LIFE-STUDY OF DEUTERONOMY

MESSAGE ONE

AN INTRODUCTORY WORD

Scripture Reading: Deut. 1:1; 8:3; 30:14; 2 Tim. 3:16a; John 1:1; Rom. 10:8-9; Matt. 4:4; John 6:63b, 57b

In this message we will give an introductory word to the life-study of Deuteronomy.

I. THE CONCLUDING BOOK OF THE PENTATEUCH

Deuteronomy is the concluding book of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. These five books were written by Moses.

The book of Deuteronomy is a book primarily of plain words. This means that, generally speaking, it is not a book of types, figures, and shadows, and neither is it deep in the matter of prophecies. Nearly all the chapters of this book consist of plain words.

We may think that plain words are easier to understand than types and figures. Actually, the plain words in the Bible are more difficult to understand than the pictures shown in the types and figures.

What does the word Deuteronomy mean? Literally, Deuteronomy means "second law" and thus signifies a respeaking, a repeated speaking, a speaking again. The book of Deuteronomy is a respeaking, not of ordinary words, but of the divine law.

The law was given through Moses the first time when he was eighty. Forty years later, after the first generation, with the exception of Caleb and Joshua, had died out, the law was again related to the children of Israel. At that time, Moses was facing those of the younger generation, most of whom had not been present to hear the giving of the Ten Commandments, the statutes, and the ordinances. Therefore,

God burdened Moses to relate the law again, to rehearse it, to respeak it. This repeating of the law was surely meaningful and significant.

We should not think that only Deuteronomy, the fifth book of the Bible, is a deuteronomy, a respeaking. Actually, the entire Bible is a deuteronomy. We should therefore regard the whole Bible of sixty-six books as a deuteronomy. The writing of the Bible was completed nineteen hundred years ago, but when we read the Bible today, we experience a respeaking. The word in the Bible has already been spoken, but it is respoken to us day by day. This means that every day we may have a deuteronomy. For example, the book of Romans was written nearly two thousand years ago, but when we read Romans today, the word in this epistle is spoken to us again. This means that in our reading of Romans we have a deuteronomy.

To say that we may have a respeaking of the Bible does not mean that anything can be added to the Bible. The claim of Joseph Smith to have had a revelation in addition to what is in the Bible is nonsensical and heretical. Revelation 22:18 and 19 indicate that the entire revelation of God has been completed and that no one should add anything or take away anything. Therefore, we should not think that we can receive a new revelation in addition to what is recorded in the sixty-six books of the Bible. What we can have today is a deuteronomy, a respeaking of the word in the Scriptures. The word has already been spoken, but it can now be respoken to us; that is, it can become to us a deuteronomy.

The book of Deuteronomy is a conclusion to the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. Apart from Deuteronomy, these four books would not have a conclusion. Do you think Moses' writing could have concluded with Genesis? Genesis ends with a man in a coffin in Egypt. Surely the divine revelation could not conclude in such a way. For a proper conclusion, the book of Deuteronomy is needed. Deuteronomy is an all-inclusive conclusion of the four preceding books, for Deuteronomy is a totality of the thought of these books. Therefore, if we would understand

the thought of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, we need to come to Deuteronomy.

A. A Concluding Word of the Law

Deuteronomy is not only a conclusion of the Pentateuch; it is also a concluding word of the law.

B. Considering the Law as the Living Word of God—the Breathing of God

What is the law in its nature? The law is God's breathing. I do not say that the law is God's breath, but I do say that it is God's breathing. When God was giving the law, He was breathing out the law. This was the reason Paul said, "All Scripture is God-breathed" (2 Tim. 3:16a). Here Paul does not say merely that all Scripture is inspired by God—he says that all Scripture is God-breathed. The law, therefore, is God's breathing.

In Deuteronomy 8:3 Moses, speaking for God, said that man lives not by bread alone but by "everything proceeding from Jehovah's mouth." Notice that this verse does not speak of every word but of everything. The words written in the Pentateuch, of which Deuteronomy is the conclusion, are things which have proceeded out of the mouth of God. These things are God's breathing. While Moses was with God on Mount Sinai, many things were breathed out by God. The Ten Commandments, for example, are items of the basic law. Nevertheless, even the Ten Commandments are God's breathing. If we read these commandments with an open heart and with a seeking and exercised spirit, we will sense that the commandments are not merely legalities but also something living, something full of life to supply us and full of light to enlighten us.

The psalmists, who appraised the law very highly, had this kind of experience in relation to the law. Thus the writer of Psalm 119 could say, "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth" (v. 103). For the psalmist, whatever came out of God's mouth was not only something legal but something sweet to his taste.

Because all Scripture is God-breathed, even verses such as Genesis 3:1 and Revelation 20:2 and 3 can supply, nourish, strengthen, and enlighten us. Genesis 3:1 says that the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field, and Revelation 20:2 and 3 speak of the devil's being bound and cast into the abyss. These verses are God's breathing, and if we pray-read them, we will be nourished by them. From this we see that we can be nourished and enlightened by any verse in the Bible, including the genealogy in Matthew 1. The point we would emphasize here is that Deuteronomy, the concluding word of the law, considers the law as the living word of God, as the breathing of God.

1. The Word Being Christ as the Word of God for Man to Receive as His Life

The word is Christ as the word of God for man to receive as his life (Deut. 30:14; John 1:1; Rom. 10:8-9). In Deuteronomy 30:11 Moses says that the commandment "is not too difficult for you, nor is it distant." The Hebrew word translated "difficult" can also be rendered "extraordinary" or "wonderful." In verses 12 and 13 Moses goes on to say, "It is not in heaven that you should say, Who will ascend to heaven for us and bring it to us that we may hear it and do it? Nor is it across the sea that you should say, Who will go across the sea for us and bring it to us that we may hear it and do it?" Then in verse 14 Moses says, "The word is very near to you, even in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it." This word is quoted and interpreted by Paul in Romans 10. In verses 6 and 7 Paul says, "The righteousness which is out of faith speaks in this way, Do not say in your heart, Who will ascend into heaven? That is, to bring Christ down. Or, Who will descend into the abyss? That is, to bring Christ up from among the dead." Here in his interpretation Paul applies the word in Deuteronomy 30:11-13 to Christ, and he interprets the sea as the abyss. Then in verse 8 Paul continues, "But what does it say? The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart: that is, the word of the faith which we preach." In verses 6

and 7 Paul speaks about Christ, but in verse 8 Christ becomes the word. The object of Paul's speaking here is Christ, and he eventually indicates that Christ is the word.

Paul's writing in Romans 10:6-8 further indicates that every word spoken in Deuteronomy is Christ, for Paul applies the breathing of God to Christ. Christ is the Word who has come out from God. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God….And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us" (John 1:1, 14). This Word who was in the beginning, who was with God, who was God, and who became flesh is Christ. As the Word, Christ Himself is the word rehearsed in the book of Deuteronomy.

In Paul's interpretation of Deuteronomy 30, we see that the word is the incarnated, crucified, and resurrected Christ. Because the incarnation of Christ has already taken place, there is no need for anyone to ascend into heaven to bring Christ down, and because the resurrection of Christ has already occurred, there is no need for anyone to descend into the abyss to bring Christ up from among the dead. Today Christ is the incarnated, crucified, and resurrected One, but where is He? According to Romans 10:8, Christ is in our mouth and in our heart.

The word in Romans 10:8 is a word for unbelievers, for those who are candidates to hear the gospel. Do you believe that Christ is in the heart and mouth of the unbelievers? This is what Paul is saying in his quotation and interpretation of Deuteronomy. Paul's word here is a deuteronomy, and in this deuteronomy Paul tells us that the living Christ as the word is in the heart and mouth of the one to whom we are preaching the gospel. At least at the time we are preaching the word of Christ to unbelievers, Christ is in their heart and mouth.

The revelation of the entire Bible is contained in the book of Deuteronomy. This means that everything of both the Old Testament and the New Testament is found in Deuteronomy. This is proved by the Lord's quotation of Deuteronomy in Matthew 4:4 and Paul's quotation of Deuteronomy in Romans 10.

The book of Deuteronomy is filled with the speaking of Moses to the second generation, the generation which was ready to enter into the good land and possess it. Concerned that they would repeat the failures of their fathers, Moses charged them concerning many matters, repeating certain things again and again. He especially spoke repeatedly concerning those matters which would preserve the people and qualify them to enter into the good land and to possess, inherit, and enjoy the land. Moses was like an elderly father speaking out of concern for his children. This is the reason that Moses' word in this book is repetitious and detailed. If we study the book of Deuteronomy carefully, especially the words of warning, we will see that Moses spoke in detail about both blessing and cursing. All the main points of the divine revelation are respoken in this book.

Moses was a figure, a representative, of the real Father of the children of Israel—God the Father in the heavens, who was very concerned about His people. Whatever proceeded out of the mouth of Moses was actually something that proceeded out of the heavenly Father. Through Moses the real Father was speaking to the people. For us today, the entire Bible is the Father's word spoken to us.

2. The Word Being Christ as Food to Man for Man to Take as His Nourishment

The word is not only Christ as the word of God for man to receive as his life; the word is also Christ as food to man for man to take as his nourishment (Deut. 8:3; Matt. 4:4; John 6:63b, 57b). Christ is first our life and then our life supply. For both our life and life supply, Christ is the word.

Matthew 4:4, a quotation of Deuteronomy 8:3, reveals that Christ as the word of God is our life supply. Everything that proceeds out of the mouth of God is Christ. Since this message is on Deuteronomy, we would emphasize the fact that the word in this book is Christ as our life and life supply. Let us come to this book to find Christ both as our life and as our life supply.

II. THE GENERAL SKETCH

The general sketch of Deuteronomy is this: the renewed training given to the new generation of the children of Israel after their long wandering, to prepare them to enter into the good land promised by God and inherit it as their possession. The word *training* cannot be found in Deuteronomy, but in fact Moses was giving the people a renewed training. The first training had been given forty years earlier at Mount Sinai, and in the book of Deuteronomy this training was given again, this time to the new generation, who had been wandering in the wilderness. The purpose of this training was to prepare them to enter into the good land and inherit it.

During the forty years in the wilderness, the children of Israel were carried by God. Moses speaks concerning this in 1:31: "In the wilderness, where you have seen that Jehovah your God carried you, as a man carries his son, in all the way that you went until you came to this place." Although their wandering was not pleasing to God, He carried them all the time until eventually He gained a people who were ready to enter into the good land, possess it, enjoy it, and build in it a temple, a house, for God.

The principle is the same with us today. Throughout the years, God has been carrying us. God carries us even when our daily living is not pleasing to Him; He does not cast us aside. He is carrying not only all the believers but also all the churches. The churches today are on the Lord's shoulder. He is carrying the churches for the purpose of accomplishing His economy. God cannot be defeated; His goal will be attained. As He is carrying us, He needs us to have a deuteronomy, a respeaking, again and again.

III. THE CENTRAL THOUGHT

The central thought of Deuteronomy is that Christ is the Instructor and Leader of the people of God that they may be able to enter into the heavenly territory and participate in His riches.

We need to realize that every word in Deuteronomy is

a life supply for us. The children of Israel were sustained by everything that proceeded out of the mouth of God. This actually means that they were sustained by Christ, for, as we have pointed out, whatever proceeds out of God's mouth is Christ. On the one hand, Christ is the good land; on the other hand, He is the food which sustains us on the way to the good land. He is the One who can make it into the land. God never intended that we make it in ourselves. The Lord is leading us into the good land by Christ, and He is sustaining us also by Christ, who is everything that proceeds out of the mouth of God. This means that Christ is sustaining us to enter into Himself. This is the revelation in the book of Deuteronomy, a book which speaks of Christ both as the good land and as the sustaining food.

As the Instructor and Leader of God's people, Christ enables them to enter into the heavenly territory and participate in His riches. This heavenly territory is Christ Himself, and the riches are the riches of Christ as the good land described in Deuteronomy 8:7-9: waterbrooks, springs, and fountains flowing forth in valleys and in mountains; wheat, barley, vines, figs, and pomegranates; oil and honey; iron and copper. The valleys and mountains signify the different kinds of environments in which we may experience Christ as the flowing Spirit. The good land is a land flowing with milk and honey, both of which are the produce of a combination of the animal life and the plant life. The iron and copper are for making weapons with which to fight the enemy. (For details on the riches of Christ as the good land, please read *The All-inclusive Christ*, a book composed of the messages given during the first conference in the United States, in 1962.) Christ is everything—the water, the food, the weapons, and the land.

IV. THE KEY WORDS

The key words in Deuteronomy are loving God, obeying His commandments (His words), and receiving His blessing. These matters are repeated throughout the book of Deuteronomy. Moses tells us over and over again that if we love

the Lord our God and obey His commandments, we will receive His blessing.

V. THE SECTIONS

Deuteronomy has eight sections. The first section is a review of the past (1:1—4:43). A person who is repentant and who wants to have a new start will receive much benefit from reviewing the past. The second section is the rehearsal of the law (4:44—26:19). This is a long section occupying most of the book. The other sections are a warning (27:1—28:68), the enactment of the covenant (29:1—30:20), the final exhortations and charges (31:1-13, 24-29), the song of Moses (31:14-23, 30; 32:1-47), the blessing of Moses (33:1-29), and the death of Moses, and his successor (32:48-52; 34:1-12).

LIFE-STUDY OF DEUTERONOMY

MESSAGE TWO

THE CRUCIAL POINTS

Before we consider the crucial points in the book of Deuteronomy, I would like to give a further word on Deuteronomy 30:11-14.

Verse 11 says, "This commandment which I am commanding you today, it is not too difficult for you, nor is it distant." Notice that this verse speaks not of the word but of the commandment.

Verses 12 and 13 continue, "It is not in heaven that you should say, Who will ascend to heaven for us and bring it to us that we may hear it and do it? Nor is it across the sea that you should say, Who will go across the sea for us and bring it to us that we may hear it and do it?" The pronoun *it* in these verses refers to the commandment in verse 11. This commandment is the word which, as the breath, proceeds out of the mouth of God.

Verse 14 goes on to say, "But the word is very near to you, even in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it." This verse speaks not of the commandment but of the word.

If we read 30:11-14 without Paul's interpretation in Romans 10, we would not apply these verses to Christ as the Word, much less to Christ as the One who came down from the heavens in incarnation and who, after His death, came out of Hades in His resurrection. In order to have such an understanding of 30:11-14, we need to study Paul's quotation and interpretation of these verses in Romans 10:6-8.

Romans 10:6 says, "The righteousness which is out of faith speaks in this way, Do not say in your heart, Who will ascend into heaven? That is, to bring Christ down."

This is Paul's interpretation of Deuteronomy 30:12. Seemingly, 30:12 does not speak of bringing Christ down. However, if we consider this verse carefully, we will see that it does refer to Christ. We have pointed out that the "it" in verse 12 refers to the commandment in verse 11. What is the commandment of God? The commandment of God is the word. The Bible as a whole reveals that the word is Christ (John 1:1). Christ is the unique word in the universe; He is the real word. The speaking of any other word is a lie. In Paul's understanding, to bring it (the word) down is to bring Christ down. According to his view of the deeper denotation of Deuteronomy 30:12, the "it" in this verse denotes the word, the word is the word of God, and the word of God is Christ. Hence, to bring the word down is to bring Christ down.

In Romans 10:7 Paul continues, "Or, Who will descend into the abyss? That is, to bring Christ up from among the dead." Whereas Deuteronomy 30:13 speaks of the sea, Paul in this verse speaks of the abyss. The sea is actually the mouth of the abyss. Revelation 9 indicates that Antichrist will come out of the abyss, and Revelation 13 tells us that Antichrist will come out of the sea. Surely Antichrist will not come from two different places. His coming out of the sea will be his coming out of the abyss. The sea, therefore, is the mouth of the abyss. Paul's point in Romans 10:7 is that in His resurrection Christ came up from the abyss, came up from among the dead. The words "from among the dead" indicate that to go to the abyss is to die. After Christ died on the cross, He went to the abyss, to the region of death and of the satanic power of darkness. This means that He went to Hades, from which He came forth in His resurrection.

Romans 10:6 and 7 reveal that Paul's study of the holy Word was deep and that in his study he touched the deeper denotation of Deuteronomy 30:11-14. In his interpretation, these verses refer to the incarnated, crucified, and resurrected Christ.

In Romans 10:8 Paul says, "But what does it say? The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart: that is,

the word of the faith which we preach." The word that is in our heart and mouth is Christ as the breath, as the life-giving Spirit, for in resurrection Christ became the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b).

When we put together Deuteronomy 30:11-14 and Romans 10:6-8, we have a full picture concerning Christ. In this picture we see that Christ was incarnated, that He was crucified and buried, that He went to the abyss, that He arose from among the dead, and that in His resurrection He became the breath, the life-giving Spirit. Since Christ is now the breath, He, like the air, is everywhere. When we speak to unbelievers about Christ, we can tell them that Christ is in their mouth and in their heart.

We thank the Lord that, in His mercy, He has opened our eyes to understand Deuteronomy 30:11-14 in the way Paul did. Now we see that these verses show us the incarnated, crucified, and resurrected Christ who has become the life-giving Spirit. Today He is the very breath breathed out by the speaking God. I am happy to tell people that Christ is God incarnated to be a man named Jesus, that He died on the cross for our redemption, that He was buried and that He descended into the abyss, that He was resurrected from Hades, and that in resurrection He became the life-giving Spirit as the divine breath. This is the Christ who is now the word of God for us to receive as our life. Furthermore, as the Lord's quotation of Deuteronomy 8:3 in Matthew 4:4 indicates, Christ is also our food. He is not only our life but also our life supply.

When we put together these verses from Deuteronomy with Matthew 4:4 and Romans 10:6-8 and follow the Lord Jesus and Paul in their way of understanding Deuteronomy, we will see that every word in the book of Deuteronomy is Christ. Christ is the repeated speaking of God; He is God's respeaking. The whole Bible is a deuteronomy, and the entire Bible is in the book of Deuteronomy.

Let us now go on to consider the nine crucial points in this book.

I. MOSES AS THE SPOKESMAN OF GOD WAS LIKE AN AGED, LOVING FATHER SPEAKING TO HIS CHILDREN WITH MUCH LOVE AND CONCERN

The first crucial point in Deuteronomy is that Moses as the spokesman of God was like an aged, loving father speaking to his children with much love and concern. This book contains God's word more than any other book of the Bible—the words of God spoken through this one spokesman.

Some may think that there is more of God's word in Job than in Deuteronomy. This view, however, is not correct. The book of Job does contain God's word, but it also contains the word of Job and his three friends, who spoke according to human opinion, logic, philosophy, and psychology. Eventually, the young man Elihu spoke what was on God's heart. In the book of Job God's word is not as abundant as in the book of Deuteronomy.

Every word spoken by Moses in Deuteronomy was God's word. Moses might have expressed something of his own feeling, but even this became the word of God. His speaking in Deuteronomy was like Paul's speaking in 1 Corinthians 7. In that chapter Paul said, "I have no commandment of the Lord, but I give my opinion as having received mercy of the Lord to be faithful" (v. 25). Later, after expressing his opinion, he said, "I think that I also have the Spirit of God" (v. 40). Eventually, because Paul was a man constituted with God, his opinion became a part of God's word as the divine revelation in the New Testament. In his speaking he was one with God; therefore, what he spoke was God's speaking. The principle is the same with Moses' speaking in Deuteronomy. Moses spoke for God for forty years, from the age of eighty to the age of one hundred twenty. He was a person not only soaked and saturated with the thought of God but also constituted with the speaking God Himself. So the word that proceeded out of his mouth was the word of God spoken through this one spokesman.

II. THIS BOOK SPEAKS ABOUT THE LOVE OF GOD AND THE GOVERNMENTAL ADMINISTRATION OF GOD

The book of Deuteronomy speaks about the love of God and the governmental administration of God. Moses was exercised in love and experienced in God's governmental administration.

Although we cannot find the expression *governmental administration* in Deuteronomy, if we read this book thoroughly, we will see that it is a book of God's government, even of His governmental administration. Moses often spoke explicitly about love, but the matter of God's governmental administration is implied. If we get into the depth of this book, we will realize that God's dealing with His people here is a kind of governmental administration.

Because God is wise, He does not spoil His children. He is a perfecting Father who loves His children and who deals with them governmentally. Hebrews 12:6 says, "Whom the Lord loves He disciplines." What is God's purpose in disciplining us? He disciplines us for the purpose of perfecting us.

This is exactly what God was doing with the children of Israel, and also with Moses, in the wilderness. Because God loved them, He did not let them get by with their mistakes. Even Moses was disciplined by God for his mistake in Numbers 20:1-13. Moses became angry with the rebellious people, and instead of speaking to the rock, as God had charged him to do, he smote the rock a second time. This offended God, and as a result Moses lost his right to enter into the good land. God allowed Moses to view the land from the peak of Pisgah, but He did not permit him to go in. That was an instance of God's governmental administration, of God's governmental dealing.

God is a loving God and also a disciplining God. He loves and He also disciplines us, for He has His governmental administration. Because Moses knew God's governmental administration and was experienced in it, he was qualified to do the respeaking recorded in Deuteronomy.

III. THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL AS THE AUDIENCE WERE EXPERIENCED IN GOD'S DEALING WITH THEM

The children of Israel as the audience were also experienced in God's dealing with them. Both the spokesman and the audience were experienced; hence, this book begins with a review of the past.

Those who heard Moses' respeaking in Deuteronomy were the second generation, the new generation. No doubt they had heard from their fathers about God's dealing with the people in the previous forty years. Through what they heard, they learned very much. As a result, they became the right audience to receive Moses' speaking. Moses, who was experienced, was the right speaker, and those of the new generation, who also were experienced, were the right audience to hear and understand what Moses spoke to them.

IV. THIS BOOK IS A SPEAKING SUPPLEMENTARY TO THE BOOK OF NUMBERS, CONCERNING WHAT KIND OF MAN ONE SHOULD BE TO INHERIT THE PROMISED LAND AS THE GOOD LAND

This book is a speaking supplementary to the book of Numbers, concerning what kind of man one should be to inherit the promised land as the good land. He should be one who loves God, fears God, subjects himself to God's ruling, minds the bowels of God, and lives in the presence of God. The principle of the New Testament is the same: God's salvation is unconditional, whereas the enjoyment of the riches in Christ is conditional, depending on man's loving Christ solely. Hence, the teaching in Deuteronomy is exactly the same as that in the New Testament. The expressions used in the teaching are different, but the essence of the teaching is the same.

When we hear about the kind of persons we must be to inherit the good land, we may feel that we cannot make it. If this is our feeling, we need to be reminded that the book of Deuteronomy is a book full of the word which is Christ. As the word, Christ is the One who sustains us and makes us those who love God, fear God, subject ourselves to God's

ruling, mind the tender feelings of God, and live in God's presence. As long as we have a morning revival through the holy Word and have daily victory also through the Word, we will become those who are qualified to inherit the good land.

V. THIS BOOK SPEAKS OF GOD AS A GOD OF LOVE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

This book speaks of God as a God of love and righteousness. This is proved by God's past leading and His future dealing with the children of Israel in His love and government. The love of God administrates among His beloved according to their faithfulness. The principle is the same with us today.

As a God of love, He is all-embracing, but as a God of righteousness, He is very strict and narrow. In His love He is broad; in His righteousness He is narrow. In His righteousness, He often says "No" when we want to do a certain thing.

Some saints, even in the Lord's recovery, are too free and do not fear God. Once we have touched God's dealing hand, we will fear Him. He deals with us righteously that we may be perfected to be righteous also. All those who intend to enter into the good land and to inherit, possess, and enjoy the good land must learn how to be righteous in every way in their daily living.

VI. IT IS REQUIRED THAT GOD'S PEOPLE RESPOND TO GOD WITH THEIR LOVE IN A WAY THAT FITS IN WITH GOD'S GOVERNMENTAL ADMINISTRATION

Because of the foregoing, it is required that God's people respond to God with their love in a way that fits in with God's governmental administration. The inheritors needed to match the Giver of the inheritance, so that He could be with them both in their living and in their fighting. This is not a requirement of the law but a condition requiring God's people to match what God is. God is sanctified, and we also must be sanctified. In order to match the Giver of

the inheritance, we need to be holy as He is holy. If we do not match God, He may be with us in our living, but He will not be with us in our fighting.

VII. WITH A REVIEW OF THE PAST, THIS BOOK POINTS OUT GOD'S LEADING AND MAN'S FAILURE

With a review of the past, on the one hand, this book points out God's leading that man may know the heart and the hand of God, so that man may trust in God and fear God. God's heart is loving and His hand is righteous. On the other hand, this book points out man's failure that man may know himself, so that man may condemn himself, humble himself, and have no more trust in himself. The intention of this book is not to point out man's history but to point out man's past errors that man may be adjusted.

VIII. WITH A VIEW OF THE FUTURE, THIS BOOK EXPECTS THAT MAN MAY KNOW THE LOVE AND GOVERNMENT OF GOD AND ALSO KNOW HIS REAL CONDITION

With a view of the future, this book expects that, on the one hand, man may know the love and government of God and that, on the other hand, man may know his real condition, so that he will not trust himself. Hence, the intention of the book of Deuteronomy is that we would know God and also know ourselves. We need to know God. In particular, we need to know that God is loving and that He is righteous in dealing with us. We also need to know that we ourselves are a failure. If we know this, we will no longer trust ourselves but put our trust in God, the One who is faithful.

IX. ULTIMATELY THIS BOOK SHOWS US THAT THE LOVE OF GOD CONSUMMATELY WORKS FOR HIS PEOPLE THAT THEY MAY ENJOY HIS FULL BLESSING ACCORDING TO HIS WILL AND FOREKNOWLEDGE

Ultimately this book shows us that the love of God consummately works for His people that they may enjoy

His full blessing according to His will and foreknowledge. In spite of our failure in loving God and fearing Him and in spite of our unfaithfulness, God will be successful. No matter what the situation of His people may be, God will be faithful to the end, and eventually He will accomplish His intention that we enjoy His full blessing.

In Deuteronomy Moses is strong in rebuking the people. However, at the end of this book, we have the song of Moses and his full blessing to every tribe. Eventually, God's chosen and redeemed people entered into the holy land, possessed it, lived in it, and enjoyed it. That was God's success, and the boast and glory belong to no one other than Him.

What is revealed in Deuteronomy is what is revealed in the Bible as a whole. The entire Bible shows us that God is loving, righteous, and faithful. The Bible also exposes how unfaithful we are; it shows us how defeated we have been in the past and how much failure we will have in the future. But in spite of all this unfaithfulness, defeat, and failure, God will still enable His chosen people to enter into the rich Christ to possess Him, enjoy Him, experience Him, and even to live Him.

LIFE-STUDY OF DEUTERONOMY

MESSAGE THREE

A REVIEW OF THE PAST

(1)

Scripture Reading: Deut. 1:2-46

The nine crucial points in the book of Deuteronomy covered in the foregoing message reveal three persons: God, man, and Christ as the word. In these nine points God is manifested, man is exposed, and Christ is presented.

According to this book, with God there are love, righteousness, faithfulness, and blessing. God has a heart, hands, a mouth, and eyes. God's heart is loving, His hands are righteous, and His mouth is faithful. Whatever proceeds out of the mouth of God will be fulfilled. God's eyes are either for blessing or for cursing. This is the God revealed not only in Deuteronomy but throughout the entire Bible.

Concerning man, Deuteronomy reveals that man is nothing. We are nothing, we have nothing, and we can do nothing. How, then, could the loving, righteous, faithful, and blessing God expect that we could do something for Him? God does not have such an expectation. As the wise God, He knows that we love ourselves and that we are righteous in our own careless way and for our own benefit. If we think something is for us, we may practice it. This is our kind of righteousness. Furthermore, if we are faithful, we are faithful only in our own interests. Finally, instead of blessing others or giving to others, we like to receive. Therefore, it would be ridiculous to think that this kind of person can carry out God's eternal purpose or fulfill His economy.

The crucial points of the book of Deuteronomy are also the crucial points of Paul's epistles. Paul's writings also manifest God as the One who is loving, righteous, and faithful

and as the God of blessing. Moreover, Paul's writings reveal that in ourselves we are nothing.

If Deuteronomy only revealed God as the loving, righteous, faithful, and blessing One and us as those who are nothing, have nothing, and can do nothing, our situation would be hopeless. Deuteronomy, however, also reveals Christ as the word. We cannot do anything for God, but we can receive the word as our life and life supply.

The loving, righteous, faithful, and blessing God does not want us to do something for Him. He knows that we are nothing, that we have nothing, and that we can do nothing. His economy, His way, is not to allow us to do something by ourselves but to have us do everything with Christ, by Christ, through Christ, and in Christ. Christ is our life and life supply; therefore, daily we need to feed on Him. Christ is also our faithfulness and the body, the substance, of all our necessities (Col. 2:17). For our supply, Christ is the word, and continually we need to contact Him in the Word and by the Word.

Do you know what the Bible is? The Bible is not merely a book of history, stories, and teachings. The Bible is the embodiment of Christ. Whatever Christ is and has and whatever Christ has done, is doing, will do, and can do are embodied in the Bible. To read the Bible, therefore, is to participate in Christ. Since the Bible is God's breath, God's exhaling, the best way to study the Bible is to breathe it, to inhale it. Let us learn to inhale the breath of the Triune God in the holy Word!

We should not think that the word is distant, and we should not ask who will ascend to heaven to bring the word down or who will go across the sea to bring the word to us (Deut. 30:11-13; Rom. 10:6-7). The word is very near—it is in our mouth and in our heart (Deut. 30:14; Rom. 10:8).

Christ as the word has already come down in His incarnation, and He has already come out of the abyss, out of Hades, in His resurrection. In resurrection He has become the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45) as the breath for us to breathe. This means that He is not only the word but also

the Spirit. When we receive His word, we receive the Spirit, for the words He speaks to us are spirit and life (John 6:63).

Learn to inhale the breath of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. If we breathe the processed Triune God, the grace of Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Spirit will be with us (2 Cor. 13:14).

When we take the word by inhaling the Bible, we will be able to do in Christ what we cannot do in ourselves. Consider what Paul says in the book of Philippians, which is a deuteronomy, a respeaking, of Moses' words. In Philippians 4:13 Paul could declare, "I can do all things in Him who empowers me." These "things" are itemized in verse 8, where Paul says, "Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is righteous, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is well-spoken of, if there is any virtue and if any praise, take account of these things." Before Paul was in Christ, he could not do any of these things. But in Christ, the One who empowered him, he could do them all. This can also be our experience today. If we would have this experience, we need to enjoy the Divine Trinity by inhaling the Bible, the embodiment of Christ.

Now that we have seen that the crucial points in Deuteronomy manifest God, expose man, and present Christ, let us go on to consider the matter of the review of the past.

I. THE BENEFIT OF REVIEWING THE PAST

Reviewing the past has a threefold benefit.

A. Bringing Us New Light and New Revelation

Reviewing the past brings us new light and new revelation. If we would have this light and revelation, we need to be in the presence of the Lord as we are reviewing our past. Otherwise, we will simply have a kind of retrospection, and this will not be helpful. If we view our past in the presence of the Lord, He may give us new light and new revelation according to what we were in the past.

B. Helping Us to Know God's Heart and God's Hand

Reviewing the past also helps us to know God's heart and God's hand. God's heart is loving and His hand is righteous. According to His heart, God is loving; according to His hand, He is righteous.

C. Helping Us to Know Ourselves, to Condemn the Flesh, and to Learn to Reject the Self and the Flesh

Reviewing the past helps us to know ourselves, to condemn the flesh, and to learn to reject the self and the flesh. While we were doing certain things or passing through certain things in the past, it was difficult for us to know ourselves. But afterwards when we look back, we can receive light to know ourselves and our flesh so that we may reject the self and the flesh.

II. THE GOVERNING THOUGHT OF REVIEWING THE PAST

Concerning reviewing the past, there is a governing thought. When we review our past, we must carry out the review according to this governing thought.

A. Showing God's Loving Heart and Righteous Governmental Dealing

Our review of the past must be governed by the thought that God's heart is loving and that His governmental dealing is righteous.

B. God's Blessing Requiring Man's Obedience and Faithfulness

God's blessing requires man's obedience and faithfulness. Obedience and faithfulness are the two conditions that must be fulfilled if we are to be qualified to receive God's blessing. Disobedience and unfaithfulness are obstacles to God's blessing. If we want God's blessing in our private life, daily life,

family life, and church life, we must learn to be obedient and faithful.

C. Man's Heart Turning Away from God Resulting in Serious Tragedy

The turning away of man's heart from God results in serious tragedy. To turn away from God and from His word, which is Christ, is to lose all the blessings and to suffer the curse.

These three points regarding God's loving heart and righteous governmental dealing, man's obedience and faithfulness, and the tragic result of man's turning his heart away from God make up the governing thought of reviewing the past. This thought, which is found throughout the Bible and which is evident in the New Testament, should govern us whenever we intend to have a review of our condition.

III. THE JOURNEY FROM THE MOUNT OF GOD TO THE ENTRY OF THE HOLY LAND

In Deuteronomy the review of the past covers the journey from the mount of God to the entry of the holy land (1:2, 19). The mount of God, called Mount Horeb, is one of the many peaks of the mountain range of Sinai. Mount Horeb was the place where Moses stayed with God and received God's speaking. In our experience today, Mount Horeb is the place where God speaks. Through God's speaking at Mount Horeb, we are equipped with the vision concerning Christ and the church, we are built up as the priesthood, and we are formed into an army.

The journey of the children of Israel began from the mount of God. Beginning from Mount Horeb, they journeyed until they reached Kadesh-barnea, the entry of the good land.

A. Having Been Equipped with the Knowledge of the Law

At Mount Horeb God equipped, or trained, the people with the knowledge of the law (Exo. 20—23). We may say that this equipping was a kind of orientation given to them by God.

B. Having Been Equipped with the Revelation of the Tabernacle and the Ark

The children of Israel were also equipped with the revelation, the vision, of the tabernacle and the ark (Exo. 25—27). The ark is a type of Christ, and the tabernacle is a type of the church. If we would journey with God and fight for Him today, we must be equipped with the revelation concerning Christ and the church.

C. Having Participated in the Building Up of God's Dwelling Place on the Earth

After seeing the revelation concerning the tabernacle and the ark, the children of Israel participated in the building up of the tabernacle as God's dwelling place on earth (Exo. 36—38). The situation is the same with us today. First we see the revelation concerning Christ and the church and then we participate in the present building up of God's dwelling place on earth.

D. Having Been Built Up as a Priesthood to Serve God

In addition to the building up of the tabernacle, there was the building up of the priesthood for the service of God (Exo. 28—30). The proper service of God can be rendered to Him only by the priesthood. From this we see that to serve God is not ordinary but extraordinary. This service is rendered by a group of trained people who serve God as priests in His dwelling place.

E. Having Been Formed into an Army to Journey and Fight with God

The children of Israel were also formed, or constituted, into an army to journey with God and to fight with God (Num. 1—9). Their journey was a fighting journey, for on their journey they had to fight again and again.

Before God's people could fight for Him, they had to be built up as His dwelling place, built up as a serving unit, and formed into a priestly army. The children of Israel,

therefore, had a threefold status: they were the dwelling place, the priesthood, and the army.

F. Under the Leading of God in the Cloud

The children of Israel journeyed under the leading of God in the cloud (Num. 10:11-28, 33-36). Although they were journeying on earth, they were under the heavenly leading. They were led not by something on earth but by the very God who is in heaven. He took the lead in their journey.

G. From the Mount of Jehovah

The children of Israel began their journey from the mount of Jehovah (Num. 10:33; Exo. 3:1; 24:13, 16). Today, our mount of God is the place where we are equipped, built up, and formed into an army. It is from this place that we begin our journey.

Before the children of Israel began their journey from the mount of God to the entry of the holy land, they were equipped, built up, and formed into an army. This indicates that if we have not also been equipped, built up, and formed into a priestly army, we cannot journey with God. There are millions of Christians today who have not received the proper equipping, that is, who have not been trained and perfected. Furthermore, these Christians have not been built up as the dwelling place and as the priesthood and have not been formed into an army to fight for God. As a result, they cannot journey with God. In order to journey with God under His heavenly leading, we must first be equipped, built up, and formed into an army.

H. To Kadesh-barnea—the Entry to the Holy Land

The people journeyed to Kadesh-barnea, the place which is considered the entry to the holy land (Num. 12:16; 13:3, 26).

I. A Distance of Eleven Days' Journey

The distance from the mount of God to Kadesh-barnea was a distance of eleven days' journey (Deut. 1:2).

J. Almost Forty Years Wasted in the Wandering in the Wilderness

The children of Israel offended God by their unbelief. Because of their unbelief, they wasted almost forty years in the wandering in the wilderness (1:3).

IV. THE SLAYING OF SIHON, THE KING OF THE AMORITES, AND OG, THE KING OF BASHAN

After the forty years in the wilderness, the people came to the plain east of Jordan, and there they slew the two kings who were guarding the entrance into the good land—Sihon, the king of the Amorites, and Og, the king of Bashan (1:4).

A. Ending the Wandering of the Children of Israel in the Wilderness

The slaying of these two kings was the end of the wandering of the children of Israel in the wilderness. If we want our wandering to end, we need to slay today's Sihon and Og.

B. Opening the Gate to Enter into the Promised Land

The slaying of these two kings also opened the gate into the promised land.

V. GOD'S CHARGE TO THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL TO LEAVE THE MOUNT OF GOD

God charged the children of Israel to leave the mount of God that they might enter the good land which He promised to their fathers (1:5-8). They had been trained by God and formed into a priestly army and they had a definite goal for the journey—the good land promised to their fathers.

VI. THE APPOINTING OF OFFICERS

Deuteronomy 1:9-18 describes the appointing of officers.

A. Indicating That It Was Not Easy to Keep the Condition of the Children of Israel in a Good Order

The appointing of officers indicates that it was not easy

to keep the condition of the children of Israel in a good order. The people were more than two million in number, and it was not possible for Moses alone to keep them in order.

B. To Keep a Good Order Being Needed for God's Dwelling and Service and for Fighting the Enemies

The keeping of a good order was needed for God's dwelling and service and for fighting the enemies. The dwelling place, the priesthood, and the army all required a good order.

C. Needing the Deputy Authority and the Submission

Maintaining the order among the children of Israel needed both the deputy authority and the submission. The deputy authority represented God as the authority. The people were required to submit to this deputy authority.

VII. THE FAILURE AT KADESH-BARNEA

The children of Israel had a great failure at Kadesh-barnea (Deut. 1:19-46; 2:14-15). This failure caused "all the generation of the men of war" to be "consumed from the midst of the camp" (2:14).

A. Because of Their Unbelief toward God and toward His Promise

The failure of the children of Israel at Kadesh-barnea was due to their unbelief toward God and toward His promise (1:32, 35). God is faithful, and His word, which is His promise, cannot fail. But the people believed neither in God nor in His promise. Their unbelief offended God.

B. In Spite of God's Carrying Them

In 1:31 Moses said, "In the wilderness, where you have seen that Jehovah your God carried you, as a man carries his son, in all the way that you went until you came to this place." God had carried the people through the terrible wilderness from the mount of God to Kadesh-barnea. But in

spite of God's carrying them, the children of Israel did not believe in Him or in His promise.

C. All the Unbelieving Ones Being Consumed in the Wilderness in the Wandering of Thirty-eight Years

All the unbelieving ones were consumed in the wilderness in the wandering of thirty-eight years (2:14-15). This shows us that it is a terrible thing not to believe in God. We need to be careful concerning unbelief.

D. Only Caleb and Joshua Being Exceptions

All the men of war perished with the exception of only Caleb and Joshua (1:36-38).

E. Unbelief Causing Disobedience to God

In 1:41-45 we see that unbelief caused disobedience to God. The reason we do not obey God is that we do not believe in Him. Unbelief is the cause of our disobedience to God.

The New Testament ministry is a ministry of faith, and the New Testament word is a word of faith. Thus we begin our Christian life and church life by faith. Without faith we cannot live either the Christian life or the church life. Unbelief damages us and leads to tragedy.

With respect to believing in God we should forget our past, but with respect to knowing God and ourselves we should remember our past. A proper review of our past will help us to no longer trust ourselves but to put our trust absolutely in God. Through reviewing the past we may learn the lesson of not having any trust in ourselves. We are nothing more than an unbelieving self, and all we have is flesh. Therefore, we must learn to reject the self and the flesh and put our trust altogether in God, the One who is faithful and whose words can never fail.

LIFE-STUDY OF DEUTERONOMY

MESSAGE FOUR

A REVIEW OF THE PAST

(2)

Scripture Reading: Deut. 4:1-40

From Genesis to Revelation, the entire Bible does three things: it manifests God, exposes man, and unveils Christ. Before considering further the matter of a review of the past, I would like to give an additional word on these three functions of the Bible.

First, the Bible shows us what kind of God we have. In the Bible God is manifested as the loving, righteous, and faithful God. Further, in the Bible we see that God is a God who blesses. God's heart is loving, His hand is righteous, His mouth is faithful, and His eyes are mainly for blessing. This is our God.

Second, the Bible exposes man. The Bible is the only book which shows us man's real condition. When we come to the Bible, we see ourselves. The Bible exposes us and shows us that we are nothing, that we have nothing, and that we can do nothing. In other words, we are a zero. Actually, this is what God wants, for He does not want us to be anything in ourselves. This is the reason Paul tells us that he has been crucified with Christ (Gal. 2:20). In His economy, in His plan and divine arrangement, God wants us to be crucified. This means that He wants us to be nullified, to become a zero.

Third, the Bible unveils Christ. Christ is hidden, mysterious, and abstract; no one can know Him. But the Bible unveils Him to us.

We have pointed out that the entire Bible is implied in the book of Deuteronomy. We may also say that Deuteronomy is an extract of the Bible. The Bible as a whole manifests

God, exposes man, and unveils Christ, and the book of Deuteronomy, as an extract of the Bible, also manifests God, exposes man, and unveils Christ.

Let us now go on to consider some further matters related to a review of the past.

VIII. THE WANDERING FROM KADESH-BARNEA TO THE CROSSING OVER OF THE BROOK ZERED

A. The Wandering of Thirty-eight Years

Deuteronomy 2:1-23 speaks of the wandering from Kadesh-barnea to the crossing over of the brook Zered. Verse 14a says, "The time that we spent in going from Kadesh-barnea until we crossed over the brook Zered was thirty-eight years." Although Kadesh-barnea was the entry into the good land, God commanded the children of Israel to leave that place and to wander in the wilderness for thirty-eight years.

B. To Consume Man's Flesh and Unbelief and to Manifest God's Mercy and Blessing

The purpose of these years of wandering was to consume man's flesh and unbelief and to manifest God's mercy and blessing (v. 7). In ourselves we are nothing but flesh and unbelief, which causes us to depart from God. Our flesh and unbelief need to be consumed. It is easy to speak about this, but it takes many years to experience it. For the children of Israel, this took thirty-eight years. On the one hand, these were wasted years; on the other hand, these years were useful in consuming their flesh and unbelief.

In these years God's mercy and blessing were manifested. During the thirty-eight years of wandering in the wilderness, God was very exercised concerning His people. Even though they were unbelieving, He extended His love to them. How did God do this? He did it by showing mercy to them and by blessing them. In the years of wandering, God had mercy on His people and blessed them, even though they were fleshly and full of unbelief.

Because we are so far away from God and because our situation is so poor, God's grace cannot reach us unless He

first has mercy upon us. God's mercy extends farther than His grace. We may say that mercy is God's grace reaching farther than grace itself can reach. In other words, when God's grace extends so far that it reaches us where we are, it becomes mercy. Since His mercy has reached us and since we are now under His mercy, God can bless us. If we realize how pitiful our situation is and how great is the distance between us and God, we will pray like this: "Lord, we need Your mercy because our situation is far away from Your grace. Thank You, Lord, that Your mercy can reach us where we are." As those who are now under God's mercy, we should also pray for God's blessing, saying, "Lord, we do not trust in what we can do. Neither do we trust in our labor. Our trust, Lord, is in Your blessing."

C. To Consume All the Unbelieving Ones

During the thirty-eight years of wandering, all the unbelieving ones were consumed. Concerning this, God was patient. Instead of consuming the unbelieving ones all at once, He took thirty-eight years to consume them.

D. To Produce a New Generation for the Fulfilling of God's Purpose

Finally, these thirty-eight years were used by God to produce a new generation for the fulfilling of God's purpose. On the one hand, Moses might have been happy with this new generation; on the other hand, he might have been saddened by the loss of the first generation. God had changed the generation by the way of consuming the old generation. This is a serious matter.

Because Moses had witnessed the consuming of the first generation, he might have sighed deeply as he spoke the words recorded in chapter two. With the exception of Caleb and Joshua, all the fathers had died, and only the sons remained.

IX. THE DEFEATING OF KING SIHON AND KING OG AND THE TAKING POSSESSION OF THEIR LANDS EAST OF THE JORDAN

In 2:24—3:22 Moses spoke about the defeating of King

Sihon and King Og and the taking possession of their lands east of the Jordan. Sihon was the king of Heshbon, and Og was the king of Bashan. It was not a small matter for the children of Israel to defeat these kings and to take possession of their lands. This must have been a joy to Moses.

A. The Defeating of the Two Gate Guards of the Land of Canaan

To defeat King Sihon and King Og was to defeat the two gate guards of the land of Canaan.

B. The Beginning of Taking Possession of the Good Land

After the children of Israel defeated Sihon and Og, they took possession of their lands, which were east of the Jordan. Moses said, "At that time we took the land from the hand of the two kings of the Amorites who were across the Jordan, from the valley of the Arnon to Mount Hermon" (3:8). This was the beginning of the taking possession of the good land.

C. The Land Taken Being Given to the Tribes of Reuben and Gad and the Half-tribe of Manasseh

The land taken from Sihon and Og was given to the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh as the firstfruit of the enjoyment of the God-promised good land (3:12-20).

D. As a Security to the Victory and Possession of the Remainder of the God-promised Good Land

In 3:21 and 22 Moses said, "I commanded Joshua at that time, saying, Yours are the eyes that have seen all that Jehovah your God has done to these two kings; so will Jehovah your God do to all the kingdoms into which you are about to cross over. Do not fear them, for it is Jehovah your God who is fighting for you." This word indicates that the defeating of Sihon and Og and the taking possession of their

lands were a security to the victory and possession of the remainder of the God-promised good land.

X. MOSES BEING REFUSED IN THE MATTER OF ENTERING INTO THE GOD-PROMISED GOOD LAND, AND JOSHUA BEING ASSIGNED TO BRING THE PEOPLE TO POSSESS THE LAND AS THEIR INHERITANCE

In 3:23-29 we see that Moses was refused in the matter of entering into the God-promised good land and that Joshua was assigned to bring the people to possess the land as their inheritance.

A. Showing God's Righteous Governmental Administration

Moses being refused by God in this matter showed God's righteous governmental administration. In Numbers 20 Moses had made a serious mistake, a mistake which God could not tolerate because it touched His administration. God's governmental administration is righteous, and even though He loved Moses, He could not for this reason fail to exercise His administration. Moses served God faithfully for forty years, but because his mistake involved God's governmental administration, he lost the right to enter into the good land.

B. Causing the Children of Israel to Have More Fear of God's Righteous Dealing

The way God dealt with Moses in not allowing him to enter into the good land caused the children of Israel to have more fear of God's righteous dealing. To be sure, God is a loving God, but His love is a perfecting love, not a spoiling love. God's dealing with Moses helped to perfect the children of Israel. They should have learned from this how fearful the righteous God is in His governmental dealings. The punishment Moses suffered was a perfecting to the children of Israel.

XI. MOSES' HEARTY ADVICE TO THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL

In Deuteronomy 4:1-40 we have Moses' hearty advice to the children of Israel. As one who was experienced and who

had been disciplined by God, he was qualified to give this advice.

A. Like an Aged, Loving Father to His Beloved Children

Moses had experienced the seriousness of God's dealing hand. So in giving his hearty advice, he was like an aged, loving father speaking to his beloved children.

B. Charging the Children of Israel to Keep God's Statutes and Judgments, Especially Not to Make Idols and Worship Them

Moses charged the children of Israel to keep God's statutes and judgments, especially not to make idols and worship them (vv. 1, 16-19, 23-25, 39).

There is a difference between statutes and judgments. The Old Testament often speaks of God's commandments (laws), statutes, and ordinances. The Ten Commandments are the basic law. Because these commandments are not complete, they are supplemented by the statutes. For this reason, after the commandments in Exodus 20, there is in Exodus 21—23 a record of many statutes, which are the details of the Ten Commandments and which are supplementary to these commandments. These statutes, however, are without judgments. Once a judgment is added to a statute, the statute becomes an ordinance. For instance, one of the Ten Commandments concerns the keeping of the Sabbath (Exo. 20:8-11). The statutes which supplement this commandment give some details as to what can be done on the Sabbath. One statute may speak of travel and another of cooking (Exo. 35:3). Such statutes do not become ordinances unless judgments are added to them. Later we are told that the one who does not keep the Sabbath should be put to death (Exo. 31:14-15). This is not a commandment or a statute but an ordinance with a judgment. Therefore, the commandments are the basic law, the details of the law are the statutes, and the statutes with judgments are ordinances. In Deuteronomy 4 Moses charged the people to keep God's statutes and judgments.

Moses especially charged the children of Israel not to make

idols and worship them. God's law concerning idol worship is a commandment, the details of this commandment are statutes, and the addition of judgments causes the statutes to become ordinances.

C. Warning Them with God's Judgment

"I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that surely you will soon perish from off the land into which you are crossing over the Jordan to possess it; you will not extend your days upon it, but you will be utterly destroyed. And Jehovah will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations to which Jehovah will drive you" (Deut. 4:26-27). Here we see that Moses warned the children of Israel with God's judgment.

D. Assuring Them with God's Mercy and Blessing

Moses not only warned the people with God's judgment but assured them with God's mercy and blessing (vv. 30-31, 40).

XII. MOSES SETTING APART THREE CITIES OF REFUGE EAST OF JORDAN

Finally, in 4:41-43 Moses set apart three cities of refuge east of Jordan. After the foregoing review of the past, Moses took thought concerning the manslayer who slew his neighbor without intent.

A. The Manslayer Losing the Right to Live in the Good Land

A manslayer could lose the right to live in the good land. Therefore, refuge cities were needed for those who slew others without intent.

B. By the Cities of Refuge the Manslayer Still Having a Way to Live in the Land

"Then Moses set apart three cities across the Jordan toward the rising of the sun, that the manslayer might flee there, who slays his neighbor without intent and did not hate him formerly, and in fleeing to one of these cities might

live" (vv. 41-42). This indicates that by fleeing to one of the cities of refuge, the manslayer still had a way to live in the land.

LIFE-STUDY OF DEUTERONOMY

MESSAGE FIVE

DEUTERONOMY—A BOOK CONCERNING CHRIST

Scripture Reading: Deut. 8:1-10; Matt. 4:4; John 1:1, 14; Gal. 2:20; 1 Cor. 6:17b; 15:10; 2 Cor. 13:14

In the foregoing messages we have covered three matters: an introductory word to the life-study of Deuteronomy, the crucial points in Deuteronomy, and the review of the past. Before we turn in the next message to the lengthy section on the rehearsal of the law (4:44—26:19), I would like to give a word regarding the Christ unveiled in Deuteronomy.

THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY UNVEILING CHRIST MAINLY IN TWO ASPECTS

The book of Deuteronomy unveils Christ mainly in two aspects. First, this book shows us Christ as the goal, the aim, prepared for us by God (8:7-10). As this goal, Christ is the all-inclusive good land. The good land, the land of Canaan, is a type of the all-inclusive Christ, the Christ who is everything to us.

The good land provided whatever the children of Israel needed: water, wheat, barley, vines, fig trees, pomegranates, olive trees, animals, milk, honey, stones, iron, copper. All these items, most of which are mentioned in 8:7-10, are types of Christ. Christ is the water flowing forth in valleys and mountains. He is the wheat, which signifies the incarnated and crucified Christ, and the barley, which signifies the resurrected Christ. The vine typifies Christ as the sacrificing One who cheers God and man; the fig tree, the sweetness and satisfaction of Christ as our life supply; the pomegranate, the abundance and beauty of the life of Christ; the olive tree, Christ as the man filled with the Spirit and anointed with the Spirit as the oil of exultant joy; the animal life, Christ with His redeeming life; milk and honey, Christ in His

richness and sweetness; stones, iron, and copper, Christ as the materials for building and fighting. This all-inclusive Christ, the Christ typified by the good land, is our goal.

Second, the book of Deuteronomy unveils Christ as the life with the strength and ability to reach the God-appointed goal. Therefore, Christ is both our goal and the way, the life, the strength, and the ability for us to reach the goal.

GOD MANIFESTED, MAN EXPOSED, AND CHRIST UNVEILED

In the book of Deuteronomy, as in the Bible as a whole, God is manifested, man is exposed, and Christ is unveiled. It is rather easy to realize that the Bible manifests God to us, showing us that God is loving, righteous, and faithful and that He is a blessing God. Since the Bible fully exposes us, when we come to the Bible, it is also easy for us to see what we are and where we are. However, it is not easy for us to realize that the Bible unveils Christ. Many readers of the Bible can see that it manifests God and exposes man but do not see that it unveils Christ. Many Christians, therefore, can apply the manifestation of God and the exposure of man in the Bible, but few can apply the unveiling of Christ in the Word.

GOD'S PLAN IN HIS ECONOMY

At this point, we need to consider God's economy and what God plans to do in His economy.

To Have Himself Expressed through Man

In His eternal economy God has planned to have Himself expressed, manifested, through man. In order to have such an expression, He created man in His own image. For God to create man in His image means that He created man according to His attributes, especially according to His attributes of love, light, holiness, and righteousness. Because human beings were created according to God's attributes, even though we have become fallen and ruined by sin, we may still have the tendency to love others, to be in the light, to do what is good, to be righteous, and to be excelling.

To Redeem Fallen Man

Since man became fallen, God in His economy also planned to redeem man and bring man back to Himself. This redemption has already been accomplished in Christ.

To Annul Man

In His economy God also intends to annul man, to bring man to nothing through death. What is God's way to do this? God's way to annul us is to crucify us in Christ and with Christ (Rom. 6:6).

To Have Man Fulfill His Requirements by Being One with Christ

Finally, in His economy God has planned that man should do everything God requires of him. However, God does not want man to do all this by himself; He wants man to do this by Christ, in Christ, with Christ, through Christ, and by being one with Christ. This means that we need to have a spiritual union, an organic union, with Christ. In order that we may enter into such a union with Christ, God wants us not only to believe in Christ but to believe into Christ (John 3:15, 16, 18). To believe into Christ is to have an organic union with Christ, becoming one spirit with Him (1 Cor. 6:17b). In this union we are joined to Christ, we are one with Him, and we are in Him. Now as those who are one with Him and in Him, we need to do all that God requires by Christ and through Christ. No longer should we live by ourselves and do things by ourselves, but we should live by Christ and do everything by Christ.

Because Paul had a thorough realization of this, he could declare, "I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." Here Paul was saying, "I have died in Christ through His death, but now He lives in me through His resurrection. His living in me is entirely by His being the life-giving Spirit." For Paul this was a reality, but for many Christians it is not a reality. We all need to have the reality of Galatians 2:20, realizing that God does not want us to live for Him by ourselves but to live for Him

by Christ, in Christ, with Christ, through Christ, and by being one with Christ.

TAKING CHRIST BY INHALING HIM

The book of Deuteronomy surely manifests God and exposes us. This book manifests God as a God who is loving in His heart, righteous in His hand, and faithful in His mouth. Furthermore, this book manifests God as the One who blesses us through His eyes. This is the God manifested in Deuteronomy. As we read this book today, we need to realize that it concerns not only the people of Israel but also concerns us. This book exposes us, for it is a photograph of the kind of person we are. The more we are exposed, the more we will realize that we are a hopeless case, that we are nothing and can do nothing, and that it is impossible to fulfill the requirements of the holy, righteous, and faithful God.

After we have been exposed in this way, what should we do? Where can we go for help? Our help is in Christ as the word. In Deuteronomy expressions such as *law*, *commandments*, *statutes*, *ordinances*, and *judgments* are synonyms of Christ. Out of God's mouth have proceeded the law, the commandments, the statutes, the ordinances, and the judgments, and all of these are Christ. Christ is our law and our commandments; He is our statutes, our ordinances, and our judgments. We should simply take Him, keep Him, and hold fast to Him. If we do this, we will enjoy Him.

Where is the Christ whom we should take, keep, hold fast, and enjoy? He is in the Bible, for He is God's unique word. The law, the commandments, the statutes, the ordinances, the judgments—all these are God's word. This is proved by Psalm 119, which clearly indicates that these expressions are different terms for God's word. They have all been spoken by God and thus are things which have proceeded out of God's mouth (Deut. 8:3). Now we need to see that the words which proceed out of the mouth of God are Christ. Christ is the totality, the aggregate, of God's word. This is the reason that He is even called the Word (John 1:1, 14). In the beginning was the Word, the Word was God, the Word was incarnated, and this incarnated Word is Jesus Christ.

God's word has been written down in the Bible. Do you know what the Bible is? The Bible is the embodiment of Christ. Christ is every word, phrase, clause, and sentence. "All Scripture is God-breathed" (2 Tim. 3:16a). Therefore, we may say that the Bible is something exhaled by God. Now we need to inhale what God has exhaled. When we inhale the word of God and it enters into our being, this inhaled word becomes the Spirit. When we exhale what we have inhaled of the Bible by speaking it to others, it is the word. When others inhale this word, it becomes the Spirit to them. It is by the Christ as the word which we inhale that we can fulfill God's requirements.

NOT I, BUT THE GRACE OF GOD

In Galatians 2:20 Paul says, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ"; in 1 Corinthians 15:10 he says, "Not I, but the grace of God." In the first part of this verse Paul tells us, "By the grace of God I am what I am." This grace is the resurrected Christ becoming the life-giving Spirit to bring the processed Triune God in resurrection into us to be our life and life supply that we may live in resurrection. Thus, grace is the Triune God becoming life and everything to us.

In 2 Corinthians 13:14 grace is related to love and fellowship. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." The love, grace, and fellowship here correspond to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit in Matthew 28:19. On the one hand, we baptize people into the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, we may also say that we are baptizing people into the love, the grace, and the fellowship. With the Father we have love; with the Son, love and grace; and with the Holy Spirit, love, grace, and fellowship. This means that to have the fellowship of the Holy Spirit is to have the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ with the love of God. This is the Triune God by whom we fulfill God's requirements for the carrying out of His economy.

LIVING, ACTING, BEHAVING, AND WORKING IN CHRIST AND BY CHRIST

The crucial matter that we need to realize is that God

wants us to live, act, behave, work, and have our being in Christ, by Christ, with Christ, through Christ, and in oneness with Christ. We all should be able to say, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me."

Every servant of the Lord should match Him. But in ourselves and by ourselves we can neither match Him nor serve Him. We are utterly lacking the capacity to do this. We are nothing, we have nothing, and we can do nothing. How can we match God or serve Him? As far as we are concerned, this is impossible, but it is possible through the Triune God embodied in the Son, who is realized as the Spirit. This Spirit is everywhere, yet He is embodied in the Bible for us to inhale that we may do all things in Christ and by Christ.

We should not try in ourselves to do anything for God. Rather, we should hate and reject our effort to serve God and match Him, for it is actually abominable in the sight of God. Yes, God wants us to fulfill His economy, but He does not want us to do this by ourselves. God's desire is that we cast ourselves aside, forget ourselves, and fulfill His economy by the Spirit, that is, by the realization of the Son, who is the embodiment of the Father. We should live, act, behave, work, and have our being by the very Christ who is the life-giving Spirit. Then it will be no longer we who live but Christ who lives within us.

In Romans 10:8 Paul refers to "the word of the faith which we preach." This word of faith includes repentance, returning to God, holding fast to God, and believing into the Triune God in order to have an organic union with Him and to live together with Him as one. Are you living? Are you behaving and working? To these questions we should be able to say, "Yes, I am living, behaving, and working, but I am doing this not in myself and by myself but in Christ and by Christ. I am living in the organic union with the Triune God." This is the Christian life, this is the church life, the Body, and, ultimately, this will be our life for eternity in the New Jerusalem. In the Christian life and in the church life, it is no longer we who live, but Christ lives in us.

LIFE-STUDY OF DEUTERONOMY

MESSAGE SIX

THE REHEARSAL OF THE LAW

(1)

Scripture Reading: Deut. 5:1-21

Before we begin to consider the rehearsal of the law, I would like to speak a word concerning the Divine Trinity, which is the basis for the revelation in the Bible.

Concerning the Divine Trinity, there is in the Bible an important principle. This principle is that anything related to the Father, who is the source, is onefold; anything related to the Son, who is the course, is twofold; and anything related to the Spirit, who is the flow, the consummation, the totality, of the Triune God, is threefold. When God's salvation or any of His attributes reaches us, it reaches us in a threefold way because this reaching involves the three of the Divine Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.

To understand this principle we need to consider how the Triune God reaches us. The Father reaches us in the Son as the Spirit. The Father is in the Son, and the Son reaches us as the Spirit. This means that when the Spirit reaches us, the Father and the Son also reach us. The Gospel of John reveals that when the Father sent the Son, the Son did not come by Himself but came with the Father (John 8:29; 16:32b). Furthermore, when the Son sent the Spirit, He sent the Spirit as Himself (John 15:26; 14:26). Thus, when the Spirit comes, the Father and the Son also come. This is the Triune God reaching us as the Spirit.

Any attribute is onefold with the Father, twofold with the Son, and threefold with the Spirit. Love is God's greatest attribute. With the Father love is onefold, with the Son it is twofold, and with the Spirit it is threefold. We see this

threefoldness in 2 Corinthians 13:14, which says, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." Love is the source of grace, and grace is the coming forth, the expression, of love. The fellowship is the transmission of the grace which is the embodiment of love. The love of God is in the grace of Christ, and the grace of Christ with the love of God is transmitted in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. From this we see that when something of the Triune God reaches us, it comes to us in a threefold way.

Although the book of Deuteronomy often uses the expression "Jehovah your God," it does not explicitly mention Christ or the Spirit. However, in this book there are synonyms of Christ. These synonyms are the word, the law, the commandments, the testimonies, the statutes, and the judgments (the ordinances). Because all these are things spoken by God, in totality they are the word. The law, the commandments, the testimonies, the statutes, and the judgments are all the word, and the word is Christ. In Romans 10 Paul interprets the word in Deuteronomy as Christ, referring in verse 8 to "the word of the faith." We may think that the word in Deuteronomy is the word of the law, but Paul regards it as the word of the faith. The commandments, the testimonies, the statutes, and the judgments are the word, and the word is the word of faith.

Since all these are synonyms of Christ, as we are reading Deuteronomy we may want to replace them with the word *Christ*. To keep the law is to keep Christ. To love the commandment is to love Christ. To receive the testimonies and judgments is to receive Christ.

We have pointed out that Deuteronomy does not speak of the Spirit. However, Paul's interpretation in Romans 10 implies the Spirit; it implies that the Christ whom he is describing is the Spirit. Paul says, "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (v. 8). To be in our mouth and in our heart, this word, which is Christ, must be the Spirit.

In his interpretation of Deuteronomy 30:11-14, Paul presents a wonderful description of Christ as the incarnated,

crucified, and resurrected One. Christ is the One who came down from the heavens in incarnation; thus, there is no need for anyone to ascend to the heavens to bring Him down. Christ is also the One who came out of the abyss, out of Hades, in resurrection; thus, there is no need for anyone to descend into the abyss to bring Him up. Where is the Christ who came down from the heavens in incarnation and who came up from the abyss in resurrection, and what kind of Christ is He today? This Christ is in our mouth and in our heart, for He is now the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b). This is the biblical Christ, the Christ unveiled in the interpretation of Deuteronomy in Romans 10.

The Christ unveiled in Deuteronomy and Romans is the very God who became incarnated as a man. This One was crucified and resurrected, and in resurrection He became the life-giving Spirit, who is the air for us to breathe by calling upon Him. He is everywhere, waiting for people to call upon Him. Romans 10:12 tells us that He is "rich to all who call upon Him." When we first call, we receive Him as life. As we continue to call upon the name of the Lord, He becomes our life supply, our strength, and our everything.

If we have the understanding concerning the Christ found in Romans 10, we will come to the book of Deuteronomy in a new way. We will regard Deuteronomy as an extract of the entire Bible. I hope that we all will have such an understanding as we now begin to consider the rehearsal of the law in 5:1-21.

I. FOR THE TRAINING OF THE NEW GENERATION AFTER THE PURGING OF THE OLD GENERATION THROUGH THEIR WANDERING OF THIRTY-EIGHT YEARS IN THE WILDERNESS

The rehearsal of the law is the respeaking of the law. This rehearsal, this respeaking, was for the training of the new generation after the purging of the old generation through their wandering of thirty-eight years in the wilderness. That wandering had been used by God to produce a new generation, and this generation needed the training of the law. They needed to be trained with and by the law.

II. THE REHEARSING OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

In 5:1-31 we have the rehearsing of the Ten Commandments.

A. The Ten Commandments Being the Covenant God Made with Israel at Horeb

Verses 2 and 3 say, "Jehovah our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. Not with our fathers did Jehovah make this covenant, but with us, we who are all here today alive." This indicates that the Ten Commandments were the covenant God made with Israel at Horeb, especially with the present new generation of Israel. This is according to the biblical principle that the children are always included in the father. This is the reason that the covenant made at Horeb included even those Israelites who had not yet been born at that time. In the sight of God, the covenant made at Horeb was actually made with the present new generation of Israel.

B. The Ten Commandments as the Base of the Entire Law

The Ten Commandments are the base of the entire law (vv. 6-21). In the book of Deuteronomy the Ten Commandments are also called the "ten words" (4:13; 10:4).

1. The First Commandment

The first commandment is not to have other gods besides Jehovah. "I am Jehovah your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before Me" (5:6-7). The Hebrew word rendered "before" can also be translated "besides."

2. The Second Commandment

The second commandment is the commandment not to make an idol and not to bow down to or serve idols. "You shall not make for yourself an idol, the form of anything that is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water beneath the earth. You shall not bow down to them, and you

shall not serve them" (vv. 8-9a). The three matters of not making idols, not bowing down to idols, and not serving idols are all part of the second commandment.

3. The Third Commandment

The third commandment is not to take the name of Jehovah in vain. "You shall not take the name of Jehovah your God in vain, for Jehovah will not hold guiltless him who takes the name of Jehovah in vain" (v. 11).

4. The Fourth Commandment

The fourth commandment concerns the keeping of the Sabbath day (vv. 12-15). "Keep the Sabbath day so as to sanctify it, as Jehovah your God has commanded you" (v. 12).

5. The Fifth Commandment

In verse 16 we have the fifth commandment. "Honor your father and your mother, as Jehovah your God has commanded you, that your days may be extended and that it may go well with you upon the land which Jehovah your God is giving to you." Having our days extended is a matter of longevity, and having things go well with us is a matter of being blessed. If we honor our parents, we will have longevity and we will be blessed. This is the reason Paul tells us that the commandment to honor our parents is the first commandment with a promise (Eph. 6:2).

The Ten Commandments, which were written on two stone tablets, are in two groups of five commandments each. The first group includes the three commandments related to God, the commandment concerning God's holy day, and the commandment to honor our parents. It is very significant that the commandment to honor our parents is included with the commandments related to God. This indicates that we should honor our parents even as we honor God. God is our source, and our parents were the means used by God to bring us forth. Therefore, by honoring our parents we honor God as our unique source.

6. The Sixth Commandment

The sixth commandment is the commandment not to kill (Deut. 5:17).

7. The Seventh Commandment

The seventh commandment is the commandment not to commit adultery (v. 18). Adultery is damaging to humanity.

8. The Eighth Commandment

The eighth commandment is the commandment not to steal (v. 19).

9. The Ninth Commandment

The ninth commandment is the commandment not to testify as a vain witness against our neighbor (v. 20). This commandment forbids lying. Instead of lying, we must speak the truth.

10. The Tenth Commandment

The tenth commandment concerns coveting. "Neither shall you desire your neighbor's wife, nor shall you covet your neighbor's house, his field, or his male servant or his female servant, his ox or his donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor" (v. 21). Coveting can lead to stealing. We may first covet a certain thing and then decide to steal it. Thus, stealing is the carrying out of our covetousness.

III. THE GENERAL ADVICES AND WARNINGS

Deuteronomy 5:32—13:18 is a long section dealing with the general advices and warnings. Because of his burden, concern, and love, Moses spoke here in a detailed, repetitious way.

A. Keeping the Commandments, Statutes, and Judgments of God

In 6:1-3 Moses charged the children of Israel to keep the commandments, statutes, and judgments of God that they may live long, that it may go well with them, and that they may be greatly increased in the land flowing with milk and

honey. The statutes are supplementary items of the law. When a judgment is added to a statute, the statute becomes an ordinance. Whereas the children of Israel were charged to keep the commandments, statutes, and judgments, we today need to keep Christ.

B. Loving Jehovah Their God and Keeping, Teaching, and Writing His Words

In 6:4-9 Moses went on to speak of loving Jehovah their God with all their heart, with all their soul, and with all their might, of keeping God's words upon their heart, teaching them diligently to their children, binding them on their hand as a sign, wearing them as frontlets between their eyes, and writing them on the doorposts of their house and on their gates. Today we need to love Christ, keep Christ, teach Christ, wear Christ, and write Christ.

C. In Their Enjoyment Remembering Jehovah, Fearing Him, Serving Him, and Not Going After Other Gods

Verses 10 through 12 say, "When Jehovah your God brings you into the land which He swore to your fathers, to Abraham and to Isaac and to Jacob, to give you great and fine cities that you did not build, and houses full of all good things that you did not fill, and hewn cisterns that you did not hew, vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant, and you have eaten and are satisfied; be careful lest you forget Jehovah who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery." Moses was concerned that in their enjoyment the people would forget Jehovah their God. Furthermore, in verses 13 through 15 he went on to charge them to fear Jehovah, to serve Him, and not to go after other gods to provoke the anger of their God, who is a jealous God.

D. Not Testing Jehovah Their God, Diligently Keeping His Commandments, Testimonies, and Statutes, and Doing That Which Is Right and Good in His Sight

In verses 16 through 19 we have a further expression of

Moses' concern. Here he charged the children of Israel not to test Jehovah their God, to diligently keep His commandments, testimonies, and statutes, and to do that which is right and good in His sight, so that it might go well with them and they might enter and possess the good land which He promised them.

E. Telling Them What to Say to the Son Who Asks about the Significance of the Testimonies, Statutes, and Judgments

In verses 20 through 25 Moses told the people what to say to the son who asks about the significance of the testimonies, statutes, and judgments. They were to tell him that they were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt, that Jehovah brought them out of Egypt with a mighty hand in order to bring them into the promised land, and that Jehovah commanded them to keep His testimonies, statutes, and judgments, so that they would fear Him for their good and He would preserve them alive and so that it would be righteousness to them.

LIFE-STUDY OF DEUTERONOMY

MESSAGE SEVEN

THE REHEARSAL OF THE LAW

(2)

Scripture Reading: Deut. 8:1-20

In this message we will consider, as a part of the general advices and warnings, the rehearsal of the law in 7:1—8:20.

F. Utterly Destroying All the Nations, Not Making Any Covenant with Them, Not Making Marriage Alliances with Them, Tearing Down Their Altars, Shattering Their Pillars, and Burning Their Idols

After the children of Israel had been brought by God into the promised land as their inheritance, they were to utterly destroy all the nations (7:1-2a). They were not to make a covenant with these nations, show them any favor, or make marriage alliances with them (vv. 2b-3). The nations were to be utterly destroyed without mercy. However, some who read the Bible according to their natural, human thought may not agree with God's requirement that the nations in the promised land be destroyed. But according to the divine thought, these nations had to be exterminated because they were devilish and mingled with demons.

Verse 5 says, "You shall deal with them in this way: their altars you shall tear down, their pillars you shall shatter, their Asherim you shall hew down, and their idols you shall burn with fire." The pillars were used in the worship of idols, and the Asherim were images of the goddess Asherah.

God's people were to destroy the nations and their idols in order to be a holy people to Jehovah their God, who had chosen them, "from among all the peoples which are upon

the face of the earth, to be a people for His personal treasure" (v. 6). The Hebrew word translated "personal treasure" has a double meaning; it means both *personal possession* and *peculiar treasure*. God treasured the children of Israel, setting His affection on them, loving them, being willing to keep His promise to them, bringing them out and ransoming them from the house of slavery (vv. 7-8).

G. Realizing That Jehovah Their God Is God, the Faithful God, Who Keeps Covenant and Lovingkindness with Those Who Love Him and Keep His Commandments

In 7:9-15 Moses wanted the people to realize that Jehovah their God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and lovingkindness to the thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments; that He would love them, bless them, and multiply them; that He would bless the fruit of their womb and the fruit of their ground, their grain, their new wine, their fresh oil, the offspring of their cattle, and the young of their flock; and that He would remove every sickness and those evil illnesses of Egypt from them.

Today God loves us, blesses us, and multiplies us because we keep His Christ. It is in Christ that we receive and enjoy God's blessings. God is with us in Christ. God's grace and peace are to us in Christ. Therefore, we need to be right with God by taking Christ. The unique commandment God gives to the world today is to believe in His Son and to receive Him. Actually, Christ Himself is the commandment of God. We need to receive Him, keep Him, and be right with Him. If we do this, we will be right with God, and He will love us and bless us.

H. Not Being Afraid of the Nations but Remembering That Which Jehovah Their God Did to Pharaoh and to All Egypt

Moses told the children of Israel not to be afraid of the nations but to remember that which Jehovah their God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt by the great trials, by the signs

and the wonders, and by His mighty hand and His outstretched arm (vv. 17-19).

In verse 20 Moses went on to say, "Furthermore, Jehovah your God will send the hornet among them until those who are left and those who hide themselves from you are destroyed." Something like this happened in 1948 when Israel was restored as a nation. At that time God used hornets to fight on behalf of Israel.

In verse 16 Moses said, "You shall devour all the peoples which Jehovah your God is giving to you; your eye shall not pity them." Then in verse 22 Moses explained, "Jehovah your God will clear away these nations from before you little by little; you shall not devour all of them immediately, lest the beasts of the field multiply against you." The children of Israel were not great in number. If all the Canaanites were slain immediately, the beasts of the field would multiply against God's people. For this reason, the Canaanites, who were useful in keeping the beasts from multiplying, were to be cleared away little by little.

Moses also charged the people to burn with fire the idols of the nations' gods, not desiring the silver or gold upon the idols, nor taking it for themselves, lest they be ensnared by it (v. 25). Likewise, they were not to bring an abomination into their house, lest they become a cursed thing like it (v. 26). This indicates how concerned Moses, an aged father, was for his beloved children.

I. Keeping the Whole Commandment Which Moses Gave Them So That They Might Live and Multiply and Might Enter and Possess the Promised Land

"The whole commandment which I am commanding you today, you shall keep and do, so that you may live and multiply, and enter and possess the land which Jehovah swore to your fathers" (8:1). Whereas the children of Israel were to keep the whole law, we need to keep the whole Christ so that the church may have both longevity and multiplication.

"You shall remember all the way that Jehovah your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness in order to

humble you and test you that He might know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. And He humbled you and let you go hungry and fed you the manna, which you had never known nor had your fathers ever known, so that He might make you know that man lives not by bread alone, but that man lives by everything proceeding from Jehovah's mouth" (vv. 2-3). Here Moses charged the people to remember how God humbled them, let them go hungry, and then fed them with manna so that they might learn that man does not live by bread alone but by whatever proceeds out of Jehovah's mouth.

In Matthew 4:4 the Lord Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 8:3, saying, "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out through the mouth of God." When He quoted this verse, He surely knew that "every word" refers to the law, the commandments, the ordinances, the statutes, and the judgments. All these are the words that have proceeded out of God's mouth as God's breathing, and they all refer to Christ. Therefore, to live by every word that proceeds out through the mouth of God is to live by Christ.

In Deuteronomy 8:4 and 5 Moses went on to say, "Your clothing did not wear out from upon you, nor did your foot swell these forty years. Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so Jehovah your God was disciplining you." During the years in the wilderness, Jehovah had dealt with the people strictly and severely. That was His loving discipline. Because He loved the children of Israel, He disciplined them.

J. Keeping the Commandments of Jehovah Their God, Walking in His Ways and Fearing Him

"Therefore keep the commandments of Jehovah your God, walking in His ways and fearing Him" (v. 6). God has His ways as well as His commandments. The children of Israel were not only to keep His commandments but also to walk in His ways. The principle is the same with us today. We should walk in the Lord's way, in the New Testament way.

The children of Israel were to keep God's commandments,

walk in His ways, and fear Him, for He was bringing them to a good land, a land of waterbrooks, of springs and of fountains, flowing forth in valleys and in mountains, a land of wheat, barley, vines, fig trees, pomegranates, olive trees with oil, and honey, a land in which they would eat bread without scarcity and in which they would not lack anything, a land whose stones were iron and from whose mountains they could mine copper (vv. 7-9). The first aspect of the good land mentioned here is its water. Concerning this water, first there were the fountains, which were the source, and then the springs and the brooks, the outflow. The water in the good land flowed forth "in valleys and in mountains." This indicates that Christ flows in different environments. We have our ups and downs, but Christ flows both in the ups and in the downs.

In the good land the children of Israel would have not only water but also an abundance of things to eat. Furthermore, they would have iron and copper out of which to make weapons to use in fighting against the enemy. Thus, in verse 10 Moses said, "You shall eat and be satisfied, and you shall bless Jehovah your God for the good land which He has given to you."

K. Being Careful Lest They Forget Jehovah Their God by Not Keeping His Commandments, Judgments, and Statutes

"Be careful lest you forget Jehovah your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes, which I am commanding you today" (v. 11). Today we should be careful lest we forget God by not keeping His Christ.

In verses 12 through 16 Moses continued his warning, telling the people to be careful, lest when they had eaten and were satisfied, and had built houses and dwelt in them, and their herd and their flock had multiplied, and their silver and their gold had multiplied, and all that they had had multiplied, their heart would be lifted up and they would forget Jehovah their God, who brought them out of the land

of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, who led them through the great and awesome wilderness and brought forth water for them out of flint rock, who fed them manna in the wilderness, that He might humble them and test them in order to do good for them in the end. Then Moses went on to warn the people not to say in their heart, "My strength and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth" (v. 17). Instead, the people were to remember Jehovah their God, for it was He who gave them strength to gain wealth, so that He might establish His covenant (v. 18). Finally, Moses warned them that if they would forget Jehovah their God and go after other gods and serve them and bow down to them, they would surely perish (vv. 19-20).

LIFE-STUDY OF DEUTERONOMY

MESSAGE EIGHT

THE REHEARSAL OF THE LAW

(3)

Scripture Reading: Deut. 9:1-8; 10:12-21

In this message we will cover the general advices and warnings found in 9:1—10:22.

L. Moses Charging the Children of Israel That They Should Know That Jehovah Their God as a Consuming Fire Would Destroy the Nations and Drive Them Out from before Them

In 9:3 Moses charged the children of Israel, saying, "Know therefore today that Jehovah your God is the One crossing over before you as a consuming fire; it is He who will destroy them and it is He who will subdue them before you, so that you may dispossess them and destroy them quickly, as Jehovah has said to you." Although Jehovah is a loving God, here He is revealed as a consuming fire that will destroy the nations.

In verses 4 through 6 we see that God would dispossess the nations, not because the children of Israel were righteous but because the nations were wicked. In verse 4 Moses continued his charge: "Do not say in your heart when Jehovah your God drives them out from before you, Because of my righteousness, Jehovah has brought me in to possess this land. Rather, it is because of the wickedness of these nations that Jehovah is about to dispossess them from before you." Therefore, God's dispossessing the nations was not due to the uprightness of the heart of His people; it was due to the wickedness of the nations. This indicates that even the wickedness of the nations serves God's purpose.

In verse 7 Moses went on to say, "Remember, do not forget, that you made Jehovah your God furious in the wilderness; from the day that you came forth from the land of Egypt up until you came to this place, you have been rebellious against Jehovah." Here Moses reminded the people that their history was a history of rebellion. From the time they came out of Egypt, they had been rebellious continually. The forty years in the wilderness were years of rebellion.

Suppose some among the new generation of the children of Israel said, "This rebellion was not our fault—it was the mistake of our fathers. They were the ones who rebelled and died in the wilderness. That rebellion had nothing to do with us. We are different." To any who might have spoken in this way, Moses might have replied, "Do not say that you are different from your fathers. You are sons of rebels, and rebels can only bring forth rebels. Just as a serpent cannot bring forth a lamb, so a rebel cannot bring forth one who is obedient. You need to realize that, as sons of rebels, you also are rebels."

M. Moses Rehearsing the Story of the Rebellion of the Children of Israel in Making the Golden Calf and Worshipping It at the Mount of God

In 9:8—10:11 Moses rehearsed the story of the rebellion of the children of Israel in making the golden calf and worshipping it at the mount of God, as a solemn testimony against the children of Israel. At the very time the Ten Commandments were being given, the rebellious children of Israel were violating the second commandment—the commandment concerning not making an idol and bowing down to it. They made an idol, bowed down to it, and served it. In order to give them an illustration of their history of rebellion, Moses reminded them of what they did at the mount of God.

N. Moses Charging the Children of Israel concerning Nine Matters

In 10:12-22 Moses charged the children of Israel concerning nine matters: fearing Jehovah their God, walking in all His ways, loving Him, serving Him with all their heart and

all their soul, keeping His commandments and statutes for their good, circumcising the foreskin of their heart, not being stiff-necked any longer, holding fast to Him, and swearing by His name, who is their praise and their God. Let us consider these matters one by one.

Verse 12 says, "Now, O Israel, what does Jehovah your God ask of you except that you fear Jehovah your God so that you would walk in all His ways and love Him and serve Jehovah your God with all your heart and with all your soul." First, Moses speaks here of fearing God. We all must have a proper fear of God. However, it seems that today many people, claiming that they are free, do not fear anything or anyone, including God. This lack of fear is terrible; it is the source of all kinds of lawlessness. The young people should recognize that, according to God's ordination, there is authority in the family, in society, and in the church. In whatever we do, say, and think, we all need to fear God. He is observing us and knows where we are and what we are doing. Eventually, we will reap a harvest from what we sow, and we will eat the fruit of this harvest.

When we fear God, we will walk in His ways. God's ways are actually what God is. This means that whatever God is, is a way to us. God is love, and this love is a way in which we should walk. God "loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. Therefore, love the sojourner, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt" (vv. 18b-19). One of God's ways is to love sojourners, and we should walk in this way of God. Many sojourners are poor, lacking food and clothing. We need to love them and give them what they need. God is also holy, and His holiness is another way for our walk. Furthermore, God "does not regard persons and does not take bribes" (v. 17b), and we should take this as a way, not regarding persons and not receiving bribes. God also "executes justice for the orphan and the widow" (v. 18a), and we should walk in the way of His justice.

The Lord Jesus said, "I am the way" (John 14:6). Since the Lord Jesus is the very God, this word indicates that God Himself is the way. To take what God is as our ways and to walk in these ways is to live God. When we take Christ as

our way, we live Him in what He is. He is humble, and we should live in the way of humility. He is the One who always takes the cross, and we should walk in the way of the cross. To take Christ as our way is to live Him, and to live Him is to express Him, to manifest Him, and even to magnify Him. Hence, to walk in God's ways is to live God, express God, manifest God, and magnify God. We should take God as our way and thus act as He acts.

The vision of the New Jerusalem reveals that we should take God as our unique way. In the New Jerusalem there is just one street, which is of pure gold (Rev. 21:21), signifying that the nature of God is our way. The river of water of life proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb and flows in the midst of the street (Rev. 22:1). This indicates that God is both our life and our way. We take God as our life, and His life with His nature then becomes the way in which we walk. Today we all should fear God and walk in His ways.

In Deuteronomy 10:12 Moses also charged the people to love God. This word *love* implies a great deal. For instance, it implies the matter of affection, which is something very tender. God Himself has set an example of loving by setting His affection on His people. Moses refers to this in verses 14 and 15. "Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens belong to Jehovah your God, the earth and all that is in it. But on your fathers Jehovah set His affection to love them and to choose their seed after them, that is, you above all the peoples, as it is this day." Now we should love God by setting our affection on Him.

In verse 12 Moses speaks of loving and serving God with all our heart and with all our soul. Our heart is linked to our spirit, for our conscience, which is of our spirit, is also a part of our heart. Thus, to love and serve God with all our heart and soul indicates that we love and serve Him also with our spirit. Furthermore, according to 6:5, we are to love Him also with all our might, that is, with our physical strength. Today, if we would serve God by practicing the new way, we need to serve with our spirit and with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength. To visit people

in order to get them saved and baptized and then to care for them afterward requires all our heart, soul, and strength.

In 10:13 Moses went on to say, "So that you would keep the commandments of Jehovah and His statutes, which I am commanding you today, for your good." Instead of "for your good," we could also say "that you may be blessed." Today we need to keep Christ and the riches of Christ which have been ministered to us so that we may be blessed.

Moses continued his charge by saying, "Circumcise then the foreskin of your heart, and do not be stiff-necked any longer" (v. 16). Because the children of Israel were a peculiar people to God, His treasure, they were required to cleanse themselves, to circumcise the unclean thing in their heart.

In verse 20 Moses says, "You shall fear Jehovah your God; Him shall you serve and to Him shall you hold fast and by His name shall you swear." Today we must hold fast to the Lord Jesus. In holding fast to Him, we may say, "Lord, I will not let You go. You must live for me."

In this verse Moses speaks not only of holding fast to God but also of swearing by His name. I believe that for the children of Israel to swear by the Lord's name was to call on His name. This was the ancient way of calling on the name of the Lord. Today we all need to hold fast to the Lord Jesus and call on His name.

LIFE-STUDY OF DEUTERONOMY

MESSAGE NINE

THE REHEARSAL OF THE LAW

(4)

Scripture Reading: Deut. 11:8-32

In this message we will consider the two aspects of the general advices and warnings found in 11:8-32.

O. The Children of Israel to Receive Blessings by Being Willing to Keep Moses' Words of Advice and Warning

In 11:8-25 we see that if the children of Israel were willing to keep Moses' words of advice and warning, they would receive certain blessings. Today, if we keep Christ, we will receive blessings from God.

1. Being Strong and Going In to Possess the Promised Land

"Therefore you shall keep the whole commandment which I am commanding you today so that you may be strong and that you may go in and possess the land into which you are crossing over to possess it" (v. 8). If the children of Israel would keep the commandment, they would receive the blessing of being strong and of going in to possess the promised land. If we today keep Christ and hold fast to Christ, we will be strengthened and encouraged to go on to possess Christ. In Paul's words, we will be strengthened to "gain Christ" (Phil. 3:8). To possess Christ is to gain Him. The more we contact the Lord and enjoy Him, the more we are strengthened and encouraged to press on to gain Him.

2. Extending Their Days upon the Promised Land

If the children of Israel were willing to keep Moses' words, they would extend their days upon the promised land, a land flowing with milk and honey, a land which God cares for and upon which His eyes are from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year (Deut. 11:9-12). For us today, the promised land is Christ, and our days may be extended not upon Christ but in Christ and with Christ.

Deuteronomy 11:12 says, "It is a land which Jehovah your God cares for; always the eyes of Jehovah your God are upon it, from the beginning of the year unto the end of the year." Literally, the Hebrew word translated "cares for" means "seeks after" (i.e., with interest and care). This verse speaks not merely of God's affection but of His care. For God's eyes to be upon us means that we are the object of His care. The reason that God puts His eyes upon us is so that we will hold fast to Christ and enjoy Christ.

First, God sets His affection upon us (7:7), and then He puts His eyes upon us. Since His eyes are upon us all the time, from the beginning of the year unto the end of the year, we can see His eyes and thereby enjoy His presence. How dear and precious is this blessing!

3. God Giving Them Rain for Their Land in Its Season, the Early Rain and the Late Rain

The third blessing is the blessing of rain, the blessing of the heavenly watering of everything in their realm. Concerning this, verses 14 and 15 say, "I will give rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the late rain, so that you may gather your grain and your new wine and your fresh oil. And I will put grass in your field for your cattle, and you will eat and be satisfied." Because of the rain, they would have a harvest of grain, new wine, and fresh oil. For us as believers in Christ today, the rain is the Spirit. Under the heavenly watering of the Spirit, we are not dry.

In verses 16 and 17 there is a warning. "Be careful lest your

heart is deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and bow down to them. And the anger of Jehovah burns against you and He shuts up heaven, so that there is no rain and the earth does not yield its produce and you perish quickly from off the good land which Jehovah is giving to you." If the children of Israel turned away to other gods, they would no longer be under God's care. Instead, His anger would burn against them, heaven would be closed to them, and there would be no rain. We need to apply this warning to ourselves today. We should be careful lest our hearts are deceived, and we turn aside to other gods, such as education, success in business, or having our own preferences. If we turn aside from God and serve other gods, we will no longer enjoy the heavenly watering.

4. Laying the Words of Moses on Their Heart and on Their Soul

The children of Israel were to lay the words of Moses on their heart and on their soul, bind them on their hand as a sign, wear them as frontlets between their eyes, teach them to their children, speaking about them when they sat in their house, when they journeyed on the way, when they lay down, and when they rose up, and write them on the doorposts of their house and on their gates (vv. 18-20). They were to do these things that their days, as well as the days of their children, might be multiplied upon the promised land, as long as the days of heaven are above the earth (v. 21). We today should lay Christ on our heart and on our soul. We should bind Christ on our hand as a sign or symbol; that is, we should bind Christ to everything related to us and to everything that is an expression of us. We should also wear Christ as a frontlet between our eyes and teach Christ to others, speaking of Christ wherever we may be. This means that all the time and everywhere we should be occupied with Christ.

The blessing in these verses is the blessing of loving God. The blessing in verses 14 through 17 is the blessing of rain, which comes to us from God. The blessing in verses 18

through 21 is the blessing of the love which returns to God from us. We should love Him just as a woman loves the man to whom she is engaged to be married. In Deuteronomy, God was actually "courting" His people, loving them and setting His affection upon them. His people should then love Him in return. Today we need to love the Lord by laying Christ as the word on our heart and on our soul and by binding this word to everything related to us.

5. Jehovah Dispossessing All Those Nations from before Them, and They Possessing the Land of the Nations

In verse 22 Moses spoke of four things: keeping the commandments which Moses commanded, loving Jehovah, walking in all His ways, and holding fast to Him. Today we should keep Christ, love God, walk in His ways, and hold fast to Him. We need to love the Lord Jesus to such an extent that we will hold fast to Him.

Moses went on to say that if the people keep the commandments, love God, walk in His ways, and hold fast to Him, "Jehovah will dispossess all these nations from before you, and you will dispossess nations greater and mightier than you. Every place on which the sole of your foot treads will be yours; from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the River Euphrates, even unto the farmost sea will be your border" (vv. 23-24). The Hebrew name for the Euphrates is Parath. The "farmost sea" is the Mediterranean Sea. According to verse 24, the good land should extend from the Mediterranean Sea to today's Iraq.

Let us now review the blessings in 11:8-25. These blessings include being strengthened and encouraged to possess the promised land, extending our days in the land under God's care and in His presence, receiving the heavenly watering, loving the Lord, and holding fast to Him. It is surely a blessing to hold fast to the Lord and to walk in His ways. The greatest of these blessings is the blessing of God's presence.

P. Moses Setting a Blessing and a Curse before the Children of Israel and Charging Them to Put the Blessing upon Mount Gerizim and the Curse upon Mount Ebal

In verses 26 through 28 Moses said, "See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you listen to the commandments of Jehovah your God, which I am commanding you today; and the curse, if you do not listen to the commandments of Jehovah your God and you turn aside from the way which I am commanding you today, to go after other gods whom you have not known." Whether we have the blessing or the curse depends on whether or not we take Christ. If we take Christ, we have the blessing. If we do not take Christ, we have the curse.

In verse 29 Moses continued, "When Jehovah your God brings you into the land which you are entering to possess, you shall put the blessing upon Mount Gerizim and the curse upon Mount Ebal." Whether we receive the blessing or the curse depends on how we behave ourselves toward the Lord. If we have Christ, we will receive the blessing and be on Mount Gerizim. If we do not have Christ, we will receive the curse and be on Mount Ebal.

LIFE-STUDY OF DEUTERONOMY

MESSAGE TEN

THE REHEARSAL OF THE LAW

(5)

Scripture Reading: Deut. 12:1-32

Thus far, the rehearsal of the law has been somewhat general. In Deuteronomy 12 we have a very particular matter—the center for the worship of God. This chapter strongly stresses that we must worship God at a definite center, at the place of His choice. We do not have the right to select a place according to our preference. Going to a place of our own choosing is altogether prohibited by God's word. God's people must come to the place which God has chosen, the place where He has put His name. Only that place where God puts His name can be the worship center of His people. Furthermore, the proper place of worship is the place of God's habitation. This means that in the place of His choice God will put His name and He Himself will dwell there. God's people must go to this place—the place where God dwells and where God's name is.

The place chosen by God as a worship center keeps God's people from being divided. If they had the freedom to choose a place according to their preferences, there would be division among them. We need to keep these matters in mind as we consider the serious warning in Deuteronomy 12.

Q. Moses Charging the Children of Israel concerning the Way to Worship God

In chapter twelve Moses charged the children of Israel concerning the way to worship God.

1. Completely Destroying All the Places Where the Nations Whom They Would Dispossess Had Served Their Gods

In verses 2 and 3 Moses charged the people, saying, "You shall completely destroy all the places where the nations whom you will dispossess have served their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every flourishing tree. And you shall tear down their altars and crush their pillars; and their Asherim you shall burn with fire, and the idols of their gods you shall cut down; and you shall destroy their name from that place." Nothing that was practiced by the nations was to be brought into the worship of God. This principle still applies today. Nevertheless, Catholicism has brought in many of the things practiced by the nations, many things related to the worship of idols. This was the reason that the church in Thyatira, which prefigures the Roman Catholic Church, was very much condemned by the Lord in Revelation 2:18-29.

In the church life today, we should give up all the ways and practices of the nations. We must worship God with Christ and with Christ alone. We should gather together in the name of the Lord and worship God with Christ as the reality of all the offerings and sacrifices. We should bring Christ to God in the place of His choice.

2. Seeking Jehovah and Coming unto the Place Which Jehovah Their God Would Choose out of All Their Tribes to Put His Name, even unto His Habitation with His Altar

The children of Israel were to seek Jehovah and come unto the place which Jehovah their God would choose out of all their tribes to put His name, even unto His habitation with His altar (Deut. 12:5-6). Here we have three things: the place, the name, and the altar. To the place chosen by God they were to bring their burnt offerings and all their other offerings, and there they were to eat before Jehovah their God, and they, their households, and the Levites who lived

with them were to rejoice in all their undertakings, in which Jehovah their God had blessed them (vv. 6-7, 10-12, 14-15, 17-19, 26-28). They were not to do according to all that they had done before they entered the good land, each man doing what was right in his own eyes; and they were to be careful not to offer up their burnt offerings in every place that they saw (vv. 8-9, 13). To fulfill these requirements was to have a center of worship, as Jerusalem would be later, for the keeping of the oneness among God's people, avoiding the division caused by man's preferences. This was good and right in the sight of God.

3. Being Permitted to Slaughter the Cattle and Eat the Meat within All Their Gates

The children of Israel were permitted to slaughter the cattle and eat the meat within all their gates, in all that their soul desired, according to the blessing of Jehovah, but they were not to eat the blood (vv. 15-16, 20-25). This was right in the sight of God.

4. Not Following the Nations to Be Ensnared, Not Seeking after Their Gods to Learn How to Serve Their Gods

The children of Israel were to be careful lest they be ensnared in following the nations and lest they seek after their gods to learn how to serve their gods (vv. 29-30). That was an abomination to God, which He hated (v. 31). After giving this charge, Moses concluded by saying, "The whole thing that I am commanding you, you shall be certain to do; you shall not add to it, nor shall you take away from it" (v. 32).

Chapter twelve of Deuteronomy corresponds in at least four ways to the revelation in the New Testament.

First, both in this chapter and in the New Testament we see that the people of God should always be one. In order to preserve the oneness of the children of Israel, God did not allow each of the twelve tribes to have its own worship center.

If each tribe had had its own center for the worship of God, there would have been twelve divisions among God's people, for each center would have been the ground and the base of a division. In His wisdom, God did not allow His people to have their own choice or preference but required them to take His choice and to come three times a year to the unique worship center, even though travel to that place was inconvenient for many of them.

The principle is the same in the New Testament. Regardless of their number, God's children, the believers in Christ, must be one and have the same center for the worship of God. However, the actual situation among Christians today is division. There are many worship centers, and this has led to divisions.

The divisions among God's people are the result of having different preferences. Many prefer to have their own way instead of God's way. Whenever the believers have their own way and their own preference, there will be division. All denominations are according to man's preferences. The situation in the Lord's recovery is altogether different. The Lord's recovery is a matter of coming back to God's way according to God's preference.

Second, both in Deuteronomy 12 and in the New Testament, God's way to keep the oneness of His people is to have a place with His name, the unique name. The name in which we gather for the worship of God is a matter of great importance. We should never think that it is insignificant. Today Christians should be gathered together into only one name, the name of the Lord Jesus (Matt. 18:20). However, Christians are accustomed to being gathered into other names, such as Baptist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Lutheran, and Methodist. To be gathered into these different names is to be divided, because these names are the base of divisions.

According to the type in Deuteronomy 12, it is a serious matter to be gathered into a name other than the unique name of the Lord. To have other names for our worship is an abomination; it is spiritual fornication. We are Christ's counterpart, His wife. Since we are His counterpart, we

should not have a name other than His name. To take another name is to take another person. Just as a wife should bear the name of her husband, not the name of any other man, so we, the believers in Christ, should bear only His name and not any other name. This means that we should not bear any denominational names, such as Baptist or Presbyterian. Rather, like the church in Philadelphia, we should not deny the Lord's name (Rev. 3:8); that is, we should abandon all names other than that of the Lord Jesus Christ. Not designating ourselves by any title or name, we should simply be gathered together into the name of the Lord.

Third, both Deuteronomy 12 and the New Testament reveal that the place chosen by God for our worship of Him is the place of His habitation. Where is God's habitation today? According to Ephesians 2:22, God's habitation, His dwelling place, is in our spirit. Yes, as a church we should be gathered into the name of Christ, but we also need to be exercised in our spirit. If we come together under the name of Christ but, instead of exercising our spirit, we remain in the natural mind or, even worse, in the flesh, we will not be in the habitation of God. In gathering together for the worship of God by enjoying Christ, we must gather into the name of Christ and we must be in the spirit. Otherwise, we will lose the proper ground of the church.

Concerning our meeting for the worship of God, we all must learn two crucial things. First, we must learn to reject every name other than the name of the Lord Jesus and to be gathered into His name. Second, we must learn to reject the flesh, the self, and the natural life and to exercise our spirit. In everything related to the worship of God, we need to exercise our spirit. Whenever we sing, we should sing with our spirit. Whenever we praise, we should praise with our spirit. Whenever we speak, we should speak with our spirit. If we do this, the meeting will be in God's habitation.

Fourth, in Deuteronomy 12 and in the New Testament we have the altar, the cross. Along with the name and the habitation, we must have the altar, which signifies the cross. Paul's word in 1 Corinthians 2:2 indicates the importance of this. "I determined not to know anything among you except

Jesus Christ, and this One crucified." The crucified Christ was the unique subject, the center, the content, and the substance of Paul's ministry.

At the entrance of the church is the cross, and everyone who would come into the church must experience the cross and be crucified. To experience the cross is to be set aside, to be annulled, to be reduced to nothing. In the church there should be only Christ, not us. Where should we be? We should be on the cross. This means that we should not bring anything of the old man, anything of the flesh, the self, or the natural life, into the church. When we are on the cross, we are truly in the spirit.

As we are preparing to come to the meeting, we may pray, "Lord, if I still have something related to the flesh, the self, and the natural life, I ask You to forgive me and to cross out these things. Lord, I need to be crossed out and then anointed with Yourself." If we all come to the meeting in this way, we will meet in the name of Christ, we will meet in God's habitation, and we will meet under the application of the cross.

Our meeting for the worship of God should be in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, in our spirit as the place of God's habitation, and in the place where the cross is. We do not uplift a physical cross, but we do have the practice of applying the cross to our being. Therefore, we have the name of the Lord Jesus, we have God's habitation, and we have the cross. If we have the name, the habitation, and the cross, there will be no divisions among us. No matter how many believers there may be in our locality and no matter how many meeting places, we all will be one—one in the same name, one in the same habitation, and one under the same cross.

LIFE-STUDY OF DEUTERONOMY

MESSAGE ELEVEN

GOD'S CHOICE—THE DEFINITE GROUND FOR THE WORSHIP OF GOD

Scripture Reading: Deut. 12:1-32

In this message I would like to give a further word on Moses' charge to the children of Israel concerning the way to worship God.

TAKING GOD'S CHOICE

The rehearsal of the law in 5:1—11:32 is rather general, but in 12:1-32 it is very definite. This chapter emphasizes the requirement that we take God's choice in the matter of a worship center. Again and again we are told to come to "the place which Jehovah your God will choose" (vv. 5, 11, 14, 18, 21, 26). We should not have any preferences but take God's choice, which is the unique ground, the proper place for the worship of God.

KEEPING THE ONENESS OF GOD'S PEOPLE

Why was Moses so definite in chapter twelve about the requirement to come to the place of God's choice? Moses was definite in this matter because it was related to the keeping of the oneness of God's people. If there had not been such a definite ground for the worship of God, the children of Israel would have been divided. Suppose each of the twelve tribes had had the freedom to choose a place of worship. Surely each tribe would have chosen a place within its own territory, and spontaneously there would have been twelve divisions. This was the reason that the children of Israel were strictly forbidden from making their own choice concerning the place for the worship of God. Moses told them repeatedly that they had to come to the place which

God had chosen and worship Him there. "Unto the place which Jehovah your God will choose out of all your tribes to put His name, unto His habitation, shall you seek, and there shall you go. And there you shall bring your burnt offerings and your sacrifices and your tithes and the heave offering of your hand and your vows and your freewill offerings and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock" (vv. 5-6).

The children of Israel had to come to the place which God had chosen, even though, for many of the tribes, the journey was long and difficult. Three times a year the Israelites had to come with their families to the place of God's choice. Furthermore, they had to bring their tithes and offerings, including livestock. According to the record in the Old Testament, the unity among the children of Israel was preserved by the act of coming to the worship center chosen by God.

This keeping of the unity is spoken of in Psalm 133. This psalm is one of the songs of ascent (Psa. 120—134), songs that were sung by the children of Israel as they ascended Mount Zion to worship God. As they were making the ascent, they sang, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (133:1). This oneness is likened to "the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments" (v. 2). This oneness is also likened to "the dew of Hermon" which "descended upon the mountains of Zion" (v. 3). In Psalm 133 we have a beautiful picture of the oneness of God's people, the oneness they were to keep by coming to worship God at the place of His choice.

THE HABITATION OF GOD IN OUR SPIRIT

In the type in Deuteronomy 12, the children of Israel were required to come to a particular geographical location. This means that in the Old Testament the chosen ground was an actual physical place. When some hear this, they may ask, "How are we to apply this type to our situation today? Are all the believers supposed to gather in a certain

place three times a year?" In answering these questions, we need to realize that the fulfillment of the type in Deuteronomy 12 is not a matter of a geographical place—it is a matter of our spirit. This is proved by putting Ephesians 2:22 together with John 4:21-23. In Ephesians 2:22 Paul said that we are "being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit." In John 4 the Lord Jesus responded to the question of the Samaritan woman concerning the proper place for the worship of God. He said to her, "An hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem shall you worship the Father…. An hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit…" (vv. 21, 23). This indicates clearly that the proper ground for the worship of God today is in our spirit. God's habitation, His dwelling place, is in our spirit. As long as we are in our spirit, we are in the right place for the worship of God.

MEETING IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS, IN OUR SPIRIT, AND WITH THE CROSS

Some may wonder why we emphasize the local church since the place for the worship of God is our spirit. For convenience and practicality, we meet in the different cities where we live. Apparently we are divided by geography, for we meet in separate cities all over the world. Actually we remain in the oneness and are not divided, for wherever we may be, we meet in the Lord's name, in the spirit, and with the cross. Therefore, no matter where we may be, we all meet in the same place.

Recently, in the prayer meeting of the church in Anaheim, there were saints present from a number of different countries. We may say that we had an international prayer meeting. Nobody gave a word about the subject of our prayer or about how we should pray. Nevertheless, we prayed in one accord. We could be one in such a way because, in spite of geographical separation, we all meet in the same place—in the Lord's name, in our spirit, and with the cross.

The situation with most Christians today is very different from this. They meet not in oneness but in many

different denominations. Even if Christians from various denominations meet together, they may have difficulty praying together. Each may pray in his own denominational tone. If the believers in Christ are to be one, they must give up all denominational things and simply come together in the name of the Lord Jesus, in the spirit, and with the cross. This is the oneness, and this is the proper ground for the worship of God.

Many Christians are divided by their preferences. Even though they may live in the same city, they will not meet together because they want to have their own preference. In the Lord's recovery, we care not for our preference but for the Lord's presence. In Matthew 18:20 the Lord Jesus said, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there I am in their midst." Wherever we may be, in Anaheim or Taipei, in London or Tokyo, we should be gathered into the Lord's name, and we should meet in our spirit and with the cross. If we all do this, we all will meet in the same place, although we meet in different localities. This one place is the ground of the unique oneness.

In the Lord's recovery, we have one name and one Spirit. We all meet in the name of Jesus Christ, and we all meet in the mingled spirit—in the regenerated human spirit indwelt by the Holy Spirit. We gather together in this spirit, not in our concept, desire, preference, or choice. Furthermore, in our meeting we should not leave the cross, which is typified by the altar in front of the tabernacle. At the entrance of the church there is the cross, and in order to meet as the church we must experience the cross. The flesh, the self, and the natural man cannot be in the church; they must be crucified. Therefore, we meet in the name of the Lord Jesus, in the mingled spirit, and with the cross. This is the place where we meet, and here we have the oneness which we endeavor to keep in the unique name of the Lord.

LIFE-STUDY OF DEUTERONOMY

MESSAGE TWELVE

THE REHEARSAL OF THE LAW

(6)

Scripture Reading: Deut. 13:1-18

In Deuteronomy 12 we have a definite word on keeping the oneness of God's people. In chapter thirteen, which we will consider in this message, we have an even more definite word—a word concerning apostasy.

R. Moses Charging the Children of Israel concerning Apostasy

What does the word *apostasy* denote? In the Old Testament, apostasy denotes the giving up of God and the turning away from God to idols. In the New Testament, apostasy denotes the denial of Christ's deity; it refers to not believing that Christ is God incarnated to be a man.

The existence of God is a mystery, and the incarnation of God to become a man named Jesus is an even greater mystery. For this reason it is more difficult for people to believe that God became a man than it is for them to believe that there is a God. As we contact people in our preaching of the gospel, we must first make it clear to them that there is a God. We may use the book of Romans to show them that there is a God. Then we need to tell them that this very God was incarnated to become a man.

Certain so-called Christians—the Modernists—do not believe that Jesus Christ is God. Instead, they believe that the Lord Jesus was merely a man, that He was a teacher, and that He died as a martyr, not to accomplish redemption. They do not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh (1 John 4:2-3). Their belief regarding Christ is heretical,

and, by denying that Jesus Christ is both the complete God and a perfect man, they have taken the way of apostasy.

The New Testament deals very strictly with division and with the denial of the teaching that Christ is God incarnated to become a man. "If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not say to him, Rejoice! For he who says to him, Rejoice, shares in his evil works" (2 John 10-11). The teaching which the Apostle John refers to here is the teaching that God came through incarnation to be a man. In his gospel this same John says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.…And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us…full of grace and reality" (John 1:1, 14). In his second epistle John shows us that, even at his time, some so-called believers did not confess that Jesus Christ the Lord had come in the flesh. John goes on to tell us that we should not receive nor even greet those who do not bring the teaching that Jesus Christ is God incarnated to be a man. Instead of speaking to those who do not bring this teaching, we should turn away from them.

We need to be clear regarding the difference between teaching apostasy and being wrong in doctrine. Someone may not be correct in his teaching about a certain doctrine, but this does not mean that he is apostate. For example, suppose a brother in the Lord, a genuine believer in Christ, is somewhat mistaken in his teaching regarding the rapture. We may say that he is wrong in doctrine, but we should not say that he is heretical or that he teaches apostasy, for he believes in the divine person of Christ and in His redemptive work. He believes that Jesus Christ is the very God, that He was incarnated to become a man, that He died on the cross for our sins, that He resurrected from among the dead, and that He ascended to the heavens. According to the New Testament, someone becomes apostate, not by teaching incorrectly about the rapture but by giving up the faith that Jesus Christ is God and that He came in the flesh to be a man. Those who do not believe this are apostate.

I believe that John and Paul learned a great deal from Moses' writings, including the definite word in chapters twelve and thirteen of Deuteronomy. Whereas John was definite concerning apostasy, Paul was definite concerning division.

The book of Romans presents a complete picture of God's salvation, a picture that comprises both the Christian and the church life. The last three chapters of Romans, chapters fourteen through sixteen, are on the local church life. In chapters fourteen and fifteen Paul speaks concerning receiving the believers. "Now him who is weak in faith receive, not with a view to passing judgment on reasonings" (14:1). For a believer to be weak in faith does not mean that he has no faith; it means that, although he has faith, he is weak in faith. Those who are weak in faith we should receive without passing judgment on reasonings. We should receive them without reasoning with them. The one who is weak in faith may eat only vegetables and may judge one day above another (vv. 2-3, 5), whereas the one who is strong in faith may believe that he may eat all things and may judge every day alike. Instead of judging the believers with respect to such matters, we should receive them in love, for God has received them (v. 3). Furthermore, Paul says, "We who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those who are weak, and not to please ourselves" (15:1). Then Paul goes on to say, "Wherefore receive one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God" (v. 7). We should receive the believers not according to the way of eating or the keeping of days but according to Christ, who is the unique center and the all-embracing One. We must receive all kinds of genuine believers, whether they eat herbs or eat meat, whether they keep certain days or consider every day alike. Moreover, we must receive all genuine believers according to Christ.

In Romans 14 and 15 Paul is generous, broad-minded, and all-embracing, but in Romans 16:17 he is very narrow and strict. "I beg you, brothers, keep a watchful eye on those who make divisions and causes of falling contrary to the teaching which you have learned, and turn away from

them." On the one hand, we need to receive all kinds of genuine believers; on the other hand, we need to be narrow and strict in dealing with divisive ones. In 16:17 Paul does not say, "These divisive ones are brothers. We need to receive them and love them." No, he tells us to keep a watchful eye on them and to turn away from them. To turn away from those who make divisions and causes of falling is to quarantine them.

In Romans 16:20a Paul says, "Now the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet." It is significant that this word comes after the word concerning the strict dealing with the divisive ones. If we do not have any discernment but instead love blindly, and if we do not quarantine those who make divisions and causes of falling, Satan will be above us, not under us. But if we quarantine the divisive ones, Satan will be crushed under our feet.

1. Putting to Death the Prophet or Dreamer of Dreams Who Advocates Apostasy from Jehovah Their God

In Deuteronomy 13:1 and 2 Moses spoke about a prophet or dreamer of dreams who stands up and gives a sign or wonder and that sign or wonder occurs, about which he spoke, saying, "Let us go after other gods whom you have not known, and let us serve them." Moses went on to tell the people not to listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer of dreams, "for Jehovah your God is testing you in order to know whether you love Jehovah your God with all your heart and with all your soul" (v. 3).

In verse 4 Moses continued, "You shall follow Jehovah your God; and you shall fear Him, keep His commandments, listen to His voice, serve Him, and hold fast to Him." Instead of using the expression "hold fast to Him," we today may speak of laying hold on Christ. We all need to lay hold of, to hold on to, Christ.

In verse 5 Moses said, "But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has advocated apostasy from Jehovah your God, who brought you out of

the land of Egypt and ransomed you from the house of slavery, in order to force you out of the way in which Jehovah your God has commanded you to walk. Thus you shall utterly remove the evil from your midst." The Hebrew word rendered "advocated" literally means "spoken." The word translated "apostasy" can also be translated "a turning away against." Literally the Hebrew word for "utterly remove" means "burn out" or "consume."

2. Slaying the Brother, Son, Daughter, Wife, or Friend Who Secretly Enticed Them to Serve Other Gods

In verses 6 through 11 Moses spoke about what to do with the brother, son, daughter, wife, or friend who entices the children of Israel secretly to serve other gods, which neither they nor their fathers had known. They were not to yield to such a one nor listen to him, nor was their eye to pity him, nor were they to spare him nor conceal him (v. 8). Rather, Moses said, "You must slay him; your hand shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. And you shall stone him with stones so that he dies, because he sought to force you away from Jehovah your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery" (vv. 9-10).

3. Dealing with Worthless Men Who Had Forced the Inhabitants of Their City to Go and Serve Other Gods

In verses 12 through 18 Moses told the people what to do if they should hear in one of their cities that "some worthless men" have gone out from their midst and "have forced the inhabitants of their city, saying, Let us go and serve other gods (which you have not known)." Concerning such a case, the children of Israel were to investigate and examine carefully and inquire thoroughly. If the thing were true and certain that that abomination had been done in their midst, they were to slay the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying it and all

that was in it and its cattle. They were to gather all its spoil at the middle of its open square and burn the city and all its spoil with fire wholly to Jehovah their God, and it would be a mound only forever and would not be built again. Nothing of what had been cursed was to cling to their hand. When they did in this way what was right in the sight of Jehovah their God, He would turn from His burning anger, show them tenderness, be compassionate to them, and multiply them as He had promised their fathers.

In Deuteronomy 12 Moses was strict in the matter of division, and in Deuteronomy 13 he was strict in the matter of apostasy. When he came to these matters, he was no longer general but very definite. Like the apostles in the New Testament, we need to learn of Moses concerning these two crucial things. We also must be very strict concerning division and apostasy. This means that we must keep the unique oneness of God's people and the unique faith in the person and redemptive work of Christ.

LIFE-STUDY OF DEUTERONOMY

MESSAGE THIRTEEN

A WORD CONCERNING DIVISION AND APOSTASY

Scripture Reading: Deut. 12:1—13:18

In previous messages we have covered the general advices and warnings. Before we turn in the next message to the section of Deuteronomy dealing with the rehearsing of the general statutes and judgments (14:1—26:19), I would like to give a further word concerning division and apostasy.

The general advices and warnings in Deuteronomy 5:32—11:32 are rather general, but in chapters twelve and thirteen they are very specific and definite. According to Moses' word in Deuteronomy 12 and 13, we must avoid division and reject apostasy. In chapter twelve he charges us to keep the ground of oneness among God's people, and in chapter thirteen he is very definite in the condemnation of apostasy. The children of Israel were not allowed to tolerate apostasy even in someone as close as a brother, son, daughter, or wife (13:6-9). Instead of loving the apostates, they were to deal with them severely. God does not tolerate apostasy, and they likewise were not to tolerate it. God hates apostasy and He condemns division.

HERESY DAMAGING THE PERSON OF CHRIST

Regarding apostasy and division, the Old Testament and the New Testament are the same. The New Testament term for apostasy is *heresy*. Apostasy and heresy are an insult to the person of God. In the Old Testament the apostates turned away from God and followed idols. That was an insult to God, and He could not tolerate it. In the New Testament the heretics denied that Jesus Christ is God incarnated to become a man. Such a denial is heresy, New Testament apostasy. This heresy damages the person of

Christ. In both the Old Testament and the New Testament, God does not tolerate apostasy or heresy.

DIVISION DAMAGING THE BODY OF CHRIST

The Lord also will not tolerate division. The Lord hates division because it destroys His people as His expression. In the Old Testament the children of Israel were God's people for His corporate expression. In the New Testament the corporate expression of the Lord is the Body of Christ. Whereas heresy insults and damages the person of Christ, division damages the Body of Christ. Division kills the Body of Christ and cuts it into pieces. Because heresy damages the Head and because division kills the Body, the Lord, in both the New Testament and the Old Testament, will never tolerate heresy and division.

TURNING AWAY FROM THE DIVISIVE ONES

Some saints may feel that instead of rejecting the divisive ones, we should receive them and love them. Being kindhearted, these saints may say, "Yes, this brother is wrong, and he is divisive. But why should we reject him? Should we not cover him with love?" However, the crucial matter here is that we should not tolerate what the Lord does not tolerate.

Concerning the divisive ones, we need to consider Paul's word in Romans 16:17. "I beg you, brothers, keep a watchful eye on those who make divisions and causes of falling contrary to the teaching which you have learned, and turn away from them." Romans 14 and 15 indicate that in the matter of receiving the believers Paul is generous, broad-minded, and all-embracing. But after greeting so many saints in chapter sixteen, he suddenly gives a word of warning about divisive ones, telling us to keep a watchful eye on them and turn away from them. Paul does not tell us to love these ones or to sympathize with them. Instead of sympathizing with those who make divisions and causes of falling, we are charged by Paul to turn away from them. The reason we must turn away from those who cause

divisions is that division is extremely serious—it destroys the Body of Christ.

APOSTASY AND DIVISION DAMAGING GOD'S ECONOMY

If we get into the depth of the Word, we will understand why Moses speaks a word concerning apostasy immediately after he gives a charge concerning division. It is very significant that Moses deals with division in Deuteronomy 12 and with apostasy in Deuteronomy 13. These two matters—division and apostasy—go together. Apostasy, or heresy, insults God Himself and damages the person of Christ, and division damages God's people as His corporate expression. This means that apostasy and division damage the entire economy of God. Because the apostasy and division are so damaging, they must be dealt with.

We ourselves may not have anything to do with either division or apostasy, but this does not mean there will not be any problem among the saints regarding these matters. There may be a problem, especially with division. The ones who make divisions are very aggressive in contacting the saints. Furthermore, they may put on a "mask" and try to entice you by appearing to be nice, humble, and loving. Certain divisive ones have been practicing this among us. Suppose someone comes to you in a "humble" manner, saying, "I would like to have some fellowship with you. I have not seen you for a long time, and I miss you very much. How have you been doing?" If someone approaches you in this way, you need to be careful. The apparent kindness, love, and humility of such a person may actually be a mask to hide his divisive intent. We need to beware of the masks of the divisive ones.

DISCERNING WHETHER OR NOT ONE IS SPREADING THE GERMS OF DIVISION

When some hear this word, they may say, "How can we tell who is divisive and who is not divisive? How can we discern who is wearing a mask and who is not wearing one? Besides, among the divisive ones are there not some who are innocent? Perhaps the one contacting us is innocent."

The person contacting you may be innocent, but, even though he is not knowledgeable, he may nevertheless be carrying the "germs" of division. You may then be infected with these germs, which can multiply very quickly. An innocent one may be full of germs, and, through his contact with you, these germs can be transferred to you and cause you to be infected unconsciously.

How can you discern whether or not the person contacting you is transmitting to you the germs of division? You need to be very careful in your listening. If the one speaking with you is living and full of life, without any germs of death, the more you talk with him, the more living you will become. The divine life within you will rise higher and higher. However, if the one contacting you is spreading the germs of death, the more you talk with him, the more you will be deadened. The life within you will go down. As long as your contact with this person causes you to be deadened, this is an indication that this one is spreading the germs of death. Such a brother or sister may speak to you in a nice, intimate, loving, and humble way, but as you listen, you inwardly sense that you are going down. By this you can discern whether or not the one contacting you is spreading the germs of death and division.

Furthermore, if you continue to listen to the speaking of such a divisive one, you may find that questions are rising up within you. Questions are often Satan's way of tempting us. In tempting Eve the serpent said to her, "Hath God said?" (Gen. 3:1). As I pointed out in the Life-study of Genesis, a question mark is shaped like a serpent standing up and asking, "Hath God said?" After talking with a divisive one, you may be filled with questions—questions about the church and about the Lord's recovery. These questions may cause you to become cold toward the church life. First, you may stop coming to the meetings of the church. Eventually you may stop praying and reading the Word. Instead of being revived by the Lord each morning, you are killed.

One of the best ways for germs to spread is through eating things that are unclean. This indicates that in order

to be kept away from the germs of death and division, we need to have a proper spiritual diet. Therefore, as we will see in the next message, in Deuteronomy 14 Moses turns from the matters of division and apostasy to the matter of the holy diet.

LIFE-STUDY OF DEUTERONOMY

MESSAGE FOURTEEN

THE REHEARSAL OF THE LAW

(7)

Scripture Reading: Deut. 14:3-21, 28-29; 26:12-15; 15:1-11

In the foregoing messages we covered the general advices and warnings (5:32—13:18). In this message we will begin to consider the rehearsal of the general statutes and judgments.

IV. THE REHEARSAL OF THE GENERAL STATUTES AND JUDGMENTS

Deuteronomy 14:1—26:19 covers the general statutes and judgments. The word *judgments* here actually means ordinances. When a judgment is added to a statute, the statute becomes an ordinance.

A. Concerning the Holy Diet

Whereas chapter thirteen is concerned with apostasy, chapter fourteen is concerned with eating. Verses 3 through 21 cover the matter of the holy diet. We need to be careful regarding our eating because germs can be transmitted by the food we eat.

1. Signifying What Kind of People Are Not Clean and What Kind Are Clean

The holy diet signifies what kind of people are not clean and what kind are clean, good for the people of God to contact, that they may be kept holy. In God's view, to contact people is to eat, that is, to receive something into us as a sustaining substance.

As God's holy people, we need to take care concerning not

only division and apostasy but also concerning the kind of people we contact. We human beings need to be social; we cannot live alone, having no contact with others. As we contact people, we need to be careful, for in our contact with others we may receive what they are, what they have, and what they know. Contacting people is a kind of eating, and, as dieticians say, we are what we eat. This means that eventually we will be like those whom we contact. Therefore, in contacting others we need to be discerning regarding who is unclean and who is clean. (For the details on this matter, please see the Life-study message on Leviticus 11.)

2. Boiling a Kid in Its Mother's Milk Being Prohibited

"You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk" (14:21b). The mother's milk is for nourishing, but boiling a kid equals killing. This indicates that in the eyes of God, any living cattle that were not properly killed were not clean for eating, that is, for contacting.

The milk in verse 21b typifies the milk of the word of God (the life supply of Christ) used to nourish new believers (1 Pet. 2:2; Heb. 5:12-13; 1 Cor. 3:2). Not boiling a kid in its mother's milk typifies that the milk of the word of God should not be used to kill new believers in Christ. We should use the milk of the word, Christ as the life supply, to nourish newborn Christians, not to kill them. However, many Christian teachers have used the word of God for "boiling" others instead of for feeding them. This is what the divisive ones are doing today. The divisive ones use verses from the Bible to boil, to kill, the new ones. They are boiling the kids in their mothers' milk. In practicing the new way, we should use Bible verses to nourish the new believers. The word of Christ which produces milk should be used always to nourish the babes in Christ, never to kill them.

On the one hand, we should not eat without discernment; on the other hand, we should not allow a kid to be boiled in

its mother's milk. We need to help the young ones and to protect them from being boiled by the divisive ones.

In Deuteronomy 12 and 13 we see that we must hate and avoid both division and apostasy. In order to do this, we need to be discerning in our contact with people, as indicated in chapter fourteen. Certain ones may be carrying the germs of division or heresy. If we contact such ones without discernment, we will be infected, perhaps unconsciously, for these germs are very contagious. Once a saint has been infected in this way, he will become cold toward the recovery and toward the church life. Therefore, in order to avoid division and apostasy, we should be careful in contacting people. Also, we need to protect our young ones from those who would use the milk of the word to boil them, to kill them.

B. Concerning Aid to the Needy

Several portions of Deuteronomy speak concerning aid to the needy (14:28-29; 26:12-15; 15:1-18; 23:15-16, 19-20; 24:6, 10-15, 17-22).

1. The Aid by the Tithes at the End of Every Three Years

a. These Tithes Being Laid within Their Gates as a Surplus to Show the Fullness of the Rich Produce of the Good Land

The statute concerning aid to the needy ones has many items. First, there was to be the aid by the tithes at the end of every three years (14:28-29; 26:12-15). God charged the children of Israel to offer Him the tithes yearly. Every year a tithe of their produce was to be offered to God. In addition, there was a further command regarding tithes in 14:28. "At the end of every three years you shall bring forth all the tithe of your produce for that year and lay it within your gates." Every three years they were to lay aside another tithe within their gates as a surplus to show the fullness of the rich produce of the good land.

b. To Take Care of the Need of the Levites, the Sojourners, the Orphans, and the Widows, That Jehovah Their God Might Bless Them More

What was laid within their gates was to be for the needy. "And the Levite shall come—for he has no portion nor inheritance with you—as well as the sojourner, the orphan, and the widow who are within your gates; and they shall eat and be satisfied, so that Jehovah your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do" (14:29). The Levites, who had no job or other source of income but who lived on God, serving Him full-time, were to be taken care of in this way. There was also to be provision for the sojourner, the orphan, and the widow. Today we should also care for the needy ones among us. Under the Lord's covering, I can testify that I cannot bear to see that any saints are lacking what they need to live properly; I have the feeling that I must do something to meet their need. In the Lord's recovery, we need to care for the full-timers and the other needy ones.

Those who gave the tithes of their produce in the third year, the year of the tithe, could say before Jehovah their God, "I have removed what is holy from out of my house, and I have also given it to the Levite and the sojourner, to the orphan and the widow, according to Your whole commandment, which You have commanded me; I have not transgressed any of Your commandments and I have not forgotten them. I have not eaten any of it in my sorrow, nor have I removed any of it while I was unclean, nor have I given any of it to the dead. I have listened to the voice of Jehovah my God; I have done according to all that You have commanded me" (26:13-14). Even if the one who gave the tithe was in sorrow or had suffering, he did not eat for his happiness what was reserved for the needy. Thus, the giving one could go on to pray, "Look down from Your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless Your people Israel, and the ground which You have given to us, as You swore to our fathers, a land flowing with milk and honey" (v. 15). This indicates that if we, for the sake of God, take care of the needy ones, God will surely bless our labor and undertakings. This blessing

will be a return to us from God. Apparently we are giving; actually we are receiving. Nevertheless, to give is much more blessed than to receive.

In Deuteronomy 13 we see that God takes care of Himself, and in Deuteronomy 12, that He takes care of His people as His expression. Now in the verses concerning aid to the needy we see that God takes care of all those who are part of His expression. In New Testament terms, this means that Christ takes care of every member of His Body. We all should follow this pattern. We should love the Lord Jesus, we should love His Body, and we should take care of the needs of all the members. In caring for the needs of the saints, it is best that we prepare for this by having a budget. This means that in a regular way we should lay something aside to use in taking care of needy saints. We need to be regular in this matter because God's people are living on earth in a practical way. The life of God's people is practical, so the meeting of the needs should be practical and also regular.

2. The Release at the End of Every Seven Years

In Deuteronomy 15:1-6 Moses gave a charge concerning the release at the end of every seven years. "At the end of every seven years you shall issue a release" (v. 1). Every creditor was to release that which he had lent to his neighbor. An Israelite was to do this even if he had lent something to his neighbor shortly before the year of release. This requirement regarding the release at the end of every seven years is related to God's way of balancing the social wealth and natural resources among His people. We may say that God was practicing a "divine communism."

"This is the manner of the release: Every creditor shall release that which he has lent to his neighbor; he shall not exact it from his neighbor or his brother, for Jehovah's release has been proclaimed" (v. 2). However, there was a limitation to the heavenly communism: the children of Israel were to release their brothers only, not the foreigners (v. 3). If God's people released that which they had lent to their brothers, they would bring in God's blessing that there would

be no poor among them (vv. 4-5). Further, because of God's blessing, they would lend to many nations and rule over many nations. "Jehovah your God will bless you as He has promised you. And you will lend to many nations, but you will not borrow; and you will rule over many nations, but they will not rule over you" (v. 6).

3. The Lending to the Poor Brothers

God's people were not only to practice the release every seven years; they were also required to lend to the poor brothers. Deuteronomy 15:7-11 speaks about the lending to the poor brothers. Some of the people might have lost money during the year of release. As a result, they might have decided never to lend anything again. Thus, there was the need for an ordinance to govern the requirement regarding lending to the poor.

a. Not Hardening Their Heart nor Closing Up Their Hand from the Poor Brother

The children of Israel were not to harden their heart nor close up their hand from the poor brother (v. 7). Suppose a poor brother had once asked an Israelite for a loan, and this brother was released from his debt in the year of release. If this poor brother should ask the same person for another loan after the year of release, that person might harden his heart and close up his hand. However, this was forbidden by the ordinance governing lending to the poor brothers.

b. Opening Their Hand to the Brother and Lending Enough for His Need

The people were required to open their hand to the poor one and to lend enough for his need in whatever he lacked (v. 8). Today we should not be reluctant to give to the poor brothers among us. When we give to meet the needs of the poor brothers, the Lord will return to us much more than we gave. All the believers who give willingly can testify of this.

c. Being Careful That There Not Be a Base Thought in Their Heart

In verse 9 the children of Israel were warned about not having a base thought in their heart with respect to lending to the poor brothers. "Be careful that there is not within your heart a base thought like this: The seventh year, the year of release, is near; and your eye be evil against your poor brother and you do not give him anything, and he cry against you to Jehovah, and it become sin to you." For an Israelite to refuse to lend something to a poor brother because the year of release was near was for the eye of that Israelite to be evil against the poor brother.

d. Their Heart Not to Be Displeased When the Giving Was Done

"You must give to him, and your heart shall not be displeased when you give to him; for on account of this matter Jehovah your God will bless you in all your work and in all your undertakings" (v. 10). The children of Israel were to be happy after the giving was done, knowing that God would bless them. We today should not be displeased when giving to the poor; instead, we should be happy, knowing that God will bless us and return much more to us.

e. The Poor Not Ceasing in the Land

"The poor will not cease being in the land; therefore I am commanding you, saying, You must open your hand to your brother, to the needy one with you, and to the poor one with you in your land" (v. 11). There would always be the poor in the land as a test to the children of Israel.

Chapters twelve through fifteen of Deuteronomy reveal that we need to hate apostasy, avoid division, be discerning in contacting people, protect our spiritual children, and be generous in giving. We need to realize that we will never suffer loss as a result of giving to the Lord. The Lord is rich, but some of His people are poor. Thus, we need to take care of the full-timers (the Levites), the sojourners, the orphans, the widows, and the poor brothers. We all should be those

who avoid division and apostasy, who contact others with discernment, who protect the spiritual children, and whose heart and hand are always open to give something to help the needy ones.

LIFE-STUDY OF DEUTERONOMY

MESSAGE FIFTEEN

THE REHEARSAL OF THE LAW

(8)

Scripture Reading: Deut. 15:12-18; 23:15-16, 19-20; 24:6, 10-15, 17-22

In this message on the rehearsing of the general statutes and judgments, we will consider some further matters concerning aid to the needy.

4. The Freeing of a Hebrew Male Servant or Female Servant

Deuteronomy 15:12-18 speaks of the freeing of a Hebrew male servant or female servant. Such a servant was one of God's people who sold himself to be someone's slave.

a. The Servants Being Set Free after Six Years of Service

"If your brother, a Hebrew man or woman, is sold to you, he shall serve you six years; but in the seventh year you shall set him free" (v. 12). The reason a Hebrew servant was to be set free after six years of service is that God is a God of rest. After doing the work of creation for six days, He rested on the seventh day (Gen. 2:2). The people created by God were also to work for six days and rest on the seventh day. In Deuteronomy 15:12, the principle of resting after a period of work is applied to a Hebrew servant. From this we see that God is not only wise but also that He sympathizes with man. God is concerned for man and cares for man.

b. The Master Not Sending the Servants Away Empty-handed but Supplying Them Richly

"When you set him free, you shall not send him away

empty-handed; you must supply him richly out of your flock, your threshing floor, and your winepress; as Jehovah your God has blessed you, so shall you give to him" (vv. 13-14). God is not a God of scarcity but a God of riches, plenty, and surplus. For this reason, the master was to richly supply the servant who was being released.

c. The Servants Who Would Not Go Forth from Their Masters Because They Loved Their Masters and Their Households Having Their Ears Run Through with an Awl and Being Servants Forever

"If he says to you, I will not go forth from you, because he loves you and your household, for it goes well with him to be with you; you shall take an awl and run it through his ear and into the door, and he shall be your servant forever; and thus also shall you do to your female servant" (vv. 16-17). This is an excellent type of us as slaves of the Lord Jesus. We love Him, we love His family, and, not wanting to leave Him, we tell Him that we want to remain in His service forever. Whenever we make such a free-will offering to the Lord Jesus, He will never reject it but will always accept it. Then He will run an "awl" through our "ear," representing us, and into the "door," representing God. The ear thus becomes one with the door, and there is much traffic between the ear and the door. From that time onward, our relationship with the Lord is one in which we have a listening ear. We are at the door, waiting to hear the voice of the Master and to serve Him.

All the full-timers have had their ears "awled" by the Lord. We may say that they have had their ears "nailed" to the doorpost. Now there is a hole in their ear. This hole is not for an earring (something for beautification) but for service, which requires a hearing ear. If we have a hearing ear, nothing will keep us away from our Master.

As the Slave of God, the Lord Jesus had His ear run through with an awl (Isa. 50:5). On His ear there was a hole, so between Him and God the Father, whom He served, there

was a thorough traffic. The situation with us should be the same.

For a Hebrew servant to be his master's servant forever meant that he gave up his liberty and no longer had any freedom. At the end of six years, the servant was free to go, but once he decided to stay and had his ear run through with an awl, he would never again have the freedom to leave. I can testify that, as a servant of the Lord, I consider myself as having no freedom and no future. In a very real sense, I am "finished," for my ear has been nailed to the doorpost of my God. I hope that the young ones will have this kind of feeling about themselves and that they will say, "I belong to the Lord Jesus forever. My ear has been nailed to His doorpost, and I have given up my freedom."

d. The Masters Not Viewing It as a Hardship When They Set the Servants Free

"You shall not view it as a hardship when you set him free; for he served you for six years, saving you double the wages of a hired hand, and Jehovah your God will bless you in all that you do" (Deut. 15:18). The masters might have felt that they had lost both the cost of buying the servant and the servant himself, and this could have caused them to be sorrowful. Therefore, Moses, an old man who surely knew human nature, charged the masters not to view the release of a servant as a hardship. They were not to be greedy or sad but happy, realizing that the servant had saved them much in wages and that Jehovah their God would bless them.

5. Taking Care of an Escaped Slave

In 23:15-16 Moses gave a word about taking care of an escaped slave.

a. An Israelite Not to Deliver to His Master a Slave Who Had Escaped from His Master to Him

"You shall not deliver to his master the slave who has escaped from his master to you" (v. 15). Contrary to what we might think, God did not allow an Israelite to send an escaped

slave back to his master. Rather, the one to whom the slave escaped was to help the slave.

b. The Slave Dwelling in Israel, Even in the Place Which He Chose among the Towns

"He shall dwell with you, even in your midst, in the place which he chooses among your towns, wherever he pleases; you shall not oppress him" (v. 16). It seems that, according to God's arrangement, a slave had a right to escape and then to dwell in the place of his choice. This reveals what kind of heart our God has. God's heart is always willing to forgive and to release, not to condemn. This indicates that we should have the heart to forgive our brothers in the Lord.

6. Not Making a Brother Pay Interest

An Israelite was not to make a brother pay interest on money, on food, or on anything on which one pays interest (v. 19). An Israelite could make a foreigner pay interest but was not to make a brother do so, in order that Jehovah his God might bless him in all his undertakings (v. 20). This was a matter involving not only an Israelite and his brother but also God, who is above all and sees everything.

7. Taking a Handmill or an Upper Millstone as a Pledge

"One shall not take a handmill or an upper millstone as a pledge, for he takes the livelihood as a pledge" (24:6). The Hebrew word for "livelihood" here is *nephesh*, which means soul, life. In this verse we see that an Israelite was not allowed to take one's handmill or upper millstone as a pledge, for that would be to take one's livelihood as a pledge. God would not tolerate this. Even if a borrower had nothing other than a handmill or upper millstone to give as a pledge, the lender was not to take such a pledge. Instead, he was to make the loan without a pledge. This statute reveals that God is loving and full of care.

8. Concerning Taking a Pledge from the Borrower

Deuteronomy 24:10-13 speaks concerning taking a pledge from the borrower.

a. The Lender Not Entering the Borrower's House but Standing Outside

When the children of Israel lent anything to their neighbor, they were not to enter his house in order to take his pledge (v. 10). Rather, they were to stand outside, and the borrower was to bring the pledge out to them (v. 11). These small points indicate that our God is detailed in His care for His people.

b. The Lender Returning the Pledge before the Sun Went Down

Verses 12 and 13 go on to say, "If he is a poor man, you shall not sleep with his pledge; you must return his pledge to him when the sun goes down, so that he may sleep in his mantle and bless you; and it will be righteousness to you before Jehovah your God." If the lender did not return the pledge by sundown, the borrower could accuse him before God, saying, "Lord, my lender will not let me have my mantle, and I have nothing to sleep in." Not returning the mantle could cause the lender to have suffering instead of blessing. But if he returned the mantle before the sun went down, the borrower would bless him, and God would count the lender's returning the mantle as righteousness before Him.

9. Concerning the Wages Given to the Poor Hired Servant

In 24:14 and 15 we have a word concerning the wages given to the poor hired servant. The children of Israel were not to oppress a poor and needy hired servant among their brothers or among the sojourners with them (v. 14). On the day that the hired servant earned his wages, the children of Israel were to give him his wages before the sun went down (v. 15a). They were not to owe anything to the one who worked

for them. Otherwise, he could cry against them to Jehovah, and it would become sin in them (v. 15b).

10. In Remembering the Need of a Sojourner, an Orphan, or a Widow

In 24:17-22 we see that the children of Israel were to remember the need of a sojourner, an orphan, or a widow. This indicates that the children of Israel were not only to give to aid the needy ones but were also to remember their need. Instead of waiting for the needy ones to come to them, they were to remember them and then do something for them.

a. The Children of Israel Not to Distort Justice Due a Sojourner or an Orphan, or to Take a Widow's Garment as a Pledge

The children of Israel were not to distort justice due a sojourner or an orphan, nor were they to take a widow's garment as a pledge (v. 17). They were to remember that they were slaves in Egypt and that Jehovah their God had ransomed them from there (v. 18).

b. Not Turning Back to Gather a Forgotten Sheaf in the Field but Leaving It for the Sojourner, the Orphan, and the Widow

When the children of Israel reaped their harvest in their field and they forgot a sheaf in the field, they were not to turn back to gather it. This sheaf was to be for the sojourner, the orphan, and the widow, in order that Jehovah their God might bless them in all their undertakings (v. 19). What was left in the field was to be God's harvest for the poor ones. If the one who reaped the harvest did not turn back to gather the forgotten sheaf but left it for the poor, this would give God an opportunity to bless this one in all his undertakings, that is, in all his business.

c. Beating Down the Fruit of Their Olive Tree and Not Going over the Boughs Afterwards

When the children of Israel beat down the fruit of their

olive tree, they were not to go over the boughs afterwards. The olives that remained on the tree were to be for the sojourner, the orphan, and the widow (v. 20).

d. Cutting the Grapes from Their Vineyard and Not Gleaning Afterwards

When the children of Israel cut the grapes from their vineyard, they were not to glean afterwards. The remaining grapes were to be for the sojourner, the orphan, and the widow (v. 21).

After giving this statute, the Lord said, "You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I am commanding you to do this thing" (v. 22). For the people not to glean after cutting the grapes from their vineyard was for them to remember that they were slaves in Egypt. They were to have such a remembrance and leave some grapes in the vineyard for the needy ones.

Suppose the owner of a vineyard, knowing that he was not allowed to glean after cutting the grapes, decided to be very careful and strict in cutting the grapes, trying not to leave any clusters of grapes behind. The one who was so strict would have been dealt with strictly by God. God would have withdrawn His blessing from the work of such a strict one. At the end of the year, he would not have much profit. But the one who was not strict in cutting the grapes but left clusters for the needy ones would be blessed by God. At the end of the year, he might be surprised to see that, because of God's blessing, his profit greatly exceeded his expectations.

The statutes and judgments concerning aid to the needy indicate that God is living and real. In all that we do in the matters of lending and harvesting, we should remember God's need with respect to the needy ones. If we remember this need, then secretly God will remember us and bless us in all our undertakings, in all our business. We all have to believe this.

As we are doing our business, we should remember the needy ones among God's children and have a heart toward them. If we have a heart to care for the needy ones, spontaneously we will set aside a portion for them. God will

see this and He will be happy about it. Then, in a secret way, He will come in to bless our work or business. Not only will we be blessed, but the body of God's people will be under His blessing. As a result, instead of scarcity, there will constantly be surplus upon surplus. This continual surplus will show forth the riches of God.

LIFE-STUDY OF DEUTERONOMY

MESSAGE SIXTEEN

THE REHEARSAL OF THE LAW

(9)

Scripture Reading: Deut. 14:22-27; 15:19-23; 16:1-17, 21-22; 17:2-7; 23:21-23; 26:1-11

In this message we will consider those general statutes and judgments which are concerned with the worship of God.

C. Concerning the Worship of God

After speaking about taking care of the needy ones, Moses came to the matter of taking care of God's need, a matter which concerns the worship of God.

1. By Giving Tithes of All the Produce of Both Their Cattle and Their Crop

In their worship of God, the children of Israel were required to give tithes of all the produce of both their cattle and their crop (14:22-27). They had to give God one-tenth of their income from the field or from their cattle.

a. To Be Offered at the Place Which Jehovah Would Choose for His Habitation

"You shall eat before Jehovah your God, in the place where He will choose to cause His name to dwell, the tithe of your grain, of your new wine, and of your fresh oil and the firstborn of your herd and flock, that you may learn to fear Jehovah your God always" (v. 23). Here we see that the children of Israel did not have the right to offer their tithes at any place of their choice. Rather, they were to bring the tithes to the place where Jehovah would choose to set His name and to

have His habitation. This means that the tithes were to be offered at the unique center for the worship of God.

b. To Be Eaten before God with Joy

In the place of God's choice, the place for God's name and habitation and the place of the altar, the offerings were to be eaten by the people before God with joy (vv. 23, 26). This means that the tithes were to be enjoyed with God. To eat "before Jehovah" is to eat with Him. The children of Israel offered the tithes to God and then they enjoyed before God and with God what they had offered to God. This indicates that God wants us to enjoy His Christ with Him at His chosen place. Whenever we come together in the Lord's name, in the spirit, and with the cross (the altar), we meet with God through Christ. We come together to enjoy Christ with God.

c. To Be Enjoyed with the Levites Who Lived with Them

"You shall not forsake the Levite who is within your gates, for he has no portion nor inheritance with you" (v. 27). This verse shows us that God does not forget the Levites, those who serve Him full-time and who, not having inheritance and employment, live on Him. Therefore, in offering the tithes to God and in enjoying the tithes with God, God's people were to include the Levites. They were to enjoy the tithes with the Levites who lived with them.

d. Learning to Fear God Always

The children of Israel were to eat the tithes before God in the place of His choice so that they might learn to fear God always (v. 23). Suppose an Israelite had said, "There is no need for me to bring this one-tenth to the place God has chosen. I can enjoy it at home with the Levites in my town." To have such an attitude is to offend God and not to fear Him. The people had to give their tithes exactly according to God's regulations. If they did this, they would learn to fear God always.

2. By Offering the Firstborn Males of the Herd and of the Flock

In 15:19-23 we see that the children of Israel were to worship God also by offering the firstborn males of the herd and of the flock.

a. To Be Sanctified to Jehovah God

"All firstborn males that are brought forth in your herd and flock you shall sanctify to Jehovah your God; you shall not do work with your firstborn ox, nor shall you shear your firstborn sheep" (v. 19). Here we see that the children of Israel could not use for their own purpose the firstborn of the herd and of the flock, which were to be sanctified to God. Because the firstborn of the ox belonged to God, it could not be used for work. Likewise, because the firstborn of the sheep belonged to God, it could not be shorn. The people had no right to use what had been sanctified to God.

b. To Be Eaten before Jehovah God in the Place Which He Would Choose

"You and your household shall eat it before Jehovah your God year by year in the place which Jehovah will choose" (v. 20). The firstborn, like the tithes, were to be eaten, but only in the place which Jehovah God would choose.

c. Not Sacrificing to Jehovah God Any Animal Having a Blemish, Lameness, or Blindness

Any animal having a blemish, lameness, or blindness was not to be sacrificed to Jehovah God (v. 21), for that was an abomination to Him (17:1). Such animals could be eaten, except for the blood, in the place where the people lived (15:22-23). From this we see that a certain portion was to be given to God in the place of His choice and enjoyed there with Him; however, other portions, having nothing to do with the worship of God, could be enjoyed by the people where they lived.

3. By Keeping the Three Main Annual Festivals

According to 16:1-17, the children of Israel were to worship God by keeping the three main annual festivals: the Feast of Unleavened Bread (the Feast of Passover), the Feast of Weeks (the Feast of Pentecost), and the Feast of Tabernacles. These festivals respectively signify the feasts of the redemption of Christ, the producing of the church, and the coming kingdom. (For the details, please see the life-study on Leviticus 23.)

4. By Not Having Any Mixture of Idolatry

In Deuteronomy 16:21-22 the children of Israel were told to worship God by not having any mixture of idolatry. There is a great deal of this kind of mixture in the Roman Catholic Church.

a. The Planting of an Asherah of Any Kind of Tree beside the Altar of Jehovah Being Prohibited

"You shall not plant for yourself an Asherah of any kind of tree beside the altar of Jehovah your God, which you will make for yourself" (v. 21). An Asherah was an image of a female deity, and the altar signifies the cross. Catholicism has brought in certain pagan things and added them to the cross to produce a mixture. Books such as The Two Babylons give the sources of the mixture in Catholicism.

b. The Erecting of a Pillar, Which Jehovah Hates, Being Prohibited

The erecting of pillars was also prohibited. "Nor shall you erect for yourself a pillar, something which Jehovah your God hates" (v. 22).

5. By Stoning to Death Those Who Transgressed God's Covenant and Served Other Gods

In 17:2-7 we see that God's people were required to stone to death those who transgressed God's covenant and served other gods, bowing down to them or to the sun, the moon, or any of the host of heaven. In this way, the children of

Israel would utterly remove this abomination, the evil, from the midst of the people.

6. By Keeping a Vow to Jehovah

Deuteronomy 23:21-23 speaks concerning worshipping God by keeping a vow to Him.

a. The Children of Israel Not Delaying to Pay the Vow They Had Vowed to Jehovah Their God

"When you vow a vow to Jehovah your God, you shall not delay in paying it; for Jehovah your God would certainly require it of you and it will become sin in you" (v. 21). To vow a vow to God and then not fulfill it, not carry it out, is sin. Once we make a vow to the Lord, we should fulfill it as soon as possible.

Some of the saints may want to make a vow to the Lord to serve Him full-time. Actually, God is "hungry" and "thirsty" for us to do this. He wants people to be for Him and to serve Him full-time. The worldly people, although created by God, have forgotten Him and have given Him up. They are busy in the world taking care of themselves and their own interests, leaving God hungry and thirsty, with hardly anyone willing to serve Him full-time. God is eager for the people created by Him to come back to Him. He is happy when some who have returned to Him promise to serve Him full-time. God is waiting for more of His people to do this.

b. It Not Becoming Sin in Them If They Refrained from Vowing

"But if you refrain from vowing, it will not become sin in you" (v. 22). God is a God who respects our free will. This means that He does not compel us to offer ourselves to Him. God is thirsty for full-timers, but promising to serve Him in this way is a matter of our free will. If we do not make such a vow, God will not count it as sin that we do not vow. But if we vow a vow to the Lord, we must fulfill it. Otherwise, the failure to fulfill the vow will be counted as sin.

c. Keeping and Doing
What Proceeded out of Their Lips

"What proceeds out of your lips you shall keep and do, as you have vowed to Jehovah your God voluntarily, which you have promised with your mouth" (v. 23). Those who made a vow voluntarily, promising God to do a certain thing, were required to keep and do what proceeded out of their lips. Today, those who promise to serve the Lord full-time should keep their promise and fulfill their vow.

7. By Offering Some of the First of All the Fruit of the Good Land after Entering It and Possessing It as an Inheritance

After the children of Israel had entered and possessed the good land as an inheritance, they were to offer to God some of the first of all the fruit of their land (26:1-11).

a. The Children of Israel Bringing
Some of the First of All the Fruit from Their Land
and Taking It to the Place Where
Jehovah Would Choose to Cause His Name to Dwell

"When you enter the land which Jehovah your God is giving to you as an inheritance and you possess it and dwell in it, you shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the earth which you shall bring from your land, which Jehovah your God is giving to you, and you shall put it in a basket and go to the place where Jehovah your God will choose to cause His name to dwell" (vv. 1-2). This offering was something in addition to the tithes. Like the tithes, a portion of the first of all fruit was to be brought to the place which Jehovah would choose. At that place, they and God were to enjoy this portion offered to God.

b. Going to the Serving Priest
and Making a Declaration to Jehovah Their God

In worshipping God by offering some of the first of all the fruit of the good land, the children of Israel were to go to the serving priest and make a declaration. "You shall go to

the priest who is serving in those days and say to him, I declare unto Jehovah your God today that I have entered the land which Jehovah swore to our fathers to give to us" (v. 3). Now that God had fulfilled His promise concerning the good land, they were to bring some of the fruit of the land for God's enjoyment.

c. The Priest Taking the Offering and Placing It before the Altar of Jehovah Their God, and the Children of Israel Responding and Relating Their History before Him

The priest was to take the offering and place it before the altar of Jehovah their God (v. 4). Then the children of Israel were to respond and relate before Him their history, how Jehovah had rescued them from the Egyptians' oppression, delivering them out of Egypt, and had brought them to the good land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and how they had just brought the first of the fruit of the ground of the good land, which Jehovah their God had given them (vv. 5-10a). Then they were to place this fruit before Jehovah their God and bow down to Him (v. 10b). They could not enjoy the first fruit of the land until they had offered it to God.

d. They, the Levites, and the Sojourners among Them Rejoicing in All the Good Which Jehovah Their God Had Given to Them

"You and the Levite and the sojourner in your midst shall rejoice in all the good which Jehovah your God has given to you and your household" (v. 11). They were to remember God and all that He had given to them.

The seven points covered in this message show us the proper way to worship God. Today we need to worship God with Christ. This is the reason the Lord Jesus said that we must worship the Father in spirit and in reality (John 4:23-24). For us to worship God in our spirit means that we worship Him in the mingled spirit, in our spirit mingled with the divine Spirit. For us to worship God in reality means that we worship Him with Christ as the reality of all the offerings.

To take care of the proper worship of God is to take care

of God's need. God is hungry and thirsty for real worship. John 4 reveals that the Father is seeking real worshippers, those who will worship Him in a proper way. We in the Lord's recovery should all be such worshippers.

If we would worship God properly, we need to honor His name, meet in the place of His habitation, and worship in the place where the altar (the cross) is. When we meet for worship, we should be gathered into the Lord's name (Matt. 18:20) and be kept in His name. We should not have any other name. Since the Lord's dwelling place is in our regenerated spirit (Eph. 2:22), we also need to exercise our spirit, which is mingled with the divine Spirit. Here in the mingled spirit we may offer Christ to God for His enjoyment and also for our enjoyment. This enjoyment satisfies God and makes Him happy. We will be satisfied also, and thus there will be a mutual satisfaction. Furthermore, under the Lord's grace, we need to learn the lessons of the cross, not doing anything by ourselves but realizing that we have been crucified with Christ and that Christ lives in us (Gal. 2:20). In every meeting we should be able to declare that we live in the Lord's name and in the mingled spirit and that we do everything through the cross. In this way we become a living testimony to the God in whom we believe and whom we worship. This is the proper worship of God in the Lord's recovery.

LIFE-STUDY OF DEUTERONOMY

MESSAGE SEVENTEEN

THE REHEARSAL OF THE LAW

(10)

Scripture Reading: Deut. 16:18-20; 17:8-20; 19:15-21; 21:1-9

In this message on the rehearsing of the general statutes and judgments, we will begin to consider the matter of the divine government among the children of Israel (16:18-20; 17:8-20; 19:15-21; 21:1-9, 18-23; 22:13-30; 24:1-4, 7, 16; 25:1-3, 5-16). The portions of Deuteronomy which deal with the divine government are the word of God, not merely the word of Moses. We need to study all these portions in order to know God's mind and to know what He is thinking. God knows man and man's need, condition, and situation. Therefore, whatever God speaks regarding man is the final word.

D. Concerning the Government among the People

The divine government among God's people is neither autocracy nor democracy but theocracy. Theocracy is government by God according to what He is. In the church life today, we exercise neither autocracy, which is a kind of dictatorship, nor democracy, which is according to the opinion of the people. Instead, we honor God's authority as our government, and thus the government in the church is a theocracy.

1. The Appointing of Judges and Officers

Deuteronomy 16:18-20 speaks of the appointing of officers and judges.

a. In All the Cities according to the Tribes

There were to be judges and officers in every city. "You shall appoint for yourself judges and officers in all your cities

which Jehovah your God is giving to you, according to your tribes; and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment" (v. 18).

b. To Keep Justice

As verse 19 indicates, the appointed judges and officers were to keep God's justice. "You shall not distort justice; you shall not respect persons, nor shall you take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and perverts the words of the righteous." Here we see that the divine government firstly pays attention to justice. Any government that does not practice justice will not last. A strong government is one that is established upon justice. In such a government everything is fair, just, and righteous.

c. To Pursue Righteousness

The judges and officers were required to pursue righteousness. "Righteousness, and only righteousness, shall you pursue, in order that you may live and possess the land which Jehovah your God is giving to you" (v. 20). To keep justice is to pursue righteousness. By pursuing righteousness the children of Israel would be able to live long on the land God had given them. Without keeping justice and pursuing righteousness, they could not have lived longer in the good land.

2. The Judgment of a Complicated Civil Suit

In 17:8-13 we have a word concerning the judgment of a complicated civil suit.

a. The Case Being Brought to the Place Which Jehovah God Would Choose

The first requirement in the judgment of a complicated civil suit was to bring the case to the place which Jehovah God would choose (v. 8b).

b. The Case Being Investigated and Judged by the Levitical Priest and the Judge

"You shall come to the Levitical priests and to the judge

who is presiding in those days and investigate the matter; and they shall declare to you the sentence of judgment" (v. 9). The case was investigated mainly by the priest. First, the priest investigated the case by going to God and staying with God. Second, in the presence of God, the priest would consider God's holy word. Third, as 33:8 indicates, the Levitical priests had the breastplate with the Urim and Thummim, which provided instant enlightenment. (For the details regarding the Urim and Thummim, please see the life-study on Exodus 28:15-21.) Eventually, through the presence of God, the word of God, and the Urim and Thummim, the priest would gain a clear understanding of the divine judgment and then pass on this judgment to the presiding judge. The judge would then make a judgment according to what the priest had received from God and passed on to him. The judgment of the case, therefore, came through man, but it was of God and according to God. It was truly a matter of theocracy.

The government in the church should be neither autocratic nor democratic but theocratic. It should be like the government in 17:8 and 9. All the saints are priests, but the elders are the leading priests. As such priests, they should stay in the Lord's presence with God's holy word and with today's breastplate—the mingled spirit with Christ and the church. As they remain in the Lord's presence with the word and the mingled spirit for the church, they will receive an understanding that is according to the Lord's thought, and this will become a decision as a kind of judgment. The elders should then administrate according to this divine judgment. Thus the elders function first as the leading priests and then as the administrators.

c. The People Doing according to the Word of the Sentence Declared by the Priest and the Judge

The people were to do according to the word of the sentence declared by the priest and the judge. "You shall do according to the word of the sentence that they declare to you from the place which Jehovah will choose; and you shall be certain to do according to all that they instruct you. You

shall do according to the word of the instruction with which they instruct you and according to the judgment which they speak to you; you shall not turn aside to the right or to the left from the sentence that they declare to you" (17:10-11). The Hebrew word translated "instruction" here is *torah*, the word used elsewhere to designate the entire law (cf. v. 18).

d. The One Not Listening to the Priest or to the Judge Being Put to Death

If one would not listen to the priest or to the judge, he was to be put to death. "The man who acts presumptuously by not listening to the priest who stands to minister there before Jehovah your God, or to the judge, that man shall die. Thus you shall utterly remove the evil from Israel" (v. 12).

3. The Setting of a King over the People

Deuteronomy 17:14-20 speaks regarding the setting of a king over the people. Actually, God does not like to see that there is a king among His people. He Himself is the King; therefore, for His people to want a king means that they want someone to replace God. But God as our King should not be replaced and cannot be replaced. Yet, according to our fallen human nature, we like to have a king. This was the situation during the time of Samuel. The people wanted a king, even though this was offensive to God (1 Sam. 8:4-22). Because of their insistence, God gave them a king—Saul. Saul was not a good king, for he was not a king who was according to God's heart. Later God exercised His own choice and raised up David to replace Saul. David was a king not according to God's preference but according to God's heart (1 Sam. 13:14). In the sight of God David was the most pleasant king.

a. The King Being a Brother Chosen by God

The king had to be a brother chosen by God (Deut. 17:14-15). An unbeliever should not be a king among God's people.

b. The King Not Amassing Horses to Himself by Turning the People Back to Egypt

"He shall not amass horses to himself, and he shall not turn the people back to Egypt so that he may amass horses, since Jehovah has said to you, You shall never again return that way" (v. 16). For the king to amass horses to himself would have caused the people to fall back to Egypt. Egypt signifies the world, and horses signify the worldly means. If we use the worldly means or the worldly way, we will surely become fallen and turn back to the world.

c. The King Not Amassing Wives to Himself, So That His Heart Would Not Turn Aside

The king was not to amass wives to himself, so that his heart would not turn aside (v. 17a).

d. The King Not to Amass Silver and Gold to Himself in Great Amounts

The king was not to amass silver and gold to himself in great amounts (v. 17b).

e. The King Writing Out for Himself a Copy of the Law in a Book and Reading in It All the Days of His Life

The king was to write out for himself a copy of the law in a book, out of that which was before the Levitical priests (v. 18). The law here refers to the Pentateuch. The king was then to read in this copy of the law all the days of his life in order that he might learn to fear Jehovah his God by keeping all the words of the law (v. 19). This indicates that in ruling over the people, he first had to be ruled himself by the word of God. A proper king among the children of Israel was one who was instructed, governed, ruled, and controlled by the word of God.

The principle should be the same with the elders in the churches today. If the elders do not read the Bible and are not controlled by the word of God, they cannot administrate the church. In order to administrate, to manage, the church,

the elders must be reconstituted with the holy word of God. As a result, they will be under God's government, under God's rule and control. Then spontaneously God will be in their decisions, and the elders will represent God to manage the affairs of the church. This kind of management is theocracy.

f. The King's Heart Not Being Lifted Up above His Brothers

The king was to learn to fear God by keeping the commandments of the law so that his heart would not be lifted up above his brothers and that he might not turn aside from the commandment to the right or to the left (v. 20a). The result of the king's not doing these things would be that he and his sons would extend their days in their kingdom in the midst of Israel (v. 20b).

4. The Judgment of Any Iniquity or Any Sin

In 19:15-21 there is a word about the judgment of any iniquity or any sin.

a. To Be Done at the Word of Two or Three Witnesses

The judgment of any iniquity or any sin was to be done at the word of two or three witnesses (v. 15). It was not adequate to have just one witness. Two were required, and it was better to have three.

b. A Malicious Witness Rising Up against a Man

If a malicious witness rose up against a man to testify against him of wrongdoing, the two men who had the dispute were to stand before Jehovah, before the priests and the judges (vv. 16-17).

c. The Judges Investigating Thoroughly

The judges were to investigate the matter thoroughly (v. 18a).

d. The Children of Israel Doing to the False Witness as He Intended to Do to His Brother

If the witness was a false witness, one who testified falsely

against his brother, the children of Israel were to do to him as he intended to do to his brother (vv. 18b-19a).

e. The Evil Being Utterly Removed from the Midst of the Children of Israel

By the people's doing to the false witness what he intended to do to his brother, the evil would be utterly removed from the midst of the children of Israel (v. 19b).

f. Those Who Remained Hearing and Fearing and Never Again Doing Anything Like That Evil

Those who remained would hear and would fear and would never again do anything like that evil in their midst (v. 20). This kind of criminal judgment thus became a warning to the rest of the people.

g. Their Eye Not Pitying

Their eye was not to pity. Instead, there was to be "life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot" (v. 21).

5. The Judgment of One Who Murdered a Man, the Slain One Being Found in the Field in the Good Land

In 21:1-9 we have the judgment of one who murdered a man, the slain one being found in the field in the good land.

a. The Elders and Judges Going Out and Measuring the Distance to the Cities That Surrounded the Slain Man

The elders of the cities were to go out and measure the distance to the cities that surrounded the slain man (vv. 1-2). By doing this they would determine which city was closest to the one who had been slain. Since this was a local matter, it was done not by the priests but by the elders.

b. The Elders of the City That Was Nearest the Slain Man Bringing a Heifer to a River Valley and There Breaking Its Neck

The elders of the city that was nearest the slain man were to take a heifer of the herd which had not been worked and had not drawn the yoke, and bring the heifer down to a river valley that flowed continuously and break the neck of the heifer there (vv. 3-4).

c. The Priests, the Sons of Levi, Drawing Near, and by Their Word Every Dispute and Every Assault Being Settled

The priests, the sons of Levi, were to draw near, and by their word every dispute and every assault was to be settled (v. 5).

d. All the Elders of the Nearest City Washing Their Hands over the Broken Heifer, Declaring Their Innocence, and Praying for Jehovah to Cover His People Israel

All the elders of the nearest city were to wash their hands over the broken heifer (v. 6). Then they were to say, "Our hands have not shed this blood, nor have our eyes seen it done. Cover Your people Israel, whom You have ransomed, O Jehovah, and do not set the guilt of innocent blood in the midst of Your people Israel" (vv. 7-8a). The Hebrew word translated "cover" here is *kipper*. Literally, this word means cover over, be propitious to. After the elders had washed their hands and spoken these words, the guilt of the blood would be covered from them (v. 8b).

e. The Guilt of the Innocent Blood Being Utterly Removed from the Midst of Israel

The conclusion of the matter was that the guilt of the innocent blood would be utterly removed from the midst of Israel, when they did what was right in the sight of Jehovah (v. 9).

LIFE-STUDY OF DEUTERONOMY

MESSAGE EIGHTEEN

THE REHEARSAL OF THE LAW

(11)

Scripture Reading: Deut. 21:18-23; 22:13-30

In this message we will consider some further matters concerning the government among the people.

6. The Judgment on a Stubborn and Rebellious Son

In 21:18-21 there is a word regarding the judgment on a stubborn and rebellious son.

a. The Parents Seizing Him and Bringing Him Forth to the Elders of Their City

If a man had a stubborn and rebellious son, who did not listen to the voice of his parents, even though they chastised him, then his parents were to seize him and bring him forth to the elders of their city and to the gate of their place (vv. 18-19). Among the children of Israel in ancient times, the gate was the place of assembling the congregation.

b. The Parents Saying to the Elders That Their Son Was Stubborn and Rebellious

The parents were to say to the elders of their city that their son was stubborn and rebellious and did not listen to them, and that he was a glutton and a drunkard (v. 20).

c. All the Men of the City Stoning the Son to Death

All the men of the city were then to stone the son to death. This carrying out of the death sentence was a matter of theocracy, not of human opinion. Through the execution of

the stubborn and rebellious son, the evil was to be utterly removed from the midst of the children of Israel, and all Israel would hear and would fear (v. 21).

It would have been very difficult for the parents of a stubborn and rebellious son to bring him to the elders of their city and then to see him stoned to death. Nevertheless, the parents of such a son were required to do this. Otherwise, they would have loved their son more than God's people. To allow such an evil one to remain among the people would have been a damage to them. Therefore, the evil had to be utterly removed from among the children of Israel.

7. The Hanging of a Criminal on a Tree

Deuteronomy 21:22-23 is concerned with the hanging of a criminal on a tree. A criminal could be executed not only by being stoned but also by being hanged on a tree. Whereas Stephen was killed by being stoned (Acts 7:58-59), the Lord Jesus was killed by being crucified, that is, by being hanged on a tree. The one hanged on a tree in Deuteronomy 21:22-23 is therefore a type of the crucified Christ.

a. The Corpse of the One Hanged on a Tree Not Remaining Overnight on the Tree but Being Buried on That Day

If in a man there was a sin, a cause worthy of death, and he was put to death and was hanged on a tree, his corpse was not to remain overnight on the tree but had to be buried on that day, for he who was hanged was accursed of God (vv. 22-23). This was exactly the situation when the Lord Jesus was crucified (John 19:31). He was buried on the day of His crucifixion.

b. The One Who Was Cursed and Hanged on the Tree Being a Type of Christ

The one who was cursed and hanged on the tree was a type of Christ, who was cursed and hanged on the cross to redeem us out of the curse of the law (Gal. 3:13).

Deuteronomy 21:22-23 is an illustration of an important

principle—that the Old Testament was written not mainly for the sake of the children of Israel but mainly for the sake of Christ. The primary purpose of the Old Testament is to portray Christ in various ways. This is the reason that Luke 24:27 says of the Lord Jesus, "Beginning from Moses and from all the Prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." Furthermore, in opening the minds of His disciples to understand the Scriptures, He said to them, "All the things must be fulfilled which have been written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and Psalms concerning Me" (Luke 24:44). In Deuteronomy 21 we have a type of Christ as the One who was hanged on the tree, on the cross. Peter used the word *tree* when speaking of the Lord's crucifixion: "Who Himself carried up our sins in His body onto the tree" (1 Pet. 2:24).

8. Judgments on Matters Related to Marriage

In Deuteronomy 22:13-30 and 24:1-4 we have judgments on matters related to marriage.

a. A Newly Married Wife's Virginity Being Suspected by Her Husband

This case was to be brought by the wife's parents to the elders of the city. If the husband's charge was proved to be unfounded, the elders were to take the man, chastise him, fine him one hundred shekels of silver, and give it to the wife's father. She was to remain the man's wife; he could not send her away all his days (vv. 13-19). But if the husband's claim was true, and the wife was not found to be a virgin, they were to bring her out to the entrance of her father's house, and the men of the city were to stone her to death (vv. 20-21).

b. A Man Lying with a Woman Married to a Husband

In verse 22 we have the case of a man lying with a woman married to a husband. In this case both were to be put to death. Thus the evil of fornication was to be utterly removed from Israel. God is merciful and compassionate, but He does

not want His people to be defiled in His sight. Therefore, in a case such as that in verse 22, the sentence was to be immediate and thorough.

c. A Man Lying with an Engaged Virgin in the City

In verses 23 and 24 we have the case of a man lying with an engaged virgin in the city. Both of them were to be stoned to death at the gate of the city, because the girl did not cry out in the city and because the man humbled his neighbor's wife.

The expression *his neighbor's wife* in verse 24 indicates that, in the sight of God, engagement is equal to marriage. This means that, in God's view, once a man and woman have become engaged, they are husband and wife. Thus, canceling an engagement is equal to divorce. This is illustrated by the case of Mary and Joseph in Matthew 1. Mary had been betrothed, engaged, to Joseph, but because she was with child, he was considering to "put her away." However, the angel said to Joseph, "Fear not to take Mary your wife" (Matt. 1:20). This indicates clearly that, although they did not come together until after the birth of Jesus (v. 25), they were nevertheless married in the sight of God.

Since in the eyes of God engagement is equal to marriage, I would urge the young people to take the matter of engagement very seriously. Marriage should be approached with fear and reverence. For a sister to be engaged means that she has already become a wife. Although an engaged couple have not come together, in the sight of God they are husband and wife.

d. A Man Lying with an Engaged Girl in the Field by Overpowering Her

Deuteronomy 22:25-27 speaks concerning a man lying with an engaged girl in the field by overpowering her. In this case only the man was to be put to death (v. 25). The girl was not to be condemned, because she cried out in the field and there was no one to save her (v. 27). She was innocent.

e. A Man Lying with an Unengaged Virgin

In the case of a man lying with an unengaged virgin (22:28-29), the man was to give fifty shekels of silver to the virgin's father. The virgin was then to be the man's wife because he humbled her. He was not allowed to send her away all his days.

f. A Man Not Taking His Father's Wife

A man was not to take his father's wife, so that he would not uncover his father's garment (22:30).

g. Concerning Divorce

In 24:1-4 we have a word concerning divorce. When a man married a woman and, having found some indecency in her, he wrote her a bill of divorce and sent her away, and she went to be another man's wife, and the latter husband despised her and wrote her a bill of divorce and sent her away, the former husband could not return to take her again. Likewise, if the latter husband died, the former husband could not take her again. Such a thing was an abomination before Jehovah. God's people must fear Him in doing all things, for He wants to see that His people are pure and decent in every way.

The word *indecency* in 24:1 is significant. Indecency kills marriage. Therefore, we all must avoid every kind of indecency. God has created us male and female, and there is a big difference between male and female. In her conduct, a sister should always be mindful of the fact that she is a female. For example, a sister, whether married or single, should not talk too freely with a brother or sit too closely to a brother. Furthermore, the sisters should avoid indecency in the matter of dress, not clothing themselves in an indecent manner. The purpose of clothing is not primarily to protect us from the cold but to cover our nakedness. As God's people, we should be a testimony to Him even in the way we clothe ourselves. If the sisters avoid indecency, they will preserve themselves and maintain their status as females. For the sake of a proper married life, we must avoid all indecency.

LIFE-STUDY OF DEUTERONOMY

MESSAGE NINETEEN

THE REHEARSAL OF THE LAW

(12)

Scripture Reading: Deut. 24:7, 16; 25:1-3, 5-16

In this message we will consider the six remaining matters concerning the government among the people.

9. The Judgment on Kidnapping

In 24:7 we have the judgment on kidnapping. If a man kidnapped someone from among his brothers of the children of Israel and dealt with him as a slave or sold him, then that kidnapper was to be put to death (v. 7a). This death sentence indicates the seriousness of kidnapping; it is equal in seriousness to the crime of murder. To kidnap a person is equal to killing him. Through the execution of the kidnapper, the evil was to be utterly removed from the midst of the children of Israel (v. 7b).

Kidnapping is a serious sin that annuls one's human rights in a cheating way. We should not think that there cannot be any kind of kidnapping among brothers today. In recent years, certain ones have attempted to "kidnap" some of the brothers and to "enslave" them and then to "sell" them. These ones have not tried to kidnap the outsiders; they have tried to kidnap the brothers, the members of the Body of Christ. This kidnapping must be condemned.

10. Judgments on Fathers and on Their Children

Deuteronomy 24:16 is a word concerning judgments on fathers and on their children. Fathers were not to be put to death because of their children, nor were the children to be

put to death because of their fathers (v. 16a). Rather, every man was to be put to death for his own sin.

Verse 16 reveals God's justice. Actually all the points concerning the divine government among the children of Israel show us that God is a God of justice. As a God of justice, God will not allow anything unjust to be among His people.

11. The Judgment on a Dispute Brought before the Children of Israel

Deuteronomy 25:1-3 deals with the judgment on a dispute brought before the children of Israel. If there was a dispute between some among the children of Israel, and they approached the court, the judges were to justify the righteous and condemn the wicked (v. 1). Justifying the righteous and condemning the wicked maintains justice among God's people.

In 1 Corinthians 6:1-8 Paul tells us that a dispute among brothers in the church should be settled by certain able ones in the church. This indicates that sometimes the church may be like a court where judgments are made regarding disputes. In settling any dispute, we must be just, justifying the righteous and condemning the wicked.

According to Deuteronomy 25:2, if the wicked one was worthy of beating, the judge was to make him lie down and have him beaten before him as was sufficient for his wickedness, by number. The judge could give him forty blows (v. 3a). The judge was not to exceed this number, lest, in exceeding, his brother would be degraded before his eyes (v. 3b).

Today we should never degrade any brother in the Lord. If we must speak about a brother's wrongdoing, we should be restrained and be careful not to exaggerate. If our speaking about him is excessive, we may degrade him in the eyes of others. Since every brother is precious to the Lord Jesus and is treasured by Him, having been purchased by Him with His blood, a great price, it is sinful to degrade a brother. If we degrade a brother by criticizing him or by speaking excessively of his wrongdoing, the divine life within us will

condemn us. Therefore, in speaking concerning the saints, we need to be restricted and careful.

12. The Judgment over a Brother Who Was Not Willing to Do the Duty of a Husband's Brother

Deuteronomy 25:5-10 speaks regarding the judgment over a brother who was not willing to do the duty of a husband's brother. If Israelite brothers dwelt together, and one of them, having no son, died, his brother was to take the deceased brother's wife as his wife and was to do the duty of a husband's brother for her (v. 5). The firstborn whom the wife bore was to assume the name of her deceased husband, so that his name would not be blotted out of Israel (v. 6).

This judgment reveals God's love, for in His love for the one who died, God wanted the name of that one to be preserved among the people. This judgment also reveals that God wants His people to be productive. God loves His people and desires that they be productive.

If the dead husband's brother did not desire to take his brother's wife, she was to appeal to the elders at the gate, saying that her husband's brother was not willing to do his duty for her (v. 7). The elders of the city were to find out if this was true. If it was true, then she was to draw near to her husband's brother in the sight of the elders and remove his sandal from off his foot, spit in his face, and say, "Thus shall it be done to the man who does not build up his brother's house" (vv. 8-9). This man's name was to be called in Israel, "The house of him whose sandal has been removed" (v. 10). To bear such a name was an insult and a shame.

The brother who died without having a son had his "sandal" removed. This means that his walk had ceased and that he could no longer move. Because he had no successor, his name would be blotted out from among the children of Israel, and his entire house would cease. This was a shame. Since his brother would not do his duty, the brother's name was to be called, "The house of him whose sandal has been removed."

We may apply this judgment to our situation today,

although in a limited way. In making the application, I would point out that this judgment indicates that we need to be spiritually productive and have spiritual children as our successors. If we have spiritual children, we can die in peace. On the one hand, we all need to have spiritual children as our successors; on the other hand, we need to help our brothers in the Lord to have spiritual children.

13. The Judgment of a Wife Who Helps a Fighting Husband Immorally

The judgment in 25:11 and 12 concerns a wife who immorally helps her husband as he is fighting. When two men fought together, a man and his brother, and the wife of the one came to rescue her husband from the hand of his beater, and her hand took hold of the beater's private parts, her hand was to be cut off (vv. 11-12a). No eye was to pity her (v. 12b), for she had done something indecent. This judgment reveals that God is not only strict in His government but also that He is detailed.

14. Concerning Weights and Measures

Deuteronomy 25:13-16 covers the judgment concerning weights and measures. The children of Israel were not to have in their bag differing weights, one heavy and one light, nor were they to have in their house differing measures, one heavy and one light (vv. 13-14). For everyone who did these things, everyone who did unrighteousness, was an abomination to Jehovah their God (v. 16).

To have differing weights and measures is a lie, and all lies come from the enemy, Satan. The dishonest practice of having differing weights and measures is surely from Satan.

The children of Israel were to have a full and righteous weight and a full and righteous measure in order that their days might be extended upon the God-given land (v. 15). Here longevity is related to righteousness. Those who have lived a long life often attribute their longevity to such matters as taking care of their health, getting adequate sleep, and having a proper diet. Have you ever heard anyone attribute longevity

to being fair, righteous, and just? In this verse living long upon the land is clearly related to having full and righteous weights and measures.

Those who have differing weights and measures actually have differing scales. In the church life today, we may have differing scales—one scale for measuring others and a different scale for measuring ourselves. Having differing scales, we may condemn a certain thing in others but justify the same thing in ourselves. Certain saints may use one scale to weigh the actions of the elders and the co-workers but a different scale in weighing their own actions. Because they weigh the elders and co-workers in one scale and themselves in a different scale, they find fault with the elders and co-workers but vindicate themselves.

In the house of God, the church, there should be only one scale. This means that the same scale should be used to weigh everyone. If we have only one scale, we will be fair, righteous, and just, even as God is. Because God is fair, righteous, and just, He measures everyone according to the same scale. He does not have differing weights or measures. For eternity He will use the same scale.

Worldly people often use different kinds of scales. Because people use many different kinds of scales, there is a great shortage of justice in human society. For instance, wives and husbands use different scales in their married life. These different scales are the reason for the quarreling between husband and wife. Both the husband and wife have two sets of scales.

Although we should not have differing scales in the church life, one scale for weighing ourselves and other scales for weighing the brothers and sisters, we all have failed in this matter. Not one of us is an exception. Using the language of accounting, we may say that it is easy for us to "debit" others and "credit" ourselves. Instead of doing this, we should give others more credit and ourselves more debit. For instance, a sister may weigh the elders in one scale, giving them a debit, and weigh herself in a differing scale, giving herself a credit. If she would give the elders more credit and give herself more debit, she would have a much more positive view of

the elders and of the church in her locality. However, if she persists in using different scales, none of the elders will be satisfactory in her eyes.

Some saints who have the practice of using differing scales may move from one locality to another, hoping to find a more satisfactory church with more satisfactory elders. But because these saints have differing scales, no matter where they may go, they do not find the church and the elders to be satisfactory.

I emphasize the practice of having differing scales because this practice is a sickness, a disease, in the church life. This is the source of disaccord. Instead of keeping the oneness and the one accord, we have disaccord. May we all receive mercy from the Lord to no longer have differing scales but, like our God, to have the same scale for everyone.

LIFE-STUDY OF DEUTERONOMY

MESSAGE TWENTY

THE REHEARSAL OF THE LAW

(13)

Scripture Reading: Deut. 18:1-8; 14:27; 18:9-22; 19:1-14

In this message we will cover six further aspects of the rehearsal of the general statutes and judgments.

E. Concerning the Supply of the Levitical Priests and the Whole Tribe of Levi

Deuteronomy 18:1-8 speaks concerning the supply of the Levitical priests and the whole tribe of Levi. Whereas the priests were in the priesthood, the Levites were servants of the priests. The priests served God directly in His presence, and the Levites coordinated with the priests and served them by taking caring of various practical matters.

1. Not Having Portion or Inheritance with Israel

The Levitical priests and the Levites were not to have portion or inheritance with Israel (vv. 1a, 2a). For their living they depended on God's faithfulness. God, in His faithfulness, took care of them through those among the children of Israel who were faithful to give of the things which God had given them.

2. Eating Jehovah's Offerings by Fire and His Inheritance

The priests and the Levites were to eat Jehovah's offerings by fire and His inheritance (v. 1b). God's inheritance consisted of the tithes offered to Him by the children of Israel. Some

of these tithes were to be for the priests' eating. Thus the priests lived on the tithes offered to God by His people.

3. Jehovah Being Their Inheritance

Jehovah would be the inheritance of the priests and the Levites, as He had promised them (v. 2b). They had no inheritance apart from God Himself.

4. The Portion for the Priests

The portion for the priests included all the shoulders, cheeks, and stomachs of the sacrifices and the offerings of the first fruits of the children of Israel (vv. 3-5; Num. 18:8-19). The priests ate God's food, and they ate this food before God and with God. What a blessing! We surely would be honored to eat with the president of our country. But it is a much greater honor to eat with God. As we eat with Him, sometimes He may encourage us to eat more, and we would then offer Him our thanks. It is possible for us to enjoy God to such an extent. This enjoyment is a very tender blessing.

5. The Portion for the Levites

The portion for the Levites was all the tithes of Israel (Deut. 18:6-8; Num. 18:21-24). The children of Israel offered their tithes not directly to God but to the Levites. The tithes went to the Levites, who then selected the best of the tithes to be offered to God as a particular tithe. This became God's food, which was also the food of the priests. God and the priests lived on the tithes offered to God by the Levites.

6. The Children of Israel Not Forsaking the Levites

The children of Israel were not to forsake the Levites who were within their gates (Deut. 14:27). God's people were to remember the Levites, who served God, who had no inheritance with Israel, and who were supported by the tithes of the people.

F. Concerning the Prohibition against the Performing of Divinations, the Practice of Soothsaying, the Interpreting of Omens, the Employing of Sorcery, the Casting of Spells, the Consulting of a Spirit of the Dead or a Familiar Spirit, or the Inquiring of the Dead

In 18:9-14 we have the prohibition against the performing of divinations, the practice of soothsaying, the interpreting of omens, the employing of sorcery, the casting of spells, the consulting of a spirit of the dead or a familiar spirit, or the inquiring of the dead. Those who did these things were an abomination to Jehovah, and on account of these abominations, Jehovah God dispossessed the nations from before the children of Israel (v. 12). Jehovah did not allow the children of Israel to practice these abominations.

Among the children of Israel, the performing of divinations was prohibited. Divination is the attempt to learn something about the future in a supernatural way. People try to learn of the future in this way because they are concerned about their security. God created us in His own image with the intention that we would express Him. He even entrusted us with the authority to rule over all other creatures. Therefore, as those created by God, we were given a very high position. Having such a position, Adam was not worried about security. However, human beings have become fallen, and now all fallen people are worried about their security. Fallen human beings are also concerned about such matters as longevity, peace, and well-being. Everyone wants to have a peaceful life, a life without trouble. Those who seek security, longevity, peace, and well-being may engage in the performing of divinations in order to learn something about the future. Such people may seek to contact the enemy's evil kingdom, which is full of demons and evil spirits.

Divination is actually a false foretelling of the future by demons and evil spirits. Those who are worried about their future, especially about their security, and who turn to the practice of divination are usually deceived by false promises

made by demons and evil spirits. The demons and the evil spirits, who often hide behind the desire for security, longevity, peace, and well-being, may give to those who practice divination false information regarding the future.

The practicing of soothsaying was also prohibited. Soothsaying, like divination, is a matter of foretelling future events. Those who practice soothsaying may speak pleasing words of comfort, consolation, and encouragement. The ones who want to hear this kind of speaking about their future may go to one who practices soothsaying.

The children of Israel were not allowed to interpret omens. An omen is a sign. Someone who was worried about his business might consult a person who could give him an omen or a sign to indicate that in the coming year his business would flourish. This interpreting of omens was prohibited.

According to verses 10 and 11, the employing of sorcery and the casting of spells were also prohibited. Sorcery is a kind of witchcraft used to deceive people. The casting of spells is a matter of having a curse put on someone.

Finally, there was not to be found among the children of Israel anyone who consulted a spirit of the dead or a familiar spirit or who inquired of the dead. Because the Canaanites practiced these abominations, they were dispossessed from before the children of Israel, who were forbidden to engage in these evil practices.

G. Concerning Jehovah God's Raising Up of a Prophet (the Coming Christ) Like Moses for the Children of Israel

In 18:15-19 Moses spoke concerning Jehovah God's raising up of a Prophet (the coming Christ) like Moses for the children of Israel. Acts 3:22 applies these verses to Christ, indicating that Christ is the Prophet promised by God to His people, the children of Israel.

1. From among Their Brothers

The Prophet was to be from among their brothers (v. 15a). This indicates that Christ as the coming Prophet would be

human as well as divine, that He would be God incarnated to be a man, the God-man. As God, Christ could not be from among the Jews as a brother, but as the incarnated One, the One who has put on human nature and who was a Jew, Christ was from among His brothers.

2. The People Listening to Him

Moses told the children of Israel that they were to listen to this Prophet (Deut. 18:15b).

3. According to All That the Children of Israel Asked of Jehovah Their God at Horeb

The Prophet raised up by God would be according to all that the children of Israel asked of Jehovah their God at Horeb (vv. 16-17). They had told Moses that they could not bear to hear God's voice. They wanted a middleman, one who could hear God's word and pass it on to them. Because they wanted a prophet, Moses promised that God would fulfill their desire for a prophet.

4. God Raising Up This Prophet through the Incarnation of Christ to Speak the Word of God

"I will raise up a Prophet for them from the midst of their brothers like you; and I will put My words in His mouth, and He will speak to them all that I command Him" (v. 18). This indicates that God would raise up this Prophet through the incarnation of Christ to speak the word of God (John 1:14; 3:34; 7:16-17; Heb. 1:2a). When the Lord Jesus came, He surely spoke God's word. To speak God's word is to dispense God, to speak God forth into others. This is what the Lord Jesus did as the Prophet raised up by God.

H. Concerning the False Prophet

Deuteronomy 18:20-22 concerns the false prophet. A false prophet was one who spoke a word presumptuously in God's name which God did not command him to speak or who spoke

in the name of other gods (v. 20a). Such a prophet was to be put to death (v. 20b). When a prophet spoke in the name of Jehovah and the thing did not happen, that was the thing which Jehovah had not spoken (v. 22).

I. Concerning the Setting Apart of the Cities of Refuge

The children of Israel were to set apart cities of refuge (19:1-13), cities into which those who had killed others accidentally could escape. These cities signify God's preparing Christ as a refuge for all sinners.

The numbers related to the refuge cities are significant. For convenience, there were to be six refuge cities, three on either side of the Jordan. The number six signifies man, who was created on the sixth day. The number three signifies the Triune God. The Triune God has come in incarnation to be our refuge; He is for us. Furthermore, the number two, implied by the fact that there were cities on the two sides of the Jordan, signifies testimony or witness. The Triune God embodied in the incarnated Christ has come to the place where we live to be our refuge. Instead of asking us to come where He is, He came to where we are. This is the reason that in preaching the gospel, we should not ask people to come to us; rather, we should bring the gospel to them. To ask others to come to us is contrary to God's ordination. (For details on the refuge cities, please see the life-study on Numbers 35:9-34.)

J. Concerning the Moving of the Neighbor's Boundary Marker

"You shall not move your neighbor's boundary marker, which your ancestors have set, in your inheritance, which you will inherit in the land which Jehovah your God is giving to you to possess" (Deut. 19:14). The land was eventually divided by lot, and boundary markers were set up. The moving of such a boundary marker was not allowed by the faithful God, who gave the children of Israel the good land to possess. To move a boundary marker was to change God's ordination.

All the foregoing statutes and judgments show that our God is careful and detailed. They also reveal that in caring for His people He is loving, holy, righteous, and just.

The six points covered in this message can be arranged in three pairs. The first pair is the supply of the Levitical priests and the whole tribe of Levi and the prohibitions against certain evil practices. The first item shows us that God and His people, including the serving ones, are one large family. In this family God the Father is the source. He gave the good land to His children, who then had to work the land. Eventually, they reaped a harvest, which was to be enjoyed both by God and by all the people. They were to bring a portion of the produce to the serving ones, and the serving ones were to offer a portion of what they received to God. In this way, God and His serving ones shared the tithes and lived together.

God has a large family, and the entire family, including God, the One who has given the good land, is involved with the good land. The good land is a type of the all-inclusive Christ. God lives on the produce of this land. If we do not labor on the good land, there will not be any food for God. God's food is the produce of the good land, and this produce comes through our labor. If we do not labor on Christ as the good land and experience Christ, how can Christ be God's food? We need to labor on Christ and experience Christ. Then Christ will be the produce not only for our satisfaction but also for God's satisfaction.

The evil things prohibited in 18:9-14 indicate that there is another family, a family that is full of such devilish and demonic things as divination, soothsaying, sorcery, and witchcraft. Fallen human beings, having lost God, turn to these evil things for the sake of security, longevity, peace, and well-being. We have nothing to do with these things, for God Himself is our inheritance, security, and future. He is everything to us, including our amusement and entertainment. But those who have lost God as their enjoyment are in darkness and, turning from God to another source, practice the evil, demonic things forbidden by God.

The second pair includes the Prophet who was to be raised

up by God and the false prophet. The Triune God embodied in Christ as the Spirit is not only our portion and our enjoyment but also our Prophet. As our Prophet, He speaks God's word to us. Our future is in Him.

For the third pair, we have the word concerning the cities of refuge and the word concerning the moving of the neighbor's boundary marker. On the one hand, we have a word indicating that Christ is our city of refuge, that He is the place into which we can escape. On the other hand, we have a warning about greed. Those who are greedy may want to change God's ordination by moving their neighbor's boundary marker. In order to get something more for themselves, they invade the land belonging to others. This is abominable in the eyes of God. Instead of being greedy and invading another's portion, we should learn to be contented with our Christ. As long as we have the portion God has ordained, we should be satisfied. Let us all enjoy Christ and be satisfied with Him.

LIFE-STUDY OF DEUTERONOMY

MESSAGE TWENTY-ONE

THE REHEARSAL OF THE LAW

(14)

Scripture Reading: Deut. 20:1-20; 21:10-17

In this message we will consider three matters: the children of Israel going forth to battle against their enemies (20:1-20), the marrying of a beautiful woman among the captives (21:10-14), and the right of the firstborn son (21:15-17).

K. Concerning the Children of Israel Going Forth into Battle against Their Enemies

Deuteronomy 20:1-20 is concerned with the children of Israel going forth into battle against their enemies. Today we are also in a war. In this war we are fighting for Christ and we are fighting to remain in Christ. The good land is a type of Christ. If we would live in Christ as our land, we need to fight.

1. Not Fearing Horses, Chariots, and a People More Numerous Than They

When the children of Israel saw horses, chariots, and a people more numerous than they, they were not to fear them, for Jehovah their God was with them (v. 1). They could be assured that as along as God was with them, they would be victorious.

2. The Priest Speaking to the People

When God's people drew near to the battle, the priest was to approach and speak to them. He was to say these words: "Hear, O Israel! You are drawing near to the battle against

your enemies today. Do not let your heart fail; do not be afraid nor alarmed nor terrified of them. For it is Jehovah your God who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies, to save you" (vv. 3-4). Since the mighty One was fighting with them, they could be at peace.

3. The Officers Speaking to the People

In verses 5 through 7 we have the first speaking of the officers to the people. This speaking indicates that God did not force the Israelites to go to war. If any man had built a new house and had not dedicated it, he could return to his house, "lest he dies in the battle and another man dedicates it" (v. 5). If any man had planted a vineyard and had not partaken of it, he could return to his house, "lest he dies in the battle and another man partakes of it" (v. 6). If any man had gotten engaged to a woman and had not taken her to himself, he could return to his house, "lest he dies in the battle and another man takes her to himself" (v. 7). All those who had a new house or vineyard or were engaged could return home to enjoy life.

4. The Officers Speaking Further to the People

According to verse 8, the officers were to speak further to the people, saying, "Is there any man who is afraid and whose heart fails? Let him go and return to his house, so that his brothers' heart does not melt like his heart." If such a one had remained, he would have affected others, causing them to be afraid. The army would have been stronger and the morale would have been higher without him. The formation of Gideon's army is an illustration of this (Judg. 7:3).

5. The Officers Appointing Commanders of the Armies

After the officers had finished speaking to the people, the officers were to appoint commanders of the army (Deut. 20:9). This indicates that everything was done in a good order and in a good sequence.

6. The People Drawing Near to the City to Fight against It and Proclaiming Peace to It

When the people drew near to the city to fight against it, they were to proclaim peace to it (v. 10). If it responded with peace and opened its gates to the children of Israel, all the people within the city were to become their forced labor and were to serve the children of Israel (v. 11). Otherwise, the children of Israel were to besiege the city (v. 12).

7. The Children of Israel Slaying Every Male in the City Which Had Been Delivered into Their Hand but Taking as Plunder the Women, the Little Ones, the Cattle, and All That Was in the City

When Jehovah their God delivered the city into the hand of the children of Israel, they were to slay every male in it with the edge of the sword (v. 13). But the women, the little ones, the cattle, and all that was in the city they were to take as their plunder for their enjoyment (v. 14).

8. Not Allowing Anything That Breathed to Live of the Cities Which Jehovah Their God Was Giving to the Children of Israel as an Inheritance

Of the cities which Jehovah their God was giving to the children of Israel as an inheritance, they were not to allow anything that breathed to live (v. 16). Rather, the children of Israel had to utterly destroy them, so that they would not teach the children of Israel to do according to all their abominations which they did for their gods (vv. 17-18). The devilish practices were to be terminated by putting to death those who engaged in those practices.

9. When Besieging a City, the Children of Israel Not Destroying Its Trees Which Were Good for Food

When the children of Israel besieged a city for many days to capture it, they were not to destroy its trees which were

good for food (v. 19). Instead, they were to destroy and cut down the trees which were not for food, that they might build up a siegework against the city until it fell (v. 20).

L. Concerning Marrying a Beautiful Woman among the Captives

In 21:10-14 we have a word about marrying a beautiful woman among the captives. When an Israelite saw a beautiful woman among the captives and would take her to himself as a wife, he was to bring her within his house (v. 12a). She was to shave her head and trim her nails, and her clothes of captivity were to be taken away from her (vv. 12b-13a). She was to dwell in that Israelite's house and mourn her father and mother for a full month (v. 13b). Afterwards the Israelite was to marry her and be her husband, and she was to be a wife to him (v. 13c). If after a time he did not delight in her, he was to let her go wherever she wished, but he was not to sell her for money nor deal with her as a slave, because he had humbled her (v. 14). God's dealing here is fair and very humane.

M. Concerning the Right of the Firstborn Son

Deuteronomy 21:15 speaks of a case of a man who had two wives, one beloved and the other despised, and both the beloved and the despised had born him sons, with the firstborn son being of the despised woman. When the man was giving his inheritance to his sons, he was not to make the son of the beloved woman the firstborn, but he was to acknowledge the firstborn, the son of the despised woman, giving to him a double portion of his inheritance, for this son was the beginning of his strength (vv. 16-17).

Apparently, the matters of fighting in 20:1-20 and the birthright in 21:15-17 have nothing to do with each other. However, spiritually speaking, fighting and the birthright are related, for only by fighting can we preserve our birthright.

Since we preserve our birthright by fighting, if we do not fight, we will lose our birthright, even as Esau lost his birthright (Heb. 12:16-17). Those who do not fight because they are concerned about their house, vineyard, or spouse or

because they are fearful will not share in the victory. There will be no spoil, no plunder, for them to enjoy. Because they do not fight, they will lose their birthright.

In fighting to preserve our birthright, we must learn to trust in God. In ourselves we do not have the strength or the capacity to fight. If we trust in ourselves, we will not have any assurance that we will be victorious in the warfare. As we are fighting, we need to realize that we are fighting for what God has given us. The good land has been given to us by God, but we still need to fight against the enemies. We should not only pray but also fight. Actually, we are not the ones fighting, for God goes with us and fights for us. Once the enemies have been defeated, the land will be cleared for our inheritance.

The principle with this fighting is the same principle that is found throughout the book of Deuteronomy. This principle is that God wants us to do certain things, but He does not want us to do these things by ourselves. It is our duty to fight, but we cannot fulfill this duty by ourselves. We can fulfill our duty to fight only by faith in the Lord. We need to believe that the Lord has ordained us to fight and that He will fight for us. We should simply take His word and obey Him, knowing that the outcome depends on Him. If we fulfill our duty in this way, the Lord will be pleased.

Whenever the Lord asks us to do something for Him, He does not intend that we do that thing by ourselves. We are not able in ourselves to do anything that the Lord asks us to do. Trying to keep His commandment by our energy is an insult to God; it is abominable in His sight. If we try to do this, the Lord might say, "I do not ask you to do something for Me by your strength or ability, for you do not have the strength or the ability. What I ask you to do for Me, I want you to do by Me. Learn to have faith in Me, to trust in Me. I will do everything for you. I simply want you to participate in My operation. I want to do something in man and with man. For this, I need to have man cooperate with Me. If you cooperate with Me, I will be able to do what I desire to do." To do something for the Lord not by ourselves but by the Lord—this is pleasing to Him.

Deep within us there is an evil thing. This evil thing, which may appear to be very good, is our desire to do the will of God and to carry out the will of God by ourselves. In God's view, this desire, despite its nice appearance, is actually abominable. We should never think that by ourselves we are able to do something for God. It is impossible for us to do anything for God by ourselves. We need another life—the divine life, the life of God. In order to have this life, we must be reborn, regenerated; that is, we need to be born of God. With our created life we cannot observe what God demands; we do not have the capacity to do God's will. Even if our mind is clear, our love is balanced, and our will is strong, we still do not have the capacity to keep God's commandment or to do His will.

God wants us to express Him. But are we, in ourselves and by ourselves, able to express God? Certainly not! Just as a dog cannot express a bird, so we with our created life cannot express God. In order to express God, we must have the life of God. This life is the divine life, the eternal life. Actually, this life is the Triune God embodied in Christ, who is realized as the life-giving Spirit.

Although we have received the divine life, we are not accustomed to living by this life. We may never have had the thought of living by the divine life. Instead, we continue to trust in our old life. We may even pray for the improvement of the old life. In our prayer we may say, "Lord, You know how weak I am." The Lord may answer, "There is no need for you to tell Me that you are weak. I know that you are weak. You are not merely weak—you are dead. This is the reason I have given you another life. Why would you not live by this new life which I have given you?"

I do not have the confidence that anyone among us, including myself, knows how to live by the divine life. If we are not on the alert, we will pray in a nonsensical, abominable way concerning the improvement of our old life, asking for the Lord's help to adjust ourselves. We may be clear that the book of Deuteronomy manifests God, exposes us, and unveils Christ as our life, our life supply, and our everything, but we may not put this knowledge into practice. Instead of living

by the divine life, we may turn to the old life and ask the Lord Jesus to help us to improve ourselves.

I appreciate the points covered in this message, especially the word regarding fighting. Those who were concerned about their house, their vineyard, or their wife and those who were afraid, were not required to join the army and go out to fight. The principle is the same with us today. The whole church is an army, but not everyone has to join in the fighting. Whether or not we can participate in the fighting depends on our situation. Only those who do not have any kind of entanglement can join in the fighting. As they are fighting, they should have the assurance to say, "I am not the one fighting. The One who is fighting is the Lord in whom I trust."

In fulfilling God's requirements, we should not have any trust in ourselves. We need to learn to take the Lord's desire as our desire and say, "Lord, I desire what You desire. In carrying out Your desire, I do not have any trust in myself, for I am not able to do Your will. Lord, because I have no trust in myself and because I have no capacity to fulfill Your desire, I take You as my life and life supply."

LIFE-STUDY OF DEUTERONOMY

MESSAGE TWENTY-TWO

THE REHEARSAL OF THE LAW

(15)

Scripture Reading: Deut. 22:1-12; 25:4; 23:1-8

In this message we will cover the general statutes and judgments concerning taking care of others' interests, concerning mixtures of any kind, concerning the sparing of the producing animals, and concerning the losing of the right to enter the congregation of Jehovah.

N. Concerning Taking Care of Others' Interests

In 22:1-4, 8 we have a word concerning taking care of others' interests.

1. An Israelite Not Neglecting His Brother's Straying Ox or Sheep but Returning Them to His Brother

An Israelite was not to see his brother's ox or sheep straying and neglect them; he was to return them to his brother (v. 1).

The word *brother* in 22:1 indicates that, in the sight of God, all the children of Israel were members of one family. The entire nation was a great family. The straying ox or sheep was an animal belonging not merely to another man but to one's brother. To return such a straying ox or sheep to the brother was to take care of the brother's interests. Among us today, there should be the practice of caring for the interests of the brothers and sisters.

2. The Brother Not Being Nearby or Not Being Known and an Israelite Bringing the Straying Ox or Sheep to His Own House until His Brother Demanded It

If his brother was not nearby him, or if he did not know who he was, the Israelite was to bring the straying ox or sheep to his own house until his brother demanded it (v. 2a). Then he was to return it to him (v. 2b).

3. An Israelite Not Neglecting His Brother's Donkey, Clothing, or Any of His Brother's Lost Things

"Thus shall you do with his donkey; and thus shall you do with his clothing; and thus shall you do with any of your brother's lost things, which he has lost and you have found. You may not neglect them" (v. 3). This indicates that an Israelite who found any of his brother's lost things was to take care of it for him.

4. An Israelite Not Neglecting His Brother's Donkey or Ox Which Had Fallen by the Way

An Israelite was not to see his brother's donkey or ox fallen by the way and neglect them; he had to lift them up with the brother (v. 4). In such a case, the owner was present, but he needed help to lift up the donkey or ox.

5. When Building a New House, an Israelite Making a Low Wall around the Edge of His Roof

When an Israelite built a new house, he was to make a low wall around the edge of his roof so that he did not put the guilt of blood on his house if someone fell from it (v. 8). In those days, the houses had flat roofs. A low wall around the edge of the roof could protect a person from falling from the roof.

O. Concerning Mixtures of Any Kind

Deuteronomy 22:5, 9-12 is concerned with mixtures of any kind.

1. A Woman Not Putting On a Man's Belongings, and a Man Not Wearing a Woman's Garment

A woman was not to put on a man's belongings, nor was a man to wear a woman's garment (v. 5a). Everyone who did these things was an abomination to Jehovah their God (v. 5b). The appearance of the brothers and sisters should be such that there is a clear distinction between male and female.

2. An Israelite Not Sowing His Vineyard with Two Kinds of Seed

"You shall not sow your vineyard with two kinds of seed, lest the full produce, the seed which you sow, is forfeited to the sanctuary, as well as the increase of the vineyard" (v. 9). Literally, the Hebrew rendered "is forfeited to the sanctuary" means "be sanctified." Darby's note on this verse says, "Lit. `hallowed,' or `set apart to God,' i.e. appropriated to the sanctuary as a forfeit." If an Israelite sowed two kinds of seed in his vineyard, neither the produce of that seed nor the increase of the vineyard would be his. He was not allowed to keep them for himself. Instead, this produce and increase, having been forfeited, would be God's. This means that his labor in sowing his vineyard with two kinds of seed would be in vain.

I believe that the prohibition against sowing two kinds of seed in one's vineyard typifies the prohibition against teaching differently in the church (1 Tim. 1:3). The church is God's vineyard, and in this vineyard we should sow only one kind of seed, one kind of teaching. If we teach differently, sowing more than one kind of seed, the "produce" in the church will be forfeited.

3. An Israelite Not Plowing with an Ox and a Donkey Together

An Israelite was not to plow with an ox and a donkey together (Deut. 22:10). This typifies the matter of becoming "unequally yoked with unbelievers" (2 Cor. 6:14a). "Unequally" means diversely, a difference in kind. According to Leviticus 11, an ox is a clean animal, but a donkey is unclean. In Deuteronomy 22:10 an ox typifies a believer and a donkey typifies an unbeliever. Believers and unbelievers are diverse peoples. They should not be yoked together because of the believers' divine nature and holy standing. This should be applied to all manner of intimate relationships between believers and unbelievers, including marriage and business. If a brother marries an unbelieving woman or if a sister marries an unbelieving man, there will be an unequal yoking of a believer and an unbeliever, and it will be difficult for them to live together. If a believer has an unbeliever as a business partner, the believer may have problems. For instance, the unbeliever may want to do certain things that are dishonest. As believers, we should not be unequally yoked with unbelievers, for this is a mixture, and every kind of mixture is abominable in the eyes of God.

4. An Israelite Not Wearing Clothing of Mixed Materials

An Israelite was not to wear clothing of mixed materials, of wool and linen together (v. 11). Wool comes from sheep, and linen is made from plants. God did not want the Israelites to mix these materials together.

5. An Israelite Making Twisted Cords upon the Four Corners of His Garment

An Israelite was to make twisted cords upon the four corners of his garment with which he covered himself (v. 12). The Hebrew word translated "corners" can also be rendered "edges." The requirement here may refer to what is mentioned in Numbers 15:38. "Speak to the sons of Israel,

and tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put upon the tassel of each corner a cord of blue." In this verse "cord" signifies binding, and "blue" signifies something heavenly; hence a blue cord indicates a heavenly binding. For us today, this cord of blue signifies that, as children of God, our conduct and behavior should be beautiful and should be under the binding of the heavenly government.

P. Sparing the Producing Animals

Deuteronomy 22:6 and 7 and 25:4 deal with sparing the producing animals.

1. An Israelite Coming Upon a Bird's Nest and Not Taking the Mother with the Young

If an Israelite came upon a bird's nest in the way, in any tree or on the ground, and the mother was sitting upon the young birds or eggs, he was not to take the mother with the young (22:6). He had to let the mother go, but the young he could take for himself, that it might go well with him and that he might extend his days (v. 7). This indicates that he was to spare the producing animal. Even a matter such as this is related to blessing, indicated by the words "it may go well with you," and longevity, indicated by the words "that you may extend your days." If an Israelite wanted a blessed, healthy, and long life, he had to fulfill the requirement concerning the sparing of a producing animal. Some brothers and sisters are like mother birds, and we need to take care of them.

2. An Ox Not Being Muzzled While It Treads Out Grain

"You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out grain" (25:4). It would not have been fair for an ox to be muzzled and thus unable to eat while it was working. Certain brothers are like producing oxen (1 Cor. 9:9; 1 Tim. 5:18). If a brother produces something for us, we must not "muzzle" him. In relation to the brothers and sisters today,

we should keep the statute concerning sparing the producing animals.

Q. Concerning the Losing of the Right to Enter the Congregation of Jehovah

Deuteronomy 23:1-8 is a word concerning the losing of the right to enter the congregation of Jehovah. No doubt, the congregation of Jehovah typifies the church. We need to be careful not to lose our right to enter the church.

1. He Who Had Been Wounded in the Testicles or Had the Male Organ Cut Off Not Entering the Congregation of Jehovah

He who had been wounded in the testicles or had the male organ cut off was not to enter the congregation of Jehovah (v. 1). In such a one the power to produce had been destroyed. This prohibition indicates that those who are barren, those who do not produce and bear fruit, will lose their right to enter the church life.

2. An Illegitimate Child Not Entering the Congregation of Jehovah, Even to the Tenth Generation

An illegitimate child was not to enter the congregation of Jehovah, even to the tenth generation (v. 2). The life of such a one was illegal and impure.

3. An Ammonite or Moabite Not Entering the Congregation of Jehovah, Even to the Tenth Generation

An Ammonite or Moabite was not to enter the congregation of Jehovah, even to the tenth generation (v. 3). Both Ammon and Moab were sons of Lot, born through incest committed by Lot with his daughters. Ammonites and Moabites could not enter the congregation of Jehovah because they did not come to meet the children of Israel with bread and water in the way when the people were coming out of Egypt (v. 4a). They were prohibited from

entering the congregation of Jehovah also because they hired Balaam to curse the children of Israel (v. 4b). Jehovah their God would not listen to Balaam, and He turned the curse into a blessing, for Jehovah loved them (v. 5). The children of Israel were not to seek the peace and the prosperity of the Ammonites and the Moabites all their days forever (v. 6).

4. The Children of Israel Not Abhorring an Edomite nor an Egyptian

The children of Israel were not to abhor an Edomite, for he was their brother (v. 7a). Neither were they to abhor an Egyptian, for they had been a sojourner in his land (v. 7b). The children of the third generation of the Edomites and the Egyptians could enter the congregation of Jehovah (v. 8). In a sense, the Egyptians did something good for the children of Israel, and the Edomites did not trouble them but allowed them to pass through their territory. Therefore, God remembered the Edomites and the Egyptians and allowed them to enter His congregation.

As we consider all the matters covered in this message, we see how careful, detailed, kind, and fair God is. Because we have God's life, we should learn of Him to be the same as He is. We need to learn to care for the interests of our brothers, the fellow members of the Body of Christ. We must also learn to be without mixture but pure in every way and in every aspect. In our living there should not be any mixture, for God wants us to be single, simple, and pure. Therefore, we need to eliminate all mixture and keep ourselves pure. Moreover, we should love the producing things and be careful not to lose the right to enter the congregation of the Lord. In order to do all these things, we need the divine life, the life that works with God for His people.

If we thoroughly study all these matters, we will know God better and also know what kind of person we should be, what kind of being we should have, and in what kind of way we should walk. We should walk before God and with God according to what God is. Let us learn God's

ways and not merely learn doctrine. Let us learn what God is and how He acts and behaves. If we take the Lord's way and what He is, we will be transformed into His image.

LIFE-STUDY OF DEUTERONOMY

MESSAGE TWENTY-THREE

THE REHEARSAL OF THE LAW

(16)

Scripture Reading: Deut. 23:9-14, 17-18, 24-25; 24:5, 8-9; 25:17-19; 26:16-19

In this message, the last on the rehearsal of the law, we will cover further general statutes and judgments.

R. Concerning Keeping the Camp Clean

Deuteronomy 23:9-14 speaks concerning keeping the camp clean. When the children of Israel as a camp went forth against their enemies, they were to keep themselves from every evil thing, especially from the discharges of their physical bodies (vv. 9-13). Jehovah their God walked in the midst of their camp to rescue them and deliver up their enemies before them; therefore their camp was to be holy (v. 14). This indicates that in the church as God's fighting camp today everything must be clean.

A camp is a group of people who have been formed into an army for fighting. If the camp is not clean and orderly, how can the army fight? Whether or not an army can fight depends on how those in the army take care of the camp. A clean, orderly camp is a sign of a strong, disciplined army. As the army of God today, we must keep our camp clean and in a good order. This is our training and our discipline, which enable us to fight.

S. Concerning a Harlot and a Dog

There was not to be a cult prostitute among the daughters of Israel, nor was there to be a cult prostitute among the sons of Israel (v. 17). The payment for a harlot

and the price for a dog were not to be brought into the house of Jehovah for a vow, for both of them were an abomination to Jehovah (v. 18). Here the term *dog* refers to a male prostitute or sodomite.

T. Concerning the Neighbor's Produce

When the children of Israel entered their neighbor's vineyard, they could eat grapes, but they were not to put any into their vessel (v. 24). If they had put grapes into a vessel, they would have been greedy. Likewise, when they went into their neighbor's standing grain, they could pluck some ears with their hand, but they were not to wield a sickle upon their neighbor's standing grain (v. 25). Wielding a sickle would also have been a sign that they were greedy. These verses indicate that we should care only for our need and should not be greedy. We need to learn to be restricted in any kind of seeking.

U. Concerning a Man Taking a New Wife

In 24:5 we have a word concerning a man taking a new wife. When a man took a new wife, he was not to go out with the army, nor was he to be charged with any duty. He was to be free at home for one year, and he was to make his wife happy. The concern shown here is very human.

God likes to see a male and a female come together in marriage for reproduction. Marriage is for human existence and human reproduction. Therefore, we must honor marriage and not damage it. God encourages us to get married, and any way in which we might damage marriage is hateful to Him.

God is happy to see the young people coming together in marriage, and He is even more happy to see them reproduce. Immediately after God created man, He charged man to be "fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Gen. 1:28), that is, to fill the earth with human beings. This indicates that we need to be married properly according to God's purpose and for God's purpose. God's purpose in marriage is to use us to maintain the existence of mankind on earth. Even today, at the end of the age, God still needs

more people. Some married couples do not want to have children because they do not want to be bothered. It is not according to God's way for a married couple not to have children. God's way is that human beings get married and then reproduce.

God also wants us to be reproductive in the church life through the preaching of the gospel that sinners might be saved and regenerated. If we are spiritually barren, this is a shame in the sight of God. God hates barrenness and fruitlessness. But He is happy to see us becoming spiritually productive and fruitful.

V. Concerning a Case of Leprosy

Concerning a case of leprosy, the people were to carefully keep what the Levitical priests instructed them, as God commanded the priests (Deut. 24:8). The children of Israel were to remember what Jehovah their God did to Miriam on the way when they came out of Egypt (v. 9). (For details regarding the case of Miriam, please see the life-study on Numbers 12.)

W. Not Forgetting to Blot Out the Memory of Amalek

The children of Israel were to remember what Amalek did to them on the way when they came out of Egypt, striking all their worn-out ones who were at the rear, when they were faint and weary (Deut. 25:17-18). Amalek did not fear God and was the greatest enemy of God's people, frustrating them in taking God's way and attacking the younger and weaker ones and those who were worn-out and unable to go further on the journey. Therefore, when Jehovah their God gave the children of Israel rest from all their enemies and gave to them the God-promised land as an inheritance, they were to blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven, and they were not to forget this (v. 19).

Amalek typifies our flesh. The thing that is most opposed to God's way is our flesh. Therefore, the flesh must be dealt with thoroughly. This is the spiritual significance of the requirement to blot out the memory of Amalek.

X. A Concluding Word of This Section to the Children of Israel

In 26:16-19 we have a concluding word of this section to the children of Israel. Moses used thirteen chapters, from chapter fourteen through chapter twenty-six, to cover the rehearsal of the law with certain developments. That day—the day Moses had finished the rehearsal of the law—Jehovah their God was commanding the children of Israel to do these statutes and judgments, and they were to keep them and do them with all their heart and with all their soul (v. 16). On that day they had declared Jehovah to be their God and had also declared that they would walk in His ways and keep His statutes, His commandments, and His judgments and listen to His voice (v. 17). That declaration was actually a vow. Furthermore, on that day Jehovah had declared them to be a people for His personal treasure, even as He promised them, and had declared that they would keep all His commandments (v. 18). Here we see that the condition for being God's personal treasure is that the people keep all His commandments. God also declared that He would set the children of Israel high above all the nations, for praise, for a name, and for honor, and that they would be a holy people to Jehovah their God as He had spoken (v. 19).

Y. The Governing Principles of One's Behavior Implied in This Section

In this section on the rehearsal of the law, five governing principles of our behavior are implied: (1) toward God, to be sanctified and fearing; (2) toward oneself, to be righteous and pure; (3) toward others, to be kind and generous; (4) toward animals, to be sparing and sympathetic; and (5) toward the devil, to be rejecting and separated.

These five principles govern our behavior in five directions—toward God, toward ourselves, toward others, toward animals, and toward the devil. Toward God we should always be sanctified and fearing. We should fear God and want to be separated, sanctified, unto Him as a holy people.

Toward ourselves we should be righteous and pure. This means that we should be just and strict, not having any looseness. Whereas we should be strict with ourselves, toward others we should be kind and generous, always willing to give. Toward animals we should be sparing and sympathetic. If we can sympathize with animals, we can, and will, sympathize with people. We may have the assurance that those who are kind to animals will also be kind to us. However, some people hate animals and mistreat them. When such people meet a dog or a cat, they may treat it in a very mean way. I will always stay away from this kind of person, for I realize that one who can mistreat animals can also mistreat people. Finally, toward the devil we should be rejecting and separated. We must reject the enemy, Satan, and separate ourselves from him. I believe that if we practice these principles by the divine life, we will become a different kind of person.

Z. All the Rehearsed Statutes and Judgments Speaking Forth How Fine, Tender, Considerate, and Sympathetic Is the Great God of Israel

If we compare Deuteronomy with Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, we will see that the law, statutes, and ordinances which Moses rehearsed in Deuteronomy are the same, but in his rehearsal there are some extensions, additions, and developments. All the rehearsed statutes and judgments, with the new developments, speak forth in detail how fine, how tender, how considerate, and how sympathetic is the great God of Israel. This indicates that the book of Deuteronomy is very particular in its revelation of what God is. The God manifested in this book is not only loving, merciful, and gracious; He is also very fine, tender, considerate, and sympathetic. This is our God.

LIFE-STUDY OF DEUTERONOMY

MESSAGE TWENTY-FOUR

WARNING
(IMPLYING GRACE)

(1)

Scripture Reading: Deut. 27

We have completed the section of Deuteronomy concerned with the rehearsal of the law (4:44—26:19), and now we come to a new section (27:1—28:68), which deals with the matter of warning and speaks about being cursed and blessed.

I. MOSES, WITH THE ELDERS OF ISRAEL, COMMANDING THE PEOPLE TO KEEP THE WHOLE COMMANDMENT WHICH HE WAS COMMANDING THEM THAT DAY

In 27:1-26 Moses, with the elders of Israel, commanded the people to keep the whole commandment which he was commanding them that day. This was the day of the rehearsal of the law.

A. The People Erecting Large Stones on Mount Ebal, Coating Them with Plaster, and Writing upon Them All the Words of the Law

When the children of Israel crossed over the Jordan into the God-given land, they were to erect large stones on Mount Ebal (vv. 2a, 4). These were to be natural stones not worked on by man, signifying unchangeableness. The stones were to be coated with plaster (v. 2b), and upon them the people were to write very clearly "all the words of this law" (vv. 3, 8). I believe that these words refer to the Ten Commandments.

B. Building to Jehovah Their God an Altar of Stones and Offering Up Burnt Offerings upon It to Him, Sacrificing Peace Offerings, Eating There, and Rejoicing before Him

In the God-given land, the children of Israel were to build to Jehovah their God an altar of stones not touched by an iron tool (vv. 5-6a). It is significant that when the blessings and the curses were about to be released, Moses charged the people to build an altar. This altar implies grace. Before the people took care of either the blessing or cursing, they built an altar. The building of an altar is a great matter, for, after man's fall, what we first need with respect to God is an altar—the cross of Christ. We thank God that, before He dealt with us regarding blessing or cursing, He accomplished salvation through Christ's redemption on the cross. Praise the Lord that an altar has been built!

Upon the altar, which signifies the cross of Christ, the children of Israel were to offer up burnt offerings (Christ) to God (v. 6b). The people were also to sacrifice peace offerings (Christ) and eat there and rejoice before Jehovah their God (v. 7). On the cross, Christ offered Himself to God as a burnt offering for God's satisfaction. He also offered Himself to God as a peace offering for us so that we could be satisfied. Now in the presence of God, we can enjoy Christ as the peace offering for our fellowship with God.

The burnt offering and the peace offering in verses 6 and 7 indicate that the one who wants to keep the commandments of God must offer himself as a burnt offering to God for His satisfaction, so that he can offer a peace offering to God for his enjoyment with God in fellowship. This means that if we intend to do something before God, we must first offer Christ to God as a burnt offering for God's satisfaction. Then, mainly for our own need and our satisfaction, we must also offer Christ as a peace offering. Then we will have enjoyment with God in the divine fellowship.

C. Israel, Having Become the People of Jehovah Their God, Listening to His Voice and Doing His Commandments and His Statutes

Moses, with the Levitical priests, spoke to all Israel that from that day they had become the people of Jehovah their God; therefore they were charged to listen to His voice and do His commandments and His statutes (vv. 9-10).

D. Moses Commanding That Six of the Tribes Should Stand upon Mount Gerizim to Bless the People and That Six Tribes Should Stand upon Mount Ebal for Cursing

Moses commanded the people that six of the tribes of Israel—Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin—should stand upon Mount Gerizim to bless the people (vv. 11-12). Moses also commanded that the other six tribes—Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali—should stand upon Mount Ebal for cursing (v. 13). Concerning which group they would be in, the tribes had no choice but had to accept God's ordination.

E. The Levites Responding

The Levites were to respond and, speaking to the people with a loud voice, were to utter the curses recorded in verses 15 through 26.

F. The Ones Who Were to Be Cursed

To each of the curses in 27:15-26, the people were to say, "Amen." The ones who were cursed included the following: the man who makes an idol (v. 15); the man who dishonors his parents (v. 16); the man who moves his neighbor's boundary mark (v. 17); the man who leads astray a blind man on the way (v. 18); the man who distorts justice due a sojourner, an orphan, or a widow (v. 19); the man who lies with his father's wife (v. 20); the man who lies with an animal (v. 21); the man who lies with his sister, his father's

daughter, or his mother's daughter (v. 22); the man who lies with his mother-in-law (v. 23); the man who slays his neighbor secretly (v. 24); the man who takes payment to slay someone of innocent blood (v. 25); and the man who does not confirm all the words of this law by doing them (v. 26).

G. The Children of Israel, Being Fallen in Nature, Not Measuring Up to Keep the Commandments, Statutes, and Judgments of Their God

The children of Israel, being fallen in nature, surely would not measure up to keep the commandments, statutes, and judgments of their God; thus they would come under all the curses listed in verses 15 through 26. However, right beside the stones of the inscriptions of the commandments of God was the altar, where they could take Christ as their burnt offering to God for His satisfaction and take Christ as their burnt offering and peace offering to God for God's satisfaction and their enjoyment with God. This is the reason that the altar was prepared before the curses were declared.

Before we believed into Christ and were saved, we were cursed under God's commandments, statutes, and judgments. Through Christ we have been redeemed "out of the curse of the law" (Gal. 3:13). God has provided an altar, the cross of Christ, and at the cross we take Christ as the burnt offering offered to God for His satisfaction. We also take Christ as our burnt offering and peace offering for God's satisfaction and our enjoyment with God. The peace offering is food for both God and us, and we enjoy this food in the presence of God as we have fellowship with Him.

At one time, we were cursed under the law. But praise the Lord for the cross! In this universe there is not only a book of law under which we are cursed; there is also the cross through which redemption has been accomplished by God's grace according to God's righteousness. Because we have come to the cross, we are now under the cross and are no longer under the law. As those who are under the

cross, we can satisfy God, and also find satisfaction for ourselves, through Christ, our Redeemer and our Substitute. Through Christ, who is our peace, we have peace with God. The law is over, and the cross stands forever.

LIFE-STUDY OF DEUTERONOMY

MESSAGE TWENTY-FIVE

WARNING
(IMPLYING GRACE)

(2)

Scripture Reading: Deut. 28

In this message we will continue to consider the warning (implying grace) in chapters twenty-seven and twenty-eight.

II. THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL LISTENING DILIGENTLY TO THE VOICE OF JEHOVAH THEIR GOD AND DOING ALL HIS COMMANDMENTS, AND JEHOVAH SETTING THEM HIGH ABOVE ALL THE NATIONS, AND ALL THE BLESSINGS COMING UPON THEM AND OVERTAKING THEM

If the children of Israel listened diligently to the voice of Jehovah their God and were certain to do all His commandments, Jehovah their God would set them high above all the nations, and all the blessings would come upon them and overtake them (28:1-2).

A. Being Blessed in the City and in the Field

The children of Israel would be blessed in the city and in the field (v. 3). Whether they were at home or at work, they would be blessed.

B. Blessed Being the Fruit of Their Womb, of Their Ground, and of Their Animals, the Offspring of Their Cattle and the Young of Their Flock

In speaking of the blessing coming upon the people, Moses was very detailed. In verses 4 and 5 he said that blessed would be the fruit of their womb, the fruit of their

ground, and the fruit of their cattle and also the offspring of their cattle and the young of their flock. Moses said that even their basket and kneading bowl would be blessed.

C. Being Blessed in Their Coming In and in Their Going Out

According to verse 6, the people would be blessed in their coming in and in their going out.

D. Being Blessed in Their Storehouses, in All Their Undertakings, and in the God-given Land

The children of Israel would be blessed also in their storehouses, in all their undertakings, and in the God-given land (v. 8).

E. Jehovah Striking Down Their Enemies

In verse 7 Jehovah said that He would strike down their enemies. The enemies would come out against them on one road, but the enemies would flee before them on seven roads.

F. Jehovah Establishing Them as a Holy People to Himself

If the children of Israel would keep the commandments of Jehovah their God and walk in His ways, He would establish them as a holy people to Himself (v. 9). Furthermore, all the peoples of the earth would see that they were called by Jehovah's name and would be afraid of them (v. 10).

G. Jehovah Giving Them Rain for Their Land in Its Season

Jehovah would give rain to His people for their land in its season (v. 12a). Because of their wealth, they would lend to many nations, but they would not borrow (v. 12b).

H. Jehovah Making Them the Head and Not the Tail

Jehovah would make His people the head and not the tail, and they would tend only upward and not downward, if they would listen to the commandments of Jehovah their God (v. 13). They were not to turn aside from His words to go after other gods to serve them (v. 14). Moses was very concerned that they might turn aside to other gods, to idols, and, in Deuteronomy, he repeatedly warned them not to do this.

III. THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL NOT LISTENING TO THE VOICE OF JEHOVAH THEIR GOD AND NOT DOING ALL HIS COMMANDMENTS AND HIS STATUTES, AND ALL THE CURSES COMING UPON THEM AND OVERTAKING THEM

If the children of Israel did not listen to the voice of Jehovah their God and were not certain to do all His commandments and His statutes, all the curses would come upon them and overtake them (v. 15).

A. Curses Coming to Every Place, on Everything, and in Every Way

Verses 16 through 19 indicate that curses would come to every place, on everything, and in every way. They would be cursed in the city and in the field, and cursed in their coming in and in their going out. The curse would come on their basket and kneading bowl, on the fruit of their womb and of their ground, and on the offspring of their cattle and the young of their flock.

B. Curses in Discomfiture in All Undertakings, in a Plague, in Consuming Diseases, in Burning Heat and Drought, and in Blight and Mildew

Verses 20 through 22 speak of curses in discomfiture in all undertakings, in a plague, in consuming diseases, in burning heat and drought, and in blight and mildew. The

diseases here would not come and go but would cling to the people until they were consumed from off the land.

C. Curses in the Heaven above Their Head Becoming Brass, in the Land under Their Feet Becoming Iron, and in the Rain Becoming Powder and Dust

Other curses would be the heaven above their head becoming brass and the land under them becoming iron (v. 23). Moreover, Jehovah would make the rain of their land powder and dust (v. 24). How terrible!

D. Curses in Being Struck Down before Their Enemies

The children of Israel would also be cursed in being struck down before their enemies and in all the diseases, robbings, and sufferings incurred at their hands (vv. 25-35).

E. Curses in Being Brought to a Nation as a Horror, a Proverb, and a Byword among All the Peoples

God's people would be cursed in being brought to a nation as a source of horror, a proverb, and a byword among all the peoples to which Jehovah would drive them (vv. 36-37). The peoples would talk about the children of Israel in a despising, joking way. Because they had been taken into captivity, they would also be cursed in the fields and vineyards being left to the locusts, worms, and sojourners (vv. 38-44). These curses would thus become a sign and a wonder forever with the children of Israel (v. 46).

F. Curses in Their Enemies Coming to Eat the Produce of Their Cattle and the Fruit of Their Ground and to Besiege All Their Towns

According to verses 47 through 57, the people would be cursed in their enemies, a nation from far away, coming to eat the produce of their cattle and the fruit of their ground and to besiege all the towns, causing the children of Israel to eat the flesh of their children. Begrudging their brother,

their wife, and the remnant of their children, they would not give to one of them any of the flesh of their children whom they would eat. This actually took place.

G. Curses Coming in Great and Persistent Plagues, in Malignant and Persistent Sicknesses, and in All the Illnesses of Egypt to Reduce Them in Number

Because the children of Israel did not do all the words of God's commandment and did not fear "this glorious and awesome name"—Jehovah their God—curses would come in great and persistent plagues, in malignant and persistent sicknesses, and in all the illnesses of Egypt to reduce the people in number (vv. 58-63a).

H. Curses in Being Scattered among All the Peoples, in Living a Life in Captivity, and in Being Brought Back to Egypt

Finally, they would be cursed in being scattered among all the peoples, in living a life in captivity, full of terrors (vv. 63b-67). They would be brought back to Egypt, and there they would offer themselves for sale to their enemies, but no one would buy them (v. 68).

These curses reveal that in His judgment God is severe. In Romans 11:22 Paul refers to the severity of God. Because God is severe toward those who are rebellious, we need to fear Him.

All the curses that have befallen the children of Israel have carried out God's governmental dealings with them, so that eventually God would be able to accomplish His economy with them to prove that He is the very God who would not change in His will forever. We should not think that God's severe chastisement of the children of Israel means that He has given them up. On the contrary, God's chastisement indicates that He will not give them up. The principle is the same with us today. God's chastisement of the believers indicates not that He has forsaken them but that He will not let them go.

In keeping with prophecy, the children of Israel have

returned to their fatherland in their iniquity. The nation of Israel today is filled with sinfulness and iniquity. The people trust in education, in technology, and in their army, all of which are idols in the sight of God. The day is coming when God will chastise them further and even more severely.

This chastisement will take place during the great tribulation, which is the second half of the last week of the seventy weeks in Daniel 9:24-27. Each week denotes seven years. The first seven weeks, a period of forty-nine years, were for the rebuilding of ancient Jerusalem. The next sixty-two weeks, a period of four hundred thirty-four years, covered the span of time from the rebuilding of Jerusalem to the day of Christ's crucifixion. Between the end of the sixty-ninth week and the beginning of the seventieth week, there is a long period of time—the age of grace, which is also the age of the church. This is the age in which we are living, and the end of this age may be very near. One sign of the end was the restoration of Israel in 1948, and a second sign was the recovery of the city of Jerusalem by the nation of Israel. As far as Israel is concerned, the only remaining sign is the rebuilding of the temple. Matthew 24:15 indicates that the temple will be rebuilt. (See the notes on this verse in the Recovery Version.) The time is coming when the temple will be rebuilt, and at that time the Jews will practice the things related to worship recorded in the Pentateuch.

Recent events in Germany and in eastern Europe may also be indications that the end of the age is near. Certain countries in eastern Europe are turning away from Russia and communism toward democracy. This is a fulfillment of the prophecy related to the great image in Daniel 2 with its feet and toes of iron mixed with clay. Iron signifies autocracy, and clay signifies democracy.

God has not given up Israel. On the one hand, God is disciplining Israel, dealing with her in a sovereign way. On the other hand, God is protecting Israel. Because of God's protection, the Arab nations surrounding Israel have not been able to destroy this tiny nation. According to prophecy, Israel will not be destroyed but will remain until the Lord

Jesus appears as lightning coming forth from the east and shining to the west (Matt. 24:27). At that time, the whole house of Israel will turn to the Lord.

At the beginning of the seventieth week, Antichrist will confirm a covenant with Israel to maintain the peace and to allow Israel to worship God according to their ways. However, in the middle of this week, the last seven years of this age, Antichrist will change his mind, and during the last three and a half years he will oppose any kind of god. In this regard, the first thing Antichrist might do is destroy Catholicism. He will also seek to destroy Judaism and persecute the Jews, besieging the city of Jerusalem. But the Lord Jesus will come back, and Israel will repent to God and be saved. In this we see how faithful God is in keeping His word and in fulfilling it.

Concerning our own situation as believers today, we need to be reverent before the Lord. Not only is Israel under God's chastisement, but we also are under His dealing. We need to ask ourselves if we are ready for the rapture of the overcomers, an extraordinary rapture that will take place before the great tribulation. The overcomers will be raptured to the third heaven before the tribulation, whereas the other believers will be left on earth to pass through the time of the great tribulation. Like the woman in Revelation 12, these believers will be preserved, cared for, and nourished by God. Nevertheless, the situation on earth will be very threatening. The devil will be cast down to earth to damage the human race, Antichrist will come up from the abyss, and the false prophet will join Antichrist to destroy the earth, making it no longer fit to be inhabited by human beings. Those three and a half years, therefore, will be a terrible time.

We have considered the portions of Deuteronomy which declare the blessings and the curses. We have also seen that instead of giving up Israel, God is chastising her for her perfecting. Thus God's chastisement is a kind of perfecting.

God has two peoples on earth—Israel and the church—and He is perfecting both. While He is perfecting Israel, He

is also perfecting us. Today God is dealing with Israel, and He is also dealing with the church.

LIFE-STUDY OF DEUTERONOMY

MESSAGE TWENTY-SIX

CHRIST IN DEUTERONOMY —THE MONUMENT, THE ALTAR, AND THE OFFERINGS

Scripture Reading: Deut. 27—28

A BOOK ON CHRIST

Before we come in the next message to the matter of the enactment of the covenant, I would like in this message to give a brief word concerning the Christ revealed in Deuteronomy. The book of Deuteronomy is a book on Christ. The focus of this book, including chapters twenty-seven and twenty-eight, is not the law but Christ.

THE MONUMENT WITH GOD'S REQUIREMENTS

In 27:1-7 Moses gave commandments to the children of Israel regarding erecting large stones, building an altar, and offering burnt offerings and peace offerings on this altar. In the day they crossed over the Jordan into the land which Jehovah was giving to them, at the entry of the good land, they were to erect large stones, coat them with plaster, and write upon them the Ten Commandments. These stones may be considered a monument. Beside this monument, they were to build an altar. Thus, two things were set up—a monument and an altar.

The Ten Commandments, which were written on the monument, were God's requirements. As God's requirements, the Ten Commandments are an expression of God Himself; they are a portrait of what God is. In particular, the Ten Commandments reveal that God is love and light and that He is holy and righteous. Thus, the monument at the entry to the land was actually the very God Himself.

God was standing there, revealing Himself to the children of Israel and making His requirements known to them. God, according to what He is, had His requirements, and the people had to satisfy these requirements.

At this point, I would emphasize once again that, since Deuteronomy is a book on Christ, in our reading of this book we should change the words *law* and *commandment* to *Christ*. The stone monument was also Christ. We have seen that this monument was God. Now we need to see that this God is embodied in Christ. This means that the One who stood before the people at the entry to the land was Christ as the embodiment of God. As Christ stood before them, He showed them what He is, and based on what He is, He made requirements of them.

THE ALTAR BESIDE THE MONUMENT

Why was an altar built up next to the monument? We need an altar because we cannot measure up to the requirements of what is written on the monument. This indicates that it is impossible for us to match Christ. Christ, the very God, is holy and righteous, and He is full of love and light. We cannot match Him. Therefore, we need an altar—we need the cross.

I would not say that the altar was a monument, for it was the place where the offerings were burned as sacrifices to the God who made requirements of the people and who placed demands upon them. The burning of the sacrifices satisfied the requiring God.

THE OFFERINGS FULFILLING GOD'S REQUIREMENTS

The offerings burned on the altar as sacrifices for God's satisfaction signify Christ. On the one hand, Christ is the One who makes the requirements; on the other hand, Christ is the One who meets and satisfies these requirements. We cannot meet His requirements, but He Himself has come to be our Substitute to replace us and to fulfill what He requires of us. This reveals that He is both the requiring One and the fulfilling One.

A WONDERFUL SCENE

In the universe today there is a wonderful scene unveiling Christ to us. As we read Deuteronomy 27 and consider the monument, the altar, and the offerings, we can see this wonderful scene. First, in this scene we see Christ as the embodiment of God standing before us with His demands and requirements according to what He is. Second, we see the altar, which signifies the cross of Christ. Because we cannot fulfill His requirements, He came to be our Redeemer, to be the One cursed for us on the cross (Gal. 3:13). The requiring One is thus the fulfilling One. When this One was crucified, He was consumed by fire as the sacrifice to satisfy God and to fulfill His requirements.

This wonderful scene is unique in the entire universe. In this scene we have the monument and the altar, that is, the requiring One and the fulfilling and satisfying One. The requiring God came in incarnation to be our Redeemer as the satisfying One. Having put on flesh through incarnation, He went to the cross in the flesh and with the flesh to die there for the fulfillment of His requirements (Rom. 8:3-4). Now we can see the monument, but we can also see the altar with the offerings burned upon it to fulfill what is written on the monument. This means that in this wonderful scene we see the requiring God and also the Redeemer, who is nothing less than the requiring God Himself.

THE ENTRY INTO THE GOOD LAND

This wonderful scene, with the monument, the altar, and the offerings, is our entry into the good land. This scene reveals that it is through the monument, the altar, and the offerings—through the requiring God, the cross of Christ, and Christ Himself as the offerings—that we enter into the good land. It is also through the monument, the altar, and the offerings that we receive all the blessings which God would give us in Christ. All these blessings are actually the processed Triune God Himself embodied in Christ.

I hope that all the saints will see this marvelous view. We all need to see that the One who stands before us with

His requirements is the Triune God in Christ, that the altar is the cross of Christ, and that, as signified by the offerings, Christ is our Redeemer. He, the fulfilling One, was "burned" on the cross as the sacrifice to satisfy the requiring One. May we all see this wonderful scene with the monument, the altar, and the offerings. If we have this vision, we will surely say, "Hallelujah for God, for the cross of Christ, and for Christ, our Redeemer and Substitute!"

LIFE-STUDY OF DEUTERONOMY

MESSAGE TWENTY-SEVEN

THE ENACTMENT OF THE COVENANT

Scripture Reading: Deut. 29—30

After the rehearsal of the law and the word of warning with the blessings and the curses, God charged Moses to make a covenant with the new generation. The former generation had received a covenant forty years prior at Horeb, but in chapters twenty-nine and thirty God charged Moses to enact another covenant with the new generation. In this message we will consider the enactment of this covenant.

I. THE INTRODUCTORY WORD

In 29:1-17 we have the introductory word.

A. A Covenant besides the Covenant God Made with the People at Horeb

The covenant enacted in chapters twenty-nine and thirty was the covenant which Jehovah commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab. This means that it was a covenant besides the one He made with them at Horeb, that is, at Mount Sinai (29:1). The warning was to remind the people, whereas the enactment of the covenant was to establish the warning.

B. Based upon the Experiences of the Past

The enactment of the covenant was based upon the experiences of the past (vv. 2-8, 16-17).

1. All That the Children of Israel Saw Which Jehovah Did in the Land of Egypt with Great Signs and Wonders

The enactment of the covenant was based upon all that

the children of Israel saw which Jehovah did in the land of Egypt with great signs and wonders, for which Jehovah had not given them a heart to understand, eyes to see, and ears to hear until that day (vv. 2-4, 16a). Because the children of Israel were rebellious in the wilderness, they did not understand what God was doing with them. They passed through many things, but they were in darkness and thus did not know what was happening.

2. All That They Had Experienced in the Wilderness

The enactment of the covenant was also based upon all that the children of Israel had experienced in the wilderness for forty years (vv. 5a, 16b-17). Their clothing did not wear out, and they did not eat bread nor drink wine or strong drink, that they might know that Jehovah was their God (vv. 5b-6).

3. Slaying Sihon, the King of Heshbon, and Og, the King of Bashan, and Taking Their Land

The children of Israel slew Sihon, the king of Heshbon, and Og, the king of Bashan, and took their land for the inheritance of the two and a half tribes of Reuben and Gad and Manasseh (vv. 7-8).

All these things were miracles done by the Lord before the eyes of the people in order to strengthen the children of Israel and assure them that He would fulfill whatever He had promised. Hence, these experiences of the past became a base for the enactment of the covenant.

C. The Objects and the Purpose of the Enactment of the Covenant

In 29:9-15 we have the objects and the purpose for the enactment of the covenant.

1. The Objects

The objects of the covenant were the leaders, the elders, the officers, every man of Israel, the little ones, the wives,

and the sojourners with them, from the men who chopped their wood to the men who drew their water (vv. 10-11). The objects also included all those who were there before Jehovah and those who were not there (vv. 14-15).

2. The Purpose

a. For the Children of Israel to Enter into a Covenant with Jehovah Their God and into His Oath

The purpose of the enactment of the covenant was for the children of Israel to enter into a covenant with Jehovah their God and into His oath, which He was making with them, so that they would keep the words of that covenant and do them that they might prosper in all that they did (vv. 12, 9). This covenant was not an ordinary agreement but a kind of oath. The covenant here may be compared to a contract to which the parties involved sign their names. Such a covenant was made by God though Moses, who was the mediator.

b. For God to Establish the Children of Israel as His People and Himself as Their God

The purpose of the enactment of the covenant was also for God to establish the children of Israel as His people and Himself as their God (v. 13). Both parties, God and the children of Israel, were in agreement and "signed" the covenant. The children of Israel were to do their part, and God was to do His part. This was the enactment of the covenant.

II. THE CONTENTS OF THE COVENANT

In 29:18—30:10 we have the contents of the covenant. This is an important matter.

A. There Not Being among the Children of Israel Any Man, Woman, Family, or Tribe Whose Heart Turned Away from Jehovah Their God, to Go and Serve the Gods of the Nations, and There Not Being among Them a Root Bearing Poisonous Fruit and Wormwood

There was not to be among the children of Israel any

man, woman, family, or tribe whose heart turned away from Jehovah their God, to go and serve the gods of the nations (v. 18a). This was God's unique concern regarding Israel. He was concerned that some day they would turn away from Him and go the way of the idols. This would be an insult to God, and it would cause Him to punish the people severely.

Furthermore, there was not to be among the children of Israel a root bearing poisonous fruit and wormwood (v. 18b), one who blessed himself in his heart, saying, "I will have peace, though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart; to the ruin of the moist with the dry" (v. 19). The *root* here refers to a rebellious person who rises up from among the people, similar to those mentioned in Acts 20:30, the ones who speak "perverted things to draw away the disciples after themselves." Eventually, such a rebellious person becomes a root bearing poisonous fruit and wormwood. The expression *to the ruin of the moist with the dry* is a Hebrew idiom indicating destruction of everything in his path. Jehovah would not be willing to pardon this kind of person, but rather His anger and jealousy would fume against that man, all the curses in this book would settle on him, and Jehovah would blot out his name from under heaven (v. 20). Moreover, Jehovah would separate him unto evil out of all the tribes of Israel (v. 21).

B. The Following Generation of Israel and the Foreigner Coming from a Distant Land, Seeing the Plagues of the Land and Its Diseases

The following generation of Israel and the foreigner coming from a distant land, seeing the plagues of the land and its diseases, and that all the land was sulphur and salt, a burning waste, that it was not sown, nor did it sprout, nor did any vegetation come up in it, would say, "Why has Jehovah done this to this land?" (vv. 22-24). The answer would be that because the children of Israel forsook the covenant of Jehovah and went and served other gods, the anger of Jehovah burned against that land, bringing upon it all the curses; and Jehovah plucked them out of their land in anger and in great indignation and sent them to another land (vv. 25-28).

Verse 29 concludes, "The things that are hidden belong to Jehovah our God; but the things that are revealed, to us and our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law." This indicates that we should take care of the revealed things and not seek the hidden things. For the children of Israel in Deuteronomy 29, the things revealed were the law, the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments. They were to take care of these things so that they might do all the words of the law.

C. The Children of Israel, While Living among the Nations, Returning to Jehovah Their God and Listening to His Voice with All Their Heart and with All Their Soul, and He Turning Their Captivity

If while living among the nations, to whom Jehovah their God would drive them, the children of Israel and their children would return to Him and listen to His voice with all their heart and with all their soul, He would turn their captivity and be compassionate to them, and He would gather them from all the peoples among whom He had scattered them and bring them into the land which their fathers possessed and would do good for them and multiply them (30:1-5). He would circumcise their heart (v. 6a), meaning that He would somewhat transform their rebellious nature. They would then love Him with all their heart and with all their soul (v. 6b). He would put all the curses upon their enemies and would give them an excess of prosperity in all their undertakings, and would exult over them for good (vv. 7-10).

This promise, which is a prophecy, has not yet been fulfilled, but we are waiting for the fulfillment. The world situation is very advanced with respect to the fulfillment of this prophecy. Eventually, the Jews will rebuild the temple, and even now they are making preparations for this. Soon after they have recovered the site of the old temple, the temple will be erected. When we see these things taking place, we will know that the "summer" of the time of

restoration is near (Matt. 24:32 and notes). We should all be prepared for this and should watch and pray.

III. THE CONCLUDING WORD

In 30:11-20 we have Moses' concluding word.

A. The Commandment Which Moses Was Commanding the Children of Israel Not Being Too Difficult for Them, nor Being Distant

The commandment which Moses was commanding the children of Israel was not too difficult for them, nor was it distant (v. 11). It was not in heaven that they should say, "Who will ascend to heaven for us and bring it to us that we may hear it and do it?" (v. 12). Nor was it across the sea that they should say, "Who will go across the sea for us and bring it to us that we may hear it and do it?" (v. 13). But the commandment was very near to them, even in their mouth and in their heart, that they might do it (v. 14). As we have pointed out, in Romans 10:6-10 Paul relates the word spoken here to Christ for the New Testament believers to receive for salvation. This is our basis for saying that Christ is unveiled throughout the book of Deuteronomy.

B. Moses Putting before the Children of Israel Life and Good, and Death and Evil

Moses put before the children of Israel life and good, and death and evil (v. 15). If they obeyed the commandment of Jehovah their God to love Him, walk in His ways, and keep His commandments, statutes, and judgments, they would live and multiply, and He would bless them in the land which they would enter and possess (v. 16). But if their heart turned and they did not listen, but rather they were drawn away in worship to other gods and served them, they would surely perish (vv. 17-18a). Their days would not be extended upon the land which they would possess over the Jordan (v. 18b). Moses called heaven and earth to witness against them: he had set before them life and death, blessing and curse (v. 19a). He exhorted them to choose life that they and their

seed might live, in loving Jehovah their God by listening to His voice and holding fast to Him; for He was their life and the length of their days, that they might dwell upon the land which He swore to their fathers to give them (vv. 19b-20).

By considering the enactment of the covenant in Deuteronomy 29 and 30, we can see that what is on God's heart concerning His people is that they would cooperate with Him. To keep the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments—this is just to cooperate with God. This is what God wants us to do. We need to say, "Lord, I stand with You. I take You, Your will, and Your word." However, we should not try to do this in ourselves and by ourselves. To do this is to insult the Lord. We should simply cooperate with Him by letting Him do everything. If we do this, we will become not the doers but the enjoyers. Then everything will be fulfilled.

Let us remember that, as we saw in the foregoing message, at the entry of the good land was a monument upon which God's requirements were written, demanding that we satisfy God's desire. When we admit that we are not able to fulfill these requirements, we should turn to the altar with the offerings, which signify Christ as our Substitute, and be enjoyers instead of doers. Then we will receive blessing upon blessing.

LIFE-STUDY OF DEUTERONOMY

MESSAGE TWENTY-EIGHT

THE FINAL EXHORTATIONS AND CHARGES

Scripture Reading: Deut. 31:1-13, 24-29

In this message we will consider the final exhortations and charges. Although Moses had spoken so many things in the foregoing chapters, in chapter thirty-one he, as an elderly father concerned for his children, still had something more to say. Because he was so concerned for the children of Israel, he spoke some of the same things again and again.

I. MOSES' EXHORTATION TO THE PEOPLE

In 31:1-6 we have Moses' exhortation to the people.

A. Moses Speaking These Words to All Israel

The words Moses spoke in these verses were spoken to all Israel (v. 1).

B. Saying to Them That He Was a Hundred and Twenty Years Old and Could No Longer Go Out and Come In

Moses told the people that he was a hundred and twenty years old and could no longer go out and come in, and that Jehovah had told him that he could not cross over the Jordan (v. 2). This was a sad word, for Moses wanted to cross over the Jordan but was not allowed to do so.

C. Jehovah Their God Crossing Over before Them and Destroying the Nations before Them

In verse 3 Moses told the children of Israel that it was Jehovah their God who was crossing over before them and who would destroy the nations before them, and they would dispossess the nations. In this verse Moses also said that

Joshua was the one who was crossing over before them, as Jehovah had spoken. Moses' word here was an expression of the concern in his heart for Israel.

D. Jehovah Doing to the Nations Even as He Did to Sihon and Og and to Their Land

In verses 4 and 5 Moses said that Jehovah would do to the nations even as He did to Sihon and Og and to their land. He would deliver the nations up before the children of Israel. God's victory over Sihon and Og was to be an assurance to the people that He would defeat all the kings in Canaan, take over their land, and give it to the children of Israel as their inheritance.

E. Encouraging All Israel to Be Strong and Take Courage, to Fear Not, Neither to Be Terrified of the Nations

Finally, in verse 6 Moses encouraged all Israel to be strong and take courage, to fear not, neither to be terrified of the nations, for Jehovah their God went with them and He would not fail them nor forsake them.

II. MOSES' EXHORTATION TO JOSHUA

Verses 7 and 8 are Moses' exhortation to Joshua.

A. Moses Calling Joshua and Speaking to Him in the Sight of All Israel

Moses called Joshua and spoke to him in the sight of all Israel. In his exhortation to Joshua, Moses said, "Be strong and take courage, for you will go with this people into the land which Jehovah swore to their fathers to give to them; and you will cause them to inherit it" (v. 7).

B. Moses Telling Joshua That Jehovah Was Going before Him and Would Be with Him

Moses also assured Joshua that it was Jehovah who was going before him and that He would be with him. Furthermore, Jehovah would not fail him nor forsake him (v. 8a).

Thus, Moses concluded his exhortation to Joshua with this charge: "Do not fear, neither be dismayed" (v. 8b).

III. MOSES' EXHORTATION TO THE PRIESTS, THE SONS OF LEVI, AND TO THE ELDERS OF ISRAEL

In verses 9-13 and 24-29 we have Moses' exhortation to the priests, the sons of Levi, and to the elders of Israel.

A. Moses Commanding Them That at the End of Every Seven Years, at the Year of Release, at the Feast of Tabernacles, They Were to Read This Law before All Israel

Verse 9 says, "Moses wrote this law and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who bear the ark of the covenant of Jehovah, and to all the elders of Israel." Moses commanded them that at the end of every seven years, at the year of release, at the Feast of Tabernacles, when all Israel would come together before Jehovah their God in the place which He would choose, they were to read this law before all Israel (vv. 10-11). They were to gather the people, the men, the women, the little ones, and the strangers with them, that they might hear, learn, and fear Jehovah their God and do all the words of this law (v. 12). They were to do this so that their children, who had not known these things, might hear and learn to fear Jehovah all the days that they would live upon the land into which they were crossing and which they would possess (v. 13).

B. Moses Charging the Levites Who Bore the Ark of the Covenant to Take This Book of the Law and Place It at the Side of the Ark, That It Might Be There as a Witness against Them

When Moses finished writing the words of this law in a book until they were completed, he charged the Levites who bore the ark of the covenant to take this book of the law and place it at the side of the ark, that it might be there as a witness against them (vv. 24-26). Moses gave this charge because he knew the rebelliousness of the children of Israel

and their stiff neck (v. 27a). While he was yet alive with them, they had been rebelling against Jehovah. How much more would they rebel after his death (v. 27b)! Moses' speaking here was according to his deep concern for God's people.

C. Moses Gathering to Him All the Elders of the Tribes and Their Officers That He Might Speak These Words and That He Might Call Heaven and Earth to Witness against Them

Moses gathered to him all the elders of the tribes and their officers that he might speak these words and that he might call heaven and earth to witness against them (v. 28). He knew that after his death the children of Israel would utterly spoil themselves and turn away from the way that he had commanded them (v. 29a). As a result, evil would come upon them in the latter days, for they would do what was evil in the sight of Jehovah so as to anger Him by their undertakings (v. 29b).

As Moses was about to depart, his heart was set on the children of Israel, but he was not at peace. Knowing that Israel would rebel against God, Moses repeated his charge again and again. He seemed to be saying to the people, "I do not have peace regarding you, and I do not have any trust in you. You rebelled many times while I was alive, and I am concerned that after I leave, you will rebel even more." Eventually, what Moses felt regarding the children of Israel became the fact, for, not too long afterward, they rebelled once again. Therefore, Moses, the elderly father, was right in his concern.

We should not think that Moses' concern was excessive. He knew that the children of Israel were rebellious in nature, that the element of rebellion was part of their very being. Because they had a rebellious nature, they would eventually rebel even more against God. No matter how much teaching the people received through Moses, the judges, and the priests, they still went after other gods and worshipped idols. They went so far as to set up idols in the temple. It seems that the children of Israel became more pagan than the

pagans. Despite the fact that they received so much training, they remained the same and continued to rebel.

We need to remember that what is portrayed regarding Israel is a picture of us today. This picture shows us what we are. Since we are the same in nature as the children of Israel, their exposure is also our exposure. Many of us have been in the church life for years; we have heard messages and have read the Recovery Version. However, we should not have any trust in ourselves, because we have a rebellious nature, a rebellious being. We are a constitution of rebellion. Therefore, we surely need the Lord's mercy and grace.

Now we can understand that Moses, shortly before he was to die, was not at peace regarding the children of Israel. His final exhortation was actually a repetition of much that he had spoken before. In particular, he exhorted them not to turn away from Jehovah their God and go after other gods. He seemed to be telling them, "Do not forget what you are, and do not forget what Jehovah your God wants of you. Remember my charge to you and the word I have spoken to you. Every seven years this law should be repeated before you by the priests. In the seventh year, while you are enjoying the Feast of Tabernacles, you must listen to the words of this law."

Today we all need to realize that we are the same in nature as the children of Israel and should not have any trust in ourselves. We should not have any kind of assurance that, in ourselves, we are able to stand and remain in the church life. We may enjoy the Lord in the morning, but a few hours later we may rebel against Him. Since we do not have the guarantee that we can remain faithful to the Lord, let us constantly come back to Him and inhale Him, receiving Him as the word into our being.

LIFE-STUDY OF DEUTERONOMY

MESSAGE TWENTY-NINE

THE SONG OF MOSES

Scripture Reading: Deut. 31:14-23, 30; 32:1-47

In this message we will cover the song of Moses.

I. JEHOVAH COMMANDING MOSES TO WRITE A SONG

In 31:14-23, 30 Jehovah commanded Moses to write a song.

A. Jehovah Telling Moses That His Days Drew Near for Him to Die

In verse 14 Jehovah told Moses that his days drew near for him to die and that he should call Joshua to be with him in the tent of meeting that Jehovah might charge him.

B. Jehovah Appearing in a Pillar of Cloud and Telling Moses That This People Would Rise Up and Go as Harlots after the Strange Gods of the Land Which They Were Entering and Would Forsake Him and Break His Covenant

Jehovah appeared in the tent in a pillar of cloud, which stood over the entrance of the tent, and told Moses that he was about to lie down with his fathers, that this people would rise up and go as harlots after the strange gods of the land which they were entering, and that they would forsake Him and break His covenant (vv. 15-16). His anger would burn against them, and He would hide His face from them (v. 17a). They would be devoured, and many evils and troubles would befall them because of all the evil they had done, for they turned to other gods (vv. 17b-18).

C. Jehovah Charging Moses to Write This Song and Teach It to the Children of Israel and Put It in Their Mouth, That He Might Have This Song as a Witness against the Children of Israel

Jehovah charged Moses to write this song and teach it to the children of Israel and put it in their mouth, that He might have this song as a witness against the children of Israel (v. 19). Jehovah would bring them into the land flowing with milk and honey, and they would eat and become satisfied and grow fat, and they would turn to other gods and serve them and despise Jehovah and break His covenant (v. 20). When many evils and troubles befell them, this song would respond as a witness before them because it would not be forgotten in the mouth of their seed; for He knew their intention before He brought them into the land (v. 21). So Moses wrote this song and taught it to the children of Israel (v. 22).

D. Jehovah's Charge to Joshua

In verse 23 Jehovah charged Joshua and said, "Be strong and take courage, for you will bring the children of Israel into the land which I have sworn to them; and I will be with you."

E. Moses Speaking to All the Congregation of Israel the Words of This Song

Moses spoke to all the congregation of Israel the words of this song until they were completed (v. 30).

II. THE CONTENTS OF THE SONG

In 32:1-43 we have the contents of the song of Moses. These contents are deep, and certain matters are difficult to understand.

A. Moses Asking Heaven and Earth to Hear His Words

In 32:1 Moses asked heaven and earth to hear his words.

B. Moses' Words Dropping like the Rain and Distilling like the Dew

Moses' words dropped like the rain upon young grass and like the dew upon herbage (v. 2). This indicates that Moses realized that whatever he spoke, either a blessing or a curse, was like rain and dew. If as we read the song of Moses we merely exercise our mind, we will not sense the rain and the dew. But if we exercise our spirit as well as our mind, we will sense that Moses' words are like dropping rain and distilling dew.

C. Moses Declaring What Kind of God Jehovah Is

In verses 3 and 4 Moses declared what kind of God Jehovah is. Jehovah is a God of greatness. He is the Rock, whose work is perfect and whose ways are justice. He is a God of faithfulness and without injustice; He is righteous and upright.

Moses' word here was actually his vindication of God. Quite often during the forty years in the wilderness, the children of Israel complained against God, saying that He was wrong in bringing them out of Egypt and into the wilderness. Thus, Moses vindicated the very God whom he served, declaring that He is the Rock and that His ways are not only just but justice itself. He is righteous and upright, and He is right in whatever He does.

D. The Children of Israel Dealing with Jehovah God Corruptly

In verses 5 and 6 we see that the children of Israel dealt with Jehovah God corruptly, having blemishes not like His sons, being a twisted and crooked generation, and repaying Jehovah as foolish and unwise people. All the children of Israel were supposed to be God's sons, but in their living they did not behave like God's sons. Instead, they were twisted and crooked. Although God had done so much for them, they repaid Him as foolish and unwise people.

E. Moses Tracing Back Jehovah's Favor and Love to Israel

Moses traced back Jehovah's favor and love to Israel (vv. 7-14). Jehovah considered Israel as His portion, His inheritance. He encircled them, cared for them, and guarded them like the pupil of His eye. As an eagle He bore them up upon His pinions, and He made them ride on the high places of the earth and enjoy the fruit of the field and the produce of the cattle. Here we see that God was not only righteous with the children of Israel but was also very good to them.

F. Israel, Growing Fat and Thick, Forsaking God, Who Made Them, and Neglecting the Rock Who Begot Them

Israel, growing fat and thick, forsook God, who made them, neglected the Rock who begot them, and angered Him with strange gods, with abominations, sacrificing to demons (vv. 15-18).

G. Jehovah Being Provoked to Anger by Israel

Jehovah was provoked to anger by Israel, His sons and daughters, and said that He would hide His face from them (vv. 19-20). A fire was kindled in His anger toward them (v. 22), and He would send the teeth of beasts against them with the venom of those that crawl in the dust (v. 24b). The sword would bereave outside, and inside, terror (v. 25a). He would scatter them and cause the memory of them to cease among men, lest their adversaries misjudge, saying that it was their hand and not Jehovah who had wrought all this (vv. 26-27). For the children of Israel were destitute of counsel, with no understanding in them (v. 28). If they had been wise, they would have comprehended that it was Jehovah their Rock who sold them and delivered them up to their enemies (vv. 29-31).

H. Jehovah Vindicating His People and Having Compassion on His Servants

In verses 36 through 43 we see that Jehovah would

vindicate His people and have compassion on His servants when He saw that their support (strength) was gone. He would say, "Where are their gods…? /Let them rise up and help you; /Let them be a shelter over you. /See now that I, I am He, /And there is no god with Me. /I kill and I make alive; /I wound and I heal; /And there is no one who can deliver from My hand" (vv. 37-39). He would avenge the blood of His servants, repay His adversaries with vengeance, and cover the guilt of His land and of His people.

Many things in the song of Moses are severe, but the ending is very positive. No matter how evil the children of Israel might be and no matter how much God might be provoked in His anger toward them, the result, the issue, will be good. Instead of forsaking His people, God will eventually come in to vindicate them. This is true concerning Israel and also concerning the believers in Christ.

III. THE WORD OF MOSES AND JOSHUA TO THE PEOPLE

Deuteronomy 32:44-47 is the word of Moses and Joshua to the people. Moses and Joshua spoke to the people all the words of this song (vv. 44-45). Moses said to them that they should set their heart on all these words and command their children to do all the words of this law (v. 46). He told them that it was not a matter too vain for them, because it was their life and by it they would extend their days upon the land into which they were crossing over the Jordan to possess it (v. 47).

Everything which Moses spoke in the book of Deuteronomy was an expression of his concern for the children of Israel. The rehearsal of the law, the warning, the enactment of the covenant, the final exhortations and charges, and the song of Moses—all were spoken by Moses out of his concern for God's people. His greatest concern was that they would turn away from their God and go after other gods. And this is what the children of Israel have done throughout the centuries. Even today, many of them have turned away from God to the idols of money, high technology, weapons, and skill in fighting. Therefore, on the one hand, God is working for

the children of Israel to protect them. On the other hand, because they have not yet repented and returned to God, He is also judging them.

LIFE-STUDY OF DEUTERONOMY

MESSAGE THIRTY

THE BLESSING OF MOSES AND THE DEATH OF MOSES, AND HIS SUCCESSOR

Scripture Reading: Deut. 33:1-29; 32:48-52; 34:1-12

In this concluding message we will consider the blessing of Moses (33:1-29) and also the death of Moses, and his successor (32:48-52; 34:1-12).

I. THE BLESSING OF MOSES

In 33:1-29 we have the blessing of Moses. Whereas a young man may not have the heart to bless others, a mature man always gives people a blessing at the end of his conversation.

A. The Introductory Word

Verses 1 through 5 are the introductory word. Verse 1 says that this is the blessing with which Moses, the man of God, blessed the children of Israel before his death. In this introductory word, Moses said that Jehovah came and dawned upon the children of Israel and approached them with a fiery law, loving the people who were in His hand, sat at His feet, and received of His words, and to whom a law was commanded as their possession, and in whose congregation He was king (vv. 2-5).

B. The Blessing

Verses 6 through 25 are the blessing itself. Moses' word here is a kind of prediction with blessing.

1. Concerning Reuben

Reuben, as the first son of Jacob, should have received the birthright, but he did something sinful and lost the

birthright. Because of that sin, the tribe of Reuben was nearly reduced to nothing. But Moses was merciful and prayed that Reuben would live and not die and that his men would not be few (v. 6). This means that the blessing upon Reuben would be the blessing of increase.

2. Concerning Judah

Concerning Judah (v. 7), Moses asked that Jehovah would hear the voice of Judah and bring him to his people. This was a prayer for Judah, a tribe accustomed to fighting for the people, to be brought back from the battlefield. In verse 7 Moses went on to say that with his hands Judah contended for his people. Those who contended in this way have included Caleb and David. Finally, Moses prayed that Jehovah would be a help against Judah's adversaries. Enemies come from the outside, but adversaries arise from within. For example, Absalom became an adversary to David.

3. Concerning Levi

The blessing concerning Levi is very rich (vv. 8-11).

a. Jehovah's Thummim and Urim Being with His Godly Men

First, Moses said that Jehovah's Thummim and Urim would be with His godly men, whom He tested at the waters of Meribah. Levi had said of his father and mother, "I do not regard him," and his brothers he did not acknowledge, and his children he did not recognize. Levi had thus kept Jehovah's speaking and had guarded His covenant (vv. 8-9). This indicates that Levi cared not for his relatives but for God's interests.

b. Levi Showing Jacob Jehovah's Judgments and Israel His Law

Second, Moses said that those of Levi would show Jacob Jehovah's judgments and Israel His law. Also, they would put incense before His nostrils and whole burnt offerings upon His altar (v. 10). The altar for incense was inside the

tabernacle, and the altar for offerings was outside. Levi would serve God at both altars.

c. Jehovah Blessing His Might and Accepting the Work of His Hands

Third, Moses asked Jehovah to bless Levi's might (or, substance) and accept the work of his hands (v. 11a) and to wound thoroughly the loins of those who would rise up against him. Of those who hate Levi, Moses prayed that they would not rise up again (v. 11b).

4. Concerning Benjamin

Concerning Benjamin (v. 12), Moses said, "The beloved of Jehovah shall dwell securely beside Him." This is a matter of geography, indicating that Benjamin would be close to Jerusalem, the location of God's dwelling place, and thus would be God's neighbor. He would dwell securely by God, who would "cover over him all the day." Furthermore, He would dwell between Benjamin's shoulders. According to geography, Benjamin is shaped like two shoulders, and Jerusalem is located between them. Hence, the Lord would dwell between the shoulders of Benjamin.

5. Concerning Joseph

Verses 13 through 17 are the rich blessing concerning Joseph.

a. His Land Being Blessed of Jehovah

Moses blessed Joseph by saying that his land would be blessed by Jehovah with the choicest things of heaven, with the dew and with the deep waters that couch beneath; with the choicest of the crops of the sun and with the choicest of the yield of the moons; with the top of the ancient mountains and with the choicest things of the eternal hills; with the choicest things of the earth and the fullness thereof, and the favor of Him who dwelt in the bush (vv. 13-16a). The expression "Him who dwelt in the bush" refers to God, who in Exodus 3 appeared to Moses from within a burning bush.

Moses asked that all these blessings would come upon the head of Joseph and upon the top of him who is separate among his brothers (Deut. 33:16b). Joseph was separated from his brothers and taken to Egypt in order to fulfill God's purpose.

b. Having Majesty, and His Horns Being the Horns of the Wild Ox

Like his firstborn bullock, Joseph would have majesty, and his horns would be the horns of the wild ox (v. 17a). With these horns he would drive peoples, the ends of the earth together (v. 17b).

Verse 17c says, "Those are the ten thousands of Ephraim; /And those the thousands of Manasseh." Ephraim and Manasseh were the two sons of Joseph. The fact that they are mentioned here indicates that the tribe of Joseph would eventually receive a double portion, which is part of the birthright of the firstborn son. Reuben lost the birthright, but a part of it—the double portion of the land—went to Joseph. The kingship went to Judah, and the priesthood, to Levi.

6. Concerning Zebulun and Issachar

Verses 18 and 19 are the blessing concerning Zebulun and Issachar. Verse 18 says, "Rejoice, Zebulun, for your going forth, /And Issachar, for your tents!" This going forth was fulfilled in the Lord's sending forth the apostles. Most of the apostles, who were sent forth to disciple the nations, were produced from Zebulun, which was in the region of Galilee.

Zebulun and Issachar would call peoples to the mountain. There these tribes would offer sacrifices of righteousness; for they would suck the abundance of the seas and the hidden treasures of the sand (v. 19). This indicates that Zebulun and Issachar would be close to the sea.

7. Concerning Gad

In verses 20 and 21 Moses blessed the tribe of Gad. Because Gad was rather small, Moses said, "Blessed be He

who enlarges Gad" (v. 20a). God is the One who would enlarge this tribe, which would be strong in fighting. This is indicated by the words, "He dwells as a lioness, /And tears off the arm, yea, even the top of the head" (v. 20b).

Gad provided the first part of the land for himself, for there the portion of a lawgiver is reserved (v. 21a). Moreover, he came with the heads of the people and executed the righteousness of Jehovah and His judgments with Israel (v. 21b). This indicates that some among the people of Gad had the knowledge of God's law and His judgments.

8. Concerning Dan

The word concerning Dan reveals that this tribe was not very much under Moses' care. In verse 22 Moses said merely that Dan would be like a lion's whelp that leaps forth from Bashan.

9. Concerning Naphtali

In blessing Naphtali (v. 23), Moses spoke of this tribe as being satisfied with favor and full of the blessing of Jehovah. Naphtali would possess the sea (the west) and the south. According to Matthew 4:13-16, the Lord Jesus, fulfilling the prophecy in Isaiah 9:1-2, came to the districts of Zebulun and Naphtali, beside the sea. Eventually, through the preaching of the gospel, those of Naphtali possessed the Mediterranean Sea. If you study church history, you will see that much was gained for the Lord in the area surrounding the Mediterranean Sea.

10. Concerning Asher

Finally, in Deuteronomy 33:24-25 we have the blessing concerning Asher. Moses declared that Asher would be blessed above the sons, that he would be the one favored of his brothers, and that he would dip his foot in oil (v. 24). For Asher to dip his foot in oil means that he would be rich in the produce of the earth. Furthermore, Asher's doorbolts would be as iron and copper; and as his days were, so would his strength be (v. 25).

C. The Concluding Word

Verses 26 through 29 are the concluding word of the blessing of Moses. This is a blessing not to any particular tribe but to all the people of Israel.

1. There Being No One Like the God of Jeshurun

First, Moses said that there is no one like the God of Jeshurun (Israel), who rides through the heavens as their help and in His majesty through the skies (v. 26).

2. The God of Old Being Their Habitation

Second, the God of old would be their habitation, and underneath would be the eternal arms (v. 27a). They would dwell in God as their habitation, and His eternal arms would be underneath them.

3. Driving Out the Enemy before Them

God drove out the enemy before them and said, "Destroy!" (v. 27b). The enemy driven out by God was then destroyed by the people.

4. Israel Dwelling Securely

Because of the foregoing, Israel dwelt securely, the fountain of Jacob in solitude, on a land of grain and new wine, with the heavens over him dropping their dew (v. 28).

5. Israel Being Happy

In verse 29 Moses proclaimed Israel's happiness, saying, "Who is like you? /A people saved by Jehovah, /The shield of your help /And He who is the sword of your majesty! /So your enemies shall come cringing to you, /And you shall tread upon their high places." This was a total blessing on all the children of Israel.

II. THE DEATH OF MOSES, AND HIS SUCCESSOR

Deuteronomy 32:48-52 and 34:1-12 are concerned with the death of Moses, and with Moses' successor.

A. The Death of Moses

1. Jehovah Telling Moses to Go Up to the Mountain of Abarim, Mount Nebo, and See the Land of Canaan, and Die in the Mountain

Jehovah spoke to Moses, telling him that he should go up to the mountain of Abarim, Mount Nebo, in the land of Moab, which faces Jericho, and see the land of Canaan, and die in the mountain (32:48-50a). There he was to be gathered to his people, to his forefathers, as Aaron his brother died in Mount Hor (v. 50b). Moses was to die in Mount Nebo because he was unfaithful to Jehovah among the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah-kadesh, because he did not sanctify Jehovah among the children of Israel (v. 51).

2. Seeing the Land from a Distance

Moses would see the land from a distance, yet he would not go there into the land (v. 52).

3. Moses Going Up to Mount Nebo, and Jehovah Showing Him the Land

Moses went up to Mount Nebo, and Jehovah showed him all the land and said to him, "This is the land which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob" (34:1-4).

4. Moses Dying There in the Land of Moab according to the Word of Jehovah

Moses, the servant of Jehovah, died there in the land of Moab according to the word of Jehovah (v. 5). Jehovah buried him in the valley in the land of Moab opposite Beth-peor, but no man knows his burial site (v. 6). Immediately after Moses died, God buried him, having a particular purpose in doing so. We believe that Moses and Elijah, both of whom appeared when the Lord Jesus was transfigured (Matt. 17:1-3), will be the two witnesses in Revelation 11.

5. Moses Being a Hundred Twenty Years Old When He Died

Moses was a hundred twenty years old when he died. Nevertheless, his eyes were not dim, nor had his freshness left him (Deut. 34:7). He had the freshness of a young man.

6. The Children of Israel Weeping for Moses

The children of Israel wept for Moses in the plain of Moab for thirty days (v. 8).

B. The Successor of Moses

1. Joshua Being Filled with the Spirit of Wisdom

Joshua, the successor of Moses, was filled with the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands upon him; and the children of Israel listened to him and did as Jehovah had commanded Moses (v. 9). From this we can see that everything was done in a good order.

2. There Not Having Arisen a Prophet Since Then in Israel Like Moses

There has not arisen a prophet since then in Israel like Moses, whom Jehovah knew face to face, for all the signs and wonders which Jehovah sent him to do in Egypt and for all the mighty power and all the great terror done by him in the sight of all Israel (vv. 10-12).

Moses was great for three reasons. First, unlike any other man, he spoke with God face to face. Second, both in Egypt and in the wilderness, he did many signs and wonders. Third, he wrote the five books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

Moses was great both in the worship of God and in human culture. The countries of the West have based many of their laws on the law of Moses. Even Roman law was based on the principle of the law of Moses. Therefore, Moses has had a great effect on Western culture. The culture and humanity of the West have been kept, preserved, and maintained largely due to the law of Moses.

III. THE FOUR PARTICULAR MATTERS IMPLIED IN DEUTERONOMY

As we conclude our life-study of Deuteronomy, we would like to point out the four particular matters implied in this book.

A. God's Governmental Dealing

The first matter implied in Deuteronomy is God's governmental dealing, which is wise, loving, sympathetic, patient, purposeful, and successful.

B. Israel's Stubbornness

The second matter implied in this book is Israel's stubbornness, which is versus God's sovereignty for the showing of God's wisdom and for the accomplishing of God's economy.

C. Moses' Character

The next matter implied in Deuteronomy is Moses' character, which was experienced, matured, loving, caring, faithful, and meek.

D. Christ's Uniqueness

Fourth, in the book of Deuteronomy Christ's uniqueness is implied. Christ is unique in being the unique Prophet of God as the divine oracle, the unique word as the embodiment of the divine riches, and the unique good land as the divine goal.

All the words in Deuteronomy—the commandments, laws, ordinances, statutes, judgments, warnings, exhortations, blessings, and curses—are God's breathing, and God's breathing is altogether embodied in Christ. As we read this book, we need to inhale all that God has exhaled, all that He has breathed out. If we do this, we will be enlightened, but this is not the primary matter. What is primary is that by inhaling the divine breath in this book, we will enjoy Christ, the embodiment of the divine breath. The more we receive the breath of the speaking God, the more we will enjoy Christ. We will enjoy Christ as the unique Prophet of God, as the

unique word to be our means to accomplish what God requires, and as the unique good land as the divine goal. In this book, Christ is the unique Prophet, the unique word, and the unique goal.