

EVANGELICAL BIBLE COLLEGE OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA



DEUTERONOMY 27-34

(LIFE OF MOSES VOLUME 8 – BLESSING OR CURSING?)

BY

DR JOHN C McEWAN

11 April 2014

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 27	2
CHAPTER 28	7
CHAPTER 29	23
CHAPTER 30	29
CHAPTER 31	34
CHAPTER 32	43
CHAPTER 33	51
CHAPTER 34	58

be he that lieth with his sister, the daughter of his father, or the daughter of his mother. And all the people shall say, Amen. 23 Cursed be he that lieth with his mother in law. And all the people shall say, Amen. 24 Cursed be he that smiteth his neighbour secretly. And all the people shall say, Amen. 25 Cursed be he that taketh reward to slay an innocent person. And all the people shall say, Amen. 26 Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them. And all the people shall say, Amen.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 3. Moses stands with the leadership of the nation to affirm these truths here before us; both national judges and tribal leaders. Military, Judicial and Pastoral leaders are all involved, for all must centre their own lives and work in these principles. Moses will distil the doctrines he has re-covered here in Deuteronomy into simple principles that will sum up the righteous demands of the Lord for His people. The future leadership must stand with Moses and bind themselves by their presence beside him to the principles he will speak aloud here as the summary of the heart of the Law. If they are not “bound” to the Law, they will be “bound” to the consequences of disobedience.

The great speech that is the content of Deuteronomy so far, was apparently given in one day to the People of Israel. Moses reminds them again here at the end of the day of the solemn obligation they have to hear, believe, and obey all that he has said to them. They must tribally, and individually, commit themselves to obedience. Their leaders, by standing with Moses as he speaks, are binding themselves to lead in obedience to the words of God through him.

This is the picture of biblical leadership that reminds us of God’s demands upon us all. We are to bind ourselves together as spiritual leaders, and commit ourselves to complete obedience to the holy demands of the Lord our God. Only then can we lead our people in obedience. Philippians 3:13-17. The memorial pillar upon which the “Ten Words” are written will stand as a reminder to the people for many generations of their need to be obedient to the revealed Word of God. Joshua will erect these stones in obedience to Moses words after the defeat of the king of Ai. Joshua 8:30-34.

The first act of national obedience Moses demands of them as a total people is the erection of this large replica of the “Ten Words” (the Ten Commandments) upon a great plastered stone cairn upon the slopes of Mount Ebal. They are to formally set up the largest stone(s) they can find there and cover the great pillar made by them with lime plaster and write upon the formed monument the “Ten Words” of Exodus 20:1-17.

The nation is to be established upon these words, and all are to read them, and all are to remember the significance of their being erected at this place, for here the Lord led them after they crossed the Jordan, and had given them the victories over Jericho and Ai. These stone cairns will be a memorial of the miracle of their crossing of the river, although they do not know it at this point. Joshua 3:5-17.

They will be a reminder that victory comes through obedience to the Word of God. Joshua 6:20. They will also be a reminder of the blessings and curses that will come upon them depending on their attitude to the Law encapsulated upon these stones. They will stand in silent witness to the truth that they must obey to be blessed as God intends for his people in all ages and places.

The reading of the Law of Moses will be a central principle for all Israelites, and it will contribute to the literacy of this nation throughout history. While other nations undervalued education, Israel taught all its people to read and write from the earliest days so that all could read and understand God’s Word to them. Literacy is always a fruit of spirituality – for all God’s people will desire to read his words to them.

Verses 4 - 8. The exact location for the erection of this pillar is now given. It is to be upon the slopes of Mt Ebal. Moses will later direct that the re-reading of the entire Law is to occur from there also. Joshua will do this and read aloud all these words again in the natural amphitheatre that exists on the slopes of that mountain, and in the valley between it and Mount Gerizim. In this valley is the town of Shechem, where the patriarchs had lived, and where the murder of all the men of the town had occurred. The Lord’s promises to the patriarchs were beginning to be fulfilled as the nation stood in this valley, and so the “Hope of the Patriarch” would be heard read aloud in their past place of abode.

In this place a new altar is also to be built of unhewn stones. No metal or other tool is to be used to shape the stones, but twelve great stones are to be chosen so that they fit together and form an altar. Man’s work is not to form this altar, but the provision of God is to be searched out, and the stones that fit together without any tools of man only are to be used. It is a picture of the plan and purposes of God. God is working His purposes out and He has provision for all things, and the believer’s job is to search out the provision of the Lord, not try to shape things in our own strength.

All the major Levitical offerings are to be offered on that new altar on that day it is set up. Leviticus 1-3. Moses then returns to the subject of the pillar that is set up beside the altar. The words of the Lord upon the great pillar are to be written “very plainly/clearly” so that all can see them and read them easily. None is to find any difficulty in reading and understanding God’s revelation.

There is great truth here for all pastor-teachers of the Word of God. We are not to make the words of the Lord hard to understand, but make them as easily understood as possible, so that all might know the truth and be saved. Habakkuk 2:1-5, 14, 2 Corinthians 3:12. My late mentor, DR J Vernon McGee, of Thru the Bible Radio, used to say often, “Put the cookies on the bottom shelf where the kiddies can get to them”. If the simplest child, who has learned to read and write cannot understand you Pastor, simplify your words – your job is to communicate.

God's purpose is to have a people that are educated in, and passionate in the truth, holy before Him, and will serve Him, being lights in the darkness of the world. God's desire for us all, as His children, is that we might rejoice in the truth and walk in it with His anointed power. Isaiah 61:3, Habakkuk 3:17-20, Philippians 4:4-13. God desires to bless us in time and in eternity – and that can only happen when we know the truth, believe the truth, and apply the truth into the very fabric of our daily lives.

Verses 9 – 10. It is intriguing that the priest and Levites note that, “this day thou hast become the people of God”. Was it not at Mt Horeb that they became the people of God? These words here are a repetition of the words recorded in Deuteronomy 26:16-19. This may be a clue to the answer to our question. When the Law was given at Horeb the people were told the extent of the Law and they were expected to start to keep it. They will fail to do so over the forty years of wandering, even forgetting to circumcise the males! Joshua 5:2-10.

It is as if the people have had forty years of apprenticeship in the Law and their duties as members of the Covenant People, and only at this point, when in the land, they are required to take their oath of obedience to the Lord. It is only now that they are required to swear their allegiance to the Lord and accept formally the requirement of full obedience to the provisions of the Law. They have had enough time to be sure they fully know what they are promising to fulfil.

It is on the plains of Moab that Israel becomes fully the people of the Lord by their swearing of obedience to the Mosaic Law, and this will be confirmed upon Mt Ebal, so that on both sides of the Jordan the oath is taken. The nation is thus fully and finally established, and their days of wandering, (and immaturity) are over. Now they are expected to function fully as members of the people of God. Their forty year training period is over, action is now required to establish themselves as a nation before God. Ephesians 4:17-24, 1 Peter 1:14-19, 4:1-5.

We become full citizens of the kingdom of God and heaven itself at the point of salvation, but that is just the beginning. Like Israel, we must grow into our inheritance, and utilize all the spiritual resources we have been given in order to live and work as full “serving and mature members” of the kingdom.

There is a world of difference between a citizen who is active and one who is inactive; between one who is useful to their nation and one who is criminal or constantly disobedient to its laws. We are called to grow in the grace and the knowledge of the Lord so that we might serve the Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit and in the Truth of the Word of God. 2 Peter 3:18.

God wants useful soldiers who can use their weapons well in the Angelic Conflict. He wants farmers of the Lord's fields who know how to use their farming equipment and bring in the harvest of souls. He wants ambassadors who know their instructions and fulfil them fully. 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, 2 Corinthians 5:10-20, Ephesians 6:10-18, 2 Timothy 2:1-10.

Verses 11 – 14. Notice the tribal groups that are to utter the blessings; they are the sons of Jacob's two legitimate wives. The tribes that utter the curses are the descendants of the concubines of Jacob; the maids of his wives. Genesis 29:28-30:24. These chapters of Genesis make sad reading, for Jacob enters into gross sexual sin and the strife in his family results from the way the sons were born. Jacob was wrong in what he did, but the sons were not judged for their father's sin, for God does not do that, unless the sons follow their father in evil.

Remember, and reassure yourself by reading the passages below, that the “Four Generation Curse” only operates when each generation hates the Lord. Repentance always restores the Lord's blessing, for He is gracious towards all who come to Him. Exodus 20:5-6, Psalms 51:9, Proverbs 10:12, Isaiah 1:18, 44:22, Jeremiah 5:25, Ezekiel 18:1-4, 19-24.

The Levites are to read aloud these words of Moses and all the tribes are to shout aloud “Amen”, or “so be it upon us”. They are to formally accept the consequences of disobedience and the rewards of obedience in the midst of the land the Lord has given them. Joshua 8:32-35.

Verses 15 – 26. The specific curses relate to deliberate disobedience to the spirit of the Ten Commandments, but there are specific curses for things not specifically mentioned in the “Ten Words”. The people are to realise that those who break these fundamental laws of freedom and grace in the Land of Israel will not be blessed there and will lose tenure to the land, just as the Canaanites did before them. They must realise that they are not just to obey the Ten Words, but heed the spirit behind them also, and be obedient to all the things that are in the heart of the Lord.

Cursed here means to be bitterly judged and condemned to the terrible, yet natural, consequences of their evil actions. The root of the ancient Hebrew word for “cursed” comes from an Akkadian word that means to “bind tightly”, and it reflects the consequences of binding yourself to gods and idols, for they bind you to their own fate. It means to be tied to the fate of the thing you attach yourself to. As God has judged and will judge all the gods and the demons behind them, just so He will judge all those who follow the religions of Satan. Revelation 20:10-15.

Let us see the curses and note as we go how they relate to the principles behind the “Ten Words”.

1. Anyone making another god to place alongside the Lord and anyone worshipping any thing, place, or personality other than the Lord God is “cursed”. They will have no spiritual blessing in the land God gives, for only those who acknowledge Him alone can share and enjoy His blessings. They are to have no “secret gods” hidden away in cupboards. All secret practise of evil will lead to very public destruction of the individual and the nation.

2. To abuse ones parents in any way is to bring the curse of God upon that person. To ignore their needs and let them suffer is also covered by this curse. Remember the concept of "curse"; there are natural consequences for all who refuse to honour the third divine institution of the family.
3. To abuse a neighbour financially and steal from them is a great evil. Respect for property of others brings great judgment upon the thieves and the nation that tolerates theft, be it individual, corporate, or national. My own nation has suffered and is still suffering from the curse that flows from the theft of Maori Land in the 1860s through 1880s. The legacy of this is with us today. We have added to this with corporate thefts, where businessmen have established companies, paid themselves millions from their companies, borrowed other people's money, and then the company has failed. The evil businessmen have kept the money they took from their company, but their investors have lost their life savings. These things bring a curse upon a nation and upon the people who do such things. Such evils must be set right or those who do them will die under God's judgment!
4. To abuse the physically vulnerable is to violate the free will of that person, and insult their integrity before the Lord who made them. Their disability should lead others to compassion, but if others treat the disabled person badly, then they themselves will enter the zone of the "curse", and they will "bind themselves" to the consequences of lack of compassion, and suffer at the hands of those who lack compassion also. Deuteronomy 28:58ff, Jeremiah 6:22-30, 50:38-52.
5. To insult, abuse, or ignore the needs of the poor, and use the Justice System against those who have less than yourself will bring God's wrath upon you. The Western nations are lining themselves up for this judgment today. When individuals and corporations sue in court those unable to pay the expensive lawyers, it is a great evil; for they know their opponents will fold under the financial pressures upon them. This manipulation of the Legal system to abuse those poorer than you is to place yourself under the curse of God.
6. To violate the sexual boundaries and have a sexual relationship with a parent's partner is to bind your self to judgment. Sex is not to cross a generational barrier within a family; incest brings destruction to any individual and family structure.
7. Bestiality and all forms of pornography are great evils and are to be shunned and avoided by all who value the Lord's blessing upon them and their families. The addictive power of the evil of all sexual sin will destroy people and lead to their personality's destruction, as well as their body's decay and death.
8. To commit incest of any form is to bring judgment upon your self. All siblings, even half siblings are to be outside the boundary for a sexual partnership.
9. The mother in law of a man is to be outside the boundary for sexual relationship, whether the father in law, or his wife is dead or not.
10. Secret violence against a neighbour is to bring the curse of violence upon the murderer. To let loose the demon of anger and murder within a society is to allow death to reign in that place. Those who allow violence to rule will reap the rewards of violence.
11. The "hit man" who receives money to kill another is also under God's curse. To kill others without just cause is to be a murderer and that means you are under the curse of God.
12. To fail to affirm the code of God is to live outside the plan and purposes of God and to be under the curse of God. Man has only two options; to serve the Lord in spirit and truth, or join the great rebellion against God and His standards, and that means to side with Satan and the demons. There is only one end to that alliance; judgment is that end.

Many of the curses above relate to sexual sin, and this is because it has been at the centre of Satan's strategy to destroy mankind since the beginning. These curses remind us of the need to set our guard against sexual sins, and go through each day with all our spiritual armour on. It also reminds us that we need a constant mental attitude of hatred towards sexual sin of all sorts, including the passive sins involved in pornography. Zechariah 3:2-4, Jude 22-23. It is tolerance for evil that allows its influence to grow over us. We need to hate sin far more than we often do!

Let us also remember the "good news" regarding the curse of sin. The "Good News" is the truth that in Christ, through the sacrifice of His Blood, and through our repentance and confession of our sin, the stain of it is washed away, and we are recovered to the place of blessing. God alone can take those under the above curses and bring them to the place of blessing. Salvation and daily sanctification are God's provisions for mankind to be able to live in the place of blessing rather than under the curse that began in the Garden of Eden and will end at the Great White Throne judgment.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. God's standards are to be clearly taught and fully known by God's people. They are also to be taught aloud whenever there is opportunity. 2 Timothy 4:2. We are to make the truth as clear to all as it is possible to make it. God wants to communicate with all mankind. He wants none to be without excuse before His judgment throne.
2. We have become the children of God, the heirs of Christ, the citizens of heaven. We are meant to live as mature and obedient citizens of the Kingdom of God. Let us be obedient to the Word of God and follow His laws, in order that we might serve as we are called to serve. Jesus words are clear; "if you love me, keep my commandments". John 15:10.
3. We are either "bound" to the Law of God in our hearts, and hate the evil of the enemy, or we are "bound" to the evil of the enemy. If we bind ourselves to evil, we will be bound to the judgment that evil brings. This fundamental "law of natural consequence" should be taught more clearly in our churches and societies than it is today. There are only two

options for mankind; we are either for God and obedient to His Word, or we are against Him, and under the curse. We drink from the CUP of the Lord, or the cup of judgment! We are called to hate sin and evil, and show no tolerance for it at all. We are to shun the company of evil men and women and flee from all iniquity. 1 Corinthians 6:18, 1 Timothy 6:3-11.

4. Cursing is turned to blessing in the beloved one who went to the Cross for us all. 1 John 1:5-10, 2:1-2. The Lord's provision for us all is sufficient to deal with all our sins and bring grace, mercy and cleansing where previously there was only the curse of sin and evil upon us.

REFLECTIONS UPON THE BELIEVER'S LAWS OF LIFE – LAWS OF LIBERTY AND RESPONSIBILITY

1. THE LAW WHICH WE ARE NOT UNDER - THE MOSAIC LAW

Christ fulfilled the requirements of the Mosaic Law (Matthew 5:17). If the Holy Spirit has control over us we automatically fulfil the righteousness of the Law.

2. THE LAW OF LIBERTY

This law is directed towards oneself. Biblically speaking you have the right to do certain things that will not cause you personally to fail the Lord in any way. (1 Corinthians 8:8)

3. THE LAW OF LOVE

This law takes other believers into consideration. In effect this law says that because of your love for the weaker brethren and in order not to offend or upset them you refrain from doing certain things which you have the liberty to do.

You refrain not because they are wrong in themselves but rather you wish to help other believers rather than hinder them. (1 Corinthians 8:9)

4. THE LAW OF EXPEDIENCY

This law concerns the unbeliever. It is expedient that your life tells the world of Christ. The unbeliever has set up standards of conduct for the Christian.

Therefore you refrain from or do certain legitimate things - not because they are wrong but because they may offend an unbeliever and prevent him from seeing the real issue that Christ Died For His Sins (1 Corinthians 9, 20-23)

5. THE LAW OF SUPREME SACRIFICE

This law is directed towards God. It involves the believer forsaking a completely legitimate function in life in order to more perfectly serve the Lord. Missionaries often function under this law when they live in primitive conditions on the mission field. This law can also operate under Australian conditions. (Matthew 3:1-6)

6. PRINCIPLE:

As Christians we have liberty, but total freedom for ourselves may enslave others. We have to use our liberty in such a responsible manner that it does not infringe on the liberty of others. As Christians we must act responsibly, as the soldiers, ambassadors and servants of the King of kings who we are. (Ephesians 5:15)

Notes

CHAPTER 28**INTRODUCTION**

Chapter twenty seven was the introduction to the next four chapters, where Moses expounds upon the consequences of obedience and disobedience to the words of the Law he has given. Many of the things he will say in these chapters are prophetic. He foretells the history of Israel with a frightening accuracy, and notes things that will happen as far out as 70-71 AD. His words are a sober reminder of his prophetic status – and the accuracy of God’s Word regarding future events.

Personally I feel a shiver up my spine as I read these next chapters, for they are reminder that this man Moses is a prophet of the highest order and his words are the accurate recording of history in advance. They are a powerful reminder that the Lord God we serve is the master of all the details of history. We are in the hands of the Lord of all lords and the King of all kings, the creator of the space-time universe, and the one who will wind all things up. 2 Peter 3:10-18.

Moses point to the people is that spiritual blessing awaits all who follow the Lord in spirit and in truth, but the consequences of persistent disobedience are simply too awful to contemplate. The words of the next chapters build upon his previous writings in Exodus 23:20-33, and Leviticus 26:1ff. Both these books may have been written early in the wilderness wanderings and been the basis for the teaching Moses did through that period.

DEUTERONOMY 28:1-14

28:1 And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: **2** And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God. **3** Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field. **4** Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. **5** Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store. **6** Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out. **7** The LORD shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways. **8** The LORD shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto; and he shall bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. **9** The LORD shall establish thee an holy people unto himself, as he hath sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, and walk in his ways. **10** And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the LORD; and they shall be afraid of thee. **11** And the LORD shall make thee plenteous in goods, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, in the land which the LORD swore unto thy fathers to give thee. **12** The LORD shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow. **13** And the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the LORD thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them: **14** And thou shalt not go aside from any of the words which I command thee this day, to the right hand, or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them.

REFLECTIONS

Verse 1. Moses will repeat this principle three times in the first part of this address, in verse 1, verse 9, and verses 13-14. The word translated “diligently” here means to work with focused energy, enthusiasm, speed and concentration. It is a word for passion in application, and it is wholehearted energy that Moses is calling the people to in their obedience of God’s Word. People are to hear with focused energy and enthusiasm, and then apply what they hear with fanatical concentration on getting their obedience right before God.

The results of obedience are great. They will become a people above all others, for they will truly become the people of God before the nations of the world and be the “light bearers” for God amongst the nations. This was the destiny of Israel, and through failure and disaster, they did their job and brought mankind to the place where the Messiah came.

Verses 2 – 4. The Lord desires to bless His people. Our response ought to be to bless the name of the Lord and praise Him. Psalms 29:11, 67:1-7, 103:1-2, 104:1, 35, 115:12-18, Hebrews 6:14. The blessings are described as if they are a great tsunami wave that builds momentum behind the obedient person, to overflow them, and carry them further forward. The concept of the Lord’s blessing is not that it is a passive reward received, but that it is a dynamic force which lifts the obedient person heavenward and gives them the excitement of further, and even more glorious service.

God’s rewards are not the silver and gold of earthly kings, which men use to fulfil their earthly lusts. God’s blessing is a wave of power for greater service with increased joy in the midst of adversities. The best analogy is that of surfing. The greatest “reward” for the good surfer is a better wave than he/she has ridden ever before. The joy he/she feels as they ride this great wave is the reward that is spoken of here. It is not silver and gold that can be stolen, but joy and satisfaction that abide forever. Matthew 6:19-21.

Verses 5 – 6. Between verses three and six the word for blessing is used six times. In the town and in the fields there will be blessing. In every sphere of economic and social life there will be blessing. Psalms 121:1-8, 128:1-5, 144:12-15.

These blessings will find their maximum fulfilment in the Millennial Kingdom blessings for Israel with the Lord Jesus Christ as their King. Isaiah 65:21-23, Zechariah 8:3-5, Malachi 3:5-12. We are called to live now in the filling of the Holy Spirit, and as we walk with Jesus in the Spirit's power we glimpse a little of what will be universally enjoyed in that glorious future day.

The blessing of the Lord will be over their own child bearing, so that they will have many children alive to fill the land He has given them. They will enjoy good economic prosperity, with many cattle and sheep to fill their pastures. The diseases that decimated populations of men and animals will be controlled, and the numbers of people and animals will increase. Their crops will prosper without the plant diseases and the rains will not fail for them if they follow the Lord's instructions.

His hedge will be around them to protect them from weather, disease, and enemies. If they fail to follow the Lord, then the hedge of protection will be removed. Job 1:10, Isaiah 5:5, Ezekiel 13:1-7. The role of the prophet of the Lord is to build the hedge of protection around the people of the Lord by teaching them truth and encouraging them to walk in the Lord. Moses has done this for Israel, and every true prophet will continue to do so. Deuteronomy 32:1-4, 33:27-29.

Sadly the later rabbis will "build a hedge" around the Law itself, and Rabbinic Judaism will become a perversion of the Mosaic Law by Jesus day. This does not change anything about what the Lord Jesus told Moses to write into the Law, for the Law is good, and Jesus came to fulfil it, not destroy it! Matthew 5:1-18.

They will have blessing as they leave their homes and agricultural properties, and they will be blessed as they return to them. There will be peace and safety in the land and they will be able to travel without fear and work without looking over their shoulder every moment. When an enemy arises, as many will do in the devil's world, they will be beaten well before they attack Israel.

The Lord will fight for them as He has done through their wilderness wanderings. If an enemy attacks from one direction, then they will flee from Israel in seven directions. All these things will be true, if and only if, they obey the voice of the Lord their God. They are expected to be militarily prepared, and stand armed ready to fight, but only in the Lord's name and under His orders. Nehemiah 4:4-20.

Verses 7 – 14. Whatever the people set their hands to, (once they have rightly set their hearts towards God), then they will prosper in their plans and actions. Proverbs 3:1-8. If they build storehouses to hold their grain, then, through their obedience to the Lord's Law, their storehouses will be filled. Their business ventures will prosper, as long as they keep the Law of the Lord.

If they forget that they are simply men, standing before eternity, and the judgment of the Lord, then they will discover that it is a dangerous thing to fall into God's judgment! Luke 12:16-28, Hebrews 12:28-29, James 5:1-8, 2 Peter 3:10-16. Earthly prosperity is a drop in the bucket of time, and lasts for a moment, but the blessings that flow from obedience to the Lord last forever.

If we forget that we are creatures of space and time in an eternal and infinite context we lose our perspective upon our place in the universe. We are like the grass of the fields, here today and gone tomorrow, but if we serve the Lord in spirit and in truth we will enjoy blessings in our service through time, and rewards that will last forever. We must recognise who we are as creatures within a creation, and enter into the correct relationship to the Lord our God. Psalms 90:2-6, 12, 103:10-17.

The people of the Lord are always expected to be "a holy people". Holiness is the concept that means "set apart for the service and glory of God". It means to be devoted to the service and honour and glory of God alone, not distracted by the things of this world. Ephesians 1:1, 4-5, 27. The opposite concept to HOLINESS (theologically this is referred to as SPIRITUALITY) is WORLDLINESS.

We are not to be preoccupied with "things" in our time here upon the earth, but with the service of the living God. If a thief can steal it, rust can destroy it, or a moth can eat it, then it should not be a thing we have any more than a passing thought towards. Matthew 6:19-34. We are to be people of heaven upon the earth and the things of earth are to be of no account for us. Our earthly goods are to be simply items to use to the glory of the Lord. 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, Ephesians 1:3-4, 5:27, 1 Timothy 2:8, 1 Peter 1:15-16, Jude 20.

The Israelites are to receive the land of promise and inherit towns they have not built, and they must remember that all the "things" they receive are gifts from God, and are not to become objects of any significance in themselves. The significance of the "things" of this world is in their relation to God who gave them to us. The value of things to the believer is to be in accordance with their value for the ministry the Lord has called us to exercise while here upon the earth.

We call land "Real Estate", and yet an earthquake or flood shows us just how unstable all land is. We used to speak of the "gold standard" for money, and yet the fluctuating value of gold and silver has made any relationship of those

commodities to our money of no significance whatsoever. What will we value in this life; things that last or things that fade? Matthew 6:25-34, 10:28-31.

All commodities have value only as they are needed; their value is relative to the needs of the people who are valuing them at that time. A diamond necklace is of no value when people have no food or water, and a million dollar necklace will be given for a glass of water in such a time to allow a person to live for another day. What value then are the diamonds? Like all "things" diamonds have value only as the people at that time value them. With such a fact before us, let us heed the words of the Lord. The words of Moses and of Jesus are to be obeyed, and the Lord reminds us that the "Gentiles" (unbelievers) seek earthly prosperity as if it matters, but we who follow Him are to have better priorities.

As the people of Israel stand firm to the standards of the Lord their God the pagan nations around them will fear them and respect them, for they will see that God is with them. They will have security as a result of their firm faith, and they will have impact upon the nations around them. Their security will be directly related to their faith and obedience. Their national influence on others will be directly related to their spirituality. These principles have not changed.

The church today has power, and the individual believer has impact in their community, in direct relationship to their walking in the Word in the filling of the Holy Spirit. As we are obedient, so we are powerful and safe in our walk with the Lord in the midst of this otherwise dangerous world.

If the people of Israel would be obedient the promise of God was for the rains to fall and the crops to be blessed. If they would stand by His Law and be holy before Him, then the Lord's promise to them was that they would be the bankers of their area and would not be the borrowers from others. If they paid their spiritual debt of obedience to the Lord they would be in financial debt to no men.

If they obeyed the Lord they could be a leader amongst the nations; they would be the head, not the tail. They would be "on top of the heap", never under the heel of any conqueror. All this was their destiny, if they obeyed the Lord, but the opposite result would eventuate if they failed to obey the Lord their God.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. We are the "light bearers" for this dark world. This is our tasking before the Lord and it requires obedience to the Word of the Lord, for the Word contains our "orders" for service. Let us be teachers and followers of the Word of the Lord. Let us not waste time moaning about the darkness of our world – let us turn the light of God's Word into every corner we are called to minister in.
2. How passionate is our desire for holiness before the Lord? How passionate and wholehearted are we in our focus upon obedience to the Lord our God? We are to be diligent regarding spiritual things, not distracted by the temporary things of this present world. Do we love this present world, or do we love the Lord our God and seek His path through this present world? Do we see the things of this world as things to use for God, or are we attached to the temporary things of time?
3. Rewards in time from the Lord are not "things" to be selfishly enjoyed; they will always be things that enable greater service, greater joy, and greater impact for the work of the Lord. God seeks to move us along His path for our life with joy and power, and for that to grow through the passage of time for us. Let us seek the rising wave of blessing, through the filling and power of the Holy Spirit. Let us stand against the false teaching of the so called "prosperity gospel", for it is not a true gospel at all. Galatians 1:6-9. The unbelievers seek comfort and wealth in this present world; our call is to seek the Lord's path through this world. Let us seek the Lord's path, not the broad way of wealth, power and final destruction.
4. Obedience to the Lord delivers power and purpose on our path through this life. God builds His protective hedge around us as we are obedient to Him. There is no security in this life apart from the path that the Lord calls us to walk. No matter how dangerous the path of God appears to be, it is the only safe place to be. Let us walk this path in spirit and in truth, for here alone we are safe in an otherwise dangerous world. We will die here, and yet we can relax about the "how and when" of death, only as we walk with God. Let us learn from Israel's experience and walk with God.

REFLECTION UPON WALKING IN THE LIGHT

1. God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all. (1 John 1:5)
2. The Lord is the visible manifestation of that light. (John 1:4, 8:12, 12:46)
3. The Lord's coming as the Light of the World was prophesied. (Isaiah 49:6)
4. The light was seen in the darkness of the world. (Matthew 4:16, Luke 2:32)
5. The Lord brought light and immortality through the gospel. (2 Timothy 1:10)
6. Believers are said to be light bearers. (Matthew 5:14-16, John 12:36)
7. We are said to be the children of the light. (John 11:9-10, Ephesians 5:8, 1 Thessalonians 5:5, 1 Peter 2:9)
8. Light is necessary for man's existence on the earth. (Ecclesiastes 11:7; Jeremiah 31:35)
9. Divine guidance of Israel was provided by God through light. (Exodus 14:20)
10. Bible doctrine in the soul is portrayed by light. (Psalm 119, 105, 130)
11. The gospel is called light. (2 Corinthians 4:3, 4; 2 Timothy 1:10)

12. Salvation brings the believer out of darkness into light just as the planet Earth was brought out of darkness into light by God. (Luke 1:79; 1 Peter 2:9).
13. Satan is the distorter, the angel of light. (2 Corinthians 11:14)
14. Satan's strategy is to outshine the true light with his own false gospel. (2 Corinthians 4:3-6)

Notes

DEUTERONOMY 28:15-44

15 But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee: 16 Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field. 17 Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store. 18 Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. 19 Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out. 20 The LORD shall send upon thee cursing, vexation, and rebuke, in all that thou settest thine hand unto for to do, until thou be destroyed, and until thou perish quickly; because of the wickedness of thy doings, whereby thou hast forsaken me. 21 The LORD shall make the pestilence cleave unto thee, until he have consumed thee from off the land, whither thou goest to possess it. 22 The LORD shall smite thee with a consumption, and with a fever, and with an inflammation, and with an extreme burning, and with the sword, and with blasting, and with mildew; and they shall pursue thee until thou perish. 23 And thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron. 24 The LORD shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust: from heaven shall it come down upon thee, until thou be destroyed. 25 The LORD shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies: thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them: and shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth. 26 And thy carcase shall be meat unto all fowls of the air, and unto the beasts of the earth, and no man shall fray them away. 27 The LORD will smite thee with the botch of Egypt, and with the emerods, and with the scab, and with the itch, whereof thou canst not be healed. 28 The LORD shall smite thee with madness, and blindness, and astonishment of heart: 29 And thou shalt grope at noonday, as the blind gropeth in darkness, and thou shalt not prosper in thy ways: and thou shalt be only oppressed and spoiled evermore, and no man shall save thee. 30 Thou shalt betroth a wife, and another man shall lie with her: thou shalt build an house, and thou shalt not dwell therein: thou shalt plant a vineyard, and shalt not gather the grapes thereof. 31 Thine ox shall be slain before thine eyes, and thou shalt not eat thereof: thine ass shall be violently taken away from before thy face, and shall not be restored to thee: thy sheep shall be given unto thine enemies, and thou shalt have none to rescue them. 32 Thy sons and thy daughters shall be given unto another people, and thine eyes shall look, and fail with longing for them all the day long; and there shall be no might in thine hand. 33 The fruit of thy land, and all thy labours, shall a nation which thou knowest not eat up; and thou shalt be only oppressed and crushed away: 34 So that thou shalt be mad for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see. 35 The LORD shall smite thee in the knees, and in the legs, with a sore botch that cannot be healed, from the sole of thy foot unto the top of thy head. 36 The LORD shall bring thee, and thy king which thou shalt set over thee, unto a nation which neither thou nor thy fathers have known; and there shalt thou serve other gods, wood and stone. 37 And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all nations whither the LORD shall lead thee. 38 Thou shalt carry much seed out into the field, and shalt gather but little in; for the locust shall consume it. 39 Thou shalt plant vineyards, and dress them, but shalt neither drink of the wine, nor gather the grapes; for the worms shall eat them. 40 Thou shalt have olive trees throughout all thy coasts, but thou shalt not anoint thyself with the oil; for thine olive shall cast his fruit. 41 Thou shalt beget sons and daughters, but thou shalt not enjoy them; for they shall go into captivity. 42 All thy trees and fruit of thy land shall the locust consume. 43 The stranger that is within thee shall get up above thee very high; and thou shalt come down very low. 44 He shall lend to thee, and thou shalt not lend to him: he shall be the head, and thou shalt be the tail.

REFLECTIONS

Verse 15. If the people heed the words of the Lord through Moses they will have blessings in their land and in their lives, but if they deliberately ignore, or disobey the words of God then they will suffer the consequences of their evil decisions. If they hear, believe and obey they will be blessed, but if they ignore, fail to believe, and fail to obey the words of the Lord, then the “curse” will fall upon them.

Now remember our previous explanation of the theology behind the word “curse”. It is the natural consequence of binding yourself to evil. To bind your self to the enemy is to share his fate. To bind your self to rebellion is to be treated as a rebel. Note the language of Moses at the end of this verse, for he describes the way the Lord will bring His “curse” upon those who think they know better than their creator.

The natural consequences of rejection of the creator’s words will come upon them as surely as a natural law will work out in time after any action. If a stone is dropped, then it will fall, and if man disobeys the creator of the heavens and the earth, then they will receive His judgment. The judgment will not tend to be a bolt of lightning from the heavens, for the Lord rarely needs to work that way.

The wave of consequences will overtake them, even though for a time they may think they have got away with their disobedience. Moses words here remind us that judgment does not fall instantly in some case. At times the natural consequences of a decision build up gradually and then overwhelm.

Let me use two ecological examples that illustrate man’s ignoring of the laws behind the creation, and foolishly thinking they know better than their creator. Many people are baffled and surprised by the pollution that kills a once beautiful lake, yet it is the result of years of careless release of toxins by the surrounding settlements. The people are shocked and saddened when the lake dies and they are disgusted when it stinks in their nostrils, but their own evil, or wilful ignorance, has created the mess.

The second example is seen in many places when men foolishly cut down the trees that cover hills and keep their soils intact. The result of removing the forest from the hills is land slips, mud slides, and disastrous floods that often kill many people. Foolish men then say it was “an act of God”, and yet it should be described as an evil consequence of man’s sinful exploitation of the environment without thinking through his actions! When we ignore the way the creator has made us, and made the world, we destroy ourselves and our world. The Bible teaches that evil men’s destruction of the world will sadly continue, and all the work of fallen men will not turn this around.

The final years of life upon this planet before the Lord’s return, will be characterised by world wide pollution, and the very near total destruction of the environment. The future is graphically portrayed by scripture, and the picture is not a pleasant one, for it is a satanic policy to destroy this world before the Lord returns. Satan will NOT be successful in his plan, and the Lord will return and clean up this world and rule here for a thousand years in perfect environment, before time is swallowed up in eternity.

The “vials” of judgment described in Revelation Chapter 16 are the ultimate judgment of the Lord upon man as a result of their ignoring of the words of scripture. Read the Commentary on this chapter of Revelation and be encouraged, rather than worrying about climate change or pollution. The Lord will restore this earth, and it will be perfect, as it was designed to be in the Millennial Kingdom.

The Lord alone can properly clean up this world and HE will do so. Until He returns however we are to be obedient to His words and not personally be polluters of this world, for that is Satan’s policy, not God’s. We are not to be polluters of the mind with pornography, polluters of the body with drugs and alcohol, or polluters of the planet with waste products. We are to be holy, and that means we are to be clean, moral, and good. Philippians 4:6-9.

Having said that we are not to be polluters, for that is Satanic policy, let me also challenge you that we are not to join the environmental political bandwagon either. Satan has two thrusts in our present age in the environmental area. These parallel his policy in moral areas; for he encourages both licence and asceticism, for all unbalanced action destabilizes people.

Pollution directly destroys the ecology, and creates economic hardship, death and health impacts, but, from Satan’s perspective, it increases the level of despair that will make unsaved men look for a powerful political deliverer. The second environmental policies of the enemy are designed to destabilize economies and political structures further by two main means. He can bankrupt economies by trying to clean up the mess he has made at great costs and with great corruption. He is far more cunning and malicious than many believers understand, and in these last days we need to!

These policy initiatives are also designed to destabilize local populations through fear and direct economic costs, as well as feeding the greed for power of the politicians involved, and the greed for money amongst the corrupt officials who run them. The purpose of both his environment policies centres in his desire to destroy the environment before the Lord’s return, and to use that destruction of the environment to bring human despair to a high level. He can use this despair through the resultant desire of unsaved man to elect and approve the rulership of his “false saviour”; the Anti-Christ, whose banner will be that he alone can clean up the world, if given the power to do so. Greed is the hallmark sign of satanic activity here as in every aspect of life, just as the “Fruit of the Holy Spirit” is the hallmark sign of the activity of the Holy Spirit.

Verses 16 – 19. These verses run the parallel course to verses 3 – 6. For all the blessings described that flow from obedience in verses 3-6, there are corresponding negative consequences that flow from disobedience. In the city limits and in the countryside they will experience the consequences of the removal of God's blessing from them. There will be insecurity in the streets of the city, and fear and danger in the open country side. Instead of many healthy births of children and animals, the birthing process and the health of the young will be affected by the evil behaviours of their parents, and the general health and vitality of the population will decline.

We see this principle working out in today's world. There is a decline in fertility in the countries where sexual promiscuity has been rampant. Many women and men are baffled by their inability to have children, or that their children are born weak, sickly or deformed, and yet their own earlier evil sexual behaviours have set up the consequences that destroy their children, or their ability to have them.

Verses 20 – 26. There will come to all who violate the Law of God, cursing, vexation and rebuke. Their "wicked" actions will reap the whirlwind of the natural consequences of their own wickedness. They have bound themselves to the consequences of their evil actions and so they will experience the frustration and madness of being unable to control the consequences that flow from their evil. The rebuke of the Lord comes as they face the flow on effects of their evil, and they realise they cannot stop the consequences from flowing over them. The final result is their absolute destruction as an individual, a family, a community, and possibly as a nation.

Israel only survives as a remnant on two occasions in their history, as a result of ignoring the words of the Lord here. In 586 BC the nation was reduced to possibly under 7000 adults (far smaller than the Exodus generation!) from a population under Solomon that may have numbered 1,000,000 or more.

Disease processes will "cleave" to them (bind themselves into the population). They will not be able to shake off disease and disaster, no matter what their politicians or doctors do to try to stop the slide. They will not stop the slide because they will not return to the Lord in spirit and in truth with all their heart focused upon Him. Disease, natural disaster, and destruction through warfare will plague them. When the enemy attack the Lord will not stand with them, for they have rejected Him. They may, in their false confidence go out to fight against their enemies, but they will flee seven ways before them. They will have no moral, military, or physical strength to stand against the enemies who will rise against them.

They have rejected their source of strength, and Satan, who seeks their death as a people, will take the opportunity they deliver to him, and he will bring his most violent servants against them to destroy them. The Assyrians, the Babylonians and the Romans were the most violent and destructive of the peoples of the ancient world, and the Nazis of Germany the most evil men the world has seen since those ancient days. These people were able to destroy Israel because Israel had forsaken their God and His Holy Word. The consequences of the rejection as a nation of their foundational revelation led to their destruction again and again, just as the Lord, through Moses, had told them it would.

To be buried without prayer and mourning of loved ones was a bad enough thing, but to have ones body lie on an open field and be eaten by wild animals was a horrible thought for the Israelite peoples. To be unmourned by loved ones was to be forgotten, and yet the horror behind Moses words is worse than this. What he describes is the lack of funerals, because all who would have held them are either also dead, or captives being carried away into slavery. It is total national disaster that is in view here. The result of religious apostasy, is the loss of the will to fight, and the loss of divine protection, that alone guarantees survival and final victory. When you walk away from God, you walk away from your only hope.

Verses 27 – 29. The spread of diseases that are resistant to medical treatment was a major sign of judgment. The mastery of man over disease is a hallmark sign of cultural stability and control. In places where the health care is good, the political situation is strong and the economy stable. The first signs of decay in a nation are often seen in the health statistics of that nation. Decline in public health mirrors moral and political decline in standards away from the honesty and integrity that is at the heart of godly government. Most "plagues" spread by poor hygiene practises.

The diseases mentioned here were the "plagues" of the ancient world, and were incurable by the physicians of the time. The ultimate decay of health was seen when a man suffered one disease that left untreated created one or more other diseases. Many were left blind by diseases that spread steadily to that point. The physical blindness experienced by the person suffering from the second stage of an infection became the visual image of the spiritual state of the person and their nation. The consequences of their unresolved sin have caught up with them. They chose spiritual darkness, and now they walk in physical darkness.

Verses 30 – 34. The continuation of property and relationship is the expectation of prosperous people. When people are in a "safe" country and have good economic conditions they believe they will pass everything on to the next generation. This expectation is correct if each generation walks with the Lord, but it is in error if each generation falls short of the standards of God, whether it is by ignoring them or deliberately disobeying them.

The ultimate disgrace and shame for any family was to lose their posterity to others; for their children to be carried off as slaves, or killed before fathering the next generation. To lose then all their property was a further disgrace, and to lose it without hope of return to it was ultimate judgment. Their blessing was tied to their name being passed on in their tribe, and for the land to still be in the hands of the family of those who received it from Moses or Joshua. All they worked for

was to enjoy this blessing, but to enjoy it they had to remember it was from the Lord and there were spiritual laws that would keep it in their hands, and spiritual laws that would guarantee they would lose it.

What is described in these verses is the horror of the results of military defeat and invasion. To see ones own children carried into slavery in a foreign land never to return was an ache that few psychologically recovered from. To have a grave to visit where your children lie is bad enough, but to know they are slaves in another place is a worse horror still.

The psychological results of invasion are described in their stark horror. The result for most was a debilitating depression of spirit that few recovered from. They will be mentally crushed by the burden of their sorrow. Remember, all these things will come upon them only because they have failed to obey the Lord their God. Moses describes what we refer to as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder here, (PTSD).

There is some depression that results from genetic origins, and some from situations well beyond the control of the person. In such cases compassion is the response of all who know the facts. In this case however, while there is great compassion for the suffering, the people have brought the suffering upon themselves. The door to recovery is spiritual, not psychological in this case; they must repent of their evil. Their "madness" results from their sin and it must be dealt with, or the madness will deepen.

Verses 35 – 39. When people suffer from specific mineral and vitamin deficiency in their diet, they will develop awful skin diseases. These can occur due to either obesity or starvation, lack of exercise, inadequate pure fluids, or simple key mineral/vitamin deficiencies in an otherwise apparently adequate diet. Even before an invasion or siege, some will suffer from these diseases.

They will suffer because of inadequate diets in a land that has stopped growing the right balance of crops for health, and has grown crops only for the jaded tastes of corrupt people, or as cash crops for sale to others, but ignores the balance in diet that is needed for the local people's health.

Moses especially mentions the planting of many vineyards. Verse 39. They were keen on the cash crop of wine, and they would drink too much of it, and they would lose their minds and their nationhood as a result. The worms would eat their grapes and their bodies as a result.

Poor people often starve or fall sick with vitamin deficiencies in such situations. They may eat plenty of simple carbohydrates, but few mineral and vitamin rich fruit, vegetables and meat/fish. The rich and corrupt rulers often ate sweet and tasty things but did not exercise, or drink enough water. The result for both groups (rich and poor) would be skin and other disease from malnutrition. These skin diseases are often cured by supplementation to the diet, increased clean fluids, and exercise alone.

All the curative elements will be unavailable to them in the time of national catastrophe, and things like the famine that accompanies an invasion will also lead to all these things in the besieged city. The suffering of a besieged population in the ancient world was often extreme, as the mineral and vitamin deficiencies led to lowered immunity and the out break of typhus and other diseases that killed the majority well before the enemy broke in.

All these things will happen to Israel when she turns away from the Lord. Psalm 66:18, Jeremiah 5:25. Moses tells them that the survivors from those days will be sent into captivity, and there they will become a proverb amongst the pagan nations of what happens when you turn away from your God. More died of the starvation results of the many sieges than died by direct enemy action.

The Lord, through Jeremiah, warned the people again of the reality of this, using words drawn from this chapter, reminding the people, if they did not repent, they would be judged. Jeremiah 5:1ff, 14:12-18, 15:1-4, 16:4-7, 21:7-10, 24:8-10, 27:8-15. As you read these passages you will note that the people had many false prophets who were saying all would be well for them, and that God was tolerant and would overlook their sins. The Lord reminds His people, He does not ever overlook sin! Sin must be dealt with by confession and true life change.

They will continue to serve other gods in that foreign place, and will continue to be judged until they repent and return to the Lord alone. These words will be terribly fulfilled in the days of the fall of Samaria in 720 BC, and then again the three falls of Jerusalem, in 605, 597, and finally 586 BC. The people will suffer terribly, and as noted above, only a remnant of the people survive.

Repentance will come to the exiles by the rivers of Babylon under the ministry of Ezekiel, who will draw upon the earlier work of Isaiah (through the Assyrian crisis of 725 – 700 BC), and that of Daniel (in the Babylonian palace at the time of Ezekiel), and the words of Jeremiah (amongst the other group of exiles in Egypt). God will ensure that they have the words of a number of prophetic voices to recall them to truth and safety again, and the people will be restored to their land in 535 BC. When they return they will give themselves over to obedience to these words of Moses, and the Law will be the central pillar of their restored nation. Idolatry will be ended for Israel by that terrible experience. Nehemiah 8:1 – 9:3.

Verses 40 – 44. The second major cash crop will be their olive groves, which Moses identifies will spread through all the land of Israel. They will have nearly one thousand years of time in the land, from around 1450 BC when they arrive until 586 when they are dispossessed by the Babylonians. In that time they will plant many great olive groves,

but the trees will “cast their fruit” upon the ground where it will spoil. They were not using the olive oil for food, but for body oils; for luxury use. Their luxury life style will end because they did not give glory to the Lord and serve Him as they were meant to. Their sons and daughters were to be a joy to them, but they will be a grief, for the survivors amongst them will go into captivity.

The total destruction of the land because of their disobedience will be accomplished by pestilence as well as war and famine. The locusts will eat the remaining crops in the fields. The strangers within their borders will no longer be subservient to them, but will be more powerful than they are and will lord it over them. Instead of Israelites ruling over Israel, they will be told what to do by those who are aliens amongst them. They will lose the rulership of their land to strangers. God has given them rights, but they will be lost due to their disobedience to His Law.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Cash crops are not wrong in themselves, but they become an evil when the result of growing them means the local people face malnutrition. This has become a problem in our own corrupt world today. These people valued the money they could make from the land ahead of the need to feed their people properly. The wealthy and the poor both suffered, either from want, or excess of the wrong food. Alcoholism and gluttony are evils before the Lord, and He will judge those who think they can ignore His rules for health, with the very diseases that these evil behaviours cause. Alcoholism and gluttony are not “diseases”, they are evil behaviours, and are to be addressed as such. All addictive behaviours are evil adjustments to inner problems that only obedience to the Lord can remedy.

2. All that Israel had, they held by the grace and favour of the Lord their God. They received gracious gifts from the Lord, but they were to be used for ministry and were to be given thanks over daily. The only way to use a gift of God is God’s way. They rejected God’s direction, and so they would fail to receive God’s protection.

3. If we ignore the Laws of God regarding nature and natural forces, we will reap the whirlwind quite literally. Man has seen the foolishness of ignoring ecology over the last fifty years. Famine has been created by men’s foolishness and disobedience. There is still, as I write this in 2014, plenty of food in the world to feed everybody, but wastage and corrupt systems mean that many are malnourished, while others grow obese. Both obesity and malnutrition are indications of judgment upon a nation. When either of these health issues is present in a nation there is something wrong spiritually with that nation. Greed and over eating is at the source of both problems, and this is the mark of the enemy’s presence. We need to be more thoughtful about what is happening in our world and be alert to the signs of enemy activity and as believers stand against the enemy’s teaching and influence.

4. Pollution is a sign of evil. It is caused by evil and stems from satanic thinking based upon the greed and selfishness of a few with no regard to consequences. No believer ought to be a polluter of the environment. We cannot clean up this world, and we are not called to do this, for the Lord alone has the power to achieve the result. Satan will succeed in destroying the ecology, but the local believer has no business doing Satan’s work for him! The Lord will remedy things on His return, but until then we are to stand against the evil of selfish men who desire to pollute the world God made, but our main focus is to save those we can from the cess pool we sometimes find ourselves in. Jude 22-23.

5. Believers are to remember that Satan’s main thrust since the Cross has been to blind men to the truth of the Atonement. His desire has been to blind men to the Gospel, obscure the truth, and build despair amongst the lost so that they are readied by their false philosophies to accept his Anti-Christ. He uses pollution to increase despondency and then uses the ecology movement to increase faith in the unbelievers that they can solve the problems if they have enough power. By his twin philosophy he will achieve his results; the Anti-Christ will secure the majority of government’s approval for total power in the Great Tribulation. We are not to worry about this, but focus upon our role, which is to rescue as many as possibly from the cesspool Satan has made of this world. Let us preach the Gospel message with power and clarity.

REFLECTIONS UPON ASCETICISM

1. All things are good, for God created all things. Genesis 1:31. The fall doesn’t mean that nature has become evil, merely fallen. Genesis 3:17-19, 8:20-22, 9:1-3. We must work hard to live now, whereas Adam and Even in the Garden could live off the land with little effort.

2. All produce is now good for believers to eat. No food or drink is banned for believers, except from strangled animals with the blood within them, and blood products. Acts 10:9-16, 15:28-35. The mind of all men can be evil, but the things of this world are morally neutral; they become things of evil in the hands of evil men.

3. Dealing with our tendency to sin is the issue for believers, not trying to be morally pure by stopping eating various foods. Philippians 3:13-14, 1 John 1:9. No food makes us evil! Even if we eat blood products in some social situation we haven’t become “evil”, we have simply disobeyed an apostolic instruction, and we can be forgiven for this.

4. We are able to worship and serve the Lord in freedom. If one day is to be treated as “special” that is fine for the person to do as unto the Lord, but the Lord desires for us to see that all days are to be days of worship and service. Romans 14:5-7.

5. We are responsible to the Lord for our own tender consciences; which are the result of our backgrounds, not the teaching of scripture. Romans 14:10-20. We are free to adopt any practice that helps us serve the Lord and maintain holiness, but not to superimpose it on others, nor consider our choice makes us more spiritual than others.

REFLECTIONS UPON THE DEVIUS NATURE OF "EVIL"

1. DEFINITION: Evil is Satan's policy in opposition to God's doctrine. Evil is therefore a collection of beliefs and practises that back up Satan's viewpoint rather than God's.
2. Evil is not necessarily obviously nasty or what we may consider "bad", it is simply a policy that will take you away from the path that God prepared for you. It may appear to be very sophisticated and normal.
3. False religion may be very moral and even ascetic (and therefore look "holy"), but if it is leading people away from God's revealed will and Holy Word it is evil.
4. Often evil can masquerade as "good". People who believe that their "good works" can satisfy God's holy demands are deceived by evil doctrine. Romans 7:19,20,
5. Only God's Word, Bible Doctrine, can help the believer distinguish between true good and evil, Hebrews 3:13,14.
6. Only a soul saturated in God's Word is truly protected from the subtlety of Satan's policy of evil. Proverbs 2:10-14, 3:7, 19:23.
7. Only applied knowledge of God's Word negates and neutralises evil. Psalms 54:5, Romans 12:21, Isaiah 45.
8. The issue for the believer is the daily choice to accept God's Word and therefore protect oneself against evil. God watches for our choices. Proverbs 11:18,19, 22:3, 24:1-4, Ephesians 5:16, 2 Thessalonians 3:2,3.
9. The company of evil people will distort the thinking of the believer and confuse his/her witness. Isaiah 5:20, 1 Corinthians 15:23.
10. There is no evil in God at all. Psalm 5:4, 1 John 1:5, 4:4.
11. God judges evil and will condemn it to the lake of fire for ever at the final judgement. Psalm 34:16, Isaiah 13:11, Revelation 20:11ff
12. In spite of evil still existing in the world due to Satan's on-going presence throughout the Church Age, the Lord is still on the throne, and his hand is on all things.
13. Satan only does things by "permission" and we are in the Lord's hands and so are, in Christ, safe. Job 1:6-12, Proverbs 16:3, 4, Isaiah 45: 6, 7.

REFLECTIONS UPON CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

1. Forgiveness is by the death of Christ (Matthew 26:28, Revelation 1:5).
2. Divine forgiveness is to all who believe in Christ (Acts 10:43, Acts 16:31).
3. The penalty of sin was paid by Christ on the cross (Hebrews 9:22, 2 Corinthians 5:21).
4. When a believer sins his fellowship with God is disrupted. God forgives these sins upon confession and cleanses from the unknown sins in the believer's life as well as known sins. (1 John 1: 9)
5. Jesus Christ is our propitiation (1 John 2:1,2).
6. In human forgiveness we are told to forgive others even as God has forgiven us (Ephesians 4:32). This can only be accomplished by the filling of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18, Galatians 5:22,23).
7. Steps towards restoration of fellowship:
[a] Examine yourself for genuineness of motivation [2 Corinthians 14:5].
[b] Act on what you see [Romans 4:7-8].
[c] Deal with any sin by confession [1 John 1:9, Psalm 66:18].
[d] Forget the sin which you have confessed. Do not proceed into a pattern of guilt. [Philippians 3:13-14, Psalm 103:10-12]
[e] Resume your active spiritual walk. Avoid areas where you might be tempted by the sin which so easily besets us. [Hebrews 12:12-13]
[f] Be reconciled to others once you have been reconciled to God [James 5:16].
[g] Get moving and grow up [2 Peter 2:17-18].

DEUTERONOMY 28:45-56

45 Moreover all these curses shall come upon thee, and shall pursue thee, and overtake thee, till thou be destroyed; because thou hearkenedst not unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which he commanded thee: **46** And they shall be upon thee for a sign and for a wonder, and upon thy seed for ever. **47** Because thou servedst not the LORD thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; **48** Therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the LORD shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee. **49** The LORD shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand; **50** A nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor shew favour to the young: **51** And he shall eat the fruit of thy cattle, and the fruit of thy land, until thou be destroyed: which also shall not leave thee either corn, wine, or oil, or the increase of thy kine, or flocks of thy sheep, until he have destroyed thee. **52** And he shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come down, wherein thou trustedst, throughout all thy land: and he shall besiege thee in all thy gates throughout all thy land, which the LORD thy God hath given thee. **53** And thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons and of thy daughters, which the LORD thy God hath given thee, in the siege, and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee: **54** So that the man that is tender among you, and very delicate, his eye shall be evil toward his brother, and toward the wife of his bosom, and toward the remnant of his children which he shall leave: **55** So that he will not give to any of them of the flesh of his children whom he shall eat: because he hath nothing left him in the siege, and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee in all thy gates. **56** The tender and delicate woman among you, which would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness, her eye shall be evil toward the husband of her bosom, and toward her son, and toward her daughter”.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 45 – 46. These verses make it clear that the “Five Cycles/Stages of Divine Discipline” for the nation Israel are to be signs of the Lord’s displeasure upon this people for all their days upon the earth. Even in the 21st century these things are to be signs of national discipline for Israel.

Now some theologians have applied these as “signs” of general national discipline upon all people groups. As a student of world history I would agree with those who see in the “Five Cycles” a general set of signs of national decay, for they certainly do appear to be present as any nation goes down into the dust of history. Even though they are specific signs upon the covenant people and may be best seen in their history, we will find all these indicators of God’s displeasure present when any nation, that was once great through its spiritual status, begins to decline and fall. The decline and fall of nations begins when they turn away from God’s Word and laws, and refuse to be corrected by holiness, but rather walk further into ungodliness.

Notice the powerful building up of the discipline upon the people through the words Moses uses. The judgments will “come upon them” without warning. They will “pursue them”; they cannot be avoided by flight to other places. They will “overtake them” as they flee. There is no escape from the judgment of God. This was seen clearly in the days of Jeremiah, when one group flees down to Egypt to avoid the Babylonian judgment in 586 BC.

Those who fled to Egypt thought they had escaped the action of God, but they have only delayed it for Nebuchadnezzar invades Egypt and conquers it within 14 years. Jeremiah preached to these people there. Jeremiah chapters 44- 46. Unless they repent, and turn their lives around, the disobedient people of the Lord will be destroyed. As God’s people they have to walk God’s way, or leave this earth, for their destiny, and their life path through this world, is to live as God intended, not as they wish.

Once we become the children of the Lord, the same principle applies to us. If we fail to advance along the path of the Lord, then we will be removed from this life. We are here to serve, and those who persistently fail to serve and bear fruit will be eventually (after a time of grace to change their stance) pruned from the vine in judgment. John 15:1-8.

Verses 47 – 48. The warning contained in verses 45-46 occur after only three of the cycles/stages of national discipline have been described. Verses 47-48 introduce the “Fourth Cycle/Stage” of national divine discipline. This is the terrible stage of invasion by a pagan power and the capturing of the Israelite fortresses one by one and the killing or enslavement of their people. Notice the reasons for the fall of their fortresses are given immediately; because they do not serve the Lord their God, with joy, gladness and whole-heartedness.

Lack of genuine worship demonstrates that the hearts of a people are not right towards the Lord, indeed they show that their hearts have been given to another. This remains a sign of danger in any group today. When any person finds it hard to pray, to worship in song, to study God’s Word, or give of their goods and time, then that person has a shadow between them and the Lord their God. It may be the shadow of great sadness through grief, and if it is such, then in time it will pass, as they keep on quietly praising the Lord, but if it is due to sin, then it will deepen over time.

Those unable to pray to the Lord, to read His Word, and give of their substance to the Lord, are people who either do not know the Lord, or have drifted away from the Lord. The "Fruit of the Holy Spirit" includes the ability to worship with Holy Spirit power, even in the midst of grief based depression. Isaiah 61:3. When worship is missing, then the Spirit of the Living God is hindered in some way from working amongst the spiritually dead people. If we are not walking in the Spirit, then we are walking in the flesh, or with the enemy, and either way we are walking into trouble.

When worship of a people grows cold, that group is to be very concerned about what their coldness means. We are told to examine ourselves, and we need to do this and deal with whatever the causes of coldness are revealed, for we stand in peril in any place where worship does not exist with power. Psalms 26:2, 1 Corinthians 11:28, 2 Corinthians 13:5, Revelation 2:1-7, 3:14-22.

We are here upon the earth in the midst of the Angelic Conflict. Satan is conducting an unceasing war against mankind and there is no place for neutrality upon this earth. Many reading of the discipline of the Lord think the Lord is unfair, and that man should be given the 'right' to "opt out" of the spiritual battle around them. Some will even say, "Why become a believer, if it means you become the eye of a storm?"

Neutrality is not possible in the spiritual war that rages around us given the reason for the creation of mankind relates directly to our being made "a little lower than the angels" to prove something to the devil himself. Our very creation is designed to prove the devil wrong in his rebellion against the Lord God, and prove that he is condemned, and so no man or woman upon the earth can opt out of the battlefield, for the entire earth is the battlefield for the souls of mankind.

We cannot be at peace within unless we are rightly oriented to the truth about our place in the creation. If there is a war going on, then we need to know the truth about it and respond accordingly. God's message is, "There is war, and victory is only in a living relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ!" This is a message of love, because love tells the truth! Satan lies, and will continue to do so to deceive man into relaxing so he can be destroyed more thoroughly.

One of Satan's main attacks upon mankind is through religious/spiritual movements that preach a false message of calm and detachment from the strife of this world. Satan wants men and women to foolishly try to step aside from the real spiritual strife around them, for then they are in his camp. Inaction in the spiritual war is victory for Satan. When people believe they can meditate and calm their spirit, and draw aside from the strife of the world and find peace, they have simple found peace in surrender to the enemy. The enemy of mankind delights in that, for they will be bound to him forever in such a state, but it will not be peaceful in the end. Revelation 20:13ff.

Verses 49 – 50. The four great destroyers of the Jewish State in past history have had the Eagle for their emblem of war. The Assyrians had the eagle as their army emblem, and they brought the fifth cycle of discipline and destroyed the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 720 BC, and brought the fourth cycle of discipline to the Southern Kingdom of Judah. The Southern Kingdom only survived because of the revival led by Isaiah.

The next great power to be used to bring discipline was the Neo-Babylonian Empire of Nebuchadnezzar. Babylon used the eagle also as its symbol of power, with the winged lion as the symbol of their royal power. In 605 and 597 Nebuchadnezzar administered the fourth cycle of discipline to Judah, but even though Jeremiah preached in the city, the people failed to respond as they had under Isaiah one hundred years before. The fifth cycle came in 586 when the city and temple was destroyed and the remnant of the survivors carried away into captivity in Babylon.

The Romans, who had the eagle as their Army emblem, brought the fourth cycle of discipline to the land of Israel in the years before Christ's birth. Pompey the Great conquered the lands of Syria and Israel, and Julius Caesar entered both regions firmly into the Empire. It was a client kingdom, under the family of Herod, but became a fully Roman area of administration during the time of the Apostles. The entire ministry of the Lord and the birth of the church occur during the fourth cycle of discipline. John the Baptist clearly preached this, and the reality of the words of Moses having come true for the people of that day moved many to repentance. Luke 3:7-9. The Romans were used in 67-70 AD to bring in the second historic administration of the fifth cycle of discipline to national Israel with the second destruction of the city and temple.

The Nazi terror from 1936 – 1945 was conducted by men who wore the eagle also as their emblem upon their uniforms and banners. Each of the nations that administered the fourth and fifth cycles of discipline have been "strange" people to the Jewish nation, and they have been brutal to a terrible extent, without pity towards the young or the old. The worst of evils in this area was not under the Nazi terror, for the majority of Jews actually survived that terror, whereas under the Assyrian and Babylonian the majority were killed.

The words of Moses remind us that these historic events, with their awful human carnage are the result of the national sin of the Jewish people as far as God is concerned. This is not our perspective, it is God's through Moses here. When the Jewish people face disasters at this magnitude, the Lord's Word commands them to look within, not outside for the reasons.

The last great evil during World War II has moved history onwards towards the end times, and seen the establishment of a Jewish State again, and this will usher in the last stage of world history. The four great holocaust periods are turning points of world history, but the last great holocaust period is still to come, and the eagle again will be the symbol of the evil men who launch the final assault upon God's people.

1. Assyria 725 - 701 BC.

2. Babylon 605 – 586 BC.
3. Rome 67 – 71 AD.
4. Nazi Germany 1942 – 1945.
5. Revived Roman Empire date uncertain – near future – as the Jews are back in their land.

Verses 51 – 53. The invaders of each army that entered the land would seize all livestock they found and use them for milk, meat and skins. They would treat all the property of the Israelites as their own and steal all things they could. Moses tells the people bluntly that if their disobedience to the clear revelation of the Lord leads to such an event, then it will be terrible indeed, and they cannot blame God or accuse Him of being unfair, for this is the “FOURTH” stage of discipline, and they could have repented at any earlier point, and even then they may find grace and mercy if they admit their sin.

The terrible things described here will occur again in the days of the next great period of attack upon Israel during the Great Tribulation period. In those darkest days the nation will finally admit their error regarding Jesus of Nazareth and accept that He was indeed the Messiah. Zechariah 12:10 – 13:9. At that time only one third of the people will be saved alive from the final assault upon Israel by their enemies. The most horrific thing about this prophetic word of Moses is the words in verse 53, that the people will even resort to cannibalism to survive.

Extra-Biblical records of the final siege of 588-586 BC are lost, but the account of the final siege of Jerusalem (67-70 AD) exists in the work of Josephus, and tells the story of such things. The words of Josephus are chilling to read in light of these words of Moses here from 1500 years before the events that occur on the streets, and in the besieged houses of Jerusalem.

Notice Moses words, (from the Lord), that the Lord will allow these things to come to pass. God accepts responsibility for these things as the one who allows this to occur, but the causative agency is the free will of the people who persist in their evil rebellion against the truth. If the people cry out and say, “Why has the Lord let this happen to us?” The answer is to be read aloud in those days from these very verses. The Lord HAS INDEED allowed these things, because of the hard heartedness of the people, who have refused to accept the truth and walk in it.

We are free to reject the Lord and His will for us, but we are not free to reject or question the consequences of such foolishness. If we walk in evil the consequences of it will, beyond a certain point, flow over us without being able to be stopped. Once evil is accepted there are terrible consequences that inevitably flow onwards. Confession of sin will always bring blessing from cursing, but some consequences must be faced. Romans 8:26-28, 29-39.

Verses 54 – 56. The man described in these verses is not “tender and delicate” in our terms today. The words used here mean “effeminate and pleasure loving”. The reference is to those who have partied and lived for sensual and sexual pleasures of all sorts. These are the people who mocked Jeremiah, who believed they were above morality and could worship the pagan gods as well as go into the temple of Solomon. They were the immoral rulers and “playboys” of the day. These men have lived for self centred pleasures and so see other people simply as people to be used for their own pleasure.

Such people will rape others without a thought for the rights of the other person, and sexually abuse their own children, because they see all life as their playthings. Even the women will look with evil upon their own children and their husbands. They will even cook and eat the after-birth of their new born, and then devour the child in secret (Verse 57). These people have thought evil so long that they will stop at nothing in order to live a day longer that they might practise evil again. Proverbs 23:6-8, Jeremiah 5:7-19, 21:3-10.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. The horror of the two great sieges of Jerusalem will be relived again in a future day, but this third time the people will transform the judgment into victory by confession of their national sin and their acceptance of their Messiah. Zechariah 12:10ff. There is hope in the darkness of these verses, but it is a sad hope. So many die through history in the clutches of satanic deception! The Lord’s will for us is blessing, but man’s own will is too often set on evil. Let us preach with honesty, deep concern for the lost, and clarity of speech that those who are held by satanic blindness might be set free by the power of the Holy Spirit through hearing the truth of the Word of God.

2. As a man thinks in his heart over time, just so he will become in character. Let us hear, and apply this truth, as we deal with our own mental attitude sins. Let us preach about the danger of leaving evil within the life, and let us be known as “fanatics” if necessary, but let us try, with all our strength. To stop men and women falling to the place we have read of here in these verses.

3. Let us be alert to the signs of national discipline in our own nations. We are called to be the “watchmen” for our nations and preach the truth to the people in order that they might receive the best the Lord has for them, not the destruction that will always come upon those who reject God’s way for them. There is no escape from the consequences of persistently wrongful actions!

4. Let us be alert towards those who join our fellowships but appear unable to worship or pray aloud. Let us be careful of such people, for those who cannot worship/pray are, either spiritually young and still learning, or they are

agents of the enemy. All who know the Lord can pour their heart out towards Him, even if in pain in prayers of anguish. Be careful of those who give no evidence of intimacy with the Lord.

5. There is no neutrality in the Angelic Conflict. We are either for the Lord or against Him. The prophetic words of Moses here are fearfully accurate and remind us that the Lord knows the end from the beginning. We are standing with the Lord, and He is already the victor. Let us embrace His victory and stand firmly in His Truth. In the midst of difficult times we are to remember the accuracy of his prophetic words, and we are to stand for the truth, for the Lord's will is being worked out upon this earth in spite of all Satan's attempts to destroy it.

REFLECTION – THERE IS INDEED A “SIN UNTO DEATH”

1. There is a sin unto death where the foolish person will die. (1 John 5:16, 17, 1 Corinthians 11:31,32)
2. The sin unto death is the physical death of a believer, where ultimate discipline is administered to the Christian due to unconfessed sin of a serious nature, or even in a couple of biblical cases, after confession, where the sin meant that earthly blessing was denied the believer (Moses and Aaron being the examples).
3. Confession of sin under the concept of 1 John 1:9 is always the way to forgiveness. Romans 8:26-39
4. Examples of sin unto death:-
 - (a) The Corinthian Pervert - (1 Corinthians 5)
 - (b) The Corinthians who habitually came to the Lord's Table in an unworthy manner. (1 Corinthians 11:27-32)
 - (c) Moses (Deuteronomy 32:48-52)
 - (d) Achan (Joshua 7:16-26)
 - (e) Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5: 1 -1 1)
5. Whilst there is a sin unto death there is no condemnation to them in Christ Jesus - all believers (Romans 8:1).
6. The effect of the sin unto death is to reduce the time which a believer can spend on earth accumulating good of eternal worth. The gold, silver and precious stones of 1 Corinthians 3:11-15.

WHERE THERE IS BACKSLIDING THERE CAN BE RECOVERY

1. Definition - falling from the standard of living that the Lord calls us to and living at a lower level of belief, behaviour, and emotion. Living in a state of embarrassment at the gospel, thinking as an unbeliever would.
2. The Lord knows who are his, we don't. 2 Timothy 2:19. A backslider is out of fellowship, and may resemble an unbeliever in every way yet still be saved. They are like the prodigal son. Luke 15:3ff. These people are different (although they appear to be the same) to religious unbelievers. 2 Peter 2:1 -22, Jude 4 -13, 18, 19, 22.
3. The Lord desires these people to be restored. Matthew 18:12 -14, Luke 15:3 -32. In the Old Testament this message is also clear. Hosea 4:14-19, 11:7, 8, 14:1-4, Jeremiah 2:19, 3:6, 8, 11, 12, 14, 22, 5:6, 8:5, 14:7, Jeremiah 31:22, 49:4.
4. Believers who are "offended" at the Word have failed to grow spiritually John 6:61 -63, Matthew 11:6, 1 Corinthians 10: 13, Matthew 13:21, Mark 4:17, John 16:1, Matthew 24:9, 10.
5. The disciples all were offended at the Lord at his death. Matthew 26:31, 33-35, cf. 67-75.
6. "Falling from grace" is another way of expressing backsliding. Colossians 1:23, Galatians 5:4, 2 Peter 3:17. It means to fall from a place where you stand for grace and adopt an inferior way of living the Christian way of life, like legalism.
7. God disciplines the backslider, but their eternal security is secure. Hebrews 12:5 -13, 16, 17, 1 Corinthians 3:12-15, 1 Peter 1:4, 5, 2 Timothy 2:11- 13, John 1:12, Ephesians 1:13.
8. The Lord is able to keep us from falling, although we can walk away from his provision by following our pride rather than his truth. Jude 24. 1 Corinthians 10:11 -14, 1 Timothy 3:6, 7.
9. At the end of the church age the Lord prophesied that there would be a time of almost total backsliding on the part of the organised church. 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 1 Timothy 4:1- 6, 2 Timothy 4:3, 4.
10. The Lord warns all backsliders very directly in Revelation 2 : 5. No fruit for too long = sin unto death! John 15:1-5.
11. Backsliding and Recovery

Seven Steps Downwards

- a. Trifling with Sin Romans 13:14
- b. Yielding to Sin Romans 6:13
- c. Habitually Serving Sin 2 Peter 2:8
- d. Abandoning Ourselves to Sin Ephesians 4:19
- e. Being Abandoned by God to Sin Romans 1:24,26,28
- f. Encouraging Others to Sin Romans 1:32
- g. Experiencing Hell on Earth James 3:6, 1 Timothy 5:6

Seven Steps Upwards

- a. Resisting Sin in our Attitudes James 4:7
- b. Overcoming Sin by Faith in Christ Galatians 5:16
- c. Habitually being Victorious over Sin Romans 6:14, 1 John 5:4-5
- d. Entering into the Secret of a Victorious Life Hid with Christ in God Romans 8:37, 2 Corinthians 2:14, Colossians 3:1-3
- e. Being Taken by God into Deeper Fellowship 1 Timothy 1:12, 1 Corinthians 4:2
- f. Delivering Others from Sin. Jude 22-23
- g. Experiencing Heaven on Earth Jude 24-25, Philippians 4:6-7

REFLECTIONS UPON SATAN'S STRATEGY

1. Believers are warned against him and his tactics. (Ephesians 4:27, 6:11-13, James 4:7, 1 Peter 5:8)
2. We must be ready and alert. (2 Corinthians 2:11)
3. Satan is a deceiver and a counterfeiter. He uses deception - not obviously wrong or sinful - but very subtle changes to the truth (Genesis 3:1). Remember, a counterfeit looks like the original.
4. Satan is described as an "angel of light" - often seeming attractive and "good". (2 Corinthians 11:14)
5. His tactics
 - a) Towards unbelievers:
 - i) To blind them regarding the gospel. (2 Corinthians 4:3, 4, 2 Thessalonians 2:9, 10)
 - b) Towards believers:
 - i) Satan seeks to hinder our growth and witness. (1 Peter 5:8)
 - ii) Satan will mislead into false doctrine and legalism. (1 Timothy 5:14-15)
 - iii) He persuades believers to ignore the will of God through disobedience (Genesis 2:17, James 4:7-8)
 - iv) Satan often attacks our assurance of salvation so that we doubt God.
 - v) Worry (1 Peter 5, 7-9)
 - vi) Fear of death. (Hebrews 2:14-15)
 - vii) He accuses believers of sin both to God and to the believer (using guilt). (Revelation 12:9-10, Job 1:6-11)
 - viii) He takes our focus off Christ by getting eyes on self (1 Corinthians 1:10-11), on people (1 Corinthians 1:12), on things (Hebrews 13:5-6)
 - ix) When we don't allow the Holy Spirit to control our lives, we open ourselves up to Satanic attack. (1 Corinthians 7:5, 2 Corinthians 2:11, 1 Timothy 5:14-15)
 - x) The Lord will allow Satan to attack a believer as discipline for unconfessed sin. (1 Timothy 1:20 cf. 2 Corinthians 12:7)
 - xi) Satan cannot indwell or possess a believer, only beguile them. (Galatians 3:1)
 - c) Towards the world in general:
 - i) The World - Satan tries to deceive the nations. (Revelation 20:7-10)

Notes

DEUTERONOMY 28:57-68

57 And toward her young one that cometh out from between her feet, and toward her children which she shall bear: for she shall eat them for want of all things secretly in the siege and straitness, wherewith thine enemy shall distress thee in thy gates. **58** If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD; **59** Then the LORD will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed, even great plagues, and of long continuance, and sore sicknesses, and of long continuance. **60** Moreover he will bring upon thee all the diseases of Egypt, which thou wast afraid of; and they shall cleave unto thee. **61** Also every sickness, and every plague, which is not written in the book of this law, them will the LORD bring upon thee, until thou be destroyed. **62** And ye shall be left few in number, whereas ye were as the stars of heaven for multitude; because thou wouldest not obey the voice of the LORD thy God. **63** And it shall come to pass, that as the LORD rejoiced over you to do you good, and to multiply you; so the LORD will rejoice over you to destroy you, and to bring you to nought; and ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest to possess it. **64** And the LORD shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even wood and stone. **65** And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the LORD shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind: **66** And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life: **67** In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see. **68** And the LORD shall bring thee into Egypt again with ships, by the way whereof I spake unto thee, Thou shalt see it no more again: and there ye shall be sold unto your enemies for bondmen and bondwomen, and no man shall buy you.

REFLECTIONS

Verse 57. The nature of the sieges that will lead to the collapse of the city and nation will be extreme, even for the ancient world. The starvation and disease within the gates will lead to madness for many well before the enemy break in to kill and enslave the survivors. After both takings of the city the victors had to encamp the survivors and feed them for many weeks before they were even fit to be sold as slaves. The cannibalism of the sieges were moderate evils to some others that occurred, that the prophet casts a cloak over to spare us all the horror of the thoughts of them. There is no limit to the depths that Satan will lead men and women into if they give themselves over to him, rather than serve the Lord. There are only the two options; we either serve the Lord or the enemy.

Verses 58 – 59. Mankind will be in fear one way or the other upon this earth; godly fear or terror based fear. To comprehend and truly see the truth about eternity and infinity you will stand in fear before the heavens, for you will understand your finitude and bow your head before the universe, or its creator. This is a purifying fear, for it leads to humility and finally to relationship with the creator. In the Bible it is called “the fear of the Lord”. To fail to stand in fear before the great unknown of the universe is to demonstrate you have no brain at all!

Many people choose not to think about the truth of their state as creatures before their creator, and so they open themselves to the second fear. This second fear is the gut wrenching fear of those who are doomed in the fallen city and face the terrible consequences of their past decision making. There is no hope then, for the only one who can provide hope is the creator whose rulership over them they have rejected. If they do not acknowledge the Lord their God as the ruler over all, then they will face the judgment of the one to whom they owe their allegiance.

Verses 60 – 61. The result of a siege is that amongst the starving population vitamin and mineral deficiencies create awful skin, gum, and other Immune System collapse associated diseases that are like plagues. The things like this, that the people feared as slaves in Egypt will be the thing they have to face again if they walk away from the Lord. The lives of slaves were not good, as few received adequate nutrition and most died young of malnutrition related diseases, just as those in a besieged city would.

When people have prosperity they can have optimal nutrition and good health, but as people walk away from God their health will suffer, because the self centred behaviours that Satan encourages are always destructive of physical as well as mental health. The things that they escaped from as slaves in Egypt will appear again, and they will not shake them off, but they will consume their bodies until they die. God is not being “mean and heartless” as He allows these things to come upon them, for these things are the natural consequence of rejection of the divine plan for mankind.

Verses 62 – 64. They will be reduced to small numbers; even less than the numbers of the Exodus generation. This would occur during the first execution of the fifth cycle of discipline 605-586. From a total population of several million in the 730s the numbers of Jewish people fall to as low as 5000. Captives heading into Babylon number 4,600 (Jeremiah 52:30) and nearly all are slaves. The reason for their decline in numbers is clear; “they would not obey the words of the Lord their God”. They will be scattered to the most distant places from Israel. This dispersion reached its ultimate point only in the 1950s when Jewish people served in Antarctica. Jewish people today certainly worship all the material world, just as the Gentiles do.

Obedience is the only pathway to blessing for God’s people. God will rejoice over His people either to lift them up or cast them down. How is this possible? God rejoices in our spiritual growth, and if we obey He can rejoice over us in blessing,

but if we refuse to obey and grow, then the only way the Lord can turn that around is by discipline. He rejoices over this path only because it will lead to blessing eventually, when the people return to the path of obedience. The Lord will be victorious, and He will rejoice in His victory over sin, the only question is whether we are rejoicing! Hebrews 12:1-15. Refer to a Commentary on this passage and read that through.

Verses 65 – 66. In every place the Jewish people go through their long dispersion (from 70 AD through until the establishment of the modern State of Israel in 1949) they have found the insecurity that Moses speaks of here. They have felt the sting of waves of persecution and the constant threat of deportation. Many nations have opened their doors and then closed them to the Jewish people. They have had no “ease” for nearly two thousand years of wandering. There has been fear and sorrow at times. There has been no assurance of life and health in most places.

It is of note that those nations that have opened their doors and allowed the Jewish people rest, have themselves prospered. America’s great prosperity through until today is, I believe, due to their positive treatment of the Jewish people. It is shifting now the other way and judgment will fall upon America as it moves away from supporting Israel.

Verses 67 – 68. Fear will rule their days of wandering. They will long for day when it is night, and long for the shadow of darkness when it is daylight. They will have no inner peace because they have walked away from the paths of God, and rejected the words of His prophets. They will see the most awful sights imaginable as they suffer. The sights of the great siege of 67-70 were indeed awful to behold, and the horrors of the holocaust of 1942-1945 were unimaginable in inhumanity before that time.

The return to Egypt spoken of prophetically here by Moses actually occurred in 70-71 AD after the fall of Jerusalem. Survivors were sent back to Egypt in ships from Caesarea to the slave markets of Alexandria, but few were bought because there were so many slaves after that war. The price of slaves collapsed and many were simply killed in Egypt when no buyers came forward.

Moses accuracy in this prophetic word should be a fearful thing to modern Israel; its relationship to this second and last institution of the fifth cycle of national discipline, and the fact that it begins forty years after the Lord Jesus is killed is the evidence that they will eventually see proves Jesus was the Messiah. Zechariah 12:10ff.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. J'Shua Ha M'shiach – Jesus (is) the Messiah! The evidence of Moses and history is conclusive and will be heard finally in the awful days of the Great Tribulation period and a third of the nation of Israel will be saved and enter the Millennium. Let us preach the truth about Jesus to Jewish people in quiet confidence that they will see it soon. Zechariah assures us that they will Zechariah 12:10ff.
2. There are only two options for life upon this created world; we serve the creator, or we serve the great rebellion against Him. Let us proclaim the truth with power, that all men might stand before the Lord’s throne without excuse for their foolishness.

NOTES

CHAPTER 29**DEUTERONOMY 29:1-29**

29:1 These are the words of the covenant, which the LORD commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, beside the covenant which he made with them in Horeb. 2 And Moses called unto all Israel, and said unto them, Ye have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt unto Pharaoh, and unto all his servants, and unto all his land; 3 The great temptations which thine eyes have seen, the signs, and those great miracles: 4 Yet the LORD hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day. 5 And I have led you forty years in the wilderness: your clothes are not waxen old upon you, and thy shoe is not waxen old upon thy foot. 6 Ye have not eaten bread, neither have ye drunk wine or strong drink: that ye might know that I am the LORD your God. 7 And when ye came unto this place, Sihon the king of Heshbon, and Og the king of Bashan, came out against us unto battle, and we smote them: 8 And we took their land, and gave it for an inheritance unto the Reubenites, and to the Gadites, and to the half tribe of Manasseh. 9 Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do. 10 Ye stand this day all of you before the LORD your God; your captains of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, with all the men of Israel, 11 Your little ones, your wives, and thy stranger that is in thy camp, from the hewer of thy wood unto the drawer of thy water: 12 That thou shouldest enter into covenant with the LORD thy God, and into his oath, which the LORD thy God maketh with thee this day: 13 That he may establish thee to day for a people unto himself, and that he may be unto thee a God, as he hath said unto thee, and as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. 14 Neither with you only do I make this covenant and this oath; 15 But with him that standeth here with us this day before the LORD our God, and also with him that is not here with us this day: 16 (For ye know how we have dwelt in the land of Egypt; and how we came through the nations which ye passed by; 17 And ye have seen their abominations, and their idols, wood and stone, silver and gold, which were among them:) 18 Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the LORD our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood; 19 And it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst. 20 The LORD will not spare him, but then the anger of the LORD and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the LORD shall blot out his name from under heaven. 21 And the LORD shall separate him unto evil out of all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant that are written in this book of the law: 22 So that the generation to come of your children that shall rise up after you, and the stranger that shall come from a far land, shall say, when they see the plagues of that land, and the sicknesses which the LORD hath laid upon it; 23 And that the whole land thereof is brimstone, and salt, and burning, that it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the overthrow of Sodom, and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, which the LORD overthrew in his anger, and in his wrath: 24 Even all nations shall say, Wherefore hath the LORD done thus unto this land? what meaneth the heat of this great anger? 25 Then men shall say, Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD God of their fathers, which he made with them when he brought them forth out of the land of Egypt: 26 For they went and served other gods, and worshipped them, gods whom they knew not, and whom he had not given unto them: 27 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against this land, to bring upon it all the curses that are written in this book: 28 And the LORD rooted them out of their land in anger, and in wrath, and in great indignation, and cast them into another land, as it is this day. 29 The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.

REFLECTIONS

This chapter and the next are additions to the Law as it was received at Mt Horeb, and Moses is told clearly that this is the way these instructions are to be received by the people. They have equal standing to the words received at Horeb and are to be considered as a part of the Law of God. These words, through the next two chapters are the rounding off of the Lord's words to His people now that they are ready to move into the land.

This is another piece of evidence that the authorship here is that of Moses. Had a later author written these five books they would have not needed to make additions at this point. They would simply repeat the principles from Exodus 20ff, and there would have been no need to add these things, for they would have written in all they needed into the initial record of the Law from the time at Horeb. It is the presence of this sort of addition that rings true for this being the record of the speech given on the plain of Moab. It is the evidence of sequential revelation.

There are things that after forty years of application of the initial law will need to be clarified and added to. There are also things that can only be added in at this point, because only as they advance towards the land will they even think of some application issues, and be ready to apply them.

Verses 1 – 2. The words of the writer here indicate that this chapter has Moses as its author, but likely Joshua as the actual writer. They are careful to note that the words here came to Moses directly from the Lord in the same way as those at Mt Horeb. The words of Moses then directly tie the events of recent days back with the events of forty years before as the Israelites left Egypt. All those over fifty will have good memory of these events that they observed as children. In the speech Moses connects all the acts of God to deliver them the land, and makes them a

continuous sequence. He is teaching them the principle of progressive revelation here, binding together all that has occurred as a single organic entity.

Verses 3 – 5. Moses now mentions the various categories of evidences of the Lord's teaching work upon the people through these forty years. The first category of the works of God they had seen was the "temptations" or better "testing" of the Lord. These acts of God were testing situations that put spiritual pressure upon people to see whether they would do the right thing and obey the Lord, or whether they would rebel against God's will.

The Egyptians were also tested through Pharaoh, and that nation was judged because they preferred their own gods to the true God over all. Exodus 3:20ff. The Lord told Moses that He would bring the children of Israel out of Egypt and bring them into the land of Canaan, and all the testing situations in the forty years of wandering were designed by God to test the faith of the people in that promise. Exodus 3:15-18. The testing situations the Lord used were many and varied:

1. Too much water at the "Yam Suf" (Sea of Reeds). Exodus 14:1-18.
2. The wrong sort of water at Marah, then the sweet waters at Elim. Exodus 15:23-27.
3. No solid food in the Wilderness of Sin, and the provision of the quail and the manna. Exodus 16:1-18.
4. No water at Rephidim, and the provision of water from the smitten rock. Exodus 17:1-7.
5. Keeping Moses up the mountain and in the delay testing the faith and obedience of the people, who failed and made the Golden calf. Exodus 32:1ff.
6. The entire wilderness march was a forty year daily test to collect the manna.
7. On their arrival at Kadesh Barnea they faced the test – to advance into the land and seize it, but failed. Numbers 13:1 – 14:38.
8. On their return to Kadesh Barnea after forty years wandering they faced another "no water" test, and Moses himself failed terribly then. Numbers 20:2-13.

All these testing situations were sent by the Lord to stretch and refine their faith, not to break them down and cause grief. All things come to us to build us up, never cast us down. Everything that happens to the believer is designed to be education, if we are listening to the teacher, who is the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:28, 1 Corinthians 10:11-13.

In addition to the testing situations there were numerous times when the Lord specifically showed His glory, and through miraculous signs gave proof that He was indeed the creator God. At Mt Horeb there were numerous signs of God's power, with the cloud of presence, the pillar of fire, thunder and lightning. Exodus 19:18. There were occasions for the direct judgment of God upon rebels, as with Nadab and Abihu in Leviticus 10. Then also the rebels who opposed Moses and Aaron, Korah, Dathan and Abiram were judged by the Lord. Numbers 16:1ff.

These judgments upon both groups were direct, spectacular and miraculous. The next great miracles after this speech will be the crossing of the Jordan River and the collapse of the walls of Jericho 4:9-18, 6:1-16. All God did through the years had a purpose, and that purpose was to focus His people's mind upon His plan for them. Miracles are not worked by God to impress men, or be objects of interest in themselves, but to bring believers to trust more and achieve more as they walk in stronger and stronger faith.

The words of Moses in verse 4 are strange words, but they reflect an important reality regarding the first and second generation, for they did not see the truth about the works of God, and they doubted the one who did such great deeds. The first generation failed to enter the land at Kadesh Barnea, and the second will fail to seize all the land. Why did they not see, and hear, and believe, and obey? Some interpret this verse to mean God stopped them hearing. This cannot be true, for God is not unjust. These people could have believed God's Word and obeyed. They were sadly like Pharaoh, with hardened hearts.

The phrase "hardening of the heart", refers to the process that went on inside Pharaoh. God certainly hardened his heart; by that is meant, the Lord forced pharaoh to reveal exactly what he really wanted to do. The more the pharaoh saw of God's power and plan the less he feared the Lord, and the more he hated the Lord. The judgments he received did not soften him and bring him to repentance, for he didn't want to change his life, his religion, or his decisions. He was arrogant, proud and stubborn, and the more facts placed before him the more he resented the truth. God forced him to reveal his deepest desires; this is what hardening his heart involved. Isaiah 6:5-10, 63:7-19. God did not give the Israelites more faith and power because they did not fully exercise the power and faith they had!

The same process, as within Pharaoh, went on within the hearts of the Exodus Generation. They had been slaves for many years and many resented any form of leadership or orders received, and the bitterness they felt was at times expressed to Moses directly. Exodus 2:13-14. The rebellions, noted above against Moses and Aaron, are testimony to the resentment that many had towards any rulers. They desired freedom from all rulership, even that appointed by God. They, like pharaoh, were filled with pride, believing they could lead themselves, when they were unfit to do so. Their pride blinded them to the truth and so they failed when the final tests came, for they had not seen the truth behind each of the miraculous deliverances of the Lord.

The present generation before Moses is also accused of not learning enough to really walk with God's power into the land of promise. Moses challenge to them is to fully believe in the power, and person, and plan, behind all the things they have seen. Only then will they be able to really seize the land from the Canaanites. Moses fears about these people will prove correct; they will fail to seize all the land. Moses urges them to look down at their feet and see their old sandals that they have worn for years and have not worn out, their feet that have not developed any of the diseases associated

with the heat, and their clothing that has not rotted all these years. They have the evidence of God's preservation upon their feet and backs and yet they will not be certain of the power of God in their hearts!

Verses 6 – 9. They have been fed the manna of the Lord throughout the journey. The manna will last until they enter the land proper, for then they are expected to provide their own food by their own labour. They received it for forty years, and one rebellion was against it, for the people desired quail again, rather than God's plain provision. Exodus 16:31-35, Numbers 11:1-10, Deuteronomy 8:3-18, Joshua 5:10-12.

Notice certain things in Moses speech here, as well as in the passages through the forty years about the Lord's provision. The Lord provides a perfect food, with all minerals and vitamins within it, so that none of the diseases associated with malnutrition occur. The food is plain and bland in taste, not spicy or "interesting". They are challenged to be content with their rations and see them as fuel for the Lord's work and their concentration is to be upon the Lord, not what is on their plate. Philippians 4:11-13, 1 Timothy 6:6-10.

They are not provided wine through the years of wandering, nor do they make any, and they are reminded that their sobriety was a benefit to them. They are called to eat simply and nutritiously with their focus upon what the food is to achieve (their health and wellbeing) not delight or preoccupation in the food itself. They are not to live for the details of life, but in obedience to the creator of all life. Food is a detail of life, not an end in life. When people start to be preoccupied with details they lose perspective on the purpose the Lord has for them upon the earth. We are to guard ourselves against majoring on the minor details of life and missing our task before the Lord. Psalms 141:1-4, Proverbs 23:1-8.

They faced the enemies of God in the Canaanite coalition of Og and Sihon when they entered the East Bank of Jordan and the Lord defeated these superior enemy forces for them. Numbers 21:21-35, Deuteronomy 3:1-17. They had to fight, but the Lord went before them and the enemy was taken. This is to be the pattern for all their conquests. They are to receive the Lord's orders and advance into the land. All who stand against them or come out in battle array against them are to be attacked with confidence, and they are to be sure that all enemies of the Lord will be defeated as they walk with the Lord in obedience. It is their faith in the Lord's plan and power, and their obedience to the Lord's Word that will deliver them the land and give them secure possession of it.

Verses 10 – 15. Everyone who stands before Moses this day as he speaks is included in the covenant of God with the people. From the princes of the tribes, down to the slaves that they own who cut their fire wood and draw their water from the wells. All are within the promises received from the Lord. All who stand with Israel and have faith in Israel's God are within the zone where blessing will be received. All are challenged to formally bind themselves to the Lord with an oath of obedience this day.

As they hear the words of Moses they are to accept them as the words of God and they are to embrace them and walk the rest of their lives with faith in them. If they do this they will receive the blessing of the land and all that this land will provide.

The amazing thing about the history of this time is the opportunity the Israelites had at this time to seize and hold the land. It was one of the few times when the great powers were not interested in the land of Canaan. We have the Amarna Letters from Egypt with Canaanite princes asking for help from Hebrew attack but the pharaohs were distracted by other things.

The land was open for a period of around a hundred years and they could have doubled or tripled their population during that time and filled the land. All they are asked to do is enter in faith and obedience to the commands of the Lord their God and they could have had total victory. They had to get their eyes off the strength of the enemy and see their weakness, which was, God was not with them, He was with Israel.

Their stability is based upon the promises of God to them and to their ancestors who are buried in the land. The covenant made that day on the plains of Moab not only goes back to Mt Horeb, but goes back to Abraham's tent and forward to the Millennial Kingdom. All the people of the past stand with Israel this day, but also all their descendents stand with them.

They do not just depend upon the things that have been said to them, and the miracles that have happened to them. They also stand with the assurance of all that was done for, and said to the patriarchs. There is historic certainty here from the past, and it stretches into the future. The Lord's plan will be fulfilled, and the future is secure as they see the past has been when they look back.

The challenge to the people of that day, and to ourselves today, is to see present troubles in the same way we see the past when we look back. As we look back we see the Lord's deliverance of us, and as we look forward we are to express the faith in the Lord that the past should produce within us. Paul weaves this principle into the verses in 1 Corinthians 10:1-13.

Verses 16 – 18. The hatred of the pagan gods and all they stood for is what drives Moses words here. He wants the people to hate paganism, and see the powers that stand behind the gods and goddesses for what they are, demonic forces driven by malice towards mankind. He wants them to hate evil and avoid all contact with it and pollution

by it. The longer I live, and the more I see, the more I believe, that we do not hate evil enough. We do not see the evil malice of Satan towards us and the subtle strategies he has to destroy us by compromise with pagan religions.

The mental attitudes of any people group are the key to understanding their strength or weakness. As the Israelites advanced towards the land, they passed through the Sinai, and Negev civilizations of the Amorites, and saw other Midianite people groups in Arabia. They saw at first hand the worship of pagan gods and goddesses and they saw what such worship did for such people. They had been seduced by the apparently clean and dignified pagan worship of Egypt and built the Golden Calf in the desert themselves. Exodus 32. They had fallen into idolatry again and again, and it would remain a deep temptation for them until after their time of captivity in Babylon a thousand years later.

They didn't hate the idol worship they saw enough, and they remained tolerant of it, and they had a part of their heart that desired the simple worship of the hearth gods of the pagans. It was homely and pleasant and seemed harmless. It is the seductive power of evil that is its satanically designed path to influence, and the broad way that leads to a people's destruction. The toxic wormwood plant was the image of pagan religion; it was poisonous and would kill over time all who drank from its polluted spring. Matthew 7:13-14, Hebrews 3:12-16, 12:15-17.

Verses 19 – 21. The rebellious man will keep on believing he is alright, even though the words of judgment are read out against all who do these evil things. A person who is determined to follow after the evil of their own heart will enjoy their habits and feel "at peace" within. They will hear the curses of Deuteronomy 27-28 and believe that they apply to other people but not to them.

This is the deception of satanic religion; that God's judgment will not fall upon you, but only upon the nasty people! Satan delights in the narcissistic mind. Those who share this mental attitude with Satan believe they are "entitled" to good things, and that they are "special" and so the rules that apply to ordinary and boring people do not apply to them. They can hear the Law read aloud but never feel it applies to them, but only to those they consider "pathetic people" who really need it.

The evil man will believe he is fine before God, and that he doesn't have to follow the rules of the rest of the people. He will see no problem with drunkenness, nor any other immoral behaviour. We are reminded here that while alcohol is not forbidden by scripture, its use is to be strictly controlled, and that drunkenness is a sin not a disease. The genetic tendency to Alcoholism is a weakness of the Old Sin Nature that some people inherit, but to open oneself to that weakness is sin. Obedience to the Word of God means all sinful tendencies are resisted, and to fail to resist them is to be judged for disobedience to the Word and will of God.

The phrase "imagination of the heart" in verse 19 bears closer study. The feelings we have at times about things are not necessarily a guide to anything at all. There is an intuition that is correct at times, and conscience that can be a good guide to life at times, but there are then feelings that are simply that, just feelings of no significance. To give magical power to our feelings is to open ourselves to deception.

We are always to correct and educate our feelings, intuitions and conscience, by the Word of God, for only then are we sure they are giving right guidance. Those who think they are special will find they are not, and that the Lord will deal with them and remove them from the tribes of Israel and all the curses named in this book will come upon them. There is no escape from the justice of the living God. Matthew 25:31-46, Hebrews 10:31, 12:28-29.

Verses 22 – 24. The judgment of the fourth and fifth cycles of discipline are so great that even pagan nations will see them and know that the Lord alone could do this. When the final axe falls upon the land it will be like that which fell upon Sodom and Gomorrah and the reason will be that the Israelites have become like the Canaanites. Judgment falls upon them only because they have copied the evil people they inherited the land from. Jeremiah 22:6-9, Lamentations 2:15-17, 4:12-13.

They will see when Jerusalem falls that the Lord's anger was hot indeed. The anger of the Lord is against the sin and evil of His people when they have no reason to follow sin and evil. The Lord's anger is however always directed to a godly purpose, and it is for the remnant to be saved and restored upon repentance. Ezekiel 14:22-23.

Verses 25 – 29. The pagans who see the destroyed land will see the truth immediately. They will recognise that destruction is come upon Israel because they forsook their God and followed after the gods of their enemies. God's anger was kindled against them exactly as He said it would be if they forsook His words and way. Exodus 20:1-5. Now read verse 28 carefully and note the last phrase, "as it is this day". Is this prophetic or descriptive? The liberals argue that these words were not written by Moses at all, indeed by no-one before 535 BC when the Exiles returned from Babylon and reflected upon their "mythic history". I reject this viewpoint. While Ezra probably edits the Mosaic Law and preserves it in its final form he is not the author of it.

These words are a continuation of Moses prophetic words, as we have seen in Deuteronomy 28:68. As we saw above, these words in chapter 28 were only fulfilled in 71 AD, but no-one argues that Deuteronomy was written then! Why argue that these words in chapter 29 were written in the 530s? The only reason is that unbelievers have difficulties in accepting prophetic words. Let us embrace these words of Moses and draw strength from the truth of his prophetic words. God has the history of man in His hands, and we are in His hands! Deuteronomy 33:27-29, John 10:27-30.

What is revealed by the Lord is for our hearing, our belief, and our application. All that is revealed is for us to apply. There are many things we do not know, and what has not been revealed we are not to speculate upon, for they are the secrets of God. What we do not know this side of eternity we are to accept, and rest upon the certainties of the character of God. We are to concentrate upon what we do know and make sure we do all we are ordered to do, not sit around arguing about what we cannot know now. Colossians 2:6-10.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. God gives us a heart to believe as we express our faith in Him. As faith is exercised, faith grows. We begin the process of growth under pressure with worship to banish heaviness (Isaiah 61:3), and we build power by faith in action, as we obey the Word of God as we hear it. Let us hear the Word of the Lord today and advance in obedience of it in daily life and ministry.
2. God's provision for us will be adequate, but plain. We are not to seek the "dainties" of this world or we run the danger that destroyed Solomon's life, his posterity, and his witness. Let us audit ourselves often lest we fall into the error of the Exodus generation and of Solomon and centre our lives around the details of life rather than its purpose!
3. God's provision and God's timing is perfect. If we are in a difficult or what appears "impossible" situation, but we are sure the Lord has led us here, then we have the same challenge the Lord gives these people. We are to trust in the holy and loving character of the Lord our God, and obey the Word of God, and wait for the deliverance of the Lord. We are to do all we are called to do while we wait for the Lord to act to deliver us, and we are to wait in a spirit of worship and praise.
4. Let us guard ourselves against idolatry of all forms, and let us remember that tolerance for paganism has limits. We live in free societies now and it is the right of all people to select their own path through life, but we are to be sure that no paganism is given publicity that may draw the foolish to it. These things are great evils and must be seen as such and hated with all our might.
5. Sin is sin and must be repented of, and evil is the foolish deception of the enemy, and it must be fled from. Let us confess our sins and deal with the tendency of the mind to evil. Let us apply all we know and not waste time speculating upon what we cannot or do not know!

REFLECTION UPON SPIRITUAL AND MENTAL STABILITY

1. God is able to keep us and bless us on the path of His Will. (Ephesians 3:20, Hebrews 7:25).
2. Stability comes when we know God; when we have grown up in his Word. Maturity brings with it stability. (2Peter 3:18, 2Timothy 1:12).
3. The alternative to a stable life of faith is to be tossed about by every pressure; this occurs when there is no doctrinal application in the life. (James 1:6, Ephesians 4:14, Revelation 3:8).
4. Believers need stability to stand fast against the wiles of Satan who is a danger to those with no doctrine: We are told to:
 - a) Stand fast in the word 1Corinthians 16:13.
 - b) Stand fast in our liberty Galatians 5:1 cf. Romans 14:1ff, 8:9-13.
 - c) Stand fast in one spirit (no pettiness) Philippians 1:27.
 - d) Stand fast in the Lord (in fellowship) Philippians 4:1.
 - e) Stand fast in doctrine 2 Thessalonians 2:5, 16,17.
5. Strength and stability comes in a close relationship with the Lord. By faith in God's character and plan alone we stand: 2 Corinthians 1:24, Psalm 59:17, 62:7, 144:1.
6. God has supreme power at His fingertips for us. Isaiah 59:1.
7. Our faith should stand secure in this power, for we are kept by it in all things, therefore we should be confident. 1Corinthians 2:5, 1Peter 1:5, John 16:33.
8. God is able to make us stand through the work of the Holy Spirit upon the word in our lives. Romans 14:4, Jude 24.
9. Strength and stability come from the impact of the Holy Spirit's work upon the word in our life as we believe and apply it, e.g. Sarah Hebrews 11:11, Paul 2 Corinthians 12:8-10.
10. Profile of the stable believer under pressure - 2 Peter 1:3-16.

REFLECTION UPON THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

1. God's faithfulness is based on his unchangeability - Hebrews 13:8
2. God's faithfulness is renewed "every day" - Lamentations 3:21-24
3. His promises are sure - Hebrews 10:23
4. The faithfulness of Christ continues even when we are unfaithful. - 2 Timothy 2:13
5. Christ is a faithful and merciful high priest - Hebrews 2:17
6. God is faithful to forgive sins - 1 John 1:9
7. God is faithful to keep us saved - 2 Timothy 2:13
8. God is faithful to deliver us through temptation - 1 Corinthians 10:13
9. God is faithful to keep His promises to us - Hebrews 10:23
10. God is faithful to us in suffering - 1 Peter 4:19
11. God is faithful in fulfilling His plan for us - I Thessalonians 5:24
12. God is faithful to strengthen us - 2 Thessalonians 3:3
13. God is the faithful partner of our union with Christ - 1 Corinthians 1:9
14. Christ is a faithful and merciful high priest - Hebrews 2:17
15. Jesus Christ is synonymous with faithfulness - Revelation 19:11

NOTES

CHAPTER 30**INTRODUCTION**

Moses concern expresses dangers that are hundreds of years in advance of the date he gives this message to the people. He warns of mental attitudes that will be destructive in his own day, but will bear the fruit of their evil in a later day to the days he speaks. This is what the liberal critic cannot understand, for they have no understanding or comprehension of prophetic words. Moses "saw" the future with the same clarity he saw his own day. He sees the days of the falls of Jerusalem and feels the pain that the Lord felt as he looked at the city many centuries later. Matthew 23:27-31, Luke 13:31-35.

Prophecy makes not sense to those who do not believe in God, or do not believe God speaks. This is not a problem to the Lord, for this clarity of fore-sight is how He speaks to His prophets, but it is a problem to the liberal who does not believe God speaks at all! The gift of prophecy is not a "pleasant thing", it means the man or woman so called actually sees and feels the pain of those to whom their message speaks. Moses felt the pain of the destruction of Jerusalem long before his people even saw the city and several hundred years before they controlled it.

In this chapter GOD SPEAKS and we are challenged to hear and obey, just as the people who heard this first were challenged. This chapter also speaks of repentance, forgiveness and restoration, and reminds us that there is hope for all who are in a relationship with the Lord. No sin separates us from the love of the Lord if we repent and come back to Him. Romans 8:35-39. Israel was restored from her dispersal in 586 BC, and she will be from the greater dispersal that began in 70 AD. Zechariah 12:1 - 14:21.

DEUTERONOMY 30:1-20

30:1 And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath driven thee, **2** And shalt return unto the LORD thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul; **3** That then the LORD thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath scattered thee. **4** If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the LORD thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee: **5** And the LORD thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers. **6** And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live. **7** And the LORD thy God will put all these curses upon thine enemies, and on them that hate thee, which persecuted thee. **8** And thou shalt return and obey the voice of the LORD, and do all his commandments which I command thee this day. **9** And the LORD thy God will make thee plenteous in every work of thine hand, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy land, for good: for the LORD will again rejoice over thee for good, as he rejoiced over thy fathers: **10** If thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which are written in this book of the law, and if thou turn unto the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul. **11** For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. **12** It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? **13** Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? **14** But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it. **15** See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; **16** In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it. **17** But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; **18** I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it. **19** I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: **20** That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 3. The words of Moses here are beyond acceptance for the liberal who will not accept that God speaks to man. To those of us who are believers in the true God, these words make sense. The Lord speaks to man, and He speaks with precision about the future, because He knows the future. There is no problem whatsoever with the words of Moses here, for the Lord showed Moses what would happen a thousand years later, and then in a further 700 years, when the people would be scattered amongst the Gentiles.

It is clear to Moses that the Lord would "drive" the people to a strange country and they would suffer there as they had suffered in Egypt. He also saw their repentance in Babylon and the restoration of the Lord to the land of the generation that repented. Moses saw with sadness their pain, but he saw with gladness their restoration to their Golden Age. He

saw with sadness their tragedy in 70 AD and its aftermath, but God gave him a glimpse of the Millennial Kingdom. Moses dies without despair for what will happen to his disobedient nation, for he sees there is hope in the future of Israel, but it will come to pass when there is repentance.

Moses thinks here of their second dispersal, from which they have not yet fully returned even in 2011. In the days of Ezekiel, Daniel and Jeremiah, the Jewish people were scattered amongst the Babylonian Empire alone, whereas under the Roman dispersal they are scattered amongst most of the nations of the earth. There are few countries where you cannot find a synagogue. It is this chapter that they are to remember when they look up finally and seek the Lord's path back to fellowship with Him. They are to first recognize that the "Lord has driven them" into these places. They are not victims of bad luck, or even satanic malice, although this latter thing is true.

The only reason the enemy has been able to pour his malice upon them is that the Lord has allowed it, due to their total rejection of His plan and purpose for them. Instead of serving the Lord through the simplicity of the Mosaic Law they have smothered the truth of God with their traditions. Matthew 15:1-12. They have built such a hedge around the Law that they can no longer see it. This hedge must come down, and it will come down in a night, and they will see that they killed their Messiah and they have been insulting the Lord through the years with their traditions, and in one day they will cast aside their traditions and embrace Moses words again. Zechariah 12:10ff.

The promise is for a full and complete re-gathering of Israel to their land to inherit its Mosaic borders. This is not even part way to being fulfilled. The future for those in the land now is described in Zechariah 12 and it is not a pleasant one, for two thirds of those in the land during the Great Tribulation will die there before the Lord's return. The "good news" of that day is the total repentance of the one third that will recognise the Lord as the Messiah, for they are then kept and delivered into the Millennial Kingdom.

Most Jewish people will remain outside the land until the Lord Himself recalls them from all nations. Only then will they return with thanksgiving (and safety) as people who fully, whole heartedly recognize and acknowledge Him as their Lord and King. Isaiah 56:1-8, Hosea 3:4-5, 5:15 – 6:3, 14:1-9, Joel 2:12-14, Romans 11:1-29, 2 Corinthians 3:13-18, Ephesians 6:24.

Read through all the verses at the end of the sentence above, for they take you through a number of passages relating to the return of the Jewish people to their land, and tell you what will unfold for them there, and in the nations where most will remain until the Lord calls. The Lord's compassion remains upon Israel even through until these last days.

There is no hatred of God towards the Jewish people and all who hate them are under God's judgment. Nations have been used to discipline them through history, but all who went too far were themselves destroyed. The Babylonians showed no mercy upon the Jewish people when they invaded the land in 597 and 586 BC. The Nazis also showed no pity or mercy in 1940-1944 and so none was shown to them when the Russians swept in in 1945.

These people did not pity the child, the poor, the aged or the sick, and so their fate will be in accordance with their lack of mercy. Psalms 137:7-9, Isaiah 13:1-22, 14:1-27, Jeremiah 21:7-10. The city of Jerusalem will be destroyed twice because the very Jewish people showed no mercy and compassion to one another! Jeremiah 13:12-27, Ezekiel 5:5-17, 7:4-9, 9:3-11.

The Lord judges people in direct proportion to the judgments the people themselves dish out to others. The most recent example of this was Germany, which was pillaged and dismembered as a result of their evil treatment of the Jewish people. They showed no mercy to the Jewish people and the Russian armies showed no mercy to them. Psalms 106:43-48, 126:1-6, Isaiah 56:8, Jeremiah 29:10-14 (this passage covers their first return from the deportations of 605-586), Jeremiah 31:7ff, 32:27-41, (this covers their second return from the present dispersion).

Having read these passages, then read, Lamentations 3:22-24, Ezekiel 34:11-31, 36:8-36, Romans 11:23-31. Read these passages slowly and be convinced of the prophetic facts; the Lord will yet restore His people Israel fully to their land and they will worship there under His protection and kingship until the end of time itself.

Verses 4 – 5. The promise here would have made no sense whatsoever until the 1970s when men took to the heavens and went to the moon. What the prophet Moses is saying refers to this very thing, for it can mean nothing else. It was a nonsensical thing to say at the time, and the hearers must have felt Moses was using the most extreme hyperbole here. Even if a Jewish person is on a space mission when the Great Tribulation breaks out and they remain in space until the Lord's return, they will be brought back from where-ever they are to worship in the land of Israel. Isaiah 11:10-16.

The promise is both for restoration of nationhood and prosperity in the land. They will grow and prosper there and their numbers will be well beyond those of the greatest time of the nation Israel of olden times. Moses directly speaks to a future generation here, rather than to his own generation. They will grow in numbers beyond the greatest numbers of their ancestors. At their greatest point of power and influence the world population of Jewish people was around 12 million, and already it is back beyond those numbers today.

During the Holocaust 67% of European Jews were killed; around 6,000,000 died. During the Great Tribulation period the same proportion of people will be killed; of those in the land it will be cut to a third of the numbers who enter that time, but will grow to the greatest ever number in the Millennial Kingdom.

Moses calls the heavens and the earth to bear record to the fair warning he has given the people. The entire created universe bears witness against them if they walk away from the Lord their God. They are urged to "CHOOSE LIFE" but Moses recognises their free will in this, and that every generation must make this choice, and depending on what they do, they will inherit the blessings of the Lord or His judgment.

The closeness of the relationship that people have with the Lord is in direct proportion to their blessing in this life and the next. Moses urges the people to draw closer to the Lord than they have ever thought necessary. They are to love the Lord with all their strength and all their heart. If He is their love and light, then He will be their life and blessing. Psalms 27:1, 30:1-5, 36:9, 37:3-8, 66:8-10, John 14:6, Acts 17:25-31, Galatians 2:20-21, Colossians 3:1-13.

A transformed life is the evidence of the presence of a relationship with the Lord. If a person is not transformed in their behaviours, then they have not met the Lord in a saving way, for He transforms all He meets. They may change slowly over time, but they really change! We are known by our family likeness, and we are all to resemble the Lord in our attitudes and actions.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. We are called to be transformed people who bear the likeness of the Lord before the people of this world. We show our love of the Lord by our obedience to His words. John 15:4-17. Anything short of obedience to the Lord is not showing love for the Lord!
2. We confront the truth of the prophetic words of the Lord's servants here. Moses was a mighty prophet and his words here go through all time. He was given a glimpse of the entire history of Israel; he saw their pain and their victory in their Messiah. Let us rejoice in the prophetic words of the Lord regarding the history of Israel here upon the earth. Let us preach the truth with focused energy and let us always consider the impact of our words upon Israel, for the Lord will lift them up one day again, and we have the responsibility to sow seed of truth now that will bear fruit later.
3. Israel built a hedge around the Law of Moses, and while they kidded themselves that this was to protect the Law and ensure it was kept, it created a legalistic rather than a living system of Law. God wants living law written into the hearts of the people who claim they love Him. Let us love and serve the Lord wholeheartedly, and walk in His grace and power, not in any man made systems that will distort the truth.
4. There is an end for Israel and it is written firmly in the Word of God; they will be taken up again and they will inherit all the land that was promised to their fathers. The Lord will return to this world, to judge it and then to rule over it in person. This is the hope of the Old Testament and the New, and is the promise around which the Communion Table centres. 1 Corinthians 11:26.

REFLECTION UPON THE NATURE OF TRUE PROPHECY

1. The gift of prophecy and the office of the prophet are distinguished in Scripture. In the Old Testament there were those who had the office of prophet, and served in an official capacity within the worship system of Israel but there were also those who at times were given the gift of prophecy to give a special prophecy even though they were not full time prophets. Elijah was a man with the office and the gift, where-as David and Moses have the gift at times but not the office.
2. The roles of the person with the office of prophet were many and varied:
 - [a]. Aaron was a preacher Exodus 7:1
 - [b]. In Nehemiah's time the prophet-preacher had a role to exegete the Word of God clearly so that the people would know the truth. Nehemiah 6:7, Hosea 6:5,
 - [c]. As revivalists they were to call people to repentance. Judges 6:7-12, Zechariah 7:7-12.
 - [d]. They were to oppose apostasy so that those who were likely to be misled by a false teacher would have no excuse. 1 Kings 18:36-39, 40, 2 Chronicles 25:15 Ezekiel 2:5, 2 Kings 20:11.
 - [e]. They were encouragers of the people. Ezra 5:2.
 - [f]. They were sometimes song/worship leaders for the people. 1 Samuel 10:5.
 - [g]. They led in prayer at worship. 2 Chronicles 32:20.
 - [h]. They were the advisers to the kings and they were associated with coronations. 1 Samuel 10:1, 1 Kings 11:28, 29, 2 Kings 9:1-6, 2 Chronicles 12:5, 2 Chronicles 12:6, 15:2-7.
 - [i]. They were spiritual advisers or seers for the kings; they "saw" the immediate future and so were able to advise the kings of the right decisions. 1 Samuel 9:9, 2 Samuel 24:11, 1 Chronicles 21:9, 24:29, 2 Chronicles 19:2, 33:18, 2 Kings 17:13, Isaiah 29:10,
 - [j]. They were fore-tellers of significant future events. 2 Samuel 7:5-16, Amos 9:11, Isaiah 9:6,7, Isaiah 53, Ezekiel 34:22ff, Micah 5:2, Daniel 9:26, Zechariah 13:8, Joel, Zechariah 14, and many more.
 - [k]. God intended them to be the shepherds and vine-dressers of the nation. As such they were to be the type of Christ, who is referred to in the Old Testament as "the great prophet". Deuteronomy 18:15-19, Zechariah 13:5,6, Matthew 21:11, Luke 7:16, 8:18-20, 24:19,23-26, John 7:40,41.
3. The Methodology of the prophets. There was no "set" formula for the prophets to follow, but certain things were established as "tests" for the people to be sure the prophet was genuine.

- [a] The prophet had to have a spiritual life witness that was like Moses. Deuteronomy 34:10-12.
- [b] God spoke to the prophets by dreams and visions. God spoke to Moses face to face but he was an exception. Numbers 12:6-7.
- [c] The prophet had to be totally confident of his message, as he was judged by God if there was any falsehood in it. 1 Kings 22:13,14, 2 Kings 5:8.
- [d] There were to be no secret prophecies, everything was to be open and clear, so that all the people might be warned of God. Jeremiah 23:25-29.
- [e] The prophet had to be specific in his message and had to be obeyed literally. 2 Kings 5:10-19, note especially verse 13.

4. There were always false prophets; in fact the great prophets of the Old Testament were always outnumbered by false prophets in their own day. Jeremiah 2:8, Ezekiel 13:1-23.

Our Lord warned us that there will always be false prophets about. Matthew 7:15-23.

Note - The Lord's Words here in that the personal walk of the prophet is to be paid attention to:-

No spiritual fruit in their life = no truth in their words.

God allows the false prophets to operate without immediate judgement upon them, so that believers are always presented with an obedience test, to see whether we will obey the Scriptures or follow our own lusts to judgement.

False prophets will abound at times of poor Bible teaching. Weeds only grow in poorly cared for soil. Hosea 4:5,6, 9:7,8.

5. Tests that believers must apply when confronting a person claiming the gift of prophecy.

- [a] The words of the prophet will never contradict the Word of God. Jeremiah 23:33-36, 2 Peter 2:1-3, 1 Corinthians 14:32.
- [b] The prophet will never call people away from genuine worship of God. Deuteronomy 13:1-5.
- [c] The prophet will always be specific and the prophecy will be able to be tested. Deuteronomy 18: 20 - 22, Jeremiah 28: 9.
- [d] Any prophet who asked for money was to be treated as false. Jeremiah 8:10.
- [e] Any prophet who was a drunkard was to be treated as false. Micah 2:11.
- [f] Any unconfessed sin of envy, jealousy, strife, etc in their life, they were false! Jeremiah 23: 11.
- [g] If they were found only in groups they were probably false, as God's prophets were men alone. 1 Kings 22:5-8, 18:22.
- [h] Does the prophecy accord with Scripture (this is more than just not contradict)? 1 Corinthians 14:37,38, 2 Kings 23:2.

NOTES

CHAPTER 31**INTRODUCTION**

Moses is now 120 years old and he is about to die. Moses is not worried about himself. He recognises that God has the details regarding his death in His hands, just as He has had his life. Psalms 68:20, 116:15. There is a replacement ready to take over the reigns of leadership, which is Joshua. Moses is not important as their leader now, for he has run his course, and he can leave the stage of life, but the messages that Moses is still preaching are all important. John 3:27-30, 2 Timothy 4:6-8.

To greedily hold onto each day when health is failing, and we have fulfilled our purpose upon the earth, is unbecoming of the believer. Moses sets us a good example here; for he is ready to lay aside his body and be with the Lord. The Bible does not support euthanasia, but neither does it support abnormally prolonging life by medical means when the body and soul are ready to depart this life. This life is temporary, a vapour, and clinging to it is a sign that there is not the correct attitude toward it. James 4:13-17.

It is the contents of the bottle of drink not the container which is important, and so it should be with people. Our earthly life is to be a drink offering, poured out with enthusiasm to our Lord. 2 Timothy 4:6. We should keep our eyes on the work we are to do in service to the Lord, not the detail of this short life. In our relationships with others, we are to concentrate upon what messages the Lord has for us through His servants, not be focused upon the vessels. We are all His vessels in ministry.

We are all challenged to have a healthy attitude towards our body, and towards the length of our earthly life. We are to see that the length of our life is in the Lord's hands and that we will not die a day too soon unless we commit the "Sin Unto Death", and even then, we can relax in the Lord's hands, as Moses does here. We are tasked with keeping the body fit, clean and well, as if it is the temple of the Holy Spirit of God, for it is, but the day will come when we need to lay it aside. Death is to be a simple, "laying aside" of the body, and if we have reached the end of the life course set for us, this should be a relaxed end for us. 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, 6:19.

Moses will say in this section that, "he cannot go out or come in", as he used to. He is an old man and worn out and now finds all work and movement difficult. He will use his last bit of strength to get up onto the mountain, to see the Promised Land and die. He is content with this, for he knows the Lord was right in judging him for striking the rock in the wilderness of Sin. Numbers 20:7-13. Moses has accepted that he is to die before entering the land, and seeing the words he has spoken here read aloud above the town of Shechem. The mountain he climbs is as good a hill to die upon as Gerizim or Ebal there. Deuteronomy 27:1-13.

At this point in his life and health, it does not trouble Moses that he has had his life shortened by a few weeks. The Lord has been gracious in His judgment upon him and he accepts the sentence and will go out rejoicing in his service, knowing he is forgiven for his sin. He is ready to move through the easy barrier of death and enter the presence of the one he has served so long. He has the experience of Stephen many years later, and death is no concern for this man. Acts 7:55-60.

All the way through this passage Moses will remind the people that the Lord is the one who will do the work for them to inherit the land and win the victories there. God will do the work, and the challenge for the people is to walk with Him. Jesus said "follow me", and that remains the order today and always. Jesus is still saying to us all today, "I am doing the work, you follow me, walk with me and obey me". We must keep on remembering the key doctrines of the character of God, and spirituality by grace.

The people in the land were hopelessly degenerate, with the only people with faith in the true God being the family of Rahab in Jericho, and the Gibeonites. We have a strong comment in this chapter on the justice of God. As we have seen before these Canaanite people groups are to be destroyed. Remember as you go through this section that judgment is God's strange work; it is not His preferred choice regarding mankind. Isaiah 28:21. God is going to deal with this degenerate people, the Canaanites.

The deliverance of Rahab and the Gibeonites will be very similar to the judgment time upon Sodom and Gomorrah when Lot was delivered from their midst. The deliverance of the few believers from the midst of the Canaanites is a reminder that God's judgment is "surgical" and the deaths of so many were clearly a necessity. We are challenged in this chapter, as in earlier ones to leave the justice of these things in the Lord's hands and bring our questions about it to Him.

The strong questions that the events of the next chapters will raise need to be sat with and meditated upon, for the death of so many evil people is a serious matter, and the Lord moves against these people only after 450 years of grace has elapsed. Genesis 15:16. Sit with these hard things for a while and meditate upon the character of God as you think of the deaths of this entire people group.

You will find that there are crises in your own life that will raise questions, and you will ask, "Why did this happen to me?" We must remember that God does all things with the complete knowledge of all the facts. In time we only see some things, and we need to sit with issues a lot longer than our impatience lets us, and we need to delay decisions, and not jump to conclusions about the justice of God on the basis of inadequate information.

Once we start seeing the problems that we have in the light of God's character our questions will start to fall into the right place, and that is the place of meditation in the light of facts that will help us arrive at biblical conclusions. God can be trusted. What He says He will do, and if He judges, then it was for a reason that demanded action, and it was after grace and mercy had run their course. He will judge all the evil ones upon this earth eventually, and He will keep you continually. He will not fail you nor forsake you if you walk with Him. He says that He is with us even to the end of this world (or age). Matthew 28:18-20, Hebrews 13:5.

BE OF GOOD COURAGE

In verse 6 Moses says to the people, "Be strong and of good courage". They have a new leader, but they have the same God to guide him. Joshua is just an ordinary man who becomes of significance spiritually because of doing what God wanted him to do. All of us are to draw strength from Joshua, for this is the way the Lord will make us all notable for Him and His service. Joshua takes God seriously and stands for Him. Joshua is on the job already as Moses speaks, and he is obedient.

A lot of people want to be great, but the path to godly greatness is the path of humility and obedience. If you have the deep desire in the spirit to be a Bible School teacher or a pastor there is not one thing in your way. Devote your time to Him, and study, pray and serve in all the areas of service the Lord brings your way. Whatever door needs to open the Lord will open; just keep moving forward as the Lord moves you. The Lord uses ordinary people who commit themselves to Him. Moses says to us all, as he said to Joshua, that when we get scared or depressed we are to just keep on remembering that the Lord is with us, look back at the reality of the doctrine of the character of God, and remember that our God can be trusted.

Look at your problems, and at times your depression, in the light of the promises of God, and decide to trust Him. You should then say "Amen" by getting up and getting moving. Isaiah 61:3, Hebrews 12:12. God wants to have people with lives that are honouring to Him. God wants us to ask Him to strengthen us **as** we do something rather than just ask Him to enable us to do something. Our simple obedience builds spiritual power. The simple act the Lord requires is worship and praise, for in that we strengthen ourselves to do more for Him.

In Joshua we have an example of an ordinary man who was made extraordinary by simple obedience. He kept on trusting the Lord, and did not sit in his tent and mope. Too many Christians sit on the premises rather than standing on the promises. Joshua continues to have over-whelming problems, but he continues to worship his way through them, and so should we.

KNOWLEDGE OF THE BIBLE

A great deal was demanded of the Jewish people in relationship to the words of Moses, for they were seen as foundational for their national life. In later years by the age of fourteen every Jewish male was expected to know the key areas of the Torah by heart. By age 21 they were expected to know the whole Torah by heart, however it was not only important to hear it and be able to recite it, but be obedient to it, as stated in verse 12.

We have had the "Navigators" group for many years that follows this early tradition, and teaches people to memorise scripture. Some Christians today learn by heart whole books of the Bible, which is excellent, provided they apply it to their life. Such a thing should not be just a memory feat. You can have people memorising Scripture while their life is falling apart because they won't pause long enough to apply what they hear their lips repeating. We need to learn about Him and reverence Him, and then do what He wants us to do. Do not be a forgetful hearer of the Word - James 1:22-27. We must not make the learning of scripture into a "vain repetition". Matthew 6:7. The challenge is not to master the scriptures, but to let the words contained there master us!

We should be careful not to bury the Word of God in a lot of questions. In John 4, the Samaritan woman at the well of Sychar tried to discuss theology, but she did this in order to distract herself from the real issue she needed to address. The Lord brought her back on track by focusing on her problem; which was the uncontrolled sin in her life. She was a sinner in need of a Saviour, and any other issue was a satanic time waster.

Many people have sin in their life and do not want to face it. We must remember the enemy seeks to distract mankind from the truth about their need of a saviour. If he succeeds in doing this the unsaved man drops into hell without ever facing the truth about their eternal state.

Moses doesn't want anything to come between the people and the reality of their spiritual needs. As the Lord's pastors today, we should not allow anything to happen that will distract people from the truth about their need for a Saviour. This means that at the end of each church service we must be careful not to spoil what the Holy Spirit has done through the Word by any actions we or others do. Let us be sure that our fear of the Lord shows itself in obedience and thoughtfulness.

Another two great examples of men like Moses and Joshua, are Nehemiah and Ezra. Ezra and Nehemiah, during the rebuilding of Jerusalem, read the law and had Scribes mingling with the crowd asking people whether they understood it. Nehemiah 8:1ff. Nothing must be allowed to come between the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit and the person upon whom the Spirit is working, and everything must be done to assist people to understand what they hear. If you are

teaching God's Word you must be especially sensitive to what the Lord is doing amongst His people through the anointed words being spoken. Do not expect the process to be free from attack by the enemy here. Let the Lord have His way with you and the people; be obedient, prayerful as you speak, and thoughtful.

YOUR MINISTRY

The Lord tells Moses he is going to die and that the people will turn to other gods (verse 14-18). This is a sad message for Moses to hear, but he has already preached to the people the message that will deliver them when they remember it. Moses had done his job but the people are going to fail, doing what Moses had warned them not to. Often the people who you love and agonise over are going to fall. All we can do as the Lord's servant is to be assured we have done our work as well as it was possible to do the work, so that the people we have taught are without excuse.

We all need to walk in the power and direction of the Holy Spirit otherwise we are going to get disillusioned at times, and perhaps even have a breakdown. Sadly many servants of the Lord fall down in mental and physical health through lack of understanding of the things we are going to be reading of here in these last chapters of Deuteronomy.

You may feel in the midst of your ministry that you are wasting your breath at times. Now we can always do a better job, but we cannot worry our selves sick over that; but do all we can. We are called to walk in the Spirit, and serve in His power, and so when we fall short, we confess that slackness, and then throw ourselves into spirit filled service again. We must be ministers of the Word in Holy Spirit power. This is our call and it is regarding this that we will be held to account! We must all do our job as unto the Lord and irrespective of the visible results we must leave the final result of our work in the Lord's hands.

God has a plan that is as perfect as His character is perfect. When you know you have not done what you were called to do as well as it could have been done, then you are to confess your sin, and you tell Him in the power of the Spirit you are going to do better. Then you get moving, and say "Amen" with spirit filled activity. Remember, you do not have to feel a certain way to teach the Word, you just need to deal with any unconfessed sin and preach the prepared message in the Holy Spirit's power, not your own. A lot of people spend a lot of time praying themselves into what they think are "spiritual feelings".

If you are not feeling well physically, or mentally you are tired or depressed, it could be for any number of reasons. To "check yourself out" in this matter, you apply 1 Corinthians 11:28, and 2 Corinthians 13:5. You check your life for sin, deal with any you find, and pray for His strength, then ignore any "feelings" and just open your heart to the people and your life to the Holy Spirit. You then open God's Holy Word and teach it in the power that will come to one with that attitude. Let your teaching be a sweet smelling offering to the Lord.

God does not want us to run on our emotions otherwise if we feel a certain way we will do nothing. Look at the Cross and see what the Lord did for you. As you advance in obedience into your area of service pray this prayer; "Lord strengthen me as I go and serve you here". You do not wait around and try to get the right feeling, for the feeling may have nothing to do with the spiritual battle that is raging around you.

Feelings are caused by all manner of spiritually irrelevant things. When you let feelings guide you, what you are saying is that your feelings are more important than the children or people you are talking to. Your feelings may be related to the Angelic Conflict that is raging around you, in that you may be feeling the depression of the people before you as they sit under the burden of their sins. At times we will feel the feelings of others, and this is a good thing, for in it we build empathy towards their pain. We are not meant to "sit with" this for long however, for we are called to help heal their pain through the proclaiming of the truth to them.

Your call as the pastor is not to sit with that depression, but rather to blow it away with worship and preaching of the truth, for in this you gain victory in the Angelic Conflict. If we have grief for a death, then that feeling is to be "sat with" and grieved through, but other feelings are to be blown away quickly by worship, and replaced by doctrines that can be rested upon. Learn what the feelings may be teaching you, but do not linger with them too long, for you are called to action not emotion!

If the Lord wants you to do something, then do it in obedience to Him, and pray as you move. In Proverbs we are told to commit our ways to the Lord and He will direct our paths. Proverbs 3:1-10. The Lord says, that He will show us where to walk, and we are to "get walking". We are not to moan about our "wounded spirit", but just get moving and be obedient. No soldier complains about a slight wound when the army is called to attack, he simply binds his wound tightly and throws himself forward with his comrades. Be a soldier!

Moses and Joshua got depressed at times when they faced great griefs, but they claimed promises and doctrines and kept moving forward in obedience to the plan. We are challenged to stand like these great men, for they are our examples of what the Lord expects of us. Do not worry about depression feelings or the other signs of exhaustion and tiredness if you have done your job, for these things will drop away if the job is done and it can be rejoiced in.

We are to be people who praise God for what has been done, not people who sit around talking about our feelings. We are to do things under the Lord's guidance and leave the outcome with the Lord. Ezekiel 2:3-8, 3:10-20. At times we may work to the point of exhaustion, and feel sad, despondent, and worn out, but if the task is complete we are called to rejoice as a tired but victorious army rejoices.

Our job is to warn the people of God's truth and the danger their sin places them in. The watchman of the ancient world was not responsible for the city's fall if he had blown the warning trumpet, but if he failed to act when he should have he was held responsible for the suffering his inaction created. Ezekiel 3:17-20. Teach the Word whether you are apparently heard or not, whether you feel like it or you do not. Do not preach at people; speak words of the heart of God directly to them, whether they respond or not. Give your message to those who need to hear it "as unto the Lord".

We will see Moses' song also in this section before us. In chapter 33 Moses blesses Israel before his death and in the following chapter his death is reported. The book of Joshua and the entry into the land commences at this point. The great man will be dead. Has anything changed - no. God is on the throne. The message to these people and to ourselves is the same; give thanks to the Lord for the great man and then advance with God's chosen replacement into the next phase of God's plan. We must honour God with our obedience. It is important to honour the people who lead us, but it is more important to honour God. We do both by obeying the Word preached to us, and passing it on with all our strength to the next generation.

DEUTERONOMY 31:1-15

31:1 And Moses went and spake these words unto all Israel. 2 And he said unto them, I am an hundred and twenty years old this day; I can no more go out and come in: also the LORD hath said unto me, Thou shalt not go over this Jordan. 3 The LORD thy God, he will go over before thee, and he will destroy these nations from before thee, and thou shalt possess them: and Joshua, he shall go over before thee, as the LORD hath said. 4 And the LORD shall do unto them as he did to Sihon and to Og, kings of the Amorites, and unto the land of them, whom he destroyed. 5 And the LORD shall give them up before your face, that ye may do unto them according unto all the commandments which I have commanded you. 6 Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. 7 And Moses called unto Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and of a good courage: for thou must go with this people unto the land which the LORD hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it. 8 And the LORD, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed. 9 And Moses wrote this law, and delivered it unto the priests the sons of Levi, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and unto all the elders of Israel. 10 And Moses commanded them, saying, At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles, 11 When all Israel is come to appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing. 12 Gather the people together, men and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the LORD your God, and observe to do all the words of this law: 13 And that their children, which have not known any thing, may hear, and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it. 14 And the LORD said unto Moses, Behold, thy days approach that thou must die: call Joshua, and present yourselves in the tabernacle of the congregation, that I may give him a charge. And Moses and Joshua went, and presented themselves in the tabernacle of the congregation. 15 And the LORD appeared in the tabernacle in a pillar of a cloud: and the pillar of the cloud stood over the door of the tabernacle.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 3. This begins a new speech, possibly on the same day as the others, recorded previously, or possibly on another day, we are not told. He reminds the people of his great age and the frailty of his body now. He no longer has the mobility and strength of earlier years. From these words it appears that he has deteriorated quite quickly in the last months, and he knows this is the final week of his life. Men who are in touch with their bodies and spirits feel this intuitively. He knows his work is done and that Joshua is the real leader of the people now in all but name only. The new generation is ready to take over from him, and there are other leaders of the tribes ready to follow on from Joshua, who is himself eighty at this point.

Moses reminds the people that the Lord has told him that he is not to go over the Jordan River. He has accepted the Lord ruling, that he will die on this side of the river due to his great sin in striking the rock when he was told to speak to it alone. His absence from the people will not hinder their victory, and it is not to hinder their advance. They are to boldly go where the Lord leads; they don't need Moses now. Joshua is the new leader, but the Lord will give them the victory, and they are to trust in God, not men.

Verses 4 – 6. Their assurance for the future is to be built upon the certainties of the past. The way the Lord dealt with Sihon and Og is the way He will deal with the Canaanites they face now. As God has done, so He will continue to do. They are to express their faith in action and obedience. The enemy will be given into their hands and they are to execute them in accordance with the commands of the Lord in the Law they have received. They are to stand in the truth and obey all that God has directed.

Note the orders here: they are to-

1. Be strong in their faith that what God has said, He will do.
2. Be of good courage and demonstrate that in battle as they attack their enemies.
3. Reject fear as an option, and deal with any fears that come up by claiming the truth.
4. They are not to fear their enemies, but fear not obeying the Lord their God.

5. Remember that God is with them and will not forsake them.
6. Remember that God does not have a power problem; he will not run out of assets for them to draw upon. They have security in their God. They can move forward with confidence.

Verses 7 – 8. Joshua has already been set aside as the replacement leader by public anointing. Numbers 27:18-23. This is not his consecration here, but the public repetition of the promises associated with his anointing. It is the public instructing of Joshua so that he might be the mentor for the people in all the six characteristics that the people have been challenged to make their own. He is to model each of these six behaviours every day in his public leadership role.

All leaders are to be mentors, and those that do not have the right characteristics for leadership are not to be appointed, whatever the “needs” of the church. 1 Timothy 3:1-16, Titus 1:7-16. The wrong leadership will always create far more problems than no leadership! We are always to wait upon the Lord in any situation of doubt. Only those with real character can lead, without creating more problems.

Joshua has the “Executive Officer” role, but it is directly under the Lord, for it is the Lord who will deliver the land to the people. Joshua is to execute the plan and enter the land in obedience to the Lord’s commands and be the active “cause” to inherit the promises made to the patriarchs and to Moses. He is to lead and lead from the front. He is to step out in faith and model the obedience he requires from the rest.

This is the task of leadership; it is the task of setting the biblical example of the faith you are asking the people to express. Joshua is to encourage the people with each of the six commands above, and by his own faith and demeanour mentor true faith to the people. People will not be “dismayed” if they see that their leaders are filled with hope in their future, through confidence in their God. Philippians 3:12-17, 4:4-13.

Verses 9 – 13. The words that had been written to this point were then to be passed quite formally over to the Levites who carried the Ark. (Moses will tell us later, verse 22, that he also added in the song that will form the next chapter before handing over the final copy of the book for placing in the Ark). These men were tasked with keeping the words of Moses in the Torah safe and secure as they kept the Ark.

They were to guard the copy of the Law they received and they were to ensure it was read every seven years, in its entirety, in the Sabbatical Year gathering of the Feast of Tabernacles, so that all the people heard it all. They were also tasked with making copies of the Mosaic code that were needed as the paper started to wear on the “working copies” of the Law that the Judges were required to refer to.

This group became the guardians of the Word of God and the editors later of the scriptures who gathered all the books and kept them safe in dangerous times. The Levites, or Joshua, will complete the story beyond this point and write up the books of Joshua and record the content that becomes the book of Judges over the next 400 years. The next chapters with the “Song of Moses” will also be left with the Levites, although it is clear from later writings that Joshua has a copy also.

This is why my belief is that the Levites were the “scribes” and wrote copies of the Law of Moses, and may even have delivered additional copies to the princes, or principal judges of each tribe also, especially given the widely dispersed groups, from the borders of Moab, and the Golan, and from Dan to Beer Sheba.

The purpose of teaching the Law is also given here. The purpose of teaching the Law is that the people might obey it fully and so be blessed in the land into which they are to enter. The people need to learn to “fear the Lord” or they will fear their enemies. They must walk in obedience to the Lord or they will have reason to fear their enemies, for they will be defeated by them! Like all believers of all ages, the principle remains true; we walk in victory when we walk with the Lord, and we walk into defeat whenever we walk away from the Lord.

Verses 14 – 15. The day draws near for Moses to die and the Lord tells him to formally and publicly pass over to Joshua the care of the people. This is the third “ceremony” and is the final one for passing over the reins of power to Joshua as the new ruler. The right place for the formal hand-over is the tabernacle door. This is the thresh hold of the Holy Place where the Lord will meet them both in visible form in the pillar of cloud.

This occurs, and the two men stand before the Lord’s presence with the cloud above their heads. At that point the Lord will give Moses the blessing of Dying Grace, even though he is dying the “Sin Unto death” for his disobedience. The Lord has been gracious to him, and he is only dying a few weeks or months early, and he will be able to rest in Abraham’s bosom with God.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. There is a time to live and a time to die, and the Lord controls the time frames. We are not to interfere with this by suicide, or foolish and dangerous actions that lead to our premature death. We are not to be pre-occupied with death, but with living and serving the Lord until the day comes to die. We are to leave our lives and our death in the hands of the one who went to the Cross for us.

2. Leadership is to focus upon the plan, and the author of the plan, not themselves. Biblical leadership looks to the Lord and does not ever magnify itself. Biblical leadership is self effacing not ever narcissistic. Christ likeness is demanded of the biblical leader, and “others” is the focus, not our selves. Let us lead as these great men led, with our eyes heavenward for the “well done” of the Lord alone.

3. There is no place for fear in the Lord’s service, other than the holy fear of the Lord. We are to advance in whatever task we are given with courage and a fixed purpose. The Lord’s will only is to be done and His glory alone to be sought. Let us be singular in our focus and so bring the glory to the Lord’s name that is His desire for our service. Let us deal with fear, depression, sadness and despair by praise and worship and then replace the negative emotions by active service and further praise in its completion. Let us put emotion where it belongs, and never be guided by it for any action whatsoever. We are called to do what is right, not what “feels” expedient.

REFLECTION UPON THE NATURE OF BIBLICAL FAITH – “OVERCOMING BY FAITH”

1. By faith learn to accept conditions as God's will for life and be thankful - Romans 8:28, 1 Thessalonians 3:3; 5:18
2. By faith maintain fellowship with God, walking in the light - 1 John 1:7
3. By faith consistently day by day examine your conduct, confessing all known sins - 1 Corinthians 11:28, 31 1 John 1:9
4. By faith receive the Word of God daily as being more necessary than daily food. - Matthew 4:4; 5:6, 2 Peter 3:18
5. By faith approach the throne of grace boldly in every case of need, requesting aid, casting every care on Him. - Hebrews 4:15-16; 1 Peter 5:7
6. By faith resist the attempts of Satan and he will flee from you. - Ephesians 6:10-13, 1 Peter 5:8
7. By faith maintain the habit of thinking and meditating on spiritual values and priorities - Philippians 4:6-9
8. Walk by faith and not by sight - 2 Corinthians 5:7

REFLECTION UPON “DYING GRACE”

1. We are all here upon the earth as in a “strange country”; we are strangers and pilgrims upon the earth, and are not meant to be too comfortable here. Philippians 3:12-17, Hebrews 11:13, 1 Peter 2:11.
2. Death is the strangest thing we confront on this earth; the weirdness of being her one minute, alive, alert and warm, then a second later, dead, cooling and inert. Death is meant to appear strange to us, for it is the evidence before us that we are not permanent inhabitants here, but simply playing out a part as we pass through. This is not a place we are meant to get attached to.
3. The death of believers is a precious thing to the God who has given his life to save us from the judgment of sin and death. 1 Samuel 26:21, 2 Kings 1:13-14, Psalms 49:8, 72:14, 116:15, 1 Peter 1:7, 2:4. Refer Grace.
4. We all must die, but that is not the end. 2 Timothy 4:7-8, Hebrews 11:13. The mature believer facing death sees through it, to the other side where they meet with the Lord face to face. 1 Corinthians 13:12, 2 Corinthians 5:6-10.
5. Dying grace is provided to all believers who are looking to their Lord as they die, for his perfect provision for each of us from eternity past has everything we need provided in advance of our life, let alone our death itself. There are no surprises to God, and all things we face have provision for them there to be claimed by faith. 1 Corinthians 10:13, 2 Thessalonians 3:3, 2 Peter 2:9, Jude 24-25.

DEUTERONOMY 31:16-30

16 And the LORD said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them. **17** Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us? **18** And I will surely hide my face in that day for all the evils which they shall have wrought, in that they are turned unto other gods. **19** Now therefore write ye this song for you, and teach it the children of Israel: put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me against the children of Israel. **20** For when I shall have brought them into the land which I swore unto their fathers, that floweth with milk and honey; and they shall have eaten and filled themselves, and waxen fat; then will they turn unto other gods, and serve them, and provoke me, and break my covenant. **21** And it shall come to pass, when many evils and troubles are befallen them, that this song shall testify against them as a witness; for it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed: for I know their imagination which they go about, even now, before I have brought them into the land which I swear. **22** Moses therefore wrote this song the same day, and taught it the children of Israel. **23** And he gave Joshua the son of Nun a charge, and said, Be strong and of a good courage: for thou shalt bring the children of Israel into the land which I swear unto them: and I will be with thee. **24** And it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, until they were finished, **25** That Moses commanded the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, saying, **26** Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee. **27** For I know thy rebellion, and thy stiff neck: behold, while I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against the LORD; and how much more after my death? **28** Gather unto me all the elders of your tribes, and your officers, that I may speak these words in their ears, and call heaven and earth to record against them. **29** For I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days; because ye will do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands. **30** And Moses spake in the ears of all the congregation of Israel the words of this song, until they were ended.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 16 – 18. The verses we will examine here present us with a challenge that few master in this life. It is the challenge to know what is going to occur, and yet do the thing ordered by the Lord with all your might, even though you know it will be ignored by the people you speak to.

Moses has been granted a prophetic glimpse of the future. He has seen in advance the two falls of Jerusalem and the terrible suffering that will come to the people because of their apostasy in those future generations. He now knows that the people will turn away from the truth he has taught, even to a higher degree than the Exodus Generation, for those that see the first destruction of the nation will strongly resist repentance and only be delivered after a considerable time through the preaching of Ezekiel and the written messages of Jeremiah that will arrive in Babylon.

God will reinforce this message to Moses and to Joshua at the handover of authority at the tabernacle door. He will also make clear that he expects their obedience to continue until the end of their own lives. Both men will be challenged to maintain the strongest preaching of the truth until their own deaths. They know that the people will eventually fail, yet they are to be wholehearted in their desire to try to stop the people failing.

The message here is a rebuke to Ultra-Calvinistic Theology, for the truth of the ULTIMATE destiny of an individual is not to stop the full and open offer of salvation to them. Each individual will be judged on the basis of their own response to the message they hear, and our job is to preach the truth! Revelation 20:12-15. Man is not born damned – all men and women are able to freely select their chosen path, and they are judged for their selection – not on the basis of what God knew about them from before time and space were made.

The people are to be urged to repent and obey the words of the Law they have received from Moses, for many generations will hear the truth and obey, and the ones that refuse to obey are to hear the truth still. The truth will be a message of hope and joy to those who hear it and obey it, but it will be the odour of death to those who refuse it. 2 Corinthians 2:14-17, Philipians 4:17-18.

Moses and Joshua, and all the servants of the Lord down the centuries, are to have their eyes on obedience to the Lord, and not to concern themselves with the response of the generation they speak to. If that generation repents and lives obediently before the Lord, then the servant of the Lord rejoices, but if they reject the Lord, the servant of God is to continue standing for the Lord in order that those people might have no excuse when they stand before Him to be judged.

As Moses passes over the words of the Law to the Levites he has the satisfaction of knowing that these words will be kept by the power of God and will work through the centuries bringing salvation to many who repent. He knows that at the first fall of the city there will be repentance and restoration, and finally these same words he wrote in Deuteronomy will bring repentance to the last generation before the Lord's return to establish His kingdom.

We are called to, like Moses, draw strength from prophetic truth. All servants of the Lord are to see the big picture, not just the drama being played out in front of them in their own assembly. Now the Lord's words to Moses are straight forward and blunt, yet there is great encouragement in the midst of the awful truth about what will happen.

Death is referred to as "falling asleep" and "sleeping with your fathers", but this does not mean the Bible teaches a "soul sleep", or unconscious state between the death of a believer and the resurrection. The Lord's story of the rich man and the beggar Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31, pictures an active afterlife, not a quiet bedroom scene. At the point of death the believer sees the Lord receiving them. Acts 7:35-36. Death is being with the Lord and all the "fathers" (ancestors of faith like Abraham).

Death for Moses is not to be an awful thing, but like a simple falling asleep at the end of a hard days work; it is to be a simple passing from this life to the next. As Moses has been with the Lord through this life, he is told that he will be taken through to the next by the Lord, and be with Him forever. This is a comfort to a man who had been brought up with the pagan Egyptian "Book of the Dead" with all its magic and superstitious nonsense about the right rituals to ensure a good passage to the afterlife. There will be no rituals of burial for Moses and no funeral over his body, and he is told that such things are irrelevant to his destination. Romans 14:6-14, 1 Corinthians 13:12, 2 Corinthians 5:6-10, 2 Timothy 4:6-8.

The description of the apostasy of the future generations is written up as if it is adultery. This is a strong reminder to us that the Lord sees our rebellion against Him in the strongest terms possible. There is certainty that serious rebellion will occur, but the time frame is unknown to Moses. The servant of the Lord is still told to serve with all their might, even though the final outcome for some generations will be the wrath of the Lord. The Lord will judge His rebellious people, and the pastoral leaders are to know that, and teach it.

The purpose of the teaching of the faithful servants of the Lord is so that when the great judgments come upon the people, they will see that this is indeed from the Lord, and is a punishment. Having been told the truth for so many centuries they will recognise the judgment as such and there is hope then for repentance. The turning to other gods is their spiritual adultery, and they will pay a terrible price when they do that great evil.

To rebel against the Lord is like rebellion against a faithful husband. Jeremiah 3:1-3, Ezekiel 16:15, 25-29, Hosea 2:2-5. Their punishment is to be forsaken by the Lord and left to the "tender mercies" of their new gods. Their judgment will be to face the full consequences of their evil actions and receive what their new gods give! The wages of sin is death, and the enemy, who is behind all the gods, ensures his followers receive their wages! Jeremiah 23:33-40, Romans 6:23.

Verses 19 – 21. Moses will now be told to sing a song that will sum up the message that he is to leave as his additional legacy to the people to remind them of the vital need to deal with their sin of apostasy. The Lord will teach Moses the song and then Moses is to sing it and write it out for posterity. It is a reminder to us that a multi-media presentation of truth is useful, and that all media may be used to help people hear, understand and remember biblical truth.

The people will initially hold to the truth when facing the adversities of the invasion of the land, but they will fail the prosperity test. When they have received their rewards and are relaxing under the grape vines they will "grow fat"; both physically and spiritually they will lose their fitness and become slack. In their prosperity they will turn to the pagan fertility gods.

In their rejoicing they will overflow with wine and be enticed and destroyed by the partying life-style of the pagans. When these things occur this song is to be a testimony against them, and because they have been brought up singing it they will remember it when the judgments fall upon them. God knows their thoughts, and can see the root of evil even now in this generation.

They do not hate the evil of Satan nearly enough at this point, and so the root will grow and eventually control their descendents. We are to HATE all forms of paganism and all forms of evil. Only hatred of the enemy and love for all the things of the Lord will keep us safe from the enticement of evil. Exodus 18:20-22, Hebrews 1:9, Jude 23, Revelation 2:6.

Verses 22 – 23. The very day the Lord spoke with him Moses wrote this song down, and he taught it to the children of Israel. It may be that the Levites made copies immediately for each of the tribal princes so that they all had copies in their groups, or that Moses simply got them to recite this song until they all had learned it by heart. The people of this day were used to being charged to learn and recite things, and so this was not out of the ordinary for them, and they would recite a piece until it was word perfect. That is what the Lord wants, and then for the people to teach their children this by heart for all the generations of Israel's life as a nation.

In public before the tabernacle the Lord also charges Joshua directly to keep faith with his tasking. Joshua is told to be strong in faith and obedience to all that the Lord directs him to do. He has the same promise from the Lord that we have in Matthew 28:20. As Joshua remains obedient, the Lord promises to be with him until the end of his life. The Lord's presence with us through the testing times of life is to be a comfort in dark places and an encouragement through all that the enemy throws at us. "Greater is He that is within us, than he that is in the world to oppose us!" 1 John 4:4. He is with us, Hallelujah!

Verses 24 – 27. There is a time delay until Moses will go up the mountain of indeterminate length. He acts as the editor and writer of the last chapters of this book before us. Others may do the final editing before the five books

enter the Jewish canon of scripture in the days of Ezra and later, but Moses is the one who ensures the final form of the Law handed over to the Levites is correct, as the Lord wants it to be.

One copy of the Law was to be placed within the Ark of the Covenant itself. At least one other copy will be outside the Ark and will be referred to by the Levites and the Tribal Leaders and Judges for all matters of dispute and for all spiritual guidance. The Law will be both “hidden” and open for all to see. The keeping of this copy of the Law within the Ark may account for its accurate preservation through the years. Even when the copies that were in circulation got lost or damaged there was always a clean copy within the Ark for the High Priest to refer to.

Moses does not hold back on his warning to the Levites. These men are from his own tribe, and were his trusted allies in many conflicts with the others, but they have also failed as often as the others. Moses knows their weaknesses and also knows his own. He knows the heart of man and he knows they will not do what they could for the Lord 100%, and he wants them to be without excuse before the Lord. Psalms 103:14, Ecclesiastes 3:20, 12:7, John 2:24-25, Acts 7:51-53.

He also knows that the failures of man do not stop the plan of God, nor do the judgments of God over disobedient men end their chance for blessing. There is hope while men look for the truth, and repent of their sin and evil. His warning to his brethren is blunt and powerful, but it is necessary. Strong words are required at times, to stop slackness and warn of severe consequences for those who ignore them. They need to get a grip of the plan of God for their lives and energise themselves and strain every fibre of their being to do what the Lord wants them to do. Hebrews 12:9-15.

Verses 28 – 30. Moses then calls the Levites to gather all the tribal elders to give them the severe warning he has just given them. All the leadership is re-gathered and Moses will give them a severe “talking to” and warn them strongly about their responsibility before the Lord to lead their people in the truth that has been revealed through him. He will call the heavens and the earth to witness against them if they fail to heed his warnings.

He tells them all bluntly that in “latter days” their descendents will “utterly corrupt themselves” with the paganism of the land and they will suffer great judgment from the Lord. Moses makes the prophetic word very personal, indicating that it is the sin of the people standing before him that will lead to this. How is this so? The answer is in the way they stand for truth, and the way they teach their children. By their teaching in the home they will set up an attitude within their family towards the truth of God’s Word.

If they are not 100% for the Lord’s Word, then their children will be less committed than they are, and the spiritual decay will gather momentum down the centuries, with each generation falling to a lower point than their fathers. Revival will preserve and restore the nation at times, but there will not be enough of that to stop the catastrophes of 586BC and 70AD.

Moses pours his heart out to them as all pastors are called to, for we must feel the pain of the Lord at the foolishness of His children, and urge God’s people to stand for truth, and seek with all their hearts to follow the Lord their God all their lives.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. We are called to stand for truth with all our hearts, and to stand against and HATE falsehood with all our hearts. We need to see the evils that surround us as they truly are and hate them with power. Failure to be totally committed to the truth and totally opposed to evil will allow us to slip away from the path of safety and truth.
2. Falling away from the Lord to worship other gods is like ADULTERY. We are to see the satanic alternatives to genuine faith as the evils they are. There is to be no compromise with evil, but unreserved hatred of it.
3. Knowledge of the prophetic future is essential for powerful pastoral ministry. Unless we see the “big picture” and know where history is going we will not have the power and focus for service in difficult times. Let us ensure we teach the prophetic plan of the Lord so that our people are not confused by the events that unfold before their eyes. Let us remember in all our preaching to leave people with the truth of the Lord’s final victory. No believer should ever walk away from a church meeting with any doubts, fears, or uncertainty about who is winning the Angelic Conflict!

NOTES

CHAPTER 32**THE SONG OF MOSES****DEUTERONOMY 32:1-14**

32:1 Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. 2 My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass: 3 Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. 4 He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he. 5 They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of his children: they are a perverse and crooked generation. 6 Do ye thus requite the LORD, O foolish people and unwise? is not he thy father that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee? 7 Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee. 8 When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. 9 For the LORD's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. 10 He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. 11 As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: 12 So the LORD alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him. 13 He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock; 14 Butter of kine, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat; and thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 2. This is a very formal start to the song and underlines its significance as a warning to all the people through all their generations. They are to hear this and receive it as the thirsty earth drinks in the water from the heavens. Moses describes the reception of his words in three ways. These ways the earth takes in moisture are good analogies to the way we take in Bible doctrine. All three forms of bible study are needed by the believer each and every day, and yet most of us have one only, if that!

The first form of study and reception of biblical truth is the “morning dew”. This is the devotional study we may do with a verse to meditate upon. The next form of study is the “light rain”. This refers to the low level biblical study from a simple book or sermon we hear. The last form of study is an in depth Bible study where we really study the Word and hear all the doctrines associated with the passage studied. The purpose of all Bible study is that we might grow and be fruitful in our spiritual life. Biblical study is never for knowledge alone; it is always for production.

Verses 3 - 4. The key theme of this song is the unchangeable majesty and character of the Lord their God. God's character will not change, and His faithfulness will be constant and stable through the years. The people will change and fail, but their God will not change or fail them. Deuteronomy 4:31, 31:6-8, Joshua 1:5, 1 Samuel 12:22, Isaiah 41:17, Hebrews 13:5.

The people may forsake the Lord, but He will not permanently forsake them. 2 Timothy 2:12-14. They will be judged if they walk away from Him and serve other gods, but they will not be forsaken and cast aside, even when as a nation they reject their Messiah. Romans 11:1ff. The next point in history for Israel is her recognition of her Messiah. This will occur in the midst of the Great Tribulation period, at the worst point in her history. Zechariah 12:10ff.

The character of God is in view here and the Lord uses pictures of His character to encourage Moses and the people in their faith and trust in Him. When God teaches a man a song like this we had better sing it ourselves, for the Lord is revealing Himself here. The first point to note here is that Moses is singing to “publish the name of the Lord”. He seeks to announce and praise the name of the Lord and make His name (and therefore His character) known to all. God seeks to be known by man and our role is to make Him known to all we meet.

The name of the Lord tells us that He is “great”, and is above all gods. We are to remember that the Lord is GOD and is above all the powers that were created. We are not to lower the Lord to any level below who He is; He is the creator of the universe. We are to remember that there are only two categories of being; the creator and the creation. We are to praise the Lord and remember He is above all created things and beings. Psalms 57:5-11, 95:3, 97:9, 103:11, 108:4 -5, 113:4, 135:5, Philippians 2:9-11.

The next words used to describe the Lord are powerful ones that each teaches an attribute of the CHARACTER OF GOD, and the PLAN OF GOD. Five characteristics of the character of God are mentioned in this song.

1. He is described as a “rock”. This is a mighty piece of bed-rock and speaks of the stability and security of the Lord to His people. They are built upon the rock of stability, that is His person and plan.
2. His work is perfect. There is no blemish in God's work, for it flows from a perfect character in accordance with a perfect plan that is built upon complete knowledge of all the facts of history.
3. All His ways are just, and He will always judge all evil in His time.
4. He is absolute truth, and is opposed to evil. There is no iniquity in His character or actions.

5. He is absolutely just and righteous in all His dealings.

Verses 5 – 6. The people of the generation standing before Moses this day must utter these words, even though they have been better than their parents. They are still guilty of being disobedient at times and their hearts are not pure before the Lord. They must be ready to admit their sin before the Lord and acknowledge their own shortcomings, for then they can be lifted even higher in their service.

All sin acts as a principle of defilement; a blemish upon the person that changes them from children of God to resemble children of the enemy. The sin and evil of the future generations will change the divine image and make it base, for sin and evil always does this within people who fall into evil and stay there. The challenge to the people who sing this song is the same as the challenge to those of us now who read it. We are all to humble ourselves before the Lord and deal with anything that has separated us from the Lord.

If the people of God do not deal with sin it will act as a destructive force within them and drive them steadily into disaster. They will become “crooked and perverse” in all their dealings and the result of this will be that they destroy themselves by their behaviours, and then are destroyed by others who come in to take advantage of their weakness. When people become evil they will discover there are always others more evil than themselves ready to take advantage of them.

In judgment people often blame God as if He is unfair to them in the things that have happened to them, and yet it is only because they have walked away from God that they are being judged. Hebrews 12:5-13. To walk away from the Lord is to rob yourself of the protection His presence with you provides. Isaiah 5:1-7, Ezekiel 13:1-16, Psalms 89:1-19, Hosea 2:6-7, 3:4-5.

Verses 7 - 9. There is a need to remember the past or its sins will be repeated. As the historian says, “Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it”. This is the negative side of the issues that flow from a good knowledge of history, but in verse seven Moses tells them to hold to the positive side of the knowledge of history, and recall the great deliverances of the Lord. The people are challenged to speak to their elders and hear the great stories from them of the goodness of God in the past, and the plan of God as it stretches into the future. It is lack of sound knowledge of the past and future doings of God that destroy people; for knowledge is protective if it is applied into daily life. Hosea 4:1-11.

The next two verses are startling in their significance. The Lord tells Moses that all the national groups upon the earth have been assigned their place upon the earth in direct relationship to the number of Israelites. He is told that the place of Israel is central in the history of mankind, and their role is to finally be the leader of the nations. This is why any hatred of Israel and actions taken against them will bring judgment upon the nation or individuals who attack them. All through history those who abuse Israel are judged, and they will be until the Lord’s return to rule from Israel. The prophecies of Balaam are a reminder of this fact. Numbers 23-24.

Verses 10 – 12. The nation Israel is “the apple of God’s eye” and those who attack her attack the Lord most directly. This fact has not changed since the Cross as some Covenant Theologians have argued. Romans 11:1ff. The church replaces Israel in the plan on a temporary basis, but the Lord returns to rule from Jerusalem not New York or Rome. The Lord has chosen Israel, and through them He will accomplish His plan for history.

The Lord has led them through the wilderness and guided them to safety each and every time they have strayed into danger, but turned to Him for help. The Lord has been like the eagle in His protection over His people. They have been kept safe in the high nest, and when the time came for them to fly they have been gently edged out of the nest and felt the wind under their wings. The Lord has been like the patient mother eagle to assist His own people to fly high and experience the freedom and grandeur of the plan of God working out through them. They have flown with the eagles in the plan of the Lord God. Isaiah 40:27-31. They face the daily choice; to fly like the eagle, or follow other gods and be “eaten up” like a plump chicken by the pagan nations around them.

Verses 13 – 14. The great blessings of the land that they will enjoy are theirs because they are with the Lord, and the Lord’s blessing is with them. They will be a leader amongst the nations under David and Solomon and they will be blessed with the physical produce of the land above and beyond what others even think is possible. There will be richness in desert places, and joy in the midst of all the land if they will only live as the Lord directs them to live and turn from the evil religions of the nations around them.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Let us ensure that we take in the Word of the Lord every day; that we wet the ground of our soul with the rains of the truth of God every day. If the people of God are ignorant of the plan and purposes of God they cannot serve the Lord. The teaching of the Word of God is crucial to the spiritual power of the people of God. Without a sound knowledge of the Word the Holy Spirit will not be as active in the believer as He wants to be, for the Holy Spirit works through the Word.

2. God remains stable and faithful; it is only man who changes through the days. God’s stability is our guarantee of blessing if we walk with Him, for blessing flows directly from His character. The first principles for spiritual power are those that teach the character of God. The closer we walk to the Lord the more power and comfort we experience.

3. Israel's history is at the centre of the plan of God for mankind. Israel remains the centre of world events today and will do so until the Lord personally returns to deliver them from the invasion of the land in the midst of the Great Tribulation period. Let us stand with Israel and keep the Gospel message flowing in their direction within a Jewish context. Israel will be saved; we have God's Word on this and we play our part by our clear preaching of truth now.

REFLECTION UPON THE CENTRALITY OF THE "WORD OF GOD" – HEBREWS 4:12

4:12 "For the Word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and the spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

How powerfully this verse points out the marvellous work of the Word of God in our lives. The word truly cuts us about if we let it loose within our hearts and minds. This is God's purpose. Note the characteristics of the Word of God here:

1. It is always living. Religion and its way of life is dead, but God's Word is alive, and makes the hearer alive and able to enjoy life. John 10:10.
2. It is powerful. It is energetic in the soul, always achieving its desired results once it is let loose in the soul of the believer. Power is only effective when the switch is turned on, and we must ensure that the filling of the Holy Spirit is operational (no unconfessed sin in our life and the Bible open before us) so that God's power is able to channel through us.
3. God's Word then will do its work and it is "sharp" as a sword. The Word cuts through to the truth and shows us how we must sort out our life.
4. It is compared to the short fighting sword of the Roman Army, the machaira. This was a weapon that revolutionised warfare, for the soldier was never off balance when using it, and was able to defeat an enemy with a far larger weapon. It was designed to thrust straight through an enemy to their heart or head, and that is what God's Word does; it penetrates our very life.
5. God's Word pierces us and gets to the real issues straight away, right to joints and marrow. This was the way in the ancient world that you said, it gets to, "the heart of the matter".
6. It separates us from misconceptions, and from the errors of thinking that so easily lead us astray from the path of truth, be they emotional attachments(heart), or false categories of thinking(mind).
7. The word is a discerner. God's Word alone lets us see our motivation and its implications, and lets us see, as an astute critic does, exactly what we have forgotten or fallen short in. It corrects us in both the thinking and the emotions, correcting facts and will; showing us if our love has grown cold, or our thinking slack!

CHRIST IS OUR "ROCK"

1. Christ is the rock of salvation. (Exodus 17:1-7, 1 Corinthians 10:4)
2. Christ is the rock of judgment. (Isaiah 8:14, 1 Peter 2:8)
3. Christ is the rock of provision. (Isaiah 26:3, 4) Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee because he trusteth thee. Trust ye in the Lord forever for in the Lord is the rock of ages.
4. Christ is the foundation rock. (Isaiah 28:16, Psalm 118:22)
5. Christ is the foundation rock of the Church. (Matthew 16:16, 18, 1 Corinthians 3:11, Ephesians 2:20-22)
6. Christ is the destroying rock of the Second Advent. (Daniel 2:35)

Notes

DEUTERONOMY 32:15-30

32:15 But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation. **16** They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they him to anger. **17** They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not. **18** Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee. **19** And when the LORD saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons, and of his daughters. **20** And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith. **21** They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation. **22** For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains. **23** I will heap mischiefs upon them; I will spend mine arrows upon them. **24** They shall be burnt with hunger, and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter destruction: I will also send the teeth of beasts upon them, with the poison of serpents of the dust. **25** The sword without, and terror within, shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling also with the man of gray hairs. **26** I said, I would scatter them into corners, I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men: **27** Were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy, lest their adversaries should behave themselves strangely, and lest they should say, Our hand is high, and the LORD hath not done all this. **28** For they are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them. **29** O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end! **30** How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their Rock had sold them, and the LORD had shut them up?

REFLECTIONS

Verses 15 – 17. The great sin of Israel will be their idolatry through the years. These verses make it clear that the gods of the nations are actually devils. The statues of the gods of the pagan nations are simply the visible manifestations of satanic religious systems and strategies, all designed to enslave the wills of men. Idolatry is spiritual adultery and anything like it is to be hated by God's people. The enemy is to be seen as the evil one he is, and all his devious and destructive works are to be hated.

The prosperity of the land and the richness of the people will make them slack concerning spiritual things. They will adopt easy religion and that is Satan's specialty. Since the bloodless offering of Cain and the murder that followed it, Satan has urged men to follow the easy downhill path of pleasure. Genesis 4:1-8, Matthew 7:13-14. The Lord calls us to the "narrow path" of obedience to His plan and the readiness to suffer hardship at times.

He does not want us to "grow fat", and be lazy in mind or body, but be fit, strong and healthy for His service. We are to adopt the mentality of the soldier throughout our time on the earth and be as ready as we can be for active service at all times. 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, Philippians 3:13-15, 2 Timothy 2:3-10. We are to be alert and responsive to our Lord's orders and are not to "kick against" the doctrines and demands of our holy God.

To treat the Lord as of no account is foolishness in the extreme, and to "lightly esteem" the Lord of salvation is to insult the sacrifice of the Lord. Hebrews 10:28-31. To despise the Blood shed upon the Cross, and insult the work of the Lord for the salvation of mankind is a serious thing. Jeremiah 2:9-17, 26-37, 3:1-16. To select false "gods" rather than accept the true sacrifice for your sins is the ultimate insult to a loving God who went as far as the Cross to save you.

This is what the Jewish people who reject the Lord are presently guilty of now, and it is why their repentance will be so powerful when it occurs. They will see the terrible evil they have done and the great sin of their ancestors in all its awfulness. Zechariah 12:10ff. They will be forgiven in that day and restored to their full place in the plan of God. The Lord is waiting for that day and our job is to prepare for it by preaching the truth to the Jewish people!

Verses 18 – 20. Moses speaks to these people before him as if they are today's generation of Jewish people, and this is because the "song" he sings here from the Lord is for the yet future generation that will repent. As a nation they have been built upon the great rock of God's character and purpose, and yet they have wandered away from their only source of stability and sought new things that are false and deadly.

God made them and they have forgotten their maker. They have made a choice and the Lord stands back from them to see how their choice will unfold. They have "no faith" that is real and so their lives depend upon the falsehood they have selected instead of the truth. They have no hope unless they see the truth and fully and openly repent. Jeremiah 4:14-22, James 4:7-8.

Verses 21 – 22. They will provoke the Lord to anger and jealousy due to their spiritual adultery, and so the Lord will provoke them to jealousy as a nation by His selection of the Gentiles for His plan to advance. The despised gentiles will be selected by the Lord to provoke the Israelites to jealousy as they see that with obedience to the Lord, even the Gentiles can be blessed and used in the plan. The Jewish people will see over time, through the blessing that comes upon the Gentiles through faith, that it is their obedience, not their election that is the guarantee of their salvation and future blessing. Romans 9:25ff, 10:19-21, 11:11-15, 1 Peter 2:9-10.

This was happening (in 2008) as I first wrote these words, as George Bush, the then president of the United States spoke to the Israeli Knesset. The leader of the largest Christian nation, made up of the peoples of all the old nations, speaks to Israel and Israel is reminded that their security and survival depend upon the despised gentiles. The fire of the Lord's judgment will burn upon Israel with great heat until they repent of their evil heart towards him. As I revised these words in 2011 the new USA President Obama was threatening Israel, and all but ordering them to give up "land for peace" (read attack by their enemies!). As I revised these words in 2014 the Israelis and Arabs were working together to counter the threat posed by USA-Iran peace talks. We must remember the Eagle is America's symbol – and the Anti-Christ emerges eventually from the old Roman Empire – the Western nations!

Their turning away from the Law of Moses and the love of the Lord their God will cause all calamities to come upon them and these things will continue until they repent, and the good news is, according to the prophetic words of Scripture, they will repent and be restored to full blessing and leadership of the nations. Until that day they will survive as a people, only under God's grace, and with gentile support, so that they can be restored and blessed when they repent. Deuteronomy 4:24, 9:3, Hebrews 12:29. The future is great for Israel, even though through a couple of very dark times to come; the Iranian invasion – Ezekiel 38-39, and the Anti-Christ's assaults in the Tribulation.

Verses 23 – 26. The anger of the Lord will burn hot towards those who have eagerly sought the comfort and immorality of paganism rather than training in godliness and serving in holiness. The Lord's great anger will be shown in the two great falls of Jerusalem, in 586 BC and 70 AD. Even the pagan servants of Nebuchadnezzar saw that the collapse of the Jewish people was a judgment. Jeremiah 40:1-6.

The judgments of the Lord through the years since these events have continued to be severe upon His people because of their persistence in their sin of rejection of their Messiah, and their clinging to the words of men rather than the words of God. They read the living words of God through Moses and the prophets in the synagogue, but are only allowed to interpret them through the words of dead Rabbis.

The hedge they have built around the words of God to Moses and the prophets is now so high, few see through it at all, and so the truth is buried in the words of the men who rejected the Lord, their Messiah. The result has been the dispersal of the people to the four corners of the earth. None now remember their glory days under David and Solomon, and all see a people under judgment, yet protected by God for some yet future purpose.

Verses 27 – 30. The main reason for the hand of the Lord being over them in both judgment and then their protection, is so that the pagan nations do not take credit for this as if they have done the work. The Lord is determined that He alone will be blamed for what happens to Israel, and that all nations will see in their fate and destiny the hand of God alone. The nation of Israel will be seen by all as a nation without its true soul and without spiritual intelligence. They will do baffling things and all will look upon them and see that only God's hand protects them from obliteration by their enemies. The world will see that they are being kept, and in the latter days of the Great Tribulation they will repent and be restored to blessing.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Have we met our obligation to the Lord as individuals and a local church? To what do I refer in this question? I refer to our obligation to proclaim the truth to Israel and to all Jewish people everywhere. We are to prepare the day for their repentance, as John the Baptist did for the Lord's arrival. Let us proclaim the truth about the Lord Jesus Christ so that when the dark days come the people know who it is they are to bow down and pray.
2. Are we living as soldiers of the Lord today? Are we keeping fit and healthy and are we ready to go anywhere and do anything? This is not a call to try to do things that age or infirmity makes impossible at our age or stage in life, but it is a challenge to be as healthy and fit as we can be for the Lord's work. No believer should be suffering from any illness or debility that we have caused ourselves by our bad eating, poor fitness routines, or spiritual slackness. Let us commit ourselves to the mental attitude of the soldier, and train each day for service, not be sloth like in slackness.
3. The gods of the nations are demons. Let us remember that fact and hate all appearance of evil and avoid all entanglement with demonic religious forces. We are to hate the evils of Satan and stand for truth in the midst of evil.

Notes

DEUTERONOMY 32:31-52

32:31 For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges. **32** For their vine is of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah: their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter: **33** Their wine is the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps. **34** Is not this laid up in store with me, and sealed up among my treasures? **35** To me belongeth vengeance and recompence; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste. **36** For the LORD shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left. **37** And he shall say, Where are their gods, their rock in whom they trusted, **38** Which did eat the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink offerings? let them rise up and help you, and be your protection. **39** See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand. **40** For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever. **41** If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me. **42** I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh; and that with the blood of the slain and of the captives, from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy. **43** Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people. **44** And Moses came and spake all the words of this song in the ears of the people, he, and Hoshea the son of Nun. **45** And Moses made an end of speaking all these words to all Israel: **46** And he said unto them, Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law. **47** For it is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life: and through this thing ye shall prolong your days in the land, whither ye go over Jordan to possess it. **48** And the LORD spake unto Moses that selfsame day, saying, **49** Get thee up into this mountain Abarim, unto mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, that is over against Jericho; and behold the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel for a possession: **50** And die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people; as Aaron thy brother died in mount Hor, and was gathered unto his people: **51** Because ye trespassed against me among the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah-Kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin; because ye sanctified me not in the midst of the children of Israel. **52** Yet thou shalt see the land before thee; but thou shalt not go thither unto the land which I give the children of Israel.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 31 – 33. The crumbling rock of the pagans is not the solid rock of God. The counterfeiter is Satan himself and he works to deceive, destroy, and distract people from the truth by clever counterfeits. We are to be wise in discernment and separate ourselves from even every appearance of evil. Matthew 10:16, 2 Corinthians 2:11.

We are to hate and resist the enemy and his works with such focused power that he is not able to deceive us, for the Holy Spirit shows us the truth quickly in all situations, and we stand against evil immediately. We are to see that the joy of the pagans is the joy of evil and immorality. Their wine is poisoned and will kill all who drink of it. They are like the evil men and women of Sodom and Gomorrah, who believed they could do anything they liked, and whose behaviours became as evil as their gods were. Pagan religion kills all its adherents in the end, and all believers are to hate every aspect of it with all their hearts and minds.

Verses 34 – 36. Verse 34 has been the subject of debate through the years as to its exact meaning. Later prophets and writers of scripture refer to this verse in two ways. Hosea refers to it to identify that the sins of the people are “hidden” when they repent of their evil and turn back to the Lord. Hosea 13:9-12. The psalmist in Psalms 139:16 refers to this verse indicating that the Lord has a book in which He records the names of His saints and that these people are secure in the Lord, and that the deeds of all mankind are “written” and known from the beginning of the creation.

God is the God of history and all the “secrets” of man are known to God, for He is the beginning and the end. Psalms 139:16, Daniel 7:9-11, Malachi 3:16-18. If we let the prophets interpret the prophets, as we are told to do, then both these points are to be taken as the Lord’s reference here. 1 Corinthians 14:32, 1 Peter 1:10.

Only God has all the facts about the creation, for it is his creation, and only God has all the facts about the thoughts and actions of all mankind, for He alone has the power to know such things. All other beings are created beings, not the creator. When we come to doctrines like the two referred to above we come face to face with our limits as creatures before our creator. Even Satan is a creature. He is powerful, but not all powerful, and so he has not the power to defeat the maker of all things and the creator of all beings.

The universe is held together by the very mind of God, so if God is “killed” the creation will unravel. This is why the very notion of “the death of God” is a piece of nonsense. Once you understand your place as a creature before the creator, and in humility accept your place these things will fall into place, and Satan will be seen for what he truly is. It is only appropriate, given the fact of God’s omniscience, that to Him alone vengeance belongs, for only God has all the facts upon which to make any final judgment.

In the Day of Judgment God will be absolutely fair and just. The Lord will bring judgment upon all who have rebelled against the truth and hate it, and He will be merciful and forgiving to all who are His servants. Notice that the believers are called “servants” of the Lord. It is a reminder that the faith that is real will always work out in daily service, and that

the person who claims to be a believer, yet does nothing for the Lord, is not a believer at all! A faith that does not work out in action is no faith at all. James 2:14-26.

Notice again, that to the Lord alone belongs the right to vengeance upon the evil ones. The Israelites will be told to kill the evil Canaanites but that was an exceptional situation, and no men are authorised to take judgment into their own hands regarding evil today, (unless it is within a judicial framework for the safety of society - Romans 13:4), for the Lord alone is the one to judge fully and finally. Romans 12:19, Hebrews 10:30, Revelation 19:15-21.

The on-going judgment upon Israel will continue until the Lord is finished with His people and they have come back to Him to seek repentance from their maker and Saviour. As we read these sad verses we can be heartened by the words of the prophet Zechariah, and remember that the remnant of the nation Israel will be delivered into the Millennium in latter days.

Verses 37 – 39. As the people are judged through history the Lord will ask of them, where is their confidence now? He will underline the reasons for their judgment, and remind them that it is their paganism that has led to their near destruction. They trusted in the “rock” of paganism but it will crumble under them when the Lord judges them. They poured out drink and blood offerings to these pagan deities, and the Lord will mock them in that day and ask where these “gods” are, who will accept the sacrifices of men, and yet not perform their duty to protect them.

The point is clear of course, for the “gods” (demons) are unable to protect the people who serve them when the true God moves against them. Demons can only protect their followers from other demons and even then not very effectively. There is no tiny “god” with the Lord when He judges. There is no person or power that can deliver man from the hand of God when He judges. He stands alone and judges with authority, power and majesty. He is the one who gives and takes life and there is none who can deliver man out of His hands. He is the king and Lord. Deuteronomy 6:1-9, Deuteronomy 31:12-13, Revelation 19.

Verses 40 – 43. The day will come when the Lord does “lift up his hand to the heavens”. This was the signal of a king to his army to launch their attack upon their enemies. Many commentators refer to the taking of an oath here, for men would lift their hand to heaven to take an oath, but the primary reference here is dealing with those who are enemies, and it is the action of a king, not an ordinary man, that is in view here.

The Lord has not judged the entire earth fully and finally yet, but His delay is not slackness, but grace and mercy. The earth was once judged by water, in the great flood, and a remnant from one family was saved. The earth will next be judged by fire at the Lord’s return, and all who are of the remnant of faith will be delivered through that time. 2 Peter 3:3-9.

The terrible and final judgment that will come upon all the earth is prefigured in the judgment upon the nation Israel through the centuries. What history shows us has already happened to Israel will happen to all people who reject the Lord and His work for them. The thoroughness of the Lord’s judgment upon Israel is an example to all the Gentile nations of how thorough the Lord will be with them on His return. The Lord will come as the righteous judge of the earth. His parable of the man who left his servants in charge of his vineyard and then finally returned to demand a return from what they had been given is told to remind us that the Lord God will finally require of us all a report on what we have done with the lives He has graciously given us. Matthew 21:33-44.

The Lord did not come the first time to judge, but to save, however He made it very clear that this offer was for “a limited time”, and then mankind would be held to account for their response to His person and His mission. He will judge the earth, but show mercy to the land of Israel and the people there that have accepted His lordship. Zechariah 13-14. Jesus will judge the earth on His return, and on that day the time for repentance will have run out for those still alive. John 8:15-16, 12:47-48, Acts 10:42, Romans 2:16, 2 Timothy 4:1-8, Hebrews 10:30, Revelation 19:11.

Verses 44 – 47. Moses and Joshua both sang this entire song to the assembled people of Israel. And when they had finished singing this to the people, Moses formally warned them of the seriousness of understanding, believing, and applying these words into their lives. The response required was a deliberate one. They had to deliberately set their hearts and minds to obey the words of the Lord.

They had to make a conscious choice and do what the Lord required of them. He reminded them that such obedience would not be without great reward, for it would lead to spiritual blessing and life and joy. If they believe the words of the song and obey the words of the Law they will enter the land, seize the land and enjoy the land. If they reject the warnings contained in this song then they will fail to obtain what God was giving them and it would eventually pass to others.

Verses 48 – 52. After completing this song Moses receives the call of the Lord to go up the mountain by the camp and there to see the land, and there to die. He has not got the time for long drawn out tearful farewells and long valedictories, for the best end to his life is the singing of this song with Joshua. He will bless the people before he goes, and they will weep for him, but he is going to let their response to him be their obedience to the Lord. His time to die has come and it is without sadness on his part that he climbs steadily up Mt Nebo.

As Aaron died on Mt Hor so Moses will die upon this mountain, and both will be re-united with their godly ancestors through the doorway of death. Notice that death is described as reunion, not the soul sleeping. The body appears to be

sleeping, but the person is gathered to their ancestors. To be “gathered to the ancestors” is to be together with, in fellowship, all those who died in faith before you.

Moses is reminded by the Lord that he is going to die outside the land as a punishment for not doing what he was told in the Wilderness of Zin, but he accepts this and he is thankful to the Lord that the judgment was not immediate, and that he is going to be allowed to see the land from the mountain top. Moses records this word from the Lord so that all the future generations of Israelites can see that even the most choice servant of the Lord, like Moses, must still abide by the standards that the Lord sets. Moses death is a reminder that the Lord does not “play favourites”, and all are held accountable for their sins, but in His judgments the Lord is gracious to those who repent and serve Him.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. The Lord our God is presently gracious towards us and we do not receive the punishment for sin and evil that we deserve. The challenge for us all is to celebrate the forgiveness of the Lord, and “put on the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness”. Isaiah 61:3. With this clear assurance, let us also remember that when the Lord returns next time it will be to judge all mankind and He will show no mercy then to those who have despised His person and work. Man is either with Him or against Him, and finally the day comes for decision, and no man will escape that day. We must preach judgment, because it is the flip side of the Gospel message and men need to hear and understand it. Luke 23:29-31.

2. Death is the doorway through which all but the last generation of believers will pass to join those who have gone before us. Let us teach more on death, so that believers have hope and confidence in their future with the Lord.

3. We are either built upon the solid rock that is Christ’s person and work, or we are sitting on the crumbling rocks of satanic deception. Let us ground ourselves in the rock, and ensure that all who hear us preach feel that assurance of the ROCK beneath them.

NOTES

CHAPTER 33**INTRODUCTION**

Before he heads up the mountain to die Moses will give a blessing to the people in the patriarchal manner. This was written down and copied into the text, possibly by Joshua, or more likely by one of the Levites who had charge of the manuscript of the Law at the time. This becomes the penultimate chapter of Deuteronomy and appropriately so. It is introduced as an addition to the book by the scribe who inserts it.

In the first verse the scribe makes observations for later generations on the character and heart of Moses in his service, and then records the “heart” of the blessing. Not every word in the blessing was necessarily recorded, and this may be an abbreviation of what he said, but I do not believe (with the liberal commentators) that this is a later invention. This feels like the heart of a real speech of a real man into a situation that was unique, and required a special speech to seal it. Moses will say “Amen” to this speech by walking slowly up the hill out of the sight of the people.

DEUTERONOMY 33:1-29

33:1 And this is the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death. **2** And he said, The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them. **3** Yea, he loved the people; all his saints are in thy hand: and they sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words. **4** Moses commanded us a law, even the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob. **5** And he was king in Jeshurun, when the heads of the people and the tribes of Israel were gathered together. **6** Let Reuben live, and not die; and let not his men be few. **7** And this is the blessing of Judah: and he said, Hear, LORD, the voice of Judah, and bring him unto his people: let his hands be sufficient for him; and be thou an help to him from his enemies. **8** And of Levi he said, Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one, whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah; **9** Who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant. **10** They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law: they shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon thine altar. **11** Bless, LORD, his substance, and accept the work of his hands; smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again. **12** And of Benjamin he said, The beloved of the LORD shall dwell in safety by him; and the Lord shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders. **13** And of Joseph he said, Blessed of the LORD be his land, for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath, **14** And for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moon, **15** And for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills, **16** And for the precious things of the earth and fulness thereof, and for the good will of him that dwelt in the bush: let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the top of the head of him that was separated from his brethren. **17** His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of unicorns: with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth: and they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh. **18** And of Zebulun he said, Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out; and, Issachar, in thy tents. **19** They shall call the people unto the mountain; there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness: for they shall suck of the abundance of the seas, and of treasures hid in the sand. **20** And of Gad he said, Blessed be he that enlargeth Gad: he dwelleth as a lion, and teareth the arm with the crown of the head. **21** And he provided the first part for himself, because there, in a portion of the lawgiver, was he seated; and he came with the heads of the people, he executed the justice of the LORD, and his judgments with Israel. **22** And of Dan he said, Dan is a lion's whelp: he shall leap from Bashan. **23** And of Naphtali he said, O Naphtali, satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the LORD: possess thou the west and the south. **24** And of Asher he said, Let Asher be blessed with children; let him be acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil. **25** Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be. **26** There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. **27** The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them. **28** Israel then shall dwell in safety alone: the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew. **29** Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 5. The first thing you notice is the poetic nature of this blessing (better seen as a prayer for blessing for each tribe) upon the twelve tribes gathered before Moses. It is a prayer for blessing that any Arab today would recognise as one of a man of the wilderness places, who has spent time alone with his creator and whose main focus in life is upon his relationship with the one who made him.

It is a doctrine packed blessing also, and it has primary focus upon the entry into the land of Canaan, and the immediate needs of the tribal armies. He mentions three mountains in this blessing; Sinai (Horeb), Seir (Edom), and Paran (the mountains around what is now known as Mt Sinai). The movement of the eyes of Moses is not from the West to the East, for then the mountains would be out of order, but from the East to the West, which was the normal way these peoples

spoke of things. He also mentions the mountains of Paran, which are now called the mountains of Sinai. Check the maps at the back of your Bible and you will see that Mt Seir is Edom, and is in between Arabia and Sinai, and as it is the middle mountain mentioned it is between Sinai and Paran, with one to the east and one to the west of it.

This is a further piece of evidence that the real Mount Sinai (Horeb) is in Arabia, not the presently named Sinai Peninsula. We must keep remembering that the present names for some biblical places were given quite late in history, and what is named as Mt Sinai today was identified as such only by the church in the fourth century of our era, even though Paul had made it clear that Mt Sinai was "in Arabia". Galatians 4:22-27.

The Lord God literally "flashed forth his glory" around each of these three mountains. The Lord appeared to the people in fire and cloud and came with the glory of 10,000 angels. This is the verse that leads the Rabbis, and early church, to believe that the angels played a big part in the transmission to man of the Mosaic Law. Galatians 3:19-20, Hebrews 2:1-10. Remember the term "saints" means "set apart ones". It is a term that refers to a dedicated service function that we share with the angels; we are called to be the Lord's set apart servants, just as the elect angels are.

The Law is referred to as a "fiery law". The Mosaic Law came with fire on the mountain to such an extent that the people thought Moses was surely dead up there. Exodus 19:18-25, 32:1. The glory of the Lord when the Lord spoke to Moses produced amazing signs and wonders that provoked fear and awe amongst the people. They saw that their God was a consuming fire! John 15:1-8, Luke 10:13ff, Hebrews 10:31, 12:28-29.

The Law was given to Moses by the visible member of the godhead – the Lord Jesus himself. The angels were there to minister to Jesus and to Moses, but they were not "intermediaries" – for the Lord spoke to Moses "face to face" as he had to Adam in the Garden. Deuteronomy 34:10. Later theologians would distort this truth and make the angels mediators – they are not – they are servants! The Lord Jesus is the sole mediator – not any angels. They serve him and they serve us now, as we are his ambassadors.

The Law was given by Jesus to Moses, to be the judge of mankind and the schoolmaster to bring the people to the place where they recognised their Messiah, who would complete the Law in His person and work. Galatians 3:10-29. The angels were there to underline the seriousness of the process, and the centrality of Jesus who gave the Law and who would fulfil the Law many centuries later. We do not worship angels, they serve us. Colossians 2:18. We will in some way yet to be revealed judge the angels. 1 Corinthians 6:3.

Verse three reminds us that even through a time of judgment the believer can always see the love of God for them, which is equal to His love for the angels who serve Him. The fact that the Lord is judging us proves His care and concern for us; that we might be corrected and so receive His blessing. Hebrews 12:5-15. We are secure in the love of God for us. We are in the hand of God at all times. John 6:36-40, 10:25-30, Romans 8:31-39, 2 Timothy 2:11-13.

The people expressed their faith and love in the Lord by sitting down and hearing the words that came from God through Moses. They showed by two things that they respected and loved the Lord their God; by hearing and believing His words. This is the way we show love and concern for the Lord, by our thoughtful obedience to all He says. The Lord is the king of His people. It is He who takes fallen Jacob and makes him Israel – the prince of God. In their unity with the Lord in obedience to His Law the Israelites are called again "Jeshurun" – literally "the righteous nation" - before the Lord.

The Lord has bound together the tribes in unity under His authority, through their obedience to His will. Sadly they will fall away from obedience to the Lord's Word and so that unity will prove to be fragile, and when the people fall away from God the tribes will go their own way. Judges 21:25. The Law is their inheritance and their bond of unity; if they embrace obedience to it they will be great, but if they reject it they will unravel as individuals and as a nation. Deuteronomy 9:25-29.

The blessings of Moses upon the tribes are to be compared with those of their ancestor Jacob, for Moses will go well beyond the words of Jacob and his will bear little resemblance to them. This is another piece of evidence for Mosaic authorship of this chapter, as a later writer, recording what they "thought" would have been said, would have followed the tribal order of Jacob's blessing and would tie the blessings in together, and probably also tie them into their own historic context.

What we find is a totally different picture that is very specific to the entry of the tribes into the land. Compare the words of Moses with those of Jacob in Genesis 49:1-28. Also refer to Ezekiel 48, for there the prophet records the allocation of land in the Millennial Kingdom and the tribal order is different again, and the parcels of land differ significantly. Each of these are time specific, and indicate the "unfolding drama of redemption", not later pseudo-history, written by theological fakes saying what they believe their invented god would have said through his deluded servants! Liberals write up their viewpoint as if it was the normal way history was written (after the event by centuries) – they cover hypocrisy with lies – and they are liars.

Verse 6. Reuben is the oldest of Jacob's sons. He lost his rulership birth-right due to his sexual sin with his father's concubine Bilhah. Genesis 35:22, 49:1-4. Reuben is a picture of lost opportunities due to his lack of control in the sexual area, although he redeemed himself a little by his attempt to save Joseph. Genesis 37:21ff. Jacob's "blessing" of Reuben is not a blessing at all, for he notes bluntly "you will not excel!"

Let us compare the blessing of Moses upon the tribe that bore Reuben's name through the wilderness years. Jacob had told Reuben that he wanted him and his descendents to shrink into insignificance because of the sin of their father against him, but Moses prays for the opposite outcome over this tribe. Moses prays that they might grow numerically and seize their inheritance in the land and hold it with their great numbers. The tribe of Reuben has received and will receive blessing from the Lord through their obedience to the Law, and at this point stands before Moses in mighty battle array to hear this blessing upon them. The cursing of Jacob over their ancestor is turned to blessing by their obedience to the Law, and Moses reflects that with a change to the words of Jacob that no longer apply. Romans 8:28.

Verse 7. The blessing upon Judah is also quite different to that of Jacob over them, and occurs out of the birth order of the sons of Jacob, but reflects the reality of the blessing of Jacob. Jacob had identified that Judah will rule, and from Judah will come the great king to rule over them all. Genesis 49:8-12.

The shortness of the blessing upon Judah is a major argument against the liberals who believe that this was written in a later day to amplify the claim of David's line to rulership. Had that been so I would have expected a number of verses here, not just one verse. Notice the words here and their meaning. Judah would lead in battle to seize the land, and so the prayer of Moses is for the soldiers of Judah to all "return alive" to their wives and families after the battles.

He further prays that they might have enough soldiers to do the work, and that they may prosper in their battles. It is another reminder of the immediate application of Moses blessing, or prayer, for them all to prosper in the invasion of Canaan and be victorious in their fight. A later writer would have "inserted" more "blessings" associated with his own time. The hallmark of this passage, like all others, is authenticity.

Verses 8 – 11. The tribe of Levi receives special and longer mention than the others. This is to be expected, as it is Moses own tribe, and they had charge over the tabernacle and the Ark, and so they held the role of the guardians of the Lord's truth and work. It is another reminder that these words are from the time of Moses, not the later days of the kings, as the emphasis is upon the immediate prayer needs of the tribes as they enter the land of Canaan.

At this point let us pause and reflect upon the entire concept of a "blessing". We are not authorised to "bless" people in the Lord's name, but we are given the example here from Moses to request blessings from the Lord upon people in need. We are to "bless" people in two ways. Firstly let us be a blessing to others through our ministry, our words, and our life, and so bless them through all our dealings with them. Secondly, let us pray for blessing upon all people we meet, that the Lord may have His way with them.

Notice the specific "blessings" Moses prays to come upon his tribe of Levi. He prays that they may be guided by Urim and Thummim. These stones in the High Priest's breastplate were used in some way to receive guidance directly from the Lord. This is an indication that the tribe of Levi, as the judges of the nation, were authorised to refer all matters to the High Priest for decision, and that they were to be guided by the Lord alone in all their dealings with the other tribes. They were to be the mouth of God and say the things that were tested by Urim and Thummim only.

The tribe of Levi had its rebels on the wilderness journey, but the majority turned away from their own family members when they disobeyed, and buried them, and moved on with Moses and Aaron, standing for God. Exodus 17:1-7, Leviticus 10:1-7, Numbers 12:1ff, 16:1ff, 20:1-13. Moses praises them for their standing for the Lord, and encourages them to continue to value the Word of God ahead of their own parents, and hold to the Lord, even if they have to bury their kin again.

Their devotion to the words of God is to be ahead of any family ties. Their role was to minister all the holy things on behalf of the other tribes, and they were to do these things faithfully and thoroughly. They were to be the priests, the judges and the teachers of the people. They were responsible for these things before the Lord. This is the standard the Lord sets for all who would follow Him. Luke 14:25-30.

Moses prayer for them is for their work to be acceptable to the Lord, and for them to be protected by the Lord, and kept safe from enemies in their service. This is to be our daily prayer for all our own work also. Romans 12:1-2, Philippians 4:18, 1 Timothy 5:4. Moses also prays that they might be prospered in their work in their fields and trades, so that they may have all the material things they need to serve and feed their families. They will not have inheritance in the land of Israel but they will receive towns and the area around them for their animals and crops. Even though they have no title in the land, Moses prays that they might receive prosperity in all they do there.

Once again there is a message here for us. The Lord will always provide enough for us to achieve what it is that He wants us to do. We have upon this earth "no continuing city". Hebrews 13:13-15. We do not stay here permanently, and so we are not to be emotionally attached to the things of this world. John 15:18-19, 17:12-25, 2 Timothy 4:10, 1 John 2:15-17.

Verse 12. The tribe of Benjamin is mentioned next. Moses is referring to the tribes in no immediately apparent order here, although I believe that Moses has grouped the initial tribes in a "prophetic order", and the latter ones in the order of their seizing of the land. Let us pause and reflect upon this. He has begun with Reuben, as he is the first born, but Reuben lost that birth-right to Judah, who gains the leadership role, so Judah is mentioned second. The first two tribes mentioned therefore make sense in their order for prayer.

The third tribe mentioned is Levi, as that tribe holds the spiritual leadership, so its order also makes sense. Benjamin is mentioned next in the prayer of blessing. This is way out of birth order, for this is the youngest son of Jacob, and the full, but younger brother of Joseph whose descendants will be mentioned next. Genesis 35:18, 44:20. The largest and most powerful tribal grouping was that of the tribes of the sons of Joseph, and so they would be expected to be mentioned next, but Benjamin has fourth place in Moses prayer list. Why is this? I suspect it is because of what the destiny of this tribe will be.

Benjamin was the “beloved” of his father, Genesis 35:18, and he will continue to be loved and protected by God, even though as a tribe they will go through dark times. Judges 19-20. The future destiny of Benjamin will be tied to Judah, not to their brethren amongst the sons of Joseph. They will prosper through their association with Judah, and will avoid the fate of the other sons of Joseph, who will be decimated by the Assyrian invasion in the 720sBC.

They will dwell “between the shoulders of God”. Now this is a strange phrase for us, but meant at this time that they would be at the very centre of the power of God’s plan, and carried upon the back of God. They will be under special protection, and the Lord will carry them through. They will provide Israel’s first king, King Saul, and one of the greatest of the early apostles of the Lord in St Paul. Their strength will come by their association with Judah and with Levi, and they will find their strength as they obey the king from Judah, and the priests from Levi.

Verses 13 - 17. This is the longest prayer for blessing by far, and also argues against a later date than the days of Moses for this prayer. The liberals want to argue that these “speeches” of Moses were all later literary inventions by Ezra (around 450 BC) or others, and that they were simply what the people would think Moses would say. By 721 BC Ephraim and Manasseh are destroyed as tribes, and have been absorbed into Judah, and so have no significance to that day of Israelite history.

There would simply be no reason to given them this space if it were not important at the time of writing. At the time of Moses they are the most numerous tribal group and so have great significance. They will provide a large army for the battles in the central and northern sectors and hold the bulk of the land on both sides of Jordan. Their size at this time means Moses pays special attention to them to instruct them and warn them.

Sadly the warning will prove prophetic, for the peoples of Joseph will fall into alcoholism and idolatry even more than the others and will be decimated as a tribal group. Isaiah 28:1-3, Joel 1:1-15, Nahum 1:7-10. A remnant will remain and through fleeing south into Judah be preserved and the tribe will grow again in Babylonian Captivity as do the others. There are no “lost ten tribes”, for the remnants survived in Judah, and also exiles from Israel who were taken into Assyrian captivity were also able to return under the Persian Empire after 535 BC. Acts 26:7, James 1:1.

The land controlled by Ephraim will be particularly fruitful and prosperous. They will have fruit trees in abundance and crops will be significant, even feeding the other tribes. The Lord will bless them with particular prosperity because of Joseph. The Lord will bless them for over six hundred years because of their ancestor’s obedience. This is a wonderful example of blessing by association, and it will last for centuries, but eventually, sadly it will be lost by disobedience. They will be like a bulldozer to their enemies, and a freight train of settlement for their people.

They will fill the land they are given and be very strong there for a time. The blessing of the Lord will come in answer to Moses prayer, and prosperity will be upon them, but in their wealth they will forget the Lord their God and for political purposes their first king built altars to other gods. They will enjoy the land, but by ignoring the Word of God, their enjoyment will be “but for a season”. Hebrews 11:25. From that time of disobedience the doom of the northern kingdom was settled. 1 Kings 12:26-33, 2 Kings 18:9-12.

Verses 18 - 19. Of the tribes of Zebulun and Issachar Moses prays for blessing in their lands, noting that they will settle in places of mountain, sand and sea, but will draw riches from these places that are not seen by the naked eye. They will have the less fertile areas apparently, but will turn them into wealth by their labours and the blessing of God. They will find “treasures” in the sands, and take food from the sea for themselves and the others. If you look at the area they finally control under Joshua it is a small area and does not stretch to the sea.

In the Millennial Kingdom they will have a share of the sea coast, as do all the tribes, but they do not in the days of Joshua. It may be that these tribes provided the sea farers and traders for the ships of Israel; we simply do not know. These tribes dwelt in areas that will be battlefields in the Great Tribulation and it may be that in those dark days that fighters will find strength and comfort from these verses that we at present cannot see.

Verses 20 – 21. Gad will be like the Asiatic Lions who lived in the area that tribe controlled on the east bank of the Jordan. They had rolling country that stretched to the mountains of Ammon and Arabia. They are a warlike and violent tribe that first feed themselves and then look to others. This weakness will plague them, for by the days of the divided kingdom there are few of them left. They will be the centre of the lawgiving of the group that live on the east bank of Jordan, and in this they will serve the Lord well.

They will be known for their holding to the Law of Moses and will be examples for a time to others. Moses prayer is to excite them with this vision and have them hold to the Law and be its champion on that side of Jordan. There are things in this blessing that do not make sense in later days and may have very specific references into the days of Moses and Joshua that are lost to us now.

Verse 22. The word to Dan is as small as this tribe will be. They will be like a baby lion, and they will seize the land between Judah, Ephraim and Benjamin, but they will be unable to hold it against the early Philistine incursions into the coastal strip and will have to head north. They will literally “leap from Bashan” and seize the far north and rename the town they seize there as Dan. Joshua 19:40-48, Judges 18:1-31. They will also be the tribe from which Samson will emerge to smite the Philistines like a young lion at times, but the compromises they make with idolatry will mean that they remain unable to grow into the mature lion they were capable of. Judges 13-14.

Verses 23. Naphtali was the son born to Jacob through Bilhah, his concubine, who later enters into a sexual relationship with Reuben. The boy is named for the “baby battles” between Leah and Rachel, and indicates at the time of his birth that Rachel believed she was now starting to win against Leah. Refer to our earlier Commentary upon the following verses. Genesis 30:7-8, 35:22, 49:21. Jacob’s blessing upon his son Naphtali was enigmatic and lacked real promise. It indicated beauty, grace, speed in action, and great ability with words, but not necessarily organised and productive actions.

While Jacob compares Naphtali to a hind deer, Moses directly recognises their satisfaction with the Lord’s blessing upon them, and prays for more of the Lord’s blessing upon them. They live in satisfaction with the Lord’s favour upon them. They have long since cast off the negative association with Bilhah and the sin of their ancestor in entering the “baby battles” of his two wives. They live under the favour of the Lord, and through their obedience to the Law they will enjoy more of that favour. They are encouraged to move to the west of the land and the south west and enlarge their territories there. They will receive the sea coastal lands around the south and west of the Sea of Galilee. Joshua 19:32-39, Ezekiel 48:1-4.

Verses 24 – 25. The tribe of Asher is mentioned last, whereas it is second from the top of the land in Ezekiel’s order, receiving with the tribe of Dan, the lands that are now in Lebanon and Syria. This is the reminder that Moses list is quite different to the two others (Jacob and Ezekiel). Moses list has rulership priority order in view, and after the ruling tribes are discussed, then follows the allotment of the various other land parcels roughly from south to north.

Asher was the fourth youngest child of Jacob, born to Leah’s maid Zilpah. Genesis 30:12, 49:20. The blessing of his father upon him is for prosperity and wealth, and they received a prosperous area of land on the coastal strip from Dor to Tyre. It was fertile land and the cities of the area were prosperous. They lived off the “fat of the land”. The reference to oil here is to Olive Oil, and indicates the prosperity associated with that industry. They ate well and lived like kings, but their land was on the coastal road, and the armies of Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon passed through their area at times and devastated them and their lands.

The phrase, “to dip his foot in oil” has created speculation over the years. Now let me quote my words from earlier days. “Foolish men have tried to drill for petroleum oil in this area, but it is pointless, as the reference is to olive oil and they would have been better to save money on petroleum exploration and spend all their resources to clothe the hills fully in olive and other fruit trees, and grape vines”. While this was true of the land, off shore, within Israel’s economic zone vast oil reserves have been discovered and exploitation of the wealth has begun in 2014! The man who drilled and spent millions to explore believed this verse – and headed off the shoreline and discovered oil greater than Saudi Arabia’s!

They will be a tribe with strength “like iron” as they will need to be to fight their many attackers, but if their days are holy, then their strength will be great. As their days are so will their strength be. This is a principle that is everlasting. As we live so will we fight and survive. It remains true that soft living will produce “soft” lives and fear filled deaths. Those who live soft lives, tend to achieve nothing of lasting value in their lives. If we are spiritually faithful to God, and physically tough and strong, we will fight well and live long to serve the Lord in power.

Verses 26 – 27. At the end of the blessing, Moses returns to speak again of the character of the Lord their God, who will answer his prayers and protect His people as they seek to serve Him. There is none like the Lord God, because there is only one creator and saviour of mankind. The Lord is ruler of the “heavens and the earth” and so the ground and sky are alike His domains. The gods of the pagans were divided into their areas of influence, but the Lord is ruler over all, for He made all things. Isaiah 40:18-31.

Although all the earth is on fire and the heavens are oppressive above man, yet the man who serves the true God of all can rejoice in the Lord, for what He has made He can restore, and what He has saved He will redeem. Isaiah 61:3, Habakkuk 3:16-19. These promises will become crucial for the faith of Israelis in the last days of the Great Tribulation period, when the skies darken and men despair of hope.

Verse 27 This is the source of a number of great hymns and songs down the ages, as it reminds us that the Lord is to be our refuge and our strength in dangerous times and places. It reminds us that the Lord alone is our strength and Saviour. It is to be the reminder to Israel that the Lord is the one who carries them, and that the arms of His power are underneath them as they advance into the land. It is the reminder that the Lord has ordered the destruction of their enemies and they are to advance into the land with the confidence of those who are carrying out the very orders of God.

The encouragement of the Lord’s presence centres in His dependable character and eternal gracious and merciful nature. Psalms 90:1-2, 102:23-28, Isaiah 25:1-9, 57:13-21. The Lord God alone is eternal. We gain everlasting life through our relationship with Him, but He alone is eternal God. Our eternal security rests alone upon Him and His character.

Verses 28 – 29. Only when the nation keeps the Mosaic Law will they enjoy the peace they long for and be able to live alone and secure in the land the Lord has given them. This will only occur during the Millennial reign of the Lord Jesus Christ over them. In that day the land will be a place of productivity and prosperity and the heavens will water the ground as is required. In that day of blessing all will praise the Israelites for their faithfulness to the Lord. They will be seen as a people saved by the Lord and even kept by Him through the centuries of their disobedience.

The Lord will be their shield and their sword in those days and their enemies will be crushed upon the high places of their paganism. Right at the heart of the evil worship of their pagan religions the enemies of God and Israel will be destroyed by God's power in that day. Revelation 19:11-21. This final blessing here is similar to the words of Balaam who despite his best attempts to the contrary had to bless Israel. Numbers 23:7-10, 20-24, 24:5-9, 15-24.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. We are to be a blessing through our life and work, and we are to bless others through our prayers, our presence and the power of the Holy Spirit working through us. Moses exercises his prophetic function here and blesses the people in the Lord's name. He has the right to do this, as the appointed prophet and leader of God's people, but we do not have this right to bless. We do however have the opportunity to bless the Lord's people through our life and lips, as we walk in the power of the Holy Spirit. Let us do this and be a blessing to all we meet.

2. Like the Levites of old, we are all "believer priests" of the Lord, and are to be the teachers and counsellors of our generation. As the people came to the tribe of Levi, so the unbelievers should come to us to seek the wisdom of the Lord.

Let us grow in the grace and the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and so fulfil our priestly function to the nations of the world.

3. Do we love this present world or do we love the Lord and the future blessing He has for us more than the things we can see now? The people before Moses had the land to inherit, just as we have the spiritual inheritance that the Lord wants us to seize and use for the glory of His mighty name. Let us seize every spiritual opportunity we have been given that the Lord may be glorified in all we do and say. We do this by dealing with every sin that might hinder the Holy Spirit's work through us. Let us not be like Reuben and miss the blessing through our sinfulness, but be redeemed through our confession and obedience.

4. Just as the tribe of Levi was to be guided by Urim and Thummim, so we are to be guided by the Holy Spirit alone. We are to speak the words of the Lord our God alone. We are to be prepared to walk away from our family if they do not follow the Lord's Word. We are to have eyes for the Lord and His Word alone, and obedience to it is to be more important than anything else.

5. We have here "no continuing city", and our security, safety and prosperity rests upon the Lord alone. Let us acknowledge this daily and serve the Lord with all our strength resting in faith upon His mighty protective and enabling power. Let us reject the lies of the so called "prosperity gospel", for it is from the pit of hell itself. We do not need earthly prosperity to serve the Lord; we need His strength, power, and plan being followed. Let us live as soldiers, fit and strong and stabilised by the knowledge of the Lord's shield and sword protecting us as we advance in His service.

REFLECTION UPON OUR "REASONABLE SERVICE"

1. Our duty is to surrender our entire lives to God. (Romans 12:1-2)
2. Willingness is essential. (Judges 5:2, 8:25, Isaiah 1:19, 2 Corinthians 8:3)
3. Service in the big things requires by faithfulness in the small things.
4. Monotony and difficulties are transformed into the opportunities with the correct attitude. (Matthew 6:33)
5. Everything we do should be "as unto the Lord". (Colossians 3:17)
6. Service to Christ is acceptable to God and approved of men. (Romans 14:18)
7. Our work should be completed. (John 4:34, 17:4, Acts 20:24, 2 Timothy 4:7)
8. The example of Christ. (Matthew 20:28, Luke 22:27, Philippians 2:7)
9. Qualities of our service:-
 - a) It is demanded. (Hebrews 12:28)
 - b) It should be immediate. (Matthew 21:28)
 - c) It is abundant. (1 Corinthians 15:58)
 - d) It is according to ability. (Matthew 25:22, Luke 12:48)
 - e) It is in co-operation with God. (2 Corinthians 6:1)
 - f) Must be exclusive. (Luke 16:13)

- g) In the power of the Spirit. (Romans 1:9)
- h) Undertaken in Godly fear. (Hebrews 12:28)
- i) Motivated by love. (Galatians 5:13)

10. It is:-

- a) Following Christ (John 12:26)
- b) For him whom all Christians serve (Colossians 3:24)
- c) Service to God (Acts 27:23).

11. It requires:-

- a) Turning from idols (1 Thessalonians 1:9)
- b) Fasting and prayer (Luke 2:37)
- c) Ministry of the Word (Acts 6:1-4).

12. Benefits of Service:-

- a) It glorifies God. (Matthew 5:16, John 15:8)
- b) It enriches life. (1 Timothy 6:18-19)
- c) It gives a pattern for imitation. (Titus 2:7)
- d) It encourages others in their tasks. (Hebrews 10:24)
- e) It shows neighbourliness. (Luke 10:36-37)
- f) It lightens life's burdens. (Galatians 6:2,16)
- g) It demonstrates love. (John 21:15-17)
- h) It demonstrates faith. (James 2:17-18, 1 Peter 2:12)
- i) It is Christ like. (John 13:12-15)

REFLECTION UPON OUR COMFORT AS BELIEVERS

1. God is in control. Nothing will ever happen to you as a Christian that you have not had the opportunity to develop resources to deal with. (1 Corinthians 10:13)
2. God's character is stable.
 - (a) if God is for you who can be against you. (Romans 8:31-34)
 - (b) no matter what happens God's love is stable. (Romans 8:35-39)
3. God's promises are secure for he is always with us. (Matthew 28:19-20, Jeremiah 1:19)
4. God's power is always the same:-
 - (a) He will always keep us. (John 10:29, 2 Timothy 1:12,)
 - (b) God does not forget us or lose His power to keep. (Jude 24)
 - (c) Even if we fall away from fellowship we still are saved. (2 Timothy 2:13)
5. God knew before time what we would need in time and has provided for the supply of all our needs. (Philippians 4:19, Hebrews 4:16, Ephesians 3:12,)
6. God has the power to bless us. (2 Corinthians 9:8)
7. God is able to make all grace abound towards us. (Ephesians 3:20)
8. We should grow to the place of real confidence and blessing. (2 Peter 3:18)
9. We do this by feeding on His Word. (John 6:29, 33, 63)

Notes

CHAPTER 34**DEUTERONOMY 34:1-12**

34:1 And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho. And the LORD shewed him all the land of Gilead, unto Dan, **2** And all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim, and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, unto the utmost sea, **3** And the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, unto Zoar. **4** And the LORD said unto him, This is the land which I swore unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed: I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither. **5** So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD. **6** And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Bethpeor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day. **7** And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated. **8** And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days: so the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended. **9** And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as the LORD commanded Moses. **10** And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, **11** In all the signs and the wonders, which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land, **12** And in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses shewed in the sight of all Israel.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 7. As we read these verses and the next we must ask ourselves, how do we know what happened to Moses after he climbed the hill? All the observers on the plain can say is that they saw him disappear up the hill, no-one can say what the Lord did there or said to him there, unless they were there, or the Lord separately told them later by special revelation. The writer is clearly writing this some time later, for he uses the phrase in verse six, “until this day”, indicating some time has passed since the events described.

It may also be that this comment was a scribal addition from the days of Ezra, but the other details here appear to be written close to the time. From the words used I believe others were with him and that Moses gave them an account of what the Lord said and showed him, and that these men secretly buried him also.

Moses was given extra-ordinary sight to be able to see all the land that is described here, for the lands beyond the hills of Judah are not directly visible from that mountain, and Dan and Naphtali certainly aren't. This is not a problem to the Lord, but once again we are faced with the fact that even the men accompanying him would need to be told what Moses saw in order to report this. The fact that these two tribal areas are mentioned makes it important to reflect upon what Moses sees and understand what is being said here.

What we read here is certainly written as if it is a received account from the person who saw it. If this passage was a simple invention it wouldn't need to be as specific as it is made with references to specific places that are impossible to see from that mountain. People grazed sheep and climbed upon this mountain and it would have been well known that the things Moses saw couldn't be seen by anyone climbing it later. From the words used we know that something special is given to Moses on that mountain, and that is why they are recorded for us.

The Lord gives Moses a special ability to see here, and that is important for the story, for his death is a judgment, and the Lord's giving him this grace is a wonderful thing in light of Moses and Aaron's sin. Numbers 20. Moses dies according to the word of God, Numbers 27:12ff, not by the “kiss of God”, as the later Rabbis argued. We don't have to invent the concept of a “kiss”, for the Lord's grace in Moses death has already been shown by the things he reports he sees. He dies under judgment, but the Lord has ensured that it is a mild judgment upon this great man, and He ensured he sees all the land before he dies.

Even if Moses had walked across the Jordan with the people he would not have seen as much as God clearly has shown him by this description here. The Lord does something special for Moses, and this is a beautiful picture of dying grace, for the Lord has forgiven him his sin, and his death will have blessing in the midst of it. Psalm 103:10-18. The next time we meet Moses he will be in the land worshipping the Messiah on the Mount of Transfiguration. Matthew 17:1-9.

The phrase that describes how the great man was buried may be interpreted two ways; that God personally buried Moses, or that the men accompanying him buried him, but that the burial place was secret, although its general area known. I favour the latter explanation, as it explains where the subject matter of this chapter comes from also. If no-one was with Moses, and none saw his burial then there would be no geographical reference at all.

No names of the men who accompany him are mentioned and that would be to protect the individuals from later pressure to disclose the grave site of Moses. Moses wanted no memorials, nor did God want his grave becoming a site for pilgrimage. The only site for pilgrimage was to be the Tabernacle. Moses was very happy to have none tending his grave; for his desire was that they tended their land and attended the tabernacle. His focus was, as ours ought to be, upon the living and the future, not the dead and the past. Matthew 8:22.

Smart believers do not want their relatives tending their grave, they want them walking in the Holy Spirit's power as they did. Leave the dead with the company in the graveyard of those who they will rise with, and join them there if you are to be buried, but don't waste time at cemeteries, do the work the Lord called you to.

Verses 8 – 12. Moses was 120 years old and he was in reasonable health, with his eyes working well, and sexually still active. As we have seen above, Deuteronomy 31:1-2, he was now having difficulties in walking, but his eyes and sexual function were normal. These two things are signs of age for many, and they are the sort of specific detail that reminds us we have an eye witness account here.

The oldest man in England, Thomas Parr (his grave may be visited in Westminster Abbey) died in his 150s, but had been blind for only the last ten or so years. Like Moses he was still able to see clearly, and was still sexually active through his 120s. The oldest man and woman last century were both older than Moses and were in good health until near the end of their lives. Don't ever feel the need to explain away the great ages mentioned here, for they have been known in our own days, and these men lived at a time without the atmospheric poisons we face.

Don't be put off by the purists of the "Guinness Book of Records" who argue that we don't have accurate birth records for these great ages; we often don't have the exact date, but give or take a few days we can be sure of the ages of those who lived in recent centuries to great ages. Don't let the obvious deceptions of Stalinist Russia rob you of the truth on these matters.

The people mourned for Moses for thirty days. They would truly have mourned for this man, for after his departure they would have realised just what a mighty man he was. Many only recognise a person's greatness after they have gone to be with the Lord. This man had been abused and insulted by these people throughout a great deal of his ministry. He had led them with firmness in truth, and had failed terribly only once. Deuteronomy 31:1-8, 32:48-52. He had confessed this sin to the Lord, and had not hidden it from the people, so that they could learn from this also. Moses concern regarding his sin, was not the punishment upon him, but that the people might not follow him in carelessness.

Moses was a teacher until the last day, even the last hour of his life. His total focus was upon his service to his people. He is the mentor to us all as to what pastoral duty really involves. Like Moses, we are called to serve until the Lord calls us home. The scribe who completes this chapter and rounds off the book of Deuteronomy is unknown to us, but he rounds it off well. It is likely that this was done during the Babylonian captivity or shortly afterwards. He pays tribute to Moses, looking back from his own day and noting that no prophet that had come since Moses days was superior to him in love, devotion to the Lord, and impact for God.

To Moses God spoke directly "face to face". Moses heard the words of God directly, and few in history have heard this at any time, but Moses heard the Lord his God all the time. This man is above all others until the days of John the Baptist. Matthew 11:11. The signs and wonders done through the hand of Moses were the greatest concentration of miracles until the Lord walked upon the earth.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. While our burial is the last chance for witness to our friends, (and believers are encouraged to think about their funerals and pre-write them so that they have maximum impact), we are not there! Once we have died we are with the Lord. Our funeral is conducted with our body only; we have already left. It also doesn't matter what happens later to our grave or to our body after our death. A grave is for the living to mourn at, not for the dead to 'sleep in'. We are in heaven, and the body decays into earth. We will receive our resurrection bodies where our body was last placed, but even if nothing is left, or the enemy has destroyed it (as they did with John Wycliffe's body), the resurrection will still occur at that place. 1 Thessalonians 4:16. No action of man hinders the work of God!
2. Mourning is a good thing for those who are left behind after the death of an important person to them. It is the natural way to remember we are here only as temporary residents of this planet, and that we have an eternal destiny not an earthly one. Mourning will help us accept the dead ones absence, but also help us live more intelligently with our eyes fixed on our creator and Saviour rather than the things of this earth. Our priorities ought to be set by the reality of death and judgment by God. What does not last the end of this life is not of lasting value! 1 Corinthians 3:1-23.
3. While we are upon the earth we are here to serve the Lord in spirit and in truth. Let us devote ourselves to such service in whole hearted Holy Spirit power and focus. Until the last day of our pilgrimage through this earth let us serve the one who gave His all for us, and so give all our moments to Him. Moses is our mentor; let us follow his example until the time of our own death. Let us not spend too long at the graves of the dead except to pray there and remember the truths of resurrection and the witness of their lives. We are here to look forward and serve the Lord not look back and weep ourselves asleep for too long.