious about false prophets leading His people astray, then His people should be vigilant about not listening to those who would presume to be prophets, but whose works and predictions are false.

**13:6-11 If your brother ... mother ... son ... daughter ... wife ... friend entice you:** The first temptation to apos-

tasy was through an individual who would assume authority and presume to speak from God. This second temptation referred to a close family member or a dear friend, as in the case when Eve enticed Adam to eat of the forbidden fruit (See 1 Tm 2:14). **You will stone him:** It is better to stone a loved one without pity than to endanger one's soul of suffering the fire of hell. Countless warnings are given by God in this book not to succumb to false religions (See Dt 6:14; 7:1-5; 12:2,3; 20:15-18). If one thus yields to a false religion, then certainly there could be no mercy in Israel for that person. Justifying false religiosity with the notion that one is a good person betrays the word of God to which all will give account in the day of judgment (See Jn 12:48). These instructions concerning those who would cause apostasy must be taken very seriously. Immediate judgment was to be handed down to Israel when a false prophet was revealed. God will condemn to eternal death those who lead people away to other gods (Mt 7:21-23; compare Mt 10:34-39; Lk 14:25-35). In the seriousness of this text, however, we must be cautious about claiming someone to be a false prophet. A false prophet in the context of these statements was one who denied the one true and living God and supposedly worked miraculous deeds or sought to tell the future to substantiate his claims. The false prophet in Israel was attempting to lead the people away from God in order to serve idol gods.

**13:12-18 Wicked men have gone out:** Some translations read, "children of Belial." Belial refers to one who is



worthless in word and action. The apostasy in this case would be the work of one with a worthless character who seeks to lead others to embrace a religious immorality that appeals to the base character of man. In modern terms this would be satanism and occultism that often lure people to perform those rites that appeal to and excite the lusts of the flesh. ***Inquire ... search ... ask:*** Before the condemnation of anyone who would be a “wicked man” who leads others astray, every effort must be made to find the truth about what was being taught. Even the truth about the “children of Belial” must be understood and confirmed before any action of judgment was to be measured

out. No gossip or hearsay was to be accepted. ***Condemned things:*** These were the accursed things, things that were doomed to destruction as the city of Jericho (Ja 6; compare Jg 20:38,48). The extremity of the judgment was for the purpose of putting evil away from Israel, causing fear in the hearts of the faithful, and to hold back the judgment of God upon the nation. This chapter concludes with stern judgment that would come upon those who forsake the word of God. It would be just to say that God’s people must be in fear of forsaking the word of God, or distorting it in any way that would lead to immoral behavior on the part of God’s people.

## CHAPTER 14

**14:1-21** See Lv 11:2-45. ***His own possession:*** Because Israel was a nation that was chosen from among the nations, she was not to identify herself in behavior with any of the false religions of the nations. Israel’s choosing by God necessitated her uniqueness, and thus her refusal to eat any abominable thing. The listing of animals that is given here certainly had behind it good dietary principles that would guard the Israelites from eating anything that would harm them. We would not conclude that God arbitrarily selected certain animals to be unclean. By eating only that which God commanded, Israel manifested her obedience to His will, though she did not understand the reasons for the restrictions. We would also conclude that the selected foods for their consumption separated them from the nations around

them who indulged in every food, but specifically certain foods that were eaten in honor of idol gods. It is for this reason that these restrictions do not apply to Christians (See Mk 7:19; Rm 14:14; 1 Tm 4:4). Christians are not to be known for what they eat, but for the love they manifest (Jn 13:34,35). They are free to eat all foods. ***Not boil a kid in its mother’s milk:*** Some have suggested that boiling a young goat in the mother’s milk was a practice of the Canaanites that manifested the base immoral principle of the people, for the Canaanites offered their own children in sacrifice to their pagan gods.

**14:22-29** ***Eat before the Lord:*** The tithe (one tenth) of the fruits and livestock was to be eaten as a meal before the Lord with the Levites. In this way there was always food for the Levites

who were given no inheritance of land (See Nm 18:21-24). **End of three years:** This tithe was to be placed in storage for the Levite families, foreigners, orphans and widows to eat in between the tithe at the end of the harvest. The tithe of the crops and livestock was seasonal, and

thus the tithe that was put in storage every three years lasted the Levites in between the harvest and the seasonal giving of the newborn of the livestock. In all of God's laws concerning food, provision was made for the Levites, the poor, widows and foreigners.

## CHAPTER 15

**15:1-11** See Lv 25:1-7. **Grant a remission:** Every seven years, debt was forgiven and the land was laid to rest (See Ex 23:11). Some have interpreted the forgiveness of debt here to mean that during the seventh year the creditor could not force payment from a debtor. However, most Bible students interpret the law here to refer to the total forgiveness of the debt. **Foreign:** This is not the alien, but one who was not an Israelite of a neighboring country with whom an Israelite had commercial dealings. The alien (stranger) was one who took up residence in Israel, and subsequently assumed obedience to the law of God, but had no inheritance of the land. **No poor among you:** There would be no poor in the sense that provision to work for food would always be made available for the poor. Laws concerning gleaning and forgiveness of debt made it possible for the poor to always have food if they were willing to work, and to borrow from their brother if they fell under hard times. **Lend to many nations:** If they remained obedient to the will of God, the land would prosper to the point that other nations would come to them for food. They would thus have no poor in the sense that everyone who would work would be able

to sustain themselves from the land. **The poor will never cease:** There would always be the opportunity to help others. Therefore, one's heart should never become calloused against the poor. We assume that these poor are such, not because they were lazy, but because of unfortunate circumstances that brought them to a state of poverty. It is the responsibility of society to help those who cannot sustain themselves because of the lack of opportunity.

**15:12-18 Sold to you:** This was not the slavery of the nations around Israel, or the slavery they experienced in Egypt. The interpretation here is that one could sell himself to another for labor in order to pay for a debt (See Ex 21:1-6). Unlike the slavery of the nations around Israel, this was a willing bondservant who gave himself for the service of another in order to repay his debt. From the time the service began, in the seventh year the bondservant was free from his or her debt. If when the six years of service were completed, and the bondservant wanted to remain, he or she had to make a statement of commitment to his or her master. The piercing of the ear at the door of the master was a lifetime commitment to the master.

**15:19-23** The offering of the firstborn was to be the best of the livestock. The Lord deserved only the best, and thus if a firstborn had a blemish, it could not be offered to the Lord. ***Eat it before the Lord:*** These offerings were to be eaten by those who gave them. They were to be eaten with the priests, and thus this fellowship meal kept the people at the table of the spiritual leaders of Israel. We must not miss the significance of these offerings. They were not legal com-

mands that were given simply to test the obedience of Israel. There was purpose behind every offering. The purpose was to bring households together in the company of the spiritual leaders. In this company spiritual matters could be discussed, and teaching carried out by the priests. The teaching was carried out during a common meal between those who brought the offering and the teachers, the priests.

## CHAPTER 16

When Israel was settled in the land, they were to celebrate the feasts that are described in this chapter (See also Ex 12:1-20; 16:14-17; 34:13-23; Lv 23:1-44; Nm 28:16 – 29:40).

**16:1-8 *The Passover:*** The Passover was to be observed in the month of Abib, which after the Babylonian captivity was called Nisan. This is March/April according to our present calendar. Passover was the independence day for Israel. The feast celebrated their deliverance from Egyptian captivity. ***Unleavened bread:*** This was the bread that reminded them of their affliction while in slavery in Egypt. It also reminded them of the haste by which they left the land, for there was no time for leaven to rise in normal bread. For the Passover, unleavened bread was to be eaten for seven days, the last day being a day for a solemn assembly. ***The place:*** As the location was different each year, they would assemble where the tabernacle was placed in order to celebrate as a nation their deliverance from Egyptian captivity.

**16:9-12** See Ex 34:22; Lv 23:15-21.

***The feast of weeks:*** This feast was for seven consecutive weeks, beginning at the time of the harvest (Lv 23:4-11). This was to be a period of great rejoicing as they witnessed their harvest for the year and remembered the blessings of God. They were also to remember their bondage in Egypt from which they were delivered.

**16:13-17** See Lv 23:33-43. ***Feast of the tabernacles:*** This feast came at the end of the harvests. This was a feast of rejoicing over the harvest and thanking for the great blessings of God in the harvest. ***Three times in a year:*** The purpose of the men appearing before the Lord was to maintain unity of the nation. God knew that if they did not do this, they would eventually become a divided people. Coming together for specific feasts, therefore, promoted an opportunity for national communication. ***Not ... empty-handed:*** The feasts were times when fellowship meals were eaten. Everyone, therefore, was to bring food (of-

ferings) to be eaten by everyone during the meeting. If one did not bring an offering, then he was not manifesting fellowship toward others (See comments 2 Co 8:4).

**16:18-22 *Appoint judges and officers:*** We are not told how this was carried out, but the Israelites were to select those who would work in making decisions in matters of dispute (See 1:13-15). ***Gates:*** The place of judgments was at the gates of the cities where the judges and officers met. ***Not ... take a bribe:*** Bribes cor-

rupt decisions. When bribes are taken, judgments are twisted and favoritism is shown. There is no justice in a system that is controlled by bribes. ***Tree ... altar ... image:*** If anyone looked toward these with any religious emotions or connotations, then he violated commandments that were against idolatry. The Israelites were to make nothing that became a religious symbol. There were to be in Israel no fetishes or icons to stimulate religious emotions of any kind.

## CHAPTER 17

**17:1-7 *Blemish ... defect:*** No animal that had a blemish or defect was to be used as an offering (See 15:19-23). Only the best was to be brought before the Lord. Since the offerings were to be eaten by the Levites and the people who brought the offering, then it is reasonable that God would command them not to eat a sickly animal. ***Two ... three witnesses:*** No gossip was to be used as evidence to convict one of idolatrous worship. Since such worship carried with it the penalty of death, then the accused must be faced by at least two witnesses who could confirm the accusations (Compare 1 Tm 5:19). In the case of the theocratic society of Israel, idolatry was treason. It was rebellion against the rule of God through His commandments, and thus subject to capital punishment.

**17:8-13** Difficult cases for judgment were to be taken before the priests at the tabernacle. ***Blood and blood:*** Cases of murder. ***Plea and plea:*** Cases of civil actions. ***Stroke and stroke:*** Cases in ref-

erence to personal assault.

**17:14-20 *I will set a king over me:*** Israel was to be a theocracy that was ruled by God as the sole monarch. He would rule through the law of commandments that were given on Mt. Sinai. However, God knew that the international social pressure of the nations around Israel would bear upon them. Their desire to be as the nations around them would drive them to seek for a king among themselves. Their appointment of a king, therefore, would be a concession by God. It is interesting to know that for almost 400 years they existed as a nation without a king, thus proving that God's original plan worked. Only when they began the process of falling away did they seek for a king on earth. ***God will choose:*** The king that they would desire must first be chosen by God. Such was the case when God anointed those whom He chose to be kings in Israel (See 1 Sm 10:24; 16:11-13; 2 Sm 5:1-3; 2 Kg 9:1-13).

## CHAPTER 18

**18:1-8 *The Lord is their inheritance:*** The tribe of Levi was appointed by God to work as the spiritual servants for the nation of Israel. For this reason they were given no portion of land, though they were given 48 cities throughout Canaan. Because the Levites had no land to cultivate for their food, it was the responsibility of the rest of Israel to provide for them through their offerings. ***The priest's portion:*** There is a difference here from the portions that were allotted in Leviticus 7:30-34. The reason for this is that in view of Moses' departure from Israel as the mediator between God and Israel, the original covenant mandates that were given at Mt. Sinai are here updated for the people as they settle in the land. ***A Levite:*** A similar portion was assigned to any Levite who chose to come and serve at the Lord's altar. What was provided for him was beside what he might profit from the sale of his personal property. He was thus not to support himself in his service at the Lord's altar, but was to partake of the offerings of the people (Compare 1 Co 9:8-18).

**18:9-14 *You will not ... imitate the abominations:*** They were not to follow the culture of the Canaanites. This included the religious culture of using one's children for sacrifices in fire (See 12:29-31). Since the mind of man was created by God to be able to go to extremes in imagination, they were not to obsess in their imaginations about things beyond this world. They were not to conjure up

fictitious spirits by exciting the emotions of people. Sobriety and rationality should be characteristic of those who seek to guide their thoughts and imaginations by the written word of God.

**18:15-22 *A Prophet ... like unto me:*** Moses here spoke first of a succession of prophets who would be God's spokesmen to His people. And such God did throughout their history when they forsook the commandments of God (See 1 Sm 11:14 – 12:25; 1 Kg 18:19-39). In this context, however, we know that Moses also referred to the Prophet who would be God's final prophet to His people (see Dt 34:10). This Prophet would be the Messiah of which Moses was a type. From this statement, Israel looked for this unique Prophet throughout their history (See Jn 1:21; 7:40). This Prophet was Jesus, the final prophet through whom God revealed His will to man (At 3:22,23; Hb 1:3). ***The thing does not follow:*** The sure proof of a false prophet was in the fact that what he prophesied did not come to pass. Combine this with the fact that if a prophet did not speak the truth, but tried to lead the people after false gods, then that prophet was truly false (Dt 13:1-5). Any supposed prophet, therefore, who would not speak according to the word of God, and would speak of things in the future that eventually did not come to pass, was a false prophet. That prophet was not to be followed.

## CHAPTER 19

**19:1-14** See Nm 35:9-34; Ja 20:1-9. **The manslayer:** This was the one who unintentionally killed someone. Since the primitive laws of Israel's day gave a right to the next of kin to carry out judgment upon the one who killed their kinsman, in Israel's case of culpable homicide, one could flee to one of six refuge cities (Ex 21:13; Nm 35:9-29). There were three refuge cities on the east side of the Jordan and three on the west side. The purpose of the refuge city law was to prevent unjust revenge on one who accidentally killed another person. **If any man hates his neighbor:** If because of hate someone murdered another person, then the law of the refuge cities did not apply. The person was to be judged by the elders of his own city. **Neighbor's landmark:** The land was a source of sur-

vival. It was a family's inheritance for the future. For this reason, no landmarks, which were usually written on stone, were to be moved once the inheritance of land was allotted and established.

**19:15-21 Two witnesses:** In 17:6 those who were charged in capital offenses had to be found guilty at the mouth of no less than two witnesses. In this context reference is to accusations concerning any iniquity or sin. **False witness:** This law was given in order to discourage perjury. If after investigation one was found to be a false witness, then he was to suffer the punishment he wished to be inflicted on the one against whom he bore false witness. This law made accusers think twice before slanderously accusing one of a deed for which he had no evidence.

## CHAPTER 20

**20:1-9 When you go out to battle:** Our interpretation of the statements of this context must be based on the eternal plan of redemption of God through the nation of Israel. Israel was separated from the nations of the world for the purpose of preserving a portion of world society through which God would bring the Redeemer of all men into the world. This purpose for the existence of Israel, therefore, made it necessary that Israel be preserved in a land of her own, which land must be freed from all evil cultures that would lure Israel into becoming like the nations around her. Throughout her history, she would also have to defend

herself from any invading armies that might bring the nation to an end. In this context, therefore, God made a promise that He would fight for the nation of Israel against all who would seek to destroy His eternal purpose for the nation. For this reason, He was a God of war in reference to defending Israel (Ex 15:3; see Ja 6:17-19; 1 Sm 30:7; 2 Ch 13:12; Hs 1:7). God fought for Israel to bring her into existence and into the land of promise (See Dt 6:18,19; 7:1,2,16-26; 9:1-6; 11:22-25; 12:29; 19:1; 31:3-8). **Out of the land of Egypt:** The men of the army of Israel were to keep fresh in their memories the fact that with a strong



arm God divided the Red Sea and brought Israel out of Egyptian bondage. In selecting those who would go to war, the leaders were thus to seek out only those who were of a strong heart with a strong faith in the fact that God would go to war with them.

**20:10-20 *Cities that are very far off from you:*** These were not cities of the Canaanites. They were to be offered the option of peace and becoming tributary

ies to Israel. If they refused, every male in the cities was to be killed. ***Cities of these people:*** These were the cities of the Canaanites. They were to be made no offer of peace, but were to be eradicated from the land of Canaan lest they endanger the moral preservation of Israel (See 7:1-6). ***Trees:*** All fruit trees were to be preserved. Only those trees that bore no fruit could be cut down in order to be used in besieging a city.

## CHAPTER 21

**21:1-9 *Found slain lying in a field:*** This would be an unknown murder for which an offering had to be made for the nation. The murderer was unknown, and thus the people's responsibility was to find an open valley nearest to the city where the body was found. There a heifer that had never been worked in the field was to be offered. In this offering the people as a whole were declared to be innocent of the murder. In this matter the elders of the city functioned as a council to prepare the sacrifice, and the priests, the sons of Levi, would make final judgments and carry out the sacrifice (See 1:9-17; 16:18-20; Ex 18:13-26).

**21:10-14 *A beautiful woman:*** This would have been a woman from another nation (20:14,15), but not a Canaanite, for the Israelites were not to marry any Canaanite (7:3). ***Shave her head and trim her nails:*** This was a ceremony to manifest her total separation from the pagan gods and practices of the nation from which she came. ***Mourn:*** In order to show respect to the woman, she was allowed to mourn her parents for a month

(See Nm 20:29). ***Have no delight:*** If the husband came to the point of having no care for the woman, he could not simply discard the woman to slavery. She had been exalted above her captive state, and thus was to be considered with the rights of the Israelite women. In this case divorce was tolerated in putting away the woman.

**21:15-17** Polygamy is here tolerated in unique cases, but does not establish the law of God in reference to all domestic relationships (See Mt 19:8). Polygamous marriages are full of strife and jealousy, and for this reason polygamy should always be shunned. ***Unloved:*** In polygamist marriages, there are always those who are loved less. If the one who is loved less gave birth to the firstborn, the firstborn still had all the rights of the firstborn, regardless of the fact that the mother was loved less than the other wife (Compare Gn 48:22; 2 Kg 2:9).

**21:18-23 *Rebellious son:*** If a son could not be controlled by the parents, then it became the responsibility of the elders of the city to deal with the son. If

the son was found to be stubborn and rebellious, it was the responsibility of the men of the city to execute the judgment of stoning the son to death. The rebellion of the son would be defined by the son's act of idolatry, or the committing of murder, or an adulterous relationship with another. All such crimes were punishable by stoning (see 22:20-27). The son could not be stoned simply because

he was stubborn and rebellious. He had to have manifested his rebellion in committing an offense that was to receive capital punishment. **Accursed of God:** Death by hanging on a tree exposed the body of the one executed, and thus carried with it the curse of God (Nm 25:4; 2 Sm 4:12). In this way Jesus was cursed by being hanged on the tree of the cross for our sins (See Jn 19:31; Gl 3:13).

## CHAPTER 22

**22:1-12** These instructions deal with the very fibre of community. In loving one's neighbor as himself, one must look out for his neighbor's property. Even if one does not get along with his neighbor, he still has a responsibility to protect his neighbor's property. Failure to do such signals the downfall of society and opens the door for common thieves among neighbors. **Woman's clothing:** Anything that would blur the distinction between males and females was to be shunned in a society that sought to maintain righteousness before God. It is not said what determined either a man or woman's clothing. But if the clothing was identified by society to reflect the status of either a man or woman, then men and women should shun the parading themselves as the opposite sex. The prohibition here is against the one who is seeking to pose either himself or herself as the opposite sex. **Parapet:** This would be a battlement or railing to prevent someone from falling off a roof. **Woven together:** These laws, though they may seem frivolous to us, are given on the background of the Canaanite cul-

ture which Israel was to destroy from the land. The mixing of fibers in garments was probably a reference to Canaanite garments that were worn in respect of certain baals.

**22:13-30 Evidence of the damsel's virginity:** This was the bloodstained linens on which the man and woman had sexual intercourse the night of the wedding when the wedding was consummated. This was evidence that the woman was a virgin at the time of the wedding. The linen was kept by the father of the bride. If a husband sought to put away the wife that he had married because of passion, claiming that she was not a virgin at the time of the wedding, then the father could produce the evidence of the bloodstained linen. If she was proved to be a virgin, then the accusing husband would be punished, fined and could not put the wife away. If the woman was found to be guilty of immorality previous to the marriage, she was to be stoned at her father's house for she had brought disgrace on her father's house. **A man is found lying with a woman married to a husband:** In the

case of adultery, both the man and woman were to be stoned. **Engaged to a husband:** Betrothal of a virgin to a man was as if she already had the man as a husband, for the bride price had already been paid (Compare Mt 1:20). **She did not cry out:** The evidence of the rape would have been the crying out of the woman

in the city. If she did not cry out, then she was not raped but willingly committed fornication. **In the field:** If the fornication took place in the field, the cries of the woman could not be heard. Therefore, only the rapist was to be stoned. **His father's wife:** See 2 Sm 3:7; 16:22; 1 Kg 2:22; Ez 22:10.

## CHAPTER 23

**23:1-8 Assembly of the Lord:** The males were to assemble before the Lord every year on Passover, Pentecost and the feast of Tabernacles. However, there were certain people who were to be excluded from the assembly of the Lord unto the tenth generation. Emasculation was the first reason for exclusion from the assembly because such mutilations of the body were often associated with Canaanite worship. An illegitimate person, or bastard, was also to be excluded from the assembly unto the tenth generation. Because of their hostile treatment of Israel at the time of their entrance into the land of Canaan, the Ammonite and Moabite were also to be excluded (See Is 21:14). The principle of these exclusions is based on the fact that God seeks conviction in His covenant with His people (Dt 18:13). **The Edomite ... Egyptian:** Exclusion extended to the Edomites and Egyptians only to the second generation. The Edomites were relatives to Israel (Gn 36:1) and the Egyptians preserved the nation of Israel for 400 years in their land (Gn 42). After the exclusion period to either the second or tenth generation, those who were excluded had to profess the covenant and

laws of God that were the conditions upon which the covenant was based.

**23:9-14** As a traveling camp of people who were making war against the Canaanites, God wanted to keep the camp of Israel sanitary (See Lv 15:16,17). For this reason laws were given here to keep the camp clean and prevent any nakedness among the people in the camp. They were thus to carry out the toiletries necessities of life outside the camp.

**23:15-25** Holiness and righteousness were to characterize the camp of Israel. No immorality was to be found in the camp. **The dog:** The male prostitute. **Interest:** They were not to take financial advantage of one who had fallen on hard times (Ex 22:25; see Lv 25:35-37). **Out of your lips:** There were no written documents in Israel, and thus when a person spoke something, he or she was to be good for his or her word. **In your vessel:** When traveling, one could eat from the fields of others, but he could not harvest any fruits by putting extra into a vessel. Since the males were to appear three times before the Lord every year, there would always be those who would travel great distances to the place that the Lord had designated for the meeting of the

Passover. The sojourners had to eat along the way from the fields of others because they could not carry with them sufficient

food for such a long journey (Compare Mk 2:24).

## CHAPTER 24

**24:1-5** The laws that God here gives in reference to divorce is to restrict their putting away of their mates for any reason, which seemed to be a common practice at the time. God hates divorce, and thus is not here encouraging divorce by these laws, but is restricting those who seek divorce for any reason (See Mt 2:14,16). These restrictions are based on the fact that some had hastily divorced their wives. **Some uncleanness:** Adultery, which was punishable by death (22:20,21), is not here indicated. Reference is probably to indecent behavior on the part of the wife. **Bill of divorcement:** The legal procedure was that the wife was to be officially divorced by the husband by giving her this statement that dissolved the marriage. If a woman was divorced twice, or divorced once and then became a widow, the first husband could not remarry her, for she had become defiled. God's original plan was one man for one woman (See comments Mt 19:7-9).

**24:6-22** There are various laws given here that are necessary for normal social behavior. There are some principles that must be highlighted in reference to the poor. Nothing was to be taken as security for a loan from a poor person that would endanger his life. Therefore, the upper or the lower of the two millstones that were used for grinding grain was not to be taken as security for a loan for this

would be destroying the livelihood of a person. If an outer garment for warmth was taken for security, it could not be kept overnight (See Ex 22:26,27; Am 2:8). The choice as to what was to be pledged was determined by the lender. In this context it is interesting to note that one is not simply to seek out the poor in order to help them. One is to make it easy in society for the poor to survive. For this reason no field, olive tree or vineyard was to be completely stripped of its produce during harvest. Something was always to be left for the poor who on their own would harvest for themselves. **Kidnapping:** The laws of God for Israel placed a great value on human life. Under the judgment of capital punishment, no one was to kidnap another. **Leprosy:** This term is used in Scripture to refer to various kinds of skin disease, though it is often used to report the serious disease of leprosy which was a decaying of the flesh. Because some leprosy was contagious, the Israelites were to obey all laws in reference to it (See Lv 13 – 14). **Put to death for his own sin:** This law enforces social accountability. The family would not be punished for the sin of one member of the family. This was a law that was common in many societies. But in Israel, the one who sinned was the one who paid the price for the sin (See 2 Kg 14:6; Jr 31:29,30; Ez 18:19,20).

## CHAPTER 25

**25:1-4** Because there were no prisons in Israel, special laws were given to protect those who were accused of crimes. All cases were to be brought before a judge or judges. Any particular case was to be tried before a judge and before the face of the accused. **According to his guilt:** This was a very important concept that was often stated in the phrase, “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” The judgment was to match the crime in that no criminal was to be punished with excessive stripes. This was a safeguard against punishment that might be carried out in the heat of the moment or by an angry crowd. **Forty stripes:** The punishment was never to exceed 40 stripes. The Israelites were so cautious about this that they would administer only 39 stripes just to make sure they did not go over the number allotted for punishment (See 2 Co 11:24). By administering just judgment, the humanity of the offender was maintained. Israel was reminded that regardless of one’s sin, the offender was still a fellow Israelite. **Not muzzle:** Respect for life and kindness to all people were foundational principles of the law of God for Israel (See 1 Co 9:9,10). Greed must never be allowed to marginalize the poor of any society. The poor will always be in every society, but society as a whole must always seek to help the poor in some way.

**25:5-10 Her husband’s brother:** The levirate law, or marriage, was a principle law of the ancient world. This law dated back to before the days of Abra-

ham. The law is mentioned in the Code of Hammurabi, a king of the city of Babylon who reigned around 2000 B.C. The law was based on preventing a family name from becoming extinct (See Rt 4:5,10; 1 Sm 24:21; 2 Sm 14:7). In reference to Israel, the allotted land that was given to a family by God as an inheritance was not to be lost from the family. The principle of the levirate law that is explained in this context is based on this principle. When a childless widow brought forth children from the brother of her dead husband, the family inheritance was continued. The dead brother’s brother had no claim to the family inheritance. The inheritance, therefore, would stay within the family of the dead brother and not be passed on to another family who was not of the genealogy of the wife or dead husband. The incorporation of this law for Israel illustrates that various laws of society that dated back for centuries were applied to Israel by God in the writing of the law for Israel. Some of the laws were not new to Israel. They were simply reinstated by Moses in order that Israel continue with those laws that could have been originally given through the mouth of prophets through whom God spoke before the giving of the law to Israel (See comments Hb 1:1). **If brethren dwell together:** The condition for the application of the levirate law was that the extended family had to be living together. Also, the widow of the dead brother had to be childless. **Firstborn:** Only the firstborn was to take the name

of the dead father. ***If the man does not desire to take his brother's wife:*** The living brother could refuse to take the widow of his dead brother. But such was considered a dereliction of one's family responsibilities. If such were the case, the elders of the city had to be informed. If the man could not be persuaded to assume his levirate duties, then he had to symbolically manifest such before the elders of the city (See Rt 4).

**25:11,12 *By the genitals:*** This act on the part of the woman was an act against the posterity of a family through procreation. Her action, therefore, which is mentioned in the context of the levirate law, is an endangering action against the covenant rights of another man. Her

action was to be dealt with harshly.

**25:13-16 *Differing weights:*** Corruption in society in the matter of buying and selling was a signal of the death of a society. Here the consumer was protected in that the seller was never to have dishonest measuring weights in his possession (See 2 Sm 14:26; Am 8:5).

**25:17-19 *Amalek:*** The Amalekites had taken advantage of the Israelites when they initially came out of Egyptian captivity (Ex 17:8-16). Because of this deplorable action on the part of the Amalekites in attacking the straggling weak of the nation of Israel on their way to Mt. Sinai, they signed their doom from history (1 Sm 15:2).

## CHAPTER 26

**26:1-11** The offering of the firstfruits and the tithes acknowledged God as the one who blessed them with all things. ***Firstfruits:*** See Nm 18:12,13; Dt 18:4. With the offering of the firstfruits, they were to declare that the promise of God's covenant had been fulfilled. They also declared the great deliverances by which God brought them into the land. ***Aramean:*** Jacob is described as an Aramean, or Syrian, because his mother was from Aram Naharaim of Mesopotamia (Gn 24:10; Hs 12:12). He also lived many years in the house of Laban in Aramea (Gn 29 – 31). ***Rejoice in every good thing:*** After the ceremonies of bringing in the firstfruits, they were to join in a fellowship meal with the Levites and aliens who had joined themselves to Israel. ***Aliens:*** These were

those who were converted to the God of Israel, and subsequently lived according to His laws. Throughout the laws given to Israel, the alien, or foreigner, is included to emphasize the fact that Israel was a nation of priests to the world. Though the Levites were a tribe of priests for Israel, the entire nation was to be "evangelistic" in the sense of reaching out to other nations concerning the commandments they had received from the one true and living God. They were thus to bring others into the hope of Israel for the coming Messiah.

**26:12-15 *The tithes:*** In the first and second years, the tithes were to be used for the feasts (14:22-27). The third tithe was to be given to the Levites and the poor (14:28,29). The worshiper must then proclaim before the Lord at the tab-



ernacle that he had fulfilled the duties of the tithe (14:23; 15:20). Tithes were for the purpose of fully supporting the priests and Levites (Nm 18:21-32). Since the priests and Levites functioned on behalf of the people to serve the spiritual needs of the people and to maintain their focus on God, God instituted that they be fully supported on behalf of Israel.

**26:16-19 Statutes ... commandments ... judgments:** This is Moses' conclusion to the conditions of the covenant that God made with Israel. By stating the conditions in preparation for their entrance into Canaan, they could know when they broke the covenant by their

disobedience of any specific law. Since Israel had accepted the promises of the covenant, then she had also accepted the conditions of the covenant. In Deuteronomy, this is the end of the legal matters of the covenant. From chapters 27 to 30 Moses focuses on exhortations in maintaining the covenant.

#### Warning Concerning Apostasy

(27:1 – 28:68)

**Outline:** (1) Recited laws on Mt. Ebal (27:1-8), (2) Curses for disobedience (27:9-26), (3) Blessings for faithfulness (28:1-14), (4) Consequences of disobedience (28:15-68)

## CHAPTER 27

### RECITED LAWS ON MT. EBAL

Now that Moses had given the terms of the covenant contract, it was time for the people to make their commitment to the contract. This procedure was according to ancient customs that were taken in reference to the establishment of covenants. When Israel came into the land, therefore, they had to ratify the covenant by stating the blessings in keeping the covenant and the cursings if they violated the conditions of the covenant.

**27:1-8 Stones:** This was a common practice among ancient people in reference to codes of law. The ancient Code of Hammurabi and Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser are examples of this practice. The purpose for making such stone inscriptions of the law was to signify the permanent conditions by which a society declared to conduct itself. **Plaster:** Since God did not want any cut stones for the construction of altars, the same

applied here for the writing of the law. Thus a layer of stucco was to be applied to the stone. Before the stucco dried, the laws of the covenant were to be impressed in the stucco. The significance of inscribing the laws of a covenant in this manner was to preserve them for generations to come. As the fathers committed themselves to the law of God by the action of writing the law on a stone, the following generations would be reminded that the nation had made a commitment to keep the law of God. The Israelites of this immediate generation, therefore, were making a commitment for all the generations of Israel throughout their history.

### CURSES FOR DISOBEDIENCE

**27:9-13 Obey the voice of the Lord your God:** This is contrary to the spirit of the idolatrous nations that Israel was to eradicate from the land. The thinking

of the idolater was that his conceived god listened to the imagination of the worshiper. Therefore, the commandments of the idolatrous god were determined by the will of the worshiper. But in reference to Israel, it was God speaking His laws to them. They must listen to the One who originated the covenant, and who gave the laws. Neither the covenant nor the laws of the covenant were the invention of Israel. Moses' repetition of the blessings and curses of the covenant was an exercise to remind them that they were not the inventors of either the covenant or laws. The exercise reminded them that the God they served spoke from Mt. Sinai. They did not speak Him into existence by the imagination of their religious nature. **Gerizim ... Ebal:** The sons of Jacob's legitimate wives were to be stationed on Mt. Gerizim to pronounce the blessings. The sons of Jacob through his concubines were to stand on Mt. Ebal and pronounce the cursings. Reuben, who gave up his birthright (Gn 49:4), and Zebulun, Leah's youngest son (Gn 30:19,20), were placed in the group that was to stand on Mt. Ebal in order to make up six tribes standing on each Mountain. There could also be indicated in this di-

vision the geographical settlement of the tribes, for the tribes of blessing, with the possible exception of Issachar, settled in the southern regions of Canaan. The other six tribes generally settled in the northern regions, including Reuben and Gad.

**27:14-26** The ceremony that is described here was different from the pronouncing of the blessings and cursings of the covenant. In this ceremony, the Levites pronounced only the curses for disobedience, then all the people were to respond. In this action, the people called down judgment on themselves if they disobeyed the conditions of the covenant. All the laws that are mentioned in this context are stated throughout the law, and thus these became representative of all the laws of the covenant. In general, many of the laws that are stated here are laws that could be violated in secret and without the knowledge of others. The principle behind the mention of such laws was to direct the people's minds to focus on their own hearts (See Ps 139). Though they might think that they could commit sin in secret, and thus escape punishment, God knew their actions and would eventually hand down judgment.

## CHAPTER 28

### BLESSINGS FOR FAITHFULNESS

**28:1-14** See Lv 26:3-13. **If you will harken:** A covenant with God first focuses on the blessings. However, if the conditions of the covenant were broken, the curses would be severe. In this case, obedience would bring blessings. If obedient, Israel would be blessed in victory

over all her enemies. She would enjoy the fullness of storehouses. She would be established as God's holy people among the nations. God would take ownership of this nation that submitted to His laws. The principle that is taught here is that this covenanted nation could expect blessings when she conducted herself ac-

cording to the moral principles of God.

### **CONSEQUENCES OF DISOBEDIENCE**

**28:15-19** See Lv 26:14-46. The curses proclaim the results of disobedience. If obedient, Israel would as a nation be blessed in victory over her enemies, with physical and spiritual prosperity. However, if they were disobedient, the blessings would be reversed. We must keep in mind that God was speaking nationally to a nation of people. Though individuals would enjoy the specifics of a national blessing in a nation that is obedient to the moral laws of God, they, as a nation, would also suffer the specifics of national disobedience.

**28:20-26** The curses would affect both the physical and material areas of life of both man and animal. Man would be afflicted with disease and animals with plagues and drought. The punishment would be so great that they would be an example of horror to all the nations around them. Verse 25 is often translated "removed into all the kingdoms," but the better translation is "horror to all the kingdoms." In the midst of such great cursings, Israel would become the horror of the world and an example of what happens when nations forsake God. If we could apply these principles to nations today, we can understand that if nations violate the principles of social order that are within the laws of God, they cannot be blessed nations. When corruption, crime, disrespect for human life, and disrespect for one's neighbor rule in a society, that society cannot be blessed. It can

only be cursed to be a horror to other nations. In reference to Israel, as the nations witnessed her blessing because of her obedience to her God, they would also clearly understand that Israel's digression into decadence would be evidence that she had forsaken her God.

**28:27-37** The curses are intensified in these verses. The body of man would be physically affected with boils and the infections that come with plagues. They would suffer madness, blindness and frustration. Invading nations would eat their crops. The finality of the punishment would be that they would be taken into another land where another king would be set over them. There they would be in the midst of the idol gods of their captors.

**23:38-48** The curses of plague and famine would bring Israel to her financial knees. She would become a devastated nation living in a land ravaged by plague and famine. She would become a nation stricken with poverty, the opposite of the land of milk and honey into which she was about to venture when these words were spoken. The reason for these curses would be that in the future Israel would give up on God, and thus, God would give up on them and hand them over to their enemies.

**28:49-57** Their disobedience would cause them to circle around socially to become that from which they were delivered. They were delivered out of the bondage of Egypt, but they would again be brought into the bondage of the Assyrian and Babylonian kingdoms, which kingdoms were only minor kingdoms at

the time these curses were stated. When these invading forces would eventually approach unto the poverty stricken Israel, the Israelites would resort to the lowest behavioral actions of life in order to survive. In their state of devastation and moral degradation they would resort to cannibalism. They would behave as animals with one another in order to survive. The disgusting description here of what they would eventually become should shock them and others into realizing what happens to societies when men forsake the law of God. When depraved men have no conscience toward God, they digress below animal behavior with one another.

**28:58-68** The curses were a prophecy of what God knew would eventually happen in the history of Israel. However, because He knew such would happen does not mean that He predestined these events. His foreknowledge does not necessitate predestination. Israel could make a choice concerning their future. They could choose to obey, and thus continue to enjoy the blessings of the covenant. However, if they chose to disobey, they were condemned to suffer the consequences of disobedience. The nature of the curses that are mentioned here is a reversal of the blessings. They escaped the plagues of Egypt through obedience, but they would suffer plagues because of disobedience. Because of obedience they multiplied in Egypt (Ex 1:12), but their disobedience would result in the decimation of their population to a remnant. Obedience brought the blessing of the promised land, but disobedience would

send them as captives into a foreign land. Obedience brought them together as a nation, but disobedience would scatter them throughout the nations. Finally, the nations would even reject them as slaves.

As Bible students we stand aghast at the consequences of Israel's disobedience. We thus wonder how a nation could fall to such a low moral level after having experienced the greatness of God. The answer is simple. They forgot the law of God. By the time the consequences that are mentioned in this chapter began to play out in their history, they were totally ignorant of the law of God. They had no Bibles that were distributed among the tribes. There were no Bible classes or lectureships. The situation became so bad that there was no known copy of the Torah in all the land of Palestine by the reign of Josiah. It was only when some renovations were being made on the temple in Josiah's reign that a copy of the law was discovered. When Josiah read it, he was terrified when he read these words. He subsequently initiated a total restoration in Israel, beginning with the killing of all those who presumed to be priests of God, but were themselves totally ignorant of the word of God. The historical lesson is clear. When God's people become ignorant of the word of God, they will lead themselves away by seeking to be like the religious nations around them. The only way to prevent apostasy, therefore, is to be a people who are continually studying the word of God. Leaders who do not focus the people's mind on the word of God, but on emotions and feelings instead of the word,

are those who are leading the people astray to serve false gods. It will be a terrifying thing to stand before God in judgment totally ignorant of His word.

### The Renewal Of The Covenant

(29:1 – 30:20)

**Outline:** (1) Remember the past (29:1-9), (2) Warnings against hypocrisy (29:10-29), (3) Blessings in keeping the covenant (30:1-20)

## CHAPTER 29

### REMEMBER THE PAST

**29:1-9** In order for Israel to swear an oath to the covenant, chapters 29 and 30 restate representative portions of the conditions of the covenant. **Words of the covenant:** Though in the Hebrew text this verse is the last verse of chapter 28, the meaning here seems to make the verse refer to the words that Moses is about to write. **Horeb:** The covenant that was made at Mt. Sinai (Horeb) is renewed here before the nation went into the promised land. Moses began by reminding Israel of three specific blessings in the past. These were Israel's deliverance from Egypt, God's provision for them during the wilderness wandering, and Israel's victories over Sihon and Og.

### WARNINGS

#### AGAINST HYPOCRISY

**29:10-29** *Those who are not here with us this day:* Those twenty years old and older who had rebelled 38 years before by not taking the land immediately, were not here present at the time these words were spoken. They had died in the wilderness. But the new generation of all the Israelite families, the servants and aliens, were present for the taking of the oath to renew the covenant at this time. Those yet unborn in the future were also taking the oath by their living fami-

lies. It was as if the posterity of all Israel for all time was making a commitment to God's covenant until the Messiah came. **Idols ... the gods of these nations:** This is the natural result of a religious people who forget the word of God. This was the primary threat to Israel. The nation would eventually become ignorant of the word of God, for the priests would fail to be diligent to keep the word of God before the people. As a result, the people would easily adopt the concepts and practices of the gods of the nations around them. They would eventually come to the fulfillment of the statement of Hosea 4:6. *"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children."* Ignorance of the word of God is something that people bring upon themselves. Idolatry easily follows ignorance of the word of God. Because of the ignorance of the word of God people lead themselves away from God by creating of gods after their own imagination. If the history of Israel proves anything, it proves that an entire nation of people can become idolaters by forgetting the word of God. **Because they forsook the covenant of the Lord:** Though Israel in the time of their igno-

rance would not understand why they were suffering, the pagan nations around them would. These nations would remember that Israel was blessed by “their God” when they kept His word. But they were cursed by “their God” when they became ignorant of His will. Though the pagan nations worshiped their false gods, and lived in godless societies, they continued in their circumstances as such nations would under their own direction. However, Israel was different. The curses of Israel were intentionally and specifically brought upon them by God because they had forsaken the conditions of the covenant that God had made with them. No specific curses were given to the pagan nations if they forsook the will of God. But curses were given to Israel, which meant that Israel had to suffer the consequences of their sin because they had been allowed to have a special relationship with God. The point is that as

the blessings manifested the existence of God as the only true and living God, the cursings also manifested the existence that the God of Israel was displeased with them. The cursings were the fulfillment of the prophecy of this book. The nations around Israel certainly understood this. **The secret things:** Since the things not revealed by God are unknown to man, Israel must live by that which has been revealed. There is no sense in frustrating one's self about that which has not been revealed. One should busy himself with that which has been revealed. Those who seek for that which is not revealed are foolishly contradicting the principle of this scripture. Only God knows the future. Knowing the future is not for man. We thus know when one is not from God when he frustrates himself and others by hopelessly predicting the future, which alone is God's business.

## CHAPTER 30

### BLESSINGS

#### IN KEEPING THE COVENANT

**30:1-10** *When all these things have come upon you:* This is in the language of not being a prophecy or a probability, but a certainty. All the cursings would come upon them because of their disobedience. The verb tense of the statements in the text, therefore, emphasize a warning to the people. Since the cursings would be inevitable, then they must struggle to see how long they can prolong the blessings by their obedience. **Turn your captivity:** If disobedience brought disaster and exile, then repentance would bring renewal and restora-

tion. If ignorance of the law resulted in their creating of gods after their own imagination, then knowledge of the law would restore their commitment to the one true and living God. This answers the question as to why after the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities Israel developed the ministry of the scribes. Scribes were men who dedicated themselves to making copies of the Old Testament books. The production of the Septuagint and communities as the Essenes, who dedicated themselves to making copies of the Old Testament Scriptures, all came after their return from Babylonian captivity. The reason for this was that Israel



had learned well her lesson of being rejected because of her rejection of a knowledge of God and His word (See Hs 4:6). In order to have copies of the word of God readily available throughout the land, copies were made to be read in every synagogue they built after the Babylonian captivity. No longer would there be few copies of the law throughout Israel. Unfortunately, at the time these words were written by Moses, they were taking for granted the privilege of having the law written and accessed only by the priests and Levites, whose responsibility it was to teach the people. ***Circumcise your heart:*** This spiritual circumcision would be a restoration of the covenant because of their restoration to obedience from the heart. Their obedience would again result in their prosperity, but curses on all their enemies. Their repentance would bring them back from Babylonian captivity and restore the nation to the land. However, within these words Moses was certainly looking toward a time of spiritual restoration when the Messiah would eventually come to make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah (See Jr 31:31-34; Ez 36:26-28; Rm 2:28,29; Cl 2:10,11).

**30:11-20 *Not hidden ... nor is it beyond your reach:*** They could never complain that the law was too difficult to understand or hard to implement in their behavior. All that God requires of men

to do to be saved takes no scholar to understand and apply. For this reason God holds each man individually responsible for his own eternal destiny. With obedience there is life and good. With disobedience there is death and evil. There was nothing difficult about this for Israel to understand. They had been given free choice, and thus, if they chose death and evil, they would be held accountable. ***Choose life:*** The final exhortation is to make a free-moral decision to choose that which will bring life and good. ***For He is your life:*** No better words could be used to conclude the preceding exhortations. When one stays close to God, he will have life. No eternal life exists outside the presence of God. Therefore, one must choose to come into and continually stay in the presence of God in order to maintain eternal life (See comments 2 Th 1:6-9). Since only God is eternal, then Scripture concludes that only those who choose to cleave to Him will enjoy eternal existence in His presence (1 Jn 5:11). It is imperative, therefore, that one discover how to come into an eternal relationship with God.

### The Final Counsel Of Moses

(31:1-29)

**Outline:** (1) Charge to the people (31:1-6), (2) Commissioning of Joshua (31:7,8), (3) Reading of the law (31:9-13), (4) Warnings concerning the future (31:14-29)

## CHAPTER 31

### CHARGE TO THE PEOPLE

**31:1-6** The end of Moses' life had come. He could not lead the people into Canaan for two reasons. (1) ***I can no longer go out and come in:*** Moses was at this time 120 years old. He was one who had experienced a phenomenal number of events, from the Egyptian palace to the east banks of the Jordan River. Nevertheless, he confessed here that he was too old to enter Canaan to be with Israel throughout the coming years of war with the Canaanites. (2) ***You will not go over:*** This banishment of God from crossing the Jordan came as a result of his earlier sin at Meribah (see 4:21,22; Nm 20:12). ***Joshua:*** This was the new leader, the one who had been with Israel from the days of the exodus from Egypt (1:38; Nm 27:18-23). Joshua did have the physical vigor to fight with the army of Israel to take the land. ***Sihon ... Og:*** These kings and nations were the greatest that Israel would face. Israel's victory over them was God's guarantee that they would defeat any other nation within the borders of Canaan (See 2:32 – 3:10).

### COMMISSIONING OF JOSHUA

**31:7,8** ***Be strong and courageous:*** This public commissioning of Joshua was not only personal for the benefit of Joshua, but it was public for all the people. The commissioning was an indirect encouragement for the people to remember the promise of God that they take the land, and to be assured that He would always be with them. It would be God who would fight for them. He would

physically empower every soldier of Israel. He proved such in the past by giving them victory over all the nations who resisted them during their journey to the banks of the Jordan.

### READING OF THE LAW

**31:9-13** ***Read this law:*** In the seventh year when there was the release of all those who had given themselves to the bondage of another because of debt (15:1-15), at the feast of Tabernacles (16:13-15), they were to publicly read the law of the covenant to the people. It was the responsibility of the Levites and elders to perform this reading in the ears of the people. ***All Israel:*** For six years only the males were obligated to attend the feast of Tabernacles. But for the seventh year at the feast of Tabernacles, all Israel, men, women, children and aliens, were to attend the reading of the law. Since all the inhabitants of the land enjoyed the benefits of the covenant, then everyone needed to be reminded why they were blessed.

### WARNINGS

#### CONCERNING THE FUTURE

**31:14-23** This exhortation to Moses and Joshua took place at the tabernacle where God communed with the leaders of Israel (Ex 25:22; 29:42; 30:36). The purpose for this direct encounter with the Lord by Joshua was to reconfirm his commissioning. Words were earlier spoken to commission him, but here the words were confirmed with action by the direct communication of God with Joshua.

**They will forsake Me:** In order for Joshua to lead a stiffnecked people, he had to understand the inevitable apostasy that awaited the nation in the years to come. With such understanding, all leaders need to understand that apostasy is only one generation away. By understanding this nature of people, one can take measures to prevent or delay apostasy. The legacy of leaders is established by the faithfulness of their lives. Joshua's legacy would be one where he made a firm commitment for his family to serve the Lord (Ja 24:15). **Write this song for yourselves:** The purpose of the song was to communicate the words of God in song to the people. They could memorize the song, and thus continually have on their

lips the word and will of God.

**31:24-29 Writing the words of this law in a book:** There is no reason to question this statement. Regardless of the many assumptions that others wrote the book of the law, all such assumptions must deal with this clear statement that Moses was the writer. **Ark of the covenant:** Because the structure of the ark contained the commandments of the covenant (the ten commandments written on stone), it was known as the ark of the covenant. **Witness against you:** The words of the written law, the Torah, were placed beside, not in, the ark. In this way it would continually be a witness of the sin that Israel would commit.

## CHAPTER 32

### The Song Of Moses (31:30 – 32:43)

The last verse of chapter 31 should be the introduction to the following song of Moses. The song was to be memorized by the nation and sung while they were in their homes. Since it was to be sung throughout the generations of Israel, it was written in a style as if it were sung by those who lived centuries after this writing. The reading of the law was every seven years when they gathered as a nation during the feast of Tabernacles. The purpose of both the reading of the law and the singing of the song was that when they fell into apostasy, they could not claim ignorance of the law, for the song reminded them of God's will. As long as the Levites and elders fulfilled

their duty, they would be taught the law of God, and thus prevented from falling into ignorance of the law (See Hs 4:6). Unfortunately, the spiritual leaders failed in their responsibilities to teach the word of God to the people, and thus the people eventually forgot the law and the singing of the song.

### THE SONG OF MOSES

**32:1-14 Heavens ... earth:** These are called upon to give witness to the covenant between God and Israel. **Drop as rain:** The teaching of God brings forth fruit when it falls on contrite hearts. **The Rock:** God is the stability of Israel and for all who will conform to His teachings. These teachings are perfect because they are the reflection of His perfect character. **Has He not made you:** This is

the interrogation of the apostates. Since God made them, then certainly it is God they must follow. Their rebellion would be the indication of their ingratitude. **He separated the sons of Adam:** Nations were created by God when He separated the descendants of Adam. Jacob (Israel) then became the possession of the Lord. They were His own people. As His people, He watched over them during their wilderness wanderings. Israel became the adopted child of God who cared for her. **Apple of His eye:** God closely looked upon Israel with care, and thus the reflection of Israel could be seen in the pupil of God's eye. **The Lord alone did lead him:** Israel could not claim any self-determination in becoming a nation and power to conquer her enemies. No god they could have created after their own imagination could have delivered and developed them into the nation they were at the time these words were written. **The high places:** God had exalted them to rule over the occupying nations of Canaan.

**32:15-18 Jeshurun:** Or, "upright." This may be something as a nickname for Israel since it is derived from the same Hebrew word that is translated "Israel." The name is used ironically here in that God ceased to show favor toward them because the "upright" became unrighteous. **Strange gods:** Israel did not forsake being religious. They insulted the graciousness of God. They not only went after the gods of their own creation, but after the gods of other nations. They turned from the God who revealed Himself from heaven to the gods that were

revealed to them by the Canaanites. Their behavior would be a humiliating blow to God who adopted this rejected child of the wilderness. **Sacrificed to devils:** This word is used only one other time in the Old Testament. In Psalm 106:37 David wrote, "*They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to devils ....*" We would assume that those who were reading this song for the first time cringed when they heard these prophetic pronouncements of what their descendants would eventually do. **Gods that recently appeared:** They dreamed up gods that even those who were first hearing these words, "their fathers," had not and could not conceive in their minds. In ignorance of the word of God, there is no limit to which the human mind can digress.

**32:19-27 I will hide My face from them:** Since the children left their Father, the Father would not be found by the children. Since they wanted to go their own way by creating their own gods that approved of their wicked behavior, God would allow them the freedom to go (See comments Rm 1:24-28). **Provoked Me to anger:** Since Israel counted as god those who were no gods at all, He was stirred to unleash upon them the curses that came with their disobedience to the laws of the covenant. If they desired to live like savage barbarians according to the desires of their lusts, then God would allow them the opportunity. However, they would have to pay the price for giving up a knowledge of God. **A fire is kindled:** God did not leave them without curses for their disobedience as

He did with other nations who simply reaped what they had sown. God specifically brought on them the curses that were pronounced in this book because Israel as a unique nation was in a covenant relationship with God. **Hell:** The word here is "Sheol," the grave, not the eternal punishment of hell. **Mischiefs ... arrows:** God would be direct in His punishment in time. At the end of time, He would hand down the destiny of eternal hell that the disobedient would eventually endure for their sins. But the judgment in time would be that they endure the invasion of foreign armies, as well as the inward struggle against disease and famine. **I will scatter them:** Through the Assyrian captivity of 722/721 B.C., the northern kingdom of Israel was scattered among the nations. In the Babylonian captivity of 586 B.C., the southern kingdom was also scattered among the nations. **Our hand is triumphant:** The enemies of Israel might make this statement in their conquest of Israel. But the fact would be that God worked through the enemies of Israel in order to judge Israel. The Assyrians and Babylonians were the proxy judges by which God punished Israel for her rebellion.

**32:28-33 O that they were wise:** The enemies of Israel would boast in their conquest of Israel, not knowing that it was God who empowered them to carry out His judgment against Israel. Because they did not know that it was God working in their insufficient armies to judge Israel, they themselves would suffer the judgment of God and come to their ruin because of their arrogance. **Sodom ...**

**Gomorrah:** The enemies certainly did not conquer Israel because they were morally superior to Israel. They were morally depraved and idolatrous nations. They could conquer Israel only by God's help.

**32:34-43** Once judgment had been rendered to Israel through their destruction by their enemies, then the Lord would have compassion on them. He would manifest His compassion by the destruction of Israel's enemies. Once Israel had been brought to her knees in captivity, she would again be restored. But she would be restored because of her repentance. **The rock:** These were the false gods in which Israel trusted. Belief in these gods took them into captivity. **I will render vengeance:** The Rock of the one true and living God would render vengeance on those nations who took pride in their conquest of His people. Because the nations did not understand that it was God judging Israel through them, they themselves would suffer the vengeance of God. **Rejoice with His people:** All must rejoice in God's righteous judgment of Israel and His just vengeance on the enemies of Israel. God shows both justice and mercy. He justly punishes disobedience, but shows mercy to His people in times of repentance. He is just both in His judgment and in the salvation of His people (Is 45:21).

#### Moses' Final Charge And Farewell

(32:44 – 33:29)

**Outline:** (1) Closing exhortations (32:44-47), (2) Preparation for Moses' death (32:48-52), (3) Final blessing (33:1-29), (4) Death of Moses (34:1-12)

## CLOSING EXHORTATIONS

**32:44-47** Both Moses and Joshua are given credit for writing and delivering the song to the people. **Joshua:** Hoshea was Joshua's original name. It was changed to "Joshua" ("the Lord is salvation") by Moses (Nm 13:8,16). **All Israel:** Unless the entire nation submitted to the principles of the song, they would fall soon into apostasy. The reason they all had to give heed to the words was to prevent the next generation from falling away. The words of the song were essentially life for them, for if they forgot the word of God, in their ignorance they would be rejected by God (Hs 4:6).

## PREPARATION

### FOR MOSES' DEATH

**32:48-52** *That same day:* The departure of Moses from Israel was on the day that he delivered the message of the song to Israel. God summoned him to Mt. Nebo, a mountain no one now knows. **Abarim:** This was probably a range of mountains of which Nebo was one of many peaks. **See the land:** Though Moses was not allowed to enter the land because of previous sin at Meribah, he was allowed to see the land (See Nm 33:37-39).

## CHAPTER 33

### FINAL BLESSING

**33:1-5** A spoken blessing had the binding power of a written last will and testament (See Gn 27:34-38; 49:1-27). In this context Moses blessed the children of Jacob before he died. All the tribes were blessed except Simeon who was eventually absorbed into the tribe of Judah (Ja 19:2-9). Though in the third person, the blessings came from Moses. The blessings were an exaltation of the goodness of God toward His people throughout the centuries of their past. Angels attended unto the work of God among men. God was King of Israel when the covenant was made and the law was given to Israel. His plan was that He remain their only king until the coming of King Jesus. Unfortunately, after a little over 400 years from this date, Israel would ask for a king on earth that they could see, and to whom they could submit.

**33:6-25** A comparison between the blessing of Moses here and that of Jacob in Genesis 49:1-27 is significant. The comparisons show that while some tribes continued their spiritual weakness, others transformed into being great tribes to the glory of God. **Reuben:** Reuben would not vanish as a tribe but would grow into a great company of people. **Judah:** Since Judah would eventually comprise the southern kingdom of Israel, in the future he would be received back into the fold of the other tribes of Israel after the Babylonian captivity. **Levi:** As keepers of the judgments of God (Thummim and Urim), Levi was scattered among the tribes for priestly functions, and thus blessed in his work to keep the tribes close to God. During the events of the golden calf at Mt. Sinai, Levi remained strong for God (Ex 32:26-29). However, at Meribah he was tested, and



failed in his tribal leadership (6:16; Ex 17:1-7). Nevertheless, he would continue to exercise his duties of instructing Israel in the law and carrying out the sacrifices for Israel. **Benjamin:** God would dwell with this tribe because Benjamin would bear God upon his shoulders. God would be the headship of this tribe throughout her history. **Joseph:** Ephraim and Manasseh, the sons of Joseph, were the tribal extensions of the seed of Joseph. These two tribes would grow into great military strength, Ephraim becoming the predominant tribe of Israel. **Zebulun ... Issachar:** These two tribes share a blessing. Zebulun was the seafaring tribe and Issachar was one of agriculture. They would use their religious celebrations as opportunities for commercial negotiations. **Gad:** Gad was blessed because he became a strong military force. This tribe chose the fruitful pasture lands east of the Jordan (Nm 32:1-5). **Dan:** He was known for sudden and devastating military attacks against the enemies of God (See Ja 19:47; Jg 18:27). **Naphtali:** This tribe would be favored

by nature because they settled in the north near the Sea of Galilee. **Asher:** This tribe was blessed with great prosperity. Asher would grow into a populous tribe and enjoy great popularity. Though the tribe settled in the northwestern part of the land, they would be a strong tribe to buffer Israel from any invasion from the north.

**33:26-29** God is here pictured as the help of Israel who comes to her rescue in times of trial. Israel was the dwelling place of God on earth because the prosperity and religious nature of the people manifested His presence. The protecting arms of God are always around Israel, even while she digresses into sin. Because of the uniqueness of God, therefore, Israel was unique among the nations. Though the enemies of Israel would seek to destroy her, through the help of God, Israel would occupy their high places. Israel would bring down the deistic imaginations of the cultures she would depose from Canaan. God would thus be Israel's refuge and support, the supplier of her every need.

## CHAPTER 34

### THE DEATH OF MOSES

**34:1-8** *Mountain of Nebo:* Pisgah would be the top edge of Nebo. Before his death, and possibly through the surreal exposure of a vision, Moses was shown the land of promise to which he had struggled for forty years to lead a nation to possess. Though unable to enter the land because of previous sin, he was granted the privilege to see the destiny of his labors, a land that flowed with milk

and honey for the people of God. It was surely a magnificent experience for a 120-year-old servant who had labored well to mediate for God to bring the Messiah into the world through a people with whom He made a covenant. **He buried him:** What more precious thing could happen to a faithful servant of God than to be buried personally by God. It was an unknown grave since Israel would surely have idolized the grave by mak-

ing it some religious shrine. It has never been in the plan of God to have tombs worshiped by His people. For this reason, there are no known tombs today where great leaders of God have been buried. From what happened in the case of Moses, therefore, we would assume that God does not want shrines built for those who are His leaders. It is better for them to be buried in obscurity in order that our minds focus on God, not man. When men build shrines for their religious leaders, they will make gods out of their dead leaders. They will take their focus off God and place it on man. ***His eye was not dim, nor his natural vigor abated:*** The physical strength of Moses in his old age was a miracle of God to all who witnessed the continued preservation of his body throughout the years. Since his physical body maintained its vigor, we would assume that he did not die a natural death. His spirit was taken by God at the time He determined He should die. As Jesus gave up His spirit as a free-choice of death, so Moses relinquished his spirit into the hands of the Father of our spirits. When Moses had fulfilled his destiny of leading the nation of Israel to the banks of the Jordan River, it was time for him to go to his eternal home.

**34:9-12** When Moses died, the fact that the nation did not go into chaos was proof that he had focused the attention of the people on God, not on himself. Moses was not some dictator who controlled the people by the power of a military. The fact that he led a people for forty years without becoming a dictator

of the people is evidence that his leadership was from God. It is also evidence of the godly character of Moses. When men have absolute power over a people for a great length of time, they are corrupted by the power. But the fact that Moses did not become a corrupted dictator who was obsessed with power, is evidence that God actually spoke to him. Moses thus walked in the fear of God, having experienced all the marvels that God worked in his sight. For this reason, he focused the people on God, not himself. When a people are focused on God as their leader is so focused, the passing of the heads of state makes no difference in the peoples' obedient relationship with God. It is the goal of every leader for God, therefore, to focus the minds of the people on God, not man ***There has not risen a prophet in Israel like unto Moses:*** It could be added that no leader in the history of mankind, other than the Lord Jesus Himself, has been a leader among people as Moses (See 18:15-19; Nm 12:6-8). Herein again is evidence that God actually spoke to Moses. Without the strength of a military, no man of his own power could have led a people out of the captivity of another nation and into the freedom of their own land as did Moses. But this is exactly what Moses did. If we thought as mere men, we would wonder how one man could do such a thing. The fact that one man on his own without a military did what God did through Moses is evidence that God was with Moses. Nothing has ever happened as this in the history of mankind. The uniqueness of

Israel's deliverance from Egypt will always stand as evidence of God's work among men, and specifically, in the life of Moses. There is no logical answer to the phenomenon of Israel's deliverance from Egypt if we discount the work of God in the life of Moses, as well as in the lives of the Israelites. The birth of the nation of Israel will always stand as an historical miracle for both the existence of God, as well as the intervention of God in the lives of men. The nation came into existence because of the work of God among men, and it was sustained in the land of promise because of His providential care.

These final words of Moses conclude the Pentateuch. These words were written to preserve Israel until the coming of the Messiah. Because Israel went through several apostasies, other books of history as Joshua and Judges were written. When the nation was in the final years of their history before going into the captivities of Assyria and Babylon, the prophets spoke and wrote in order to preserve a remnant from the captivities. However, in reference to their faith and civil laws, the books of Genesis through Deuteronomy remained the law and foundation of their faith.