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## Deuteronomy

### Introduction

#### *Summary*

Deuteronomy is Moses' farewell address to the tribes he had served as prophetic leader. The book includes narratives, exhortations, warnings, instructions, and promises of blessings for Israel's faithfulness. Using elements common to covenants between nations, Deuteronomy is composed as a treaty text. It is similar to other treaties from other Near Eastern sources, particularly from Hittite archives. Moses, clearly aware of the patterns used in typical covenants, communicates God's purposes to Israel in a familiar literary and legal form.

Paying careful attention to the formal structures of Deuteronomy yields a great deal of insight into the theological nature of the book. As a covenant text, it underscores the seriousness of God's promises and of Israel's need, as the covenant partner, to obey the terms of treaty so that God can fulfill His promises. As a farewell speech, Deuteronomy is rooted in a historical and geographical setting.

The following outline reflects the analysis of Deuteronomy as a covenant document.

- 1:1-5 Preamble to the covenant.
- 1:6-4:49 Historical prologue.
- 5:1-26:15 Stipulations of the covenant.
- 26:16-29:1 Blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience.
- 29:2-30:20 Review of the covenant and choice between life and death.
- 31:1-29 Deposit of the text of the covenant.
- 31:30-32:43 Witness of the covenant

The outline embedded in the Bible text reflects Deuteronomy's structure both as a covenant text and as a farewell speech and a series of sermons.

#### *Title*

The Greek title of "mishneh" is "copy of this law," and is translated Deuteronomy. In the Greek it is translated "second law," which is written Deuteronomium in the Latin version. (Deuteronomy 17:18) In Hebrew the translation reads, "These are the words," and come from the first four words in the text. The Hebrew is a better translation as this is not a second law but the words of Moses' explanation concerning the law. The Book of Deuteronomy completes the five part unit written by Moses and is call the Pentateuch.

#### *Author and Date*

Traditionally Moses is recognized as the author of Deuteronomy. Moses claimed authorship in Deuteronomy 1:5. Both in the Old Testament and the New Testament this claim is supported. (1 Kings 2:3; 1 Kings 8:53; 2 Kings 14:6; 2 Kings 18:12; Acts 3:22-23; Romans 10:19) It is believed that Deuteronomy 32:48-34:12 was written after the death

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of Moses by Joshua, the rest of the book was written by the hand of Moses who died in 1405 BC.

## *Background and Setting*

As was with Leviticus Deuteronomy does not advance the historical text but takes place in one location over a month of time. Israel was camped in a valley east of the Jordan River at the time of this writing. The location is referred to in Numbers 36:16 as “the plains of Moab” an area north of the Arnon River across the Jordan River from Jericho. It has been forty years since the Israelites had exited Egypt.

Deuteronomy concentrates on events that took place in the final weeks of Moses’ life. The major event was the divine communication that Moses received and gave to the people of Israel. The other events recorded were 1) Moses recording the law in a book, 2) Moses’ commissioning of Joshua as the new leader, 3) Moses’ viewing of the land of Canaan from Mount Nebo, 4) Moses’ death.

As in Leviticus Deuteronomy contains much legal detail, but this detail is in the context of the people rather than to the priest. Moses was calling his people to be obedient to the covenant made with God at Sinai and he reminded the people of their past history. Moses also reminded the people of the victories the Lord had given them over their enemies. And most importantly Moses reminded the people to take the land that God had promised them under oath to their forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Moses not only looked back but looked ahead and saw Israel’s future failures that would lead to them being scattered among the nations before the fulfillment of God’s promise could be fulfilled.

Along with Psalm and Isaiah the book of Deuteronomy reveals to us much about the attributes of God. By the peoples obedience they would receive the blessings of God. Obedience and the pursuit of holiness is always based upon the character of God. Because of who God is His people are also to be holy.

## The Deeds and the Demands of God 1:6 to 4:40

Moses gives three speeches that are confessional in nature in Deuteronomy and is also found in two other major parts of Deuteronomy. In the first speech of Moses there is a balanced emphasis between the deeds of God and the demands of God. In his second speech there is a contrast between the nature of God and the demands that flow from His character. In the third speech of Moses he continues his appeal for the people to respond to the Lord. As with all of Moses’ speeches there is a principle of confession and exhortation.

## Proclaiming God’s Mighty Acts 1:6 to 3:29

In these chapters we see a resume of God’s mighty acts during Israel’s pilgrimage between Sinai and Moab. Throughout the book of Deuteronomy Horeb is used as a name for Sinai. The deeds of God and the response of Israel may be summarized in these chapters as a portrait in fear and failure and as a portrait in providential leadership.

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## A Portrait in Fear and Failure 1:6-46

Israel is now challenged to leave the Sinai where God has so gloriously manifested Himself, Israel was prompted to leave that mountain scene, cooperate in achieving God's purposes, and conquer the land that God had promised so long before to Abraham. Israel confronted by that challenge was a portrait in fear and failure, a people who allowed their fear to erode their commitment as to assure their failure. This study is appropriate today in modern society where we see the polarities of fear and failure.

## Chapter 1

### *Preface 1-5*

This chapter begins in a third person context with these words, "***These are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel across the Jordan in the wilderness.***" The writer of these words probably lived on the west bank and wrote them later than the time of Moses. The writer goes on to remind the readers of his day that it was an eleven days journey from the Sinai to Kadesh-barnea. This was probably added for an audience beyond the time of Moses.

In all the other books written by Moses his speech was grounded in "all that the Lord had given him." The words that Moses spoke were the words that God had given him to speak. Moses' message was not grounded in himself but in God. Now in the land of Moab Moses "undertook to explain the law." That is to interpret covenant stipulations and demands for the life of the covenant people. Moses as a teacher/preacher is an ideal model for any age. Moses gave himself to the ministry of others to understand the implications of God's revelation for life.

### *The Call to commitment 6-8*

The Israelite people had become content with their surroundings and the assurance of God's presence. As with Israel those who have become comfortable in the surroundings of the Church should also hear this call from the Lord. "***You have stayed long enough at this mountain.***" The command that the Lord had given them was clear. "***Turn and set your journey.***" People of God are pilgrims and are always in motion to achieve the purposes of God's tomorrows. This is also the call to commitment for the Church today. You have stayed long enough where you are, be on your journey to where I will lead you.

### *A Call to cooperation 9-18*

Here again we see the choice of shared leadership. As earlier when the seventy were chosen in the book of Exodus and Numbers. (Exodus 18:13; Numbers 11:10-17) each narrative of shared leadership has different aspects to add to each but they are an unedified concept of shared leadership. The very success of the Israelites as a covenant community, as in the new covenant, call for the implementation of this principle of shared leadership. The call of conquest by God is a call to cooperation.

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## *The Call to Conquest 19-46*

The call of God to Israel placed them between two poles, their fear of God and their fear of other persons. Although they had the fear of God from when they were at Sinai that fear was replaced at Kadesh-barnea by their fear of the Canaanites and what might happen if they invaded their land. Their abortive effort can be seen from four perspectives.

First the goal that God had set before them as seen in verses 19-25. ***"It is a good land which the LORD our God is about to give us."*** The previous expedition of the twelve spies, (Numbers 13-14) we again see here in abbreviated form. There was no question of the goodness of the land, the question was the commitment of Israel to possess the land fulfilling the purpose of God. The odds of victory looked overwhelming to the people and they lost their trust in God's word.

Second there are times when the faithful will falter. (26-33) The reason Israel faltered is not difficult to see. They lacked faith in God's promise. To believe God is to trust Him, it does not matter the comparative size and power of the opposition. It was not that the goal before them was questionable but their lack of disciplined commitment that would be needed to accomplish that goal. This is ever true. It is not the value or the goodness of the goal, it is the price demanded to achieve that goal. If they are not willing to make the commitment to pay the price then their lack of faith causes fear and failure.

Third, to succumb to fear of other persons rather than a fear of the Lord is a position where one forfeits their future. ***"Not one of these men, this evil generation, shall see the good land which I swore to give your fathers."*** There were only two groups of people who would see the Promised Land. The two spies who brought positive news of the Promised Land and the children who turned back with the elders who refused to go forward at Kadesh.

Fourth Israel's delay in response to the Lord's command is the danger of learning too late. After hearing the rebuke of the Lord the people may have made an abortive attempt to enter the land on their own. Once aware of their failure the people repented. ***"We have sinned against the LORD; we will indeed go up and fight."*** But now it was too late as the opportunity had slipped through their fingers. The Lord gave them counsel through Moses. ***"Do not go up nor fight, for I am not among you; otherwise you will be defeated before your enemies."*** But Israel was determined and went up to the hill country in spite of the Lord's words. The Amorites came out to meet them, and chased them away as bees. The Israelites returned to Kadesh and remained there for a long stay.

It is possible for one to learn from their mistakes and poor judgments and turn their lives around. It is also possible to wait too long and learn the lesson too late. It is too late when the opportunity has passed by. For most persons the opportunity comes at a unique time and then passes on. When that time has passed the opportunity has passed with it. It is important to perceive the precise time and the right moment to achieve the purpose of

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God. It may pass to another generation or to another person to achieve it. But for the one who learns too late they will never accomplish their God given mission.

## God's War

The Lord's command to Israel to annihilate its enemies poses a major ethical problem. How could the God of love mandate genocide? What justification could Israel have had for invading, conquering, and destroying the land of Canaan and its peoples? From a human perspective, it appears that Israel's aggressive campaigns to settle Canaan were illegal and immoral.

However, the war against the Canaanites was led by God, not by mere human whim. The conquest was directed against wicked people who had rebelled against the Lord and His purposes. Their sin had reached its full measure and now warranted their destruction. Israel became God's instrument to carry out this judgment.

The war that Israel was authorized to wage was limited historically and theologically to its Old Testament setting. Medieval campaigns, such as the crusaders by European "Christians" against Middle Eastern "infidels," or the more recent jihads of Islamic terrorism cannot be justified based on Old Testament practice. Jesus made it very clear that "God blesses those who work for peace" (Matthew 5:9) and that **"those who use the sword will die by the sword."** (Matthew 26:52) No justification for such action exists in the modern world. In the final judgment, God Himself will pour out His holy wrath on Human wickedness. (Revelation 19:11-21)

## Chapter 2

### A Portrait in Providential Leadership

One generation fails the Lord but another succeeds at the same challenge. On this rest the future of God's purposes. Someone somewhere will respond to a challenge which others thought impossible to dream, much less achieve. So chapters two and three are a study in providential leadership as God led the battered Israelites across the wilderness, searching for the promise made to Abraham. God may give us up to our own rebellious ways, but He never gives up on us. That is humanities hope. And that was the hope of Israel.

### *Command of God for a Chastened People 1-3*

Israel turned back from Kadesh and moved southeastward toward the Gulf of Aqaba. They wandered for many days until the Lord called them to leave as He had done at Sinai. Those words are a call to every battered person: **"You have circled this mountain long enough. Now turn north."** Northward lay the Promised Land and that was the land that God was leading them to. Chastened by their failure and anxious because of their travail, Israel responded to God's command that they would not outlive their dream. They would march northward where the purpose of God lay.

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## *Consideration for God's Purposes 4-23*

As the Israelites traveled towards the Promised Land they respected the lands given to Esau and Lot. Israel was not allowed to encroach on the land of Moab, as that land had been given to the sons of Lot.

Israel was commanded to follow the valley where the brook Zered was the dividing line between Edom and Moab. The hand of the Lord was usually issued in reference to helping Israel but in verses 15 the hand of the Lord is used against the Israelites who were not allowed to enter into the Promised Land.

As they moved toward the Promised Land they were warned not to bother the Ammonites. God had promised this land to the sons of Lot. Although the focus is for a later generation there is a larger purpose for Israel to not conquer this land. The Lord respects the promises that He has made and has kept each and every one reaching back to the patriarchs. God is faithful in His purposes both for Israel and for others.

## *Conquest of the Noncooperative 24-37*

Sihon the King of Heshbon had not shared in the old promises of God and did not serve the Lord's purposes during the pilgrimage of God's people. God handed them over to the Israelite people.

## Chapter 3

### *Verses 1-11*

Then the Israelite people marched forward to Bashan and fought the King Og. They overpowered him and destroyed his cities and took their livestock and possessions. These verses from 2:24 to 3:11 describes the practice of putting others to the ban. Ban is dedicating them to the Lord through extermination. This was a holy war, as it was decreed by the Lord God. The cities of King Sihon and King Og were utterly destroyed. The idea of this dedication to the Lord is to take that which belonged to another god and dedicating it to the Lord by putting an end to the people, animals, and property. In that concept the extermination of these nations was a religious act. Today this runs counter to contemporary Christian sensibilities. This act was part of the culture of the day and not necessarily the ultimate expression of God's will. Holy war was one way the Israelite people understood the character of God. It was heavily influenced by the cultural practices of the era and the Israelite people saw it as an expression of God's purpose.

### *Consolidation and Extension of Territory 12-22*

Israel now divided up the territories that they had conquered east of the Jordan River. They also planned the extension of their land beyond the Jordan. The conquered territory was given to the tribes of Gad and Reuben. But the tribes of Gad and Reuben were to continue on with the other Israelites to conquer the land on the west side of the Jordan. Joshua was chosen to lead the western campaign and it is also implied that he would be the successor to Moses. (Numbers 27:12-23)

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## *Condemnation of Moses 23-29*

Moses was denied entry into the Promised Land but was allowed to view it from Mount Pisgah. Moses had prayed that the Lord would allow him to cross over but he was denied. Moses would die in Moab and like the others of his generation forfeited the future by presuming on the grace and power of God. (Numbers 27:12-14; Deuteronomy 32:48-52)

## Remembering What God Has Done

Having proclaimed the mighty acts of God, Moses challenged Israel to remember and to act in the context of God's gracious actions. The chapter is an urgent and moving appeal directed to the memory of Israel. As all succeeding covenant persons, she was to keep the law because of the greatness of God's revelation. Because of what God had done, Israel was urged to remember the deeds of God, (4:1-8) the revelation of God, 4:9-24) the alternatives of God, (4:25-31) and the uniqueness of God. (4:32-40)

## Biblical Law

Biblical law is more than a list of dos and don'ts. It is a system of divine expectations regarding belief and behavior which, if faithfully carried out, will bring God's richest blessing. Life itself depends on keeping the law.

The Exodus from Egypt freed the nation of Israel to become God's servant. When God delivered Israel from bondage by ***"a strong hand, a powerful arm, and terrifying acts,"*** it was not because Israel had earned this right through its own righteousness but because God is gracious and faithful to His promises to Abraham. The purpose of the rescue from Egypt was not to just to relieve the Israelites of their onerous burdens, but to make a covenant with them. The covenant relationship did not make the Israelites God's people; they were already His people. Obedience was not a precondition to the relationship but a proper response to it. It placed upon them the responsibility of serving God as a priestly kingdom and a holy nation.

The covenant guaranteed the people of Israel abundant and meaningful life if they kept the law. The covenant document consists of broad principles, patterns, and standards. God's instructions are embodied most famously in the Ten Commandments and most succinctly in the Shema. All other laws of God are interpretations and applications of these primary principles. The law was given to regulate Israel's affairs as a nation so that God's people would be a beacon of His grace to the whole world.

The life that resulted from obedience to the law was not eternal life in the New Testament sense. It was God's promise that if the Israelites were faithful to the covenant, the nation could expect long and prosperous days in the land. Jesus also exhorted His disciples to keep the Ten Commandments and the demands of the Shema, not to have eternal life but as an expression of commitment to Him.

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## Chapter 4

### Remembering the Deeds of God 1-8

This chapter begins with the word “now”, as to say “see what the Lord has done. (Chapter 1-3) We are told to “listen” to the revelation of God. In remembering the deeds of God at Baal-Peor (Numbers 27:12) and the revelation which God shared (Verses 5-6) three elements are primary. The action of God, (Verses 1-4) the knowledge of God, (Verses 5-6) and the presence of God. (Verses 7-8)

#### *The Action of God 1-4*

In this exhortation the people are told not to add or subtract from the words that the Lord has given them. God’s word is adequate. Those of faith and unfaithfulness should know that God’s actions are for their instruction. For the faithless at Baal-Peor their fate was clear, ***“Your eyes have seen what the LORD has done in the case of Baal-Peor, for all the men who followed Baal-Peor, the LORD your God has destroyed them from among you.”*** The fate of the faithful is just as instructive. ***“But you who held fast to the LORD your God are alive today, every one of you.”***

#### *The Knowledge of God 5-6*

Moses was faithful in his teaching of what God had told him. God’s action among the people precipitated the knowledge of God. God’s knowledge in the lives of His people is experiential and dynamic. The teaching of God will bring about three things in the lives of His listeners. They will keep what God teaches, they will do what God teaches, and others will discover, ***“Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.”***

#### *The Presence of God 7-8*

The greatest gift in life is the gift of self. And that is what God has given to His people, Himself. From the Exodus forward the presence of God among His people was the context they lived in. The concept of God’s presence was from the beginning when He called Moses. This was true in corporate Israel. ***“For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the LORD our God whenever we call on Him?”*** With the presence of God the people also had His law. The law was not given as a penalty but as a light to guide His people in fulfilling the covenant relationship.

### Remembering the Revelation of God

The second exhortation of Moses to Israel focused on remembering the revelation of God. Someone has said that the fourth chapter of Deuteronomy is a commentary on the second commandment, ***“You shall have no other gods before me.”*** Why is this so? Because God is not revealed through an idol but through the creative Word. God was not revealed to Israel at Sinai by images but by words and deeds of redemption.

#### *Revelation and Remembrance are Inseparable 9*

The people were not only to remember God’s revelation but they were to share His revelation with their children. The emphasis is on learning and teaching and is consistent in Deuteronomy. The use of the words remember and forget is more than the issue of forgetting or a lapse of memory. Remembering is to be a deliberate act of commitment to

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remembering and deliberate acts to not repudiation or forget. We are to guard the treasure of our experience with the Lord. There is an element of nurture in maintaining ones relationship with God.

## *Revelation and Word are Inseparable 10-14*

The word of revelation may be audible or inaudible. In Psalm 19:3-4 we read, "**There is no speech, nor are there words; Their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth, And their utterances to the end of the world. In them He has placed a tent for the sun.**" At Sinai Israel saw no form but they heard the Lord's voice. The word of God's revelation must be communicated to the people. The word came through reverential awe or "fear", and is transmitted or taught to one's children.

## *Revelation and Idolatry are Incompatible 15-24*

Idolatry was rejected in Israel because it made God into an object which reduced God to a single object. The revelation of God comes through His word, living, active, and dynamic. There are times His word is like new wine, fermenting and active, churning in the heat of its own movement and unable to rest in old wineskins.

The idols of today's contemporary world are subtle but are rampant in society. An understanding of God that limits Him to a single aspect of His nature and character is a subtle form of idolatry. God comes to us in the reality of His Word, the creative and redeeming power of God in our lives to address our inner person and effective for the whole person.

## Remembering the Alternatives of God 25-31

Deuteronomy often cast its message through the use of polarities. In addition to the polarities in the larger speeches in which God's action or character are set against human response other patterns also emerge. For example, the closing cycle of the book places cursing and blessing before the people or the ways of life and death. So here also, the polar alternatives of God are clear, scattered among the nations (25-28) or searching for God. (29-31)

## *Scattered Among the Nations 25-28*

This alternative to serving God happened to Israel when they were exiled to Babylon. Israel was confronted with this alternative when they began idol worship. "**When you become the father of children and children's children and have remained long in the land, and act corruptly, and make an idol in the form of anything, and do that which is evil in the sight of the LORD your God so as to provoke Him to anger.**" As a result God scattered them among the nations. If we abandon our relationship with God we also lose our hedge of protection.

## *Searching For God 29-31*

God is a compassionate God and if we seek Him, even as we have been scattered, He will bring us back into His fold. "**For the LORD your God is a compassionate God;**

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***He will not fail you nor destroy you nor forget the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them.*** The decision is ours to make, to abide in the Lord or to reject Him, and the fate of that decision is ours to bear.

## Remembering the Uniqueness of God

This exhortation to Israel, as to later covenant persons, closes with five characteristics of God in relationship to the covenant community, plus a final exhortation.

### *Unique in Action 32*

The whole of history is filled with the uniqueness of God. When looking at the religions of the world we can discover positive moral factors or exemplary human figures. But none can find a comparable emphasis on God's unique action in history as what can be seen in the Bible. The challenge is clear for all to see, go back as far in time as the creation ***"inquire from one end of the heavens to the other. Has anything been done like this great thing, or has anything been heard like it?"*** The actions of God in history and to this day are completely unique in the world's history.

### *Unique in Revelation 33*

God is unique in that He spoke to Israel. Whether one understands the nature of speaking as external and audible or inaudible, God is unique in His revelation. The world's gods are revealed in fixed forms of the idols. But God's revelation comes through the living Word. It is the uniqueness of the Word of God that gives the revelation of God and it was manifested when ***"the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth."*** (John 1:14)

### *Unique in Redemption 34*

God's redemptive activity is unique. No other god had redeemed his people as God had redeemed His. ***"Or has a god tried to go to take for himself a nation from within another nation by trials, by signs and wonders and by war and by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm and by great terrors, as the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?"*** God's redemptive work through the Exodus of His people could be extended to other acts of redemption in history. The prime example can be seen on a hill outside of the city walls of Jerusalem. Concluding with the empty tomb by a risen redeemer. No other deity has acted in a unique fashion to redeem humanity.

### *Unique in Communion 35-36*

There are two aspects of God's communion generated through God's redemption that are significant. The uniqueness of the Exodus and at Sinai is in order that, ***"you might know that the LORD, He is God."*** God also shared Himself through His Word to ***"hear His voice to discipline you."*** His discipline is to teach, to give advice, and to listen and reason. God has given Himself to us that we might learn and be led by Him in discipleship.

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## *Unique in Devotion 37-40*

The Lord is uniquely devoted to His people. His devotion is because "**He loved your fathers, therefore He chose their descendants.**" Because of His devotion and the promises that He made to the patriarchs the Lord chose to give them a land for their inheritance. In the context of such a devotion they should know "**there is no other besides Him.**"

Knowing the uniqueness of God and who He is we should choose to live out our lives in His revelation.

## *Cities of Refuge 41-43*

Chapter 19 deals more fully with the cities of refuge.

### The Character of God and the Conduct of Man

The Ten Words, (Deuteronomy 4:13) more commonly known as the Ten Commandments, appear in both Exodus and Deuteronomy. They constitute the highly compressed stipulations attached to covenant relationships and convey the demand of God for the redeemed persons. But viewed from another perspective, the Ten Words are also an index to the character of God. Just as legislation passed by a state or national legislature is an index to the character of elected officials, so the Ten Words portray the character of God. The polarity to God's character is the conduct of persons. For chapters 6-11 constitute a clearly delineated statement of what it means to be the people of God. Hence one might outline the second speech of Moses according to the character of God (chapter 5) and the conduct of man. (Chapters 6-11)

### Giving the Law

But prior to the beginning of Moses' second speech, there is an introduction to the giving of the law. First the law was described with regard to its content and to the locale of its declaration. The law consisted of the testimonies, the statutes, and the ordinances. While these three categories should not be interpreted as rigid distinctions, they did come from a late Old Testament era when the law had fully developed. Each word gives a careful distinction of categories within the larger law. Second, the law was ascribed to the time when Israel encamped to Moab, across the Jordan; and according to Deuteronomy, Moses gave the law a second time. The giving of the law was also linked to the conquest of the trans-Jordan tribes.

## Chapter 5

### The Character of God

Who God is may be determined in part by what He demands from those bound with Him in covenant. The same is true of religion generally, for the demands are an index to its character.

## *Command of God 1-5*

The command of God is clear in these passages, hear, learn, and do all that God commands. The covenant was not just for the fathers who stood on the plains of Moab to

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obey but for all the people. God's covenant was made with the patriarchs and the law was given to the people at Sinai. The importance of what Moses was saying is that the covenant was not made with someone in history but that the people of the day themselves have a covenant obligation with the Lord. Love brings on a certain fear and the emphasis of that love is a reverential awe in response to the Lord and is appropriate for every generation of believers.

## *Confessional Proclamation of the Lord's Redemptive Deed 6*

God's redemptive action is the foundation for the commandments. These are the commands for the redeemed of God and not for those who are outside of His redemptive grace. In the religion of Judaism the focus on the character of God's redemption that this verse is considered the First Commandment. "I am the LORD your God." this redemptive statement is confessional as it rises from faith as opposed to rationally demonstrated proof. The Israelites view their Exodus from Egypt as an act of faith and so was a confessional statement on God's redeeming action.

## *Character of God Revealed in the Ten Words 7-21*

The first four of the Ten Words stress the worth and worship of God. God is unique, as there is none like Him and this is His worth to covenant persons. God is the only God to be worshiped by the believers and His revelation comes through His Word and not through static idols.

The name of God is holy and is not to be lifted up in emptiness. By setting aside one day a week and making it holy to the Lord the believer acknowledges that all time belongs to God and give this day to worship Him.

The remaining six words of the Ten Words focus on the rights of other people in relationship to the believer. The Ten Words are seen vertically and horizontally. They are seen vertically in our relationship to God and horizontally in our relationship to others. God and man are just as involved in both directions, vertically and horizontally.

There are some rights that are central in this covenant relationship. Parents have the right to expect respect from their children. Persons have a right to life in the fullest sense. Adultery is the expectation that the husband has that others will respect fidelity of marriage. The property of persons is to be respected in the covenant community, as well as their right to have property. As God's Word is true so should the word of those in the covenant community. The truth is fundamental in all relationships and is expected in legal, social, individual, and corporate exchanges. Persons also have the right to be free from the covetousness of others in regards to their property and possession.

## Receiving the Ten Words

How did the Israelite people receive the Lord's revelation through the Ten Words? There are at least three aspects of that reception.

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## *Sufficiency of the Word 22*

These Ten Words are adequate in that the statement of the Lord was, "**and He added no more.**" The Ten Words are in themselves adequate statements of fundamental principle to guide the covenant life. Jesus confirmed the validity of the Commandments but took them beyond their original application. (Matthew 5:17-32) The commandments do not need to be expanded or superseded but applied in all human situations. There are some who say that the commandments will not work in present day society but then neither will soap if it is not applied.

## *Speaking With God 23-27*

If we as a people become too familiar with God, then our relationship with God would be as it is with others, taken for granted. The Israelites could not bear to be in the presence of God for fear that they would die. They had a proper fear of His power. I think that many people today do not, even as His power is displayed throughout His creation.

In these verses we see three features of their experience in being in the presence of God. First they had seen God's glory and greatness. Second they had heard His voice. Third they had seen Him and yet they lived.

The distance between a holy God and man remained. The people of Israel realized that they could not approach the fullness of God's glory and power. They knew that they needed a mediator for them and they turned to Moses. Today, now in the New Testament times our mediator between God and us is His Son Jesus.

## *Submitting to God 27*

Israel submitted to the Lord's revelation and this is a model of commitment. "**The LORD our God speaks to you, and we will hear and do it.**" It is one thing to hear the words of God but unless we obey it does not do any good for us. In the Biblical sense one has not heard if one does not obey. The revelation of God then is a personal experience for the one who hears and obeys. If one does not obey, then there has been no revelation.

### Responding to Human Reaction

How does the Lord respond when persons commit themselves to Him as Israel did?

## *Loyalty to Revelation Commended 28*

When the Lord again spoke to Moses He commended the people. "**They have done well in all that they have spoken.**"

## *Longing for Loyalty 29*

The Lord's response reflects His longing for a constant fidelity. "**Oh that they had such a heart in them, that they would fear Me and keep all My commandments always, that it may be well with them and with their sons forever!**"

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## *Legal Expansion of the Ten Words 30-31*

Moses was commanded to remain with the Lord that He would give "**all the commandments and the statutes.**" This is consistent with the view of the Ten Words that are the foundation of other stipulations. As the society evolved new stipulations grew from the foundation of the Ten Words.

## Chapter 6

### The Conduct of Man

These six chapters focus on the conduct of persons bound in covenant with the Lord. In his book on Deuteronomy, Pythian-Adams astutely observed that these chapters may be viewed as a commentary on the first commandment. If there is only one God, what are the implications of that belief for Israel or for succeeding believers in the Church who affirm that the uniqueness of God logically presupposes a unique life-style for the committed to relationship with Him? If there is one God and one God only, then there is one faithful fellowship, one people of God, one source of life, one source of success, one ultimate relationship, and one fundamental choice.

### One God – One Faithful Relationship

If there is only one God, then it follows that there is a single fellowship of covenant persons bound in faith within the circle of commitment to that God

## *A Fearful Fellowship 1-3*

The use of the word fear is not the same as we understand it in the English dictionary. The meaning of fear in the Hebrew is awe and reverence. This is the reaction to our experience in the presence of God, a reverent fear of awe and wonder. This does not mean that we are improperly afraid of God or are in terror in His presence, although I think I might be terrified when I am actually in His presence. In this passage the purpose of the revelation of God beings about the nature of the covenant community. "**That you and your son and your grandson might fear the LORD your God.**" The fate of this fellowship is determined by the proper fear in the response the believer makes towards God.

## *Fundamentals of the Faith 4-9*

There is only one true God and the fundamentals of faith are exceedingly significant. First Faith must be perceived in the hearing of God's Word. As we read, "**Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!**" and "**You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.**" Our faith is balanced by our love for Him. Our love for God is fundamental to our faith.

## *Second Faith Must Be Practiced 6-9*

God's Word is to be on our heart which governs our will. They are to be taught to our children and in our conversations and lived through our life. The Word of God constitutes the fundamentals of our faith. One should not live apart from the Word of God. It is important to keep practice in our faith and transfer them to the following generations.

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## *Third the Fundamentals of Faith Must Be Perpetuated 4-9*

Teaching is sharing what we have learned and the emphasis of Deuteronomy is teaching and learning. In the present day society the parents have forsaken the word of God and the children are suffering to hear the truth. **"You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up."** Faith is not only to be present in our own lives but to be offered with vigor to the lives of others. The Church will never reach its full potential apart from the involvement of His Word in the home. The family cannot reach its proper stability and moral influence apart from the teaching Church. Each, the family and the Church, is a partner in perpetuating the faith.

## *A Forgotten Father 10-15*

If the people forsake their Heavenly Father, then there can be no faithful fellowship. God the Father gave them the land they were about to possess as a reward that Israel had not labored for. It was a land that had cities they did not build and houses filled with good things they had not labored for. They would drink from wells they had not dug and they would eat from vineyards that they did not plant. Moses reminded the people to not forget the graciousness of the Lord during the days of their abundance. Moses warned the people not to worship the false gods of the people they would conquer for, **"the LORD your God in the midst of you is a jealous God."**

## *Testing or Trusting 16-19*

We can either test the truth of God's Word or we can trust His Word. Moses is asking the people which it shall be with them. The Israelite people had tested the Lord at Massah and Moses is now counseling them not to test the Lord again. Jesus had used this verse when tempted by Satan. **"And Jesus answered and said to him, 'It is said, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"** (Luke 4:12)

We should not test God but trust Him at His Word. Our obedience to His Word pleases Him. The one who has faith in God should keep His commandments, (Verse 17) by doing what is right and good. (Verse 18) The success of the conquest depended upon their obedience to His Word.

## *The Meaning of Life and Law 20-25*

The children will ask the meaning of worship, ministry, service, and mission? They will ask what the meaning of life is and the answer will be found in what God has done for His people. We are to tell our children what God has done in our lives, how God has invaded history to give His redemptive power and this is important for our children to know.

## Chapter 7

### One God – One People 1-26

Exclusivism holds many a negative connotation for many people in the world. The simple definition of exclusivism is the action or policy of excluding a person or group from a place, group, or privilege. Today's society and the society of the past does not abide well with the idea that one group of people are above all others. There are many groups of people

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and religions that feel that they are to only one that has the correct view of how people should live. That should be an obvious statement and I do not think the need to list any examples. The Jewish nation served the One True God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and to this day is the oldest religion in the world. But it was never that they were superior to any other nation. The Jews were called by God in a covenant relationship as His chosen people for a purpose. **“Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.”** (Exodus 19:5-6) The purpose of God was not that they would be a superior race of people but a people that would be His witness of a people that lived in His righteousness. It was God’s purpose that through the Jewish nation that His Son Jesus would be born as the Savior of the world. They were not superior people but people who were showing the way to the truth. When the Messiah came they failed to receive Him, they rejected Him, and through Him the gospel of Christ was given to the Gentile world.

Therefore, Christianity was born and Christ Church was established by His Apostles. They were to fulfill the purpose of God to be a people living in His light that it might shine in a darkened world that people might see **“the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.”** (John 14:6) Neither then are the Christians superior over others except they have been forgiven of their sin by the redeeming blood of Jesus. Jesus is the only way to have a restored relationship with God.

In the context of this chapter of Deuteronomy exclusivism is the result of the holy war that God had declared upon those who had rejected Him for the worship of false gods and religions. They resided in the land of Canaan and were many nations. No one nation has ever possessed the Promised Land, not even Israel. The land of Canaan was promised to Abraham and His seed and is holy to them and the Christian nation as they have been grafted into the family of Abraham. **“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”** (1 Peter 2:9) The land had to be taken and it had to be possessed by God’s chosen people and would remain theirs as long as they served Him, had faith in His revelation and were obedient to His Word.

The Israelites were commanded by God to defeat the nations that were in Canaan. They were to utterly destroy them that their wicked influences could not defile the people. The land was to be purged of all the inhabitants without compromise that would lead to apostasy. All religious structures that were not Israelite were to be destroyed.

Support for exclusivism is hard to justify in a worldly view and must be seen in the Biblical context. God’s command was a positive exclusivism in loving support of the uniqueness of God’s action both in the Old Testament and the New Testament Church. There is one God, one way and soon one nation. God’s nation as all unrighteous people will be purged

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from His presence. As the inhabitants of Canaan were supposed to be when the Israelites took possession of the Promised Land that God had given them.

Verses 6-11 there emerges a theology of exclusivism which is the undergirding of the call of God for the Israelite people. The Israelites were not to fear the people of Canaan but to remember the power of God as He had delivered them from the hand of the Pharaoh of Egypt. They were to put their trust in the promises that God had given to the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (Genesis 12:1) For the Lord has proven Himself as faithful and true to keep His covenant with His people.

Because of the uniqueness of Israel's relationship with God a unique performance was demanded of them: ***"Therefore, you shall keep the commandment and the statutes and the judgments which I am commanding you today, to do them."***

The rewards for exclusivism are a reality of God's covenant love and faithfulness which are seen in His external manifestations of love and blessing. The people were given the assurances of health and well-being. They were also promised to be victorious over their enemies. The army of Israel went to the battlefield but it was God who fought the battle for them. To enable the Israelites to know that God was with them. ***"You shall not dread them, for the LORD your God is in your midst, a great and awesome God."*** They were not only to dispossess the Canaanites but to eradicate all traces of their heathen worship.

## Chapter 8

### One God – One Source

In this chapter we learn that the discipline of the Lord was so the people would learn ***"that man does not live by bread alone."*** In the wilderness the Lord tested His people ***"to know what was in your heart."*** They had learned from their experiences that the meaning of their life is bound up in the power of the Lord. In the backdrop of their discipline in the wilderness the land which the Lord was to give them became more desirable. They were given three conditions for receiving the blessings of God. Keeping His commandments, walking in His ways, and fearing Him. In spite of the Lord's blessing in their lives, they were confronted with the danger of forgetting to serve their One God.

Moses cautioned the Israelite people about the dangers of forgetting the Lord. Their pride and self-exaltation could lead people to forget their dependence upon God. ***"Then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery."*** If the people would succumb to that temptation, then God's grace would be ignored as the source of their blessings. They would become confused about the source of their blessing. They would think it was the might of their hand that had gotten them their wealth. The consequences of this self-exaltation is clear. They would forfeit their life and experience destruction. It should be logical for them to realize that if there is One God, then there is only one source of life for humanity. It was in God that there was life in the

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beginning and only in God would there be life now, and only in God would there be life in the hereafter. The Lord is the singular, unique, and only God.

## Chapter 9

### One God – One Source of Success

Success in its finest context is not only humanities desire but God's purpose. God desires that people are successful in life. Success is more crucial in its totality than in the isolated experiences that people often overvalue. We see this theme developed in two ways in Deuteronomy. There is the statement of the principle in verses 1-8 and then an illustration in 9:8-10:11.

The expression of the principle is twofold. First God prepares the way for the people. (Verses 1-3) Success in life is often dependent upon events that are beyond the control of the persons involved. In this instant the Israelites were to cross the Jordan and confront the people living in Canaan and had prevented them from entering Kadesh over forty years earlier. If they had failed before, then how could they now succeed? The answer to this question is clear in verse 3. ***"Know therefore today that it is the LORD your God who is crossing over before you as a consuming fire. He will destroy them and He will subdue them before you, so that you may drive them out and destroy them quickly, just as the LORD has spoken to you."*** This is a truth that is prevalent to this day. Success in the covenant community is more to do with the preparatory work of God who goes before His people.

Second success is due to God and not to people. The conquest of Canaan was successful because of God's judgment upon the people in Canaan and because God was fulfilling the covenant promise made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This success came for the Israelite people in spite of their rebellions and not because of their fidelity.

Moses then illustrated the success of the covenant depended on God and not Israel. Moses did this by bringing to remembrance of the golden calf at Mount Sinai and the people continued rebellions through the wilderness journey. This was an example that life for the people was in the power of God. He also demonstrated that the future of the covenant rested with God in spite of His rebellious people who serve Him imperfectly. The point is that since there is only one God there is only one source for success in life.

## Chapter 10

### One God – One Ultimate Relationship

People are involved in multiple relationships. People are also involved in community relationships, some large and some small. These community relationships can and do bleed into each other. All these relationships vary in their importance to the persons involved. But there is only one relationship that people can have that has eternal value and that is their relationship with God their Heavenly Father. Jesus said it this way. ***"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."*** (Matthew 6:33) There is One God and One Ultimate Relationship.

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What does the Lord require of us to have a relationship with Him? First we are to honor God through fearing Him, walking in His ways, loving Him, serving Him, and by keeping His commandments. (Verses 12-13) In each of these five ways we can honor God.

Second we are to submit to God. (Verses 14-16) Here Israel was called to circumcise their heart. As Paul spoke of in Romans 2:29. Here Moses is calling Israel to circumcise their hearts as opposed to their foreskins. They were to remove anything in their hearts that came between them and their God. This call was grounded in the sovereignty of God as all things belong to Him. (Verse 14) Also, because of God's grace He chose Israel and this should prompt all submission of their hearts. They should reject their stubbornness as a quality of their relationship. This is also the challenge that the Apostle Paul gave to the Church in Rome.

Third if they are to have an ultimate relationship with God they are to imitate Him. (Verses 17-19) This passage begins with God as sovereign, mighty, impartial, and just towards the helpless. How does this characterization of God define the quality of human response? Moses describes who God is and how He relates to others and then addresses Israel. ***"So show your love for the alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt."*** We are to be like God imitating His love and justice for all.

Forth we are to be grateful to God. In the text the word gratitude does not appear but does say that ***"He is your praise and He is your God."*** We see in this verse four actions of God that is a person's praise. Fear the Lord, serve Him, cleave to Him, and swear by His name. (Verse 20)

## Chapter 11

### One God – One Fundamental Choice

There is but one choice for those who know that there is but one God and that is to either obey or disobey. In this chapter Moses discusses the obligations of obedience, the motives for obedience, and the contrast of obedience to disobedience.

There is a threefold obligation to obedience. Three times in this chapter we see the phrase ***"you shall therefore."*** In verse 1 we see, ***"You shall therefore love the Lord your God."*** This is the primary responsibility in a covenant relationship. The thinking of some is unclear in the Old Testament in regard to law and grace, love and wrath, as if the Old Testament knew nothing of God's grace and love. We see in the law that its stipulation flowed from and were initiated by God's grace. God's love is the foundation upon which all rest. Paul realized this in his statement that ***"love is the fulfillment of the law."*** (Romans 13:10) When Jesus had given His great commandment He joined two Old Testament passages. ***"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind ... and the second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. Of these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets."*** (Matthew 22:37-40) These two combined passages come from Deuteronomy 6:4-5 and Leviticus 19:18.

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Another obligation of covenant living is **“you shall therefore keep all the commandment.”** The commandments of God were given to His people to enable them to live in the demands of the covenant they had entered into with God. But their relationship began before the commandments. (Exodus 20:2; Deuteronomy 5:6) The Ten Commandments or Ten Words were addressed to a redeemed community. Yet as all relationships the covenant relationship imposed demands upon the people. It was the demands of the covenant that formed the essence of the law.

Another obligation is **“You shall therefore lay up these words of mine in your heart.”** God’s people are to live out of the Word of God. This would be in response to God’s dynamic quality of creative redeeming power in their lives. There are no human conditions that occur outside of the boundaries of God’s Word. The obligation for obedience to God’s Word then should be clear to the believer. Believers are to love the Lord, keep His commandments, and treasure His Word.

We also see in this chapter that Moses gives us three sections on motivation for our obedience to God’s Word. In verses 1-8 we are motivated to obedience because of God’s discipline in history. Moses tells us to, **“He is your praise and He is your God.”** We learn the power of the Lord through historical events. The disciple of God will learn from history that they should respond in a positive way to the Lord’s commands. Moses illustrates this by the example of the freedom from bondage by the Egyptians. The Israelites experiences in the wilderness journey and the fate of those who were disobedient. The greatest of these factors for obedience is **“your own eyes have seen all the great work of the LORD which He did.”**

In verses 8-17 we see the motivation of God’s blessing of the land. The Israelites fidelity to the Lord was clearly connected to their possessing the land, a long life in the land, the goodness of the land, rain in its season, and the grass of the fields. However one may view this there is a link between the good life and ones fidelity to the Word of the Lord.

The Israelites conquest of the Promised Land was related to their fidelity to God. **“For if you are careful to keep all this commandment which I am commanding you to do, to love the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and hold fast to Him, then the LORD will drive out all these nations from before you, and you will dispossess nations greater and mightier than you.”**

There is a contrast between obedience and disobedience and that is in terms of cursing and blessing. In the Scriptures a curse is more significant than contemporary profanity. God’s Word is dynamic and will fulfill His commands. When the Lord blesses those blessings will surely come to pass. By the same truth that which the Lord curses will surely be cursed.

The alternatives for Israel is the same as it is for us today. Do we desire the blessings of the Lord and do we fall into His cursing? The choice is ours to make. In this chapter the

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alternatives are clear, a life of curses and filled with disasters, trials, and purposelessness or a life of God's blessing so richly described throughout the Scriptures.

We have seen in Deuteronomy chapters 5-11 a glimpse of God's character and man's responsibility to God. In chapter five we have seen the character of God and chapters 6-11 the conduct of man. In chapter 6 there is to be one faithful fellowship, chapter 7 there is one people for God, chapter eight is one source of life, chapter 9 to 10:11 one source of success, chapter 10:12-22 one ultimate relationship, and in chapter 22 one fundamental choice.

## The Demands of Covenant Living

What does it mean to be the people of God, living in covenant relationship with Him and other persons? To a significant degree, this question may be answered by our examining the legal section of Deuteronomy. (12-16) Here the writer collected laws appropriate to defining the nature of covenant expectations. Often Old Testament laws have been interpreted as negative, burdensome impositions on human freedom. But such an interpretation, even in the New Testament, often was much more influenced by the perversion of the law in later Judaism than by an understanding of the relationship of covenant and law in early Israel. For the law was not a personal burden to be borne, not as God provided it as covenant stipulations in the beginning of Israel's covenant experience. Rather, the law was like a light guiding Israel to embody in history what covenant relationships implied for personal and corporate living.

It would be impossible within the limitations of space imposed for this study to consider each stipulation in isolation in great detail. How then can we study such an extensive collection of laws? First, we might isolate different themes for the broad areas within the legal section. Second, within those larger areas we may develop subsidiary themes. Then we would have a reasonably clear understanding of the major concerns of the legal section and could turn to special studies of Deuteronomy to study individual laws with greater detail. Following this pattern, within the fifteen chapters of the legal section, it is possible to isolate seven basic demands for covenant living: purity in worship, (12:1 to 17:7) acknowledging authority, (17:8 to 18:22) justice in criminal cases, (19:1-21) humanitarian conduct in welfare, (20:1 to 21:14) morality in conduct, (21:1 to 25:18) responsibility in worship and social concern, (26:1-15) and fidelity to the covenant. (26:16-29) Throughout these sections there is a consistent emphasis on exhortation, appealing to Israel to embody the stipulations on covenant living. In Deuteronomy the law is more than a mere listing or codification. It is an urgent, moving appeal which exhorts people to respond. Simply stated, it is a preached law.

## Preaching on Purity of Worship

As stressed throughout the book of Leviticus, holiness was central both to Old Testament worship and to Old Testament life. Because God was "wholly other" than persons or places, persons were to worship Him in ways that reflected that holiness. God could be approached only at particular places and in prescribed ways.

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Covenant living affirms that worship is central for a person's life and that it is consistent with the nature and character of God. It should be no surprise, therefore, that the first concern for covenant living focuses on worship. (12:1 to 17:7) Four themes are central to the Deuteronomic concern for purity of worship: the holiness of worship, (12-13) the holiness of worshipers, (14:1-21) the holiness of structures, (14:22 to 17:1) and the fate of the apostate. (17:2-7)

## The Central Sanctuary

God wanted worship to be carried out only in the place where He had established His name. For Israel, this place was the Tabernacle and later the Temple in Jerusalem.

God is transcendent and omnipresent, yet He chose one place for Israel to worship Him. Solomon later asked how the God of heaven could be housed in a human structure. (1Kings 8:27) The answer is that God's name stands in His place. The Tabernacle and then the Temple belonged to Him and bore His name, so they were, in a sense, His dwelling places. In the ancient Near East, names were more than labels: They represented the character and nature of the named individual. (Genesis 27:36; Matthew 1:21; Acts 4:36; John 1:42; 1 Corinthians 1:12; 1 Corinthians 9:5) Thus the ancient Hebrew sage could advise, **"Choose a good reputation over great riches."** (Proverbs 22:1)

God made His home in a sanctuary that bore His name. His glorious presence manifested in fire and cloud during the wilderness wanderings served as a constant reminder that His name was there (Exodus 40:34-35; 1 Kings 8:10-11) and that He was at home among His people. (John 1:14; John 2:19-21; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 1 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:21; Revelation 21:22)

## Chapter 12

### *The Holiness of Worship*

Both the place of worship and the person worshiped are critical to the Lord. Throughout the history of Israel the people worshiped in their homes and at local shrines there came a time when Israel centralized their place of worship in Jerusalem. This was related to the reform of Josiah in the seventh century BC. This was the probable intent of Deuteronomy: **"But you shall seek the LORD at the place which the LORD your God will choose from all your tribes, to establish His name there for His dwelling, and there you shall come."** Permission was given for the slaughter of animals far from the sanctuary, and the people who were scattered were cautioned about fidelity to the Lord. But the priority of the central place for worship was clear.

The concentration of a central place to worship the Lord continues to be both positive and necessary. Today, few would call for the legal stipulations related to Jerusalem as the single sanctuary and place of sacrificing and offerings. The place of worship is not unimportant as it is meaningful that people worship in the community of believers. The sanctuary is a continuing and vital aspect of worship and nurture in covenant faith.

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More important than the place of worship was the holiness of the one being worshiped. The Israel people served a holy God and they had to fear His uniqueness. The people must both acknowledge His holiness for himself and affirm that for the community. Chapter 12 closes with a warning against apostasy.

## Chapter 13

The people of Israel are not to compromise their worship of God and must remain dedicated to the Holy One of Israel. They must not allow themselves to be led astray by religious leaders, family, and citizens of the cities. The people can be led astray by the religious leaders and fall away from their faith in God. They were warned of the prophets who would rise and say, "**Let us go after other gods.**" The people were not to listen to them. As members of the covenant community they were to weigh the words of the teachers and religious leaders. Although contemporary religious leaders are mostly characterized by responsible theological teaching there are exceptions. "**You shall not listen to the words of that prophet.**" All religious leaders should be tested by the Lord's revelation within the covenant community.

Family members can mislead as well when they become involved in other religious beliefs. A family member can place a strong pull but they must be resisted. They could be close relation or distant still they must be resisted. "**You shall not yield to him or listen to him.**"

Popular opinion of the community can place a strong persuasion on people. We so often fall into the trap of "Others are doing it so it must be okay." Popular culture can be a hard thing to combat but we must remain strong and set in our faith.

The holiness of worship is first protected by assuring a holy place of worship. Second it is protected by refusing to be led away from the covenant relationship by religious leaders, family members, and community pressure. Our society would be well better if these principles were practiced today.

## Chapter 14 - 16

A personal relationship with God is reflected through our unique lifestyle. Some of the animals were prohibited from eating because they had not been ritually slaughtered. In some cases some animals may have been used in other worship systems. They may have been restricted because of dietetic reasons. The most important reason that these restrictions were implemented was that it demonstrated to whom the Israelites belonged. By their refusal of food that was incompatible with the holiness of God, they retained their relationship with the Lord. Such views today are primitive but the principle can still be affirmed today with integrity. Persons in a relationship with the Lord are to maintain the sanctity of that fellowship.

This chapter focuses on the uniqueness of the Israelite people. This uniqueness was because of their relationship with the Lord. "**You are the sons of the LORD your God.**" It is on this presupposition that this chapter rests. The fact that they are the people

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of God imposes its own set of demands. How was this uniqueness to find expression? These answers are given. Avoiding pagan mourning rites, (1-2) unclean foods, (3-21) and pagan ritual. (21)

## *The Holiness of Worship Structures*

For the purity of worship the worship structures must be preserved. In the Old Testament it was far less important for later biblical religion. But throughout the Bible the way in which one worshiped is important.

Although the worship structures mentioned in Deuteronomy is not all-inclusive, they present excellent principles. First the worship structure provided for one dedication of possessions. (14:22 to 15:23) Whether it was the giving of tithes, (14:22-29) granting release to those who were bound through indebtedness or other forms of servitude, (15:1-18) or dedicating the first born to the Lord, person confronted unique opportunities of worship in the expression of their faith.

The worshiper demonstrates the giving of himself by the giving of his possessions. Second is the dedication of life which was achieved through the calendar year in the festival celebrations. Passover, (16:1-8) Pentecost, (16:9-12) and Tabernacles. (16:13-17) These festivals recalled the historical events of their religious pilgrimage. They affirmed the goodness of God's gift of the earth and productivity, they praised God for His providence which had brought them through the sea and wilderness. In these moments of worship they are both proclamation and response. They remember and proclaim what God has done and give appropriate praise for His grace through their pilgrimage.

Third was justice. Justice was an integrated component of Israel's worshipping community. At the conclusion of the writers narrative on festivals there is an added call to justice. In all the towns there were to be appointed judges, and people were not to pervert justice by showing partiality towards some or taking bribes to be swayed in judgments. ***"Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue."***

How does one maintain the holiness of a worship structure? He dedicates himself through his possessions, he proclaims and responds to God's gracious gifts. There is equal justice for all in the community, as that too is a form of worship.

## Purge the Evil

Sin is so abhorrent to God that it cannot coexist with Him. The same would be true for His people. God is holy, and He expects His people to reflect His holiness. (Leviticus 11:45; Leviticus 19:2)

God required severe measures to remove sins and sinners from the covenant community. God offered forgiveness, but only for the truly repentant; those who hardened their hearts could expect God's judgment – a devouring fire, a purging process that devours sinners and their sins and leaves nothing behind. (Isaiah 33:14; Hebrews 12:28-29) Such cleansing is meant to heal the community of believers and deter others from rebelling against the Lord.

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Early in the Old Testament, God's judgment amongst His people was often immediate. (Numbers 11:1-3; Numbers 16:1-50; Joshua 7:1-26; Acts 5:1-11) God made His people aware of His demand for obedience and of the penalty for those who did not comply.

God's retribution is now reserved for the future Day of Judgment, which the sins of the unrighteous and the saints will be exposed and judged. (Romans 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Hebrews 9:27; 1 Peter 4:5) However, some instances of calamity can be understood as God's judgment on His disobedient children. (1 Corinthians 11:27-30; James 5:19-20) It is still a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Hebrews 10:31)

## Chapter 17

### *The Fate of the Apostate*

Israel was to have purity in their worship and they were to give attention to the apostate who abandoned the Lord for other gods. The offence of abandoning the Lord was serious and the punishment was death. Though today people do not face such punishment for infidelity to God in Israel they did. This fact demonstrates the seriousness of this issue in spite the contemporary view of this day. The point is clear that the purity of worship cannot be maintained if the faith is eroded by person's commitment to other gods. Contemporary persons of today exemplify their faith in the Lord by their obedience to the commands of God.

### Preaching on Authority

A second demand of covenant living is to acknowledge authority. Relationship to authority and authority figures is a troubling issue with which many people struggle but never resolve satisfactorily. Although there was no effort to suppress the integrity of personal initiative and responsibility, the biblical revelation does affirm the propriety of authority structures. In this instance Deuteronomy affirms the integrity of government; (17:8-20; 16:18-20) the equality and support of religious leadership, (18:1-8) and the validity of prophetic witness. (18:9-22)

### *The Integrity of Government*

First, the integrity of the government rest on justice. This is a fundamental principle to the juristic system. Both in ancient times and in present the courts exist for the purpose of ensuring justice throughout the land. The desire of the people throughout the land was justice for all the people.

Second, arbitration and obedience is crucial to the justice system. In the Book of Deuteronomy it has provided for the submission of difficult cases to a central court. But only when justice could not be received on the local level. The reference to the place which the Lord God will choose likely means Jerusalem. When the "Court of appeal" had given its verdict, obedience was required. ***"You shall do according to the terms of the verdict which they declare to you from that place which the LORD chooses; and you shall be careful to observe according to all that they teach you."***

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Third, government is epitomized in the choice of a king, but the king was subordinate to God. Here we see the merge of the monarchy to the theocracy. A kingship is permitted but only with stipulations given to control this form of government.

The government's integrity would be assured through the principle of justice, the acceptance of arbitration in cases of disagreement, and the subordination of kingship to the Lord.

## Chapter 18

### *The Equality and Support of Religious Leaders*

In consideration of the authority figures in the government it is only logical to speak of the religious leadership. In the government of Israel religious leadership was far more powerful than for contemporary persons in the Free Church tradition. First, the Levites were assured of physical support. It is likely that this addresses the problem of when a local shrine was replaced by a central sanctuary. When a priest was displaced there was an obligation for the community of faith to care for such ministers.

Second, the equality of the priest suggest that rural Levitical priest displaced from their local places of service with the centralization of the worship were entitled to minister at the Jerusalem Temple. It is clear from the text there is to be no discrimination within the ministry. A Levitical; priest coming from the most obscure rural village had a legitimate right to minister in the name of the Lord at the Jerusalem Temple. Such equality in any generation could advance the ministry of God's servants.

### *The Validity of the Prophetic Word*

In the third area of authority addressed the demand for covenant living as an issue of divine revelation. How can one know the revelation of God? First the uniqueness of the revelation from the Lord led to the condemnation of pagan religious practice. As the faith community searches for the bases of authority, we may be sure that it does not rest in systems and practices. The system cannot stand over the Lord or the covenant commitment.

Second, continuity in divine revelation was affirmed in the promise the Lord will rise up "a prophet like me" who will bear the Words of God.

Third was the compulsive power of the prophetic word was such that it commanded the obedience from those who heard. It would be decreed destruction for false prophets who pretended to speak the word of the Lord but who spoke their own word.

Forth the content of prophetic word was the test of its authenticity. Did prophetic content come to pass and was it consistent with performance? This is the criteria are continuing test for the validity of the prophetic word. But the implication is clear that only the prophetic word of the Lord is the one people are obliged to hear. Only to word of the false prophet need not be listened to. This is the bases that the **"prophet who speaks a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die."**

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## Preaching on Justice

The concern for justice in the Old Testament focused not only on general principles within the community but especially on criminal cases. Every effort was expended to assure that justice was implemented, with equality both to the accused and to the victim. Efforts were made to protect persons from intemperate wrath, to protect property rights, and to protect an accused person against a false witness.

## Chapter 19

### *Protecting Persons against Intemperate Wrath*

The cities of refuge were for those who killed either by accident or deliberately could take refuge until his case was decided. This was to protect the refugee from the avenger of blood. If a person was killed for whatever reason, the nearest of kin to the deceased was obliged to avenge the blood of his kinsmen. Thus the cities of refuge were established as a place of safety till the case could be decided in court. But if the defendant was found to be a murderer the elders of the city were to hand him over to the avenger. But the principle is clear that people of God are to protect persons against intemperate wrath.

### *Respecting Property Rights*

The covenant community is to respect the property rights of its members. People should not have to fear if their property will be infringed upon. Reference can be found to this principle in the eighth and tenth of the Ten Commandments.

### *Protecting Persons against False Witness*

Throughout the Old Testament the problem of a false witness is addressed and must have been a serious problem amongst the people. A person who had been accused was protected in two ways from a malicious witness. First a single witness could not prevail against him for any crime. A person could only be convicted on the testimony of multiple witnesses. Second, a most interesting law had developed to discourage a false witness. In cases where the witness was proven to be false, "**then you shall do to him just as he had intended to do to his brother. Thus you shall purge the evil from among you.**" An example to the extreme would be if a man was on trial for murder and a witness against him was found to be false, the witness would be put to death. This principle was to create integrity with witnesses in the courts of law.

## Preaching on Humanitarian Conduct of War

On first examination, to speak of the humanitarian conduct of a war may appear altogether inconsistent. But historically war has been subject to limitations because of humanitarian concerns. In ancient Israel holy war was central to the conquest, and the specific stipulations governing its conduct are instructive for understanding the humanitarian concern which characterized such a war,

## Chapter 20

### *Conscription of Men for War*

Those who were called into the army of God for warfare embodied special exemptions. Those who had built a new house but they had not dedicated it, or those who had planted

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a vineyard but not had eaten of its fruit, and those who were engaged to be married and had yet consummated their marriage were exempt from military duty.

## *Conciliatory Efforts Toward the Enemy*

The Israelites were to be conciliatory towards the enemy before making their attack. They were not only to offer peace to their enemies but to extend peace to distant cities. However the cities that were in the area that the Lord had given them were to be exterminated according to the guidelines given for holy war. These instructions may not be acceptable in later biblical revelation the emphasis of conciliation remains a worthy goal.

## *Consideration for the Countryside*

The countryside was to be respected in the time of war. Ecological care of the land was a concern for the Lord. The tress were not to be cut down but they were allowed to eat the fruit of them. There was an exception for the trees that weren't fruit bearing. Those tress could be cut down and used for breastworks. The populations were dependent upon the fruit bearing trees and the Israelites were forbidden to destroy them.

## Chapter 21

### *Procedures for an Unsolved Murder*

When an unsolved murder has been committed the procedure to gain forgiveness is different than the usual practice. The sacrifice for this killing did not take place at the tabernacle and there was nothing said as to what to do with the blood. This particular procedure seem to be an old procedure taken over by the Israelites upon entering the Promised Land.

The reason for the sacrifice is clear. The sin of murder makes the land unclean. The Israelites cannot practice true worship in an unclean land. This unusual sacrifice was carried out to receive forgiveness for the blood guilt of the unknown murderer. This formula was seemingly the right way to please God.

### *Captive Women and Human Dignity*

Women who had been captured were to be treated with respect. In the history of war the treatment of women who have been captured has been an embarrassment in history. But in Israel if one saw attraction to a captive woman that person was not to molest her. The captive woman was brought to one's home where she would be purified in purification rites. Only after that could the warrior marry her. This came with this reservation, ***"It shall be, if you are not pleased with her, then you shall let her go wherever she wishes."*** The woman could not be sold into slavery, ***"but you shall certainly not sell her for money, you shall not mistreat her, because you have humbled her."***

### Preaching on Morality in Conduct

The legal section which extends from Chapter 21 through Chapter 25 is composed of a wide variety of stipulations which focus on morality in conduct. Common life was regulated

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by divine law, (21:1 to 22:12) and purity of sexual standards was to characterize the covenant community. (22:13-30) Holiness necessary for God's presence was protected, (23:1-14) and personal morality was governed by covenant stipulation. (23:15 to 25:19)

## *Regulating Common Life by Divine Principles*

Though the stipulations vary they focus on corporate life by divine law. All of corporate life was a concern for the covenant faith such that unsolved murder which assumes corporate responsibility, (21:1-2) the inheritance rights of a person, (21:15-17) or the worthless son who disgraced his parents. (21:18-21) There were even stipulations for the removal of convicted criminals, so that the accursed man would not defile the land, as hanging on a tress was a symbol of divine curse. (21:22-23)

## Chapter 22

On the personal level there are laws which was the concern one should have for their neighbor, (22:1-12) lost property was to be returned to its owner. (22:1-3) One must be ready to volunteer assistance to his neighbor in need, (22:4) and the animals were to be protected. (22:6-7) There were responsibilities for others, a person who built a house with a flat roof must also build a parapet on the roof. (22:8) The ways that people were to dress were prescribed, that the dress of people would not be mixed in incompatible ways. (22:5,9-11)

## *Protecting the Purity of Sexual Standards*

In the covenant community every protection is taken to protect the purity of sexual standards. Though these standards may seem too harsh by today's standards the principles still apply. There should be a concern for sexual purity in the covenant community, as the Church has an imperative responsibility to address that most personal relationship. They are to be concerned with accusations of chastity (13-21) and exemplify the ideal of sexual purity. Although one would hardly deal with sexual promiscuity in the same manner today the ethical idealism of the law is commendable. This section deals with adultery, (Verse 22) seduction of a virgin, (Verses 23-29) incest, (Verse 20) demands sexual purity in the covenant faith.

## Chapter 23

### *Protecting One's Relationship with the Lord*

As in Leviticus and Numbers we see again the holiness needed to enter into the presence of God in the covenant community. We see here in Deuteronomy certain persons are excluded from the assembly of the Lord, as their condition would violate that holiness. The people excluded were the eunuch, (Verse 1) the bastard, (Verse 2) and those who prevented Israel from passing through their land during the wilderness pilgrimage. (Verses 3-6) In the camp of the military protection from uncleanness of bodily discharges was observed. (Verses 10-14)

In later revelation from God some of these laws have been subsumed. But the principle of maintaining a holy community in the presence of God are valid today.

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## *Personal Morality and Conduct*

There are nineteen areas addressed in these stipulations. They include refuge for escaped slaves, (Verses 15-16) the rejection of sexual irregularity, (Verses 17-18) interest charged on loans, (Verses 19-20) and the keeping of one's word. (Verses 21-23) A person could use the crop of his neighbor to satisfy his personal hunger. (Verses 24-25)

## Chapter 24

There were also concerns for marriage, the prohibiting of remarriage to a divorced wife (Verses 1-4) and the exemption of a newly married from the army or any business. (Verse 5) For the protection of families one's mill or upper millstone were prohibited from pledges for debts. (Verse 6) An Israelite could not become a slave. (Verse 7) It was the responsibility of the priest to care for the diseases that caused people to become unclean. Leprosy was such a disease. (Verses 8-9) Moses' sister Mariam was a historical reminder. (Numbers 12:9) Pledges and collateral for loans were both collected, used, and returned in such a manner to respect human dignity. (Verses 10-13) The servant was not to be oppressed, (Verses 14-15) and there was to be no corporate punishment for individual crimes. (Verse 16) There was to be help for the helpless. (Verses 17-22)

## True Justice

The community of God's people in Old Testament Israel was to be responsible for the well-being of widows and orphans and foreigners. The Israelites were to represent the just God who they served and always remember that they had been enslaved and defenseless people in Egypt. How could they, the beneficiaries of God's grace, ignore the rights and needs of the most vulnerable who lived among them?

Every society has social structures that separate the powerful from the weak and the privileged from the ill-favored. This was true in Old Testament Israel despite its unique constitution and commission as a "holy nation," (Exodus 19:6) judges and other officials charged with upholding the law might tend to favor individuals with financial means, high social standing, or community influence, especially when these individuals offer bribes. However, God cannot be bribed, nor does He show partiality. The rich and the poor, the powerful and the weak, the exalted and the downtrodden are all alike to Him.

Those charged with applying the law in God's name must be scrupulously honest and upright in carrying out their duties. Justice that falls short of God's standard is not true justice, and those responsible for its corruption can expect full retribution from the judge of all the earth. The prophets of Israel understood the need for equity and justice and often called for the application of these principles to community and national life. (Isaiah 1:17; Isaiah 10:1-4; Isaiah 14-19; Ezekiel 22:23-29; Amos 2:6-8; Habakkuk 1:4) The New Testament also appeals for proper treatment of the poor and disadvantaged and speaks of God's displeasure when they are neglected. (Matthew 23:23; 2 Corinthians 9:6-10; James 2:1-7)

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## Chapter 25

Punishments had its limitations. (Verses 1-3) The beast of burden were to be cared for. (Verses 4) There were laws to regulate the marriage of a brother's widow. (Verses 5-10) Immodest assault of another person was prohibited, this was probably for the religious overtones of sexuality than for immodesty. (Verses 11-12) Proper weights and measures were to be used in trading. (Verses 13-16)

In the remembrance of Amalek we see a difference from the book of Exodus (Exodus 17:8-16) than in Deuteronomy. (Verses 17-19)

Legislating public or private morality inevitably fails but the idealism remains. Through appropriate ethical and theological guidelines, the covenant community is to exalt personal morality and conduct.

## Chapter 26

### *Preaching on Worship and Social Concern*

It has been observed that every religion must have a system of ideas, pattern of ethics, and a means to achieve the joy of salvation. All three of these factors are embedded in this chapter. We find one of the earlier theological statements on the nature of God's relationship to Israel and a summation of what Israel believed about God's action. (Verses 5-10)

Israel declared annually the offering of first fruits, Israel declared their faith. Israel had found in their celebration the joy of their salvation experienced through the hand of God. (Verse 8) The tithe of their produce was to be shared with the needy, (Verses 12-15) calling Israel to an ethical commitment within the covenant faith. What you believe about God, how you relate to other persons, and the way in which you celebrate the joy of salvation in worship are appropriate concerns for both the ancient Temple and temporary Church.

### *Preaching on Covenant Fidelity*

This legal section of Deuteronomy closes with a brief exhortation to covenant fidelity. It is brief but has emphasis on the demands of covenant living. (Verses 12-26) On that day Israel declared that the Lord was her God, that she would keep His commandments and obey His voice. (Verse 17) The Lord also assumed responsibility in the covenant relationship. The Lord promised to make Israel His possession, to set her a nation above all others, and to make them a holy people. (Verses 18-19) The Lord will keep faith with His obligation to the covenant relationship and a comparable obligation rest upon the Israelite people.

### Joys and Hardships of Following God

Following the legal section of Deuteronomy these chapters appropriately set before Israel the alternatives of cursing and blessing – cursing if the law was not maintained, blessing if the law was fulfilled. Such an emphasis was consistent with the twofold focus on proclamation and exhortation throughout the book. Moses proclaimed the acts of God,

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then exhorted Israel to respond to God's revelation in history. So here the law was proclaimed, and Israel was challenged to respond positively to those covenant stipulations.

## Chapter 27

### *Renewing the Covenant*

Israel renews the covenant by publishing the law on stones. These stones were to be set up on Mount Ebal. After publishing the law they were to have a covenant renewal ceremony with a formal oath of loyalty, "***This day you have become a people for the LORD your God. "You shall therefore obey the LORD your God, and do His commandments and His statutes which I command you today."***" Also in the renewal of the covenant was the proclamation of the curses. (Verses 11-26) Though they are stated as curses they may actually be commandments. They are related to idolatry, (Verse 15) disrespect for parents, (Verse 16) dishonesty concerning property, (Verse 17), the abuse of a blind man, (Verse 18) perverting justice, (verse 19) sexual aberrations including incest, probably involving multiple marriages and a wife other than the child's blood mother, (verse 20) bestiality, (Verse 21) intercourse with one's sister, regardless of the mother, (Verse 22) intercourse with one's mother-in-law, (Verse 23) the murder of a neighbor, (Verse 24) bribery, (Verse 25) and failure to confirm the law by doing it. (Verse 26) (Exodus 20)

### Curses and Blessing

Nearly all treaty and covenant text from the ancient Near East contained curses and blessings. The curses were leveled against those who violated the terms of the agreement, while blessings were promised to the faithful. This was particularly true of suzerain-vassal covenants like Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomy presented to the assembly of Israel what God expected of the nation. The covenant required the nation of Israel to obey the Lord, and the Israelites had pledged themselves to obey. (Exodus 19:8) The curses and blessings section spells out how God would reward their obedience and judge their disobedience. The curses receive more emphasis than the blessings, perhaps because people naturally pay more attention to promises than warnings. Promised blessings in the future can easily be understood as providing well-being. However, judgment is more abstract and needs detailed, graphic description. God emphasizes the curses to drive home the consequences of wrongdoing. These warnings were very much in line with Jesus' warnings about things to come. (Matthew 24:1 – Matthew 35:46)

Israel's subsequent history bears witness to God's promise of both the blessings and the curses. When Israel was faithful to the covenant of God, He blessed the people. When they rebelled, He brought judgment upon them. Israel's whole history is summarized in 2 Kings 17:7-20 when the Israelites broke the first two commandments, they proceeded to violate the whole covenant. Their rebellion brought upon them the curses of chapter 28.

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## Chapter 28

### *The Blessing of Obeying God*

The positive aspects of fidelity the blessings were isolated for Israel. We note first that there was a conditional aspect to those blessings. (Verse 1) Second the blessings were comprehensive and encompassed the whole life. (Verse 2-6) Third the blessings also touched on areas such as defeat of one's enemies, (Verse 7) one's barns and all of his endeavors, (Verse 8) the relationship of Israel to other people and to the Lord, (Verses 9-10) the bounty of cattle and the fruit of the ground, (Verse 11) the rains in the time of need, (Verse 12) and the general exaltation as long as the nation remained faithful to the Lord. (Verses 13-14)

### *The Curse of Disobeying God*

At first the writer uses a causal relationship between disobedience and the curses experienced in life. (Verse 15) The nature of the curse constituted a second element in the charge, whether one was in the city or in the field, (Verse 16) every aspect of life would be cursed. (Verses 18-19) The curses also included the calamity of nature, (Verses 20-24) conflict in war and its horror, (Verses 25-35) conflict of good, (Verses 36-46) the horrors of conquest and siege, (Verses 47-57) and a summary of other calamities. (Verses 58-68)

As it was in ancient Israel so it is in contemporary life. There is a blessing in following the Lord with fidelity, just as there are curses for those who abandon the Lord. The blessings and curses may vary but covenant believers agree that there are inherent blessings in fellowship with the Lord. There is also an equal barrenness of life apart from that communion.

### Daily Dedication of Oneself to God

The third speech of Moses introduced an emphasis on covenant renewal. The covenant had been made at Sinai, (29:1) but at the passage of time there was need for covenant renewal. Just as in contemporary life there remains the constant need to renew one's covenant relationships, so on the plains of Moab Moses led the Israelites to reaffirm their faith. But the passage here moved beyond Moab to include covenant renewal ceremonies which occurred following Israel's occupation of the land. Indeed, beyond the words of the text one hears a word that clamors for covenant renewal as an ongoing experience for the people of God. Again, the polarities of proclamation and exhortation were intertwined. Deuteronomy 29:1-15 forms a confessional statement of God's action in history, counterbalanced by a moving call to commitment and obedience. (29:16 to 30:20) As suggested throughout the study of Deuteronomy, the book is one of preached law and general exhortation that the people live out of covenant relationships and their demands.

### *Confessing What God has Done*

What are the bases that one should accept the stipulations of the covenant? We see in these passages that the clear answer is because of what God has done in the life of the follower. (Verses 1-8) Secondly it is because of what God had done from the time they left Egypt to the time on the plains of Moab. (Verses 1-8) ***"So keep the words of this***

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**covenant to do them, that you may prosper in all that you do."** This base of covenant obedience remains the same through all generations. We are to consider what the Lord has done in our life and respond towards Him against the background of His grace. The relationship is always the greater concern than the stipulations themselves. Just as God's grace precedes that law, even in ancient Israel. Now Israel stands on the threshold of the Promised Land promised long ago to their forefathers and Moses reminded them that God had fulfilled His promise. (Verses 10-15) God is faithful and true and requires fidelity from those who are in a covenant relationship with Him.

## *Committing Oneself to Obedience*

We see that Moses called his people to a renewed commitment to God in five distinct ways. First there was not be no hypocrisy within the covenant. People were to be faithful in their relationships. (Verses 19:16-28) In the case of such hypocrisy that Lord would not be forgiving, **"The LORD shall never be willing to forgive him, but rather the anger of the LORD and His jealousy will burn against that man, and every curse which is written in this book will rest on him, and the LORD will blot out his name from under heaven."** Second they are to remember the mystery and the challenge of the revelation. (Verse 29) Here we read, **"The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law."** The people are to live out the demands of the revelation which God has made clear to them. They also are to learn to live in the mystery of God which God has buried in impenetrable mystery.

## Chapter 30

And third the covenant relationship demands that one live in repentance and renewal. (Verses 1-10) Judgment is a reality in the life of people and it should lead a sensible person to repentance. (Verses 1-2) Restoration is always a possibility and the renewal of their life in the Lord. (Verses 3-10) Forth, one is to maintain a dedicated awareness to the Word of God. (Verses 11-14) One does not need to ask, **"Who will go up to heaven for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?"** The Word of revelation is not an impossible dream but a present reality. Fifth, it is important for people living in the covenant community to live knowing that it is man's choice. (Verses 15-20) That choice is either life or death, good or evil, are ultimate choices which reach the farthest places of human existence. Hear the Word of God, **"See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity"** (Verse 15) **"I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, by loving the LORD your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him; for this is your life and the length of your days, that you may live in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them."** (Verses 19-20)

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## God's Covenant Love

Often in the Bible, God's love is understood in the ordinary sense that God has strongly affectionate feelings towards humankind. In certain contexts, such as the covenant document of Deuteronomy, love refers to God's commitment to His people.

In the ancient Near East, a conquering king would characteristically speak of his relationship to vassal peoples as a relationship of love, meaning that he had chosen those people to enjoy his favor and to benefit from his protection in exchange for their loyal service. Similarly God chose Israel to be His servant nation not because the Israelites deserved it but because He loved them. Put another way, He loved them because He had chosen them.

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