

Deuteronomy Explained & Applied 05

Ger de Koning



The Land

The Book of Deuteronomy

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Deuteronomium – Toegelicht en toegepast 05

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Abbreviations of the Names of the Books of the Bible

Old Testament

Gen – Genesis

Exo – Exodus

Lev – Leviticus

Num – Numbers

Deu – Deuteronomy

Jos – Joshua

Jdg – Judges

Rth – Ruth

1Sam – First Samuel

2Sam – Second Samuel

1Kgs – First Kings

2Kgs – Second Kings

1Chr – First Chronicles

2Chr – Second Chronicles

Ezra – Ezra

Neh – Nehemiah

Est – Esther

Job – Job

Psa – Psalms

Pro – Proverbs

Ecc – Ecclesiastes

Song – Song of Songs

Isa – Isaiah

Jer – Jeremiah

Lam – Lamentations

Eze – Ezekiel

Dan – Daniel

Hos – Hosea

Joel – Joel

Amos – Amos

Oba – Obadiah

Jona – Jonah

Mic – Micah
Nah – Nahum
Hab – Habakkuk
Zep – Zephaniah
Hag – Haggai
Zec – Zechariah
Mal – Malachi

New Testament

Mt – Gospel of Matthew
Mk – Gospel of Mark
Lk – Gospel of Luke
Jn – Gospel of John
Acts – Acts of the Apostles
Rom – Letter to the Romans
1Cor – First Letter to the Corinthians
2Cor – Second Letter to the Corinthians
Gal – Letter to the Galatians
Eph – Letter to the Ephesians
Phil – Letter to the Philippians
Col – Letter to the Colossians
1Thes – First Letter to the Thessalonians
2Thes – Second Letter to the Thessalonians
1Tim – First Letter to Timothy
2Tim – Second Letter to Timothy
Tit – Letter to Titus
Phlm – Letter to Philemon
Heb – Letter to the Hebrews
Jam – Letter of James
1Pet – First Letter of Peter
2Pet – Second Letter of Peter
1Jn – First Letter of John
2Jn – Second Letter of John
3Jn – Third Letter of John
Jude – Letter of Jude
Rev – Revelation

Explanation of general format

PERSONAL PRONOUNS are capitalized when pertaining to Deity.

BRACKETS [] are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words which are not found in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek but implied by it.

SHARP BRACKETS < > are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words possibly not in the original writings.

When **ASTERISKS** * are used in New Testament quotations, it is to mark verbs that are historical presents in the Greek which have been translated with an English past tense in order to conform to modern usage. The translators recognized that in some contexts the present tense seems more unexpected and unjustified to the English reader than a past tense would have been. But Greek authors frequently used the present tense for the sake of heightened vividness, thereby transporting their readers in imagination to the actual scene at the time of occurrence. However, the translators felt that it would be wise to change these historical presents to English past tenses.

ALL CAPS in the New Testament quotations are used in the text to indicate Old Testament quotations or obvious references to Old Testament texts.

The book of Deuteronomy

Introduction

The author of Deuteronomy is Moses. This is mentioned in various places in the New Testament in connection with quotations from this book (Deu 25:5-6 in Mt 22:24; Deu 18:15-19 in Acts 3:22). Moses wrote the book shortly before his death (Deu 31:24). The last chapter, in which his death is recorded, is probably written by Joshua.

The book describes the special situation of the people. On the one hand they have the wilderness journey behind them. On the other hand, they are about to get what God has promised the patriarchs. The LORD wants to prepare the people to conquer and take possession of the land.

The book has its own special character. The names of the five books of Moses were given by the translators of the Old Testament from Hebrew into Greek. They have placed a Greek title above each book. 'Deuteronomy' means 'second law', in the sense of repetition. However, the book is not a repetition. Many of the topics that have been covered in previous books are recurring, but they are presented in this book for a special purpose that the other books do not have.

In Deuteronomy something new is added. The people have the experiences of the wilderness behind them. It exposes what is in their hearts. In the forty years they have travelled the wilderness, they have learned nothing, neither about themselves or God Who has carried them and has cared for them. In a few long speeches, Moses presents these experiences in this book, both with themselves and with God. He also presents them the future.

Before they cross the Jordan, Moses calls them with this long book to contemplate. He presents them the blessing, but also the curse. They have experienced God's grace, what will they do with it? The urgent question that gradually comes to the people is this: Do you intend to serve God or do you want to go your own way?

It is tragic that it is clear from the beginning that they have learned nothing from the past and there will be further corruption in the future. Deuteronomy 28-29 show this. There is, however, a turning point in the last verse in Deuteronomy 29 where we read about “the secret things” (Deu 29:29). “The things revealed” also mentioned in that verse are discussed in the previous chapters. In it obedience is presented as the sure way to the blessing, and disobedience as the sure way to destruction. In “the secret things” we see what God has in store following on from the people’s actions of corruption. After God has scattered them among the nations because of their unfaithfulness, He will bring them to repentance. God wants to deal with them, even though they do not want to deal with Him. That is still the future.

In the Old Testament we are dealing with typological representations in which God illustrates certain truths from the New Testament. To this end, everything that has happened to Israel has been recorded. It even happened “as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved” (1Cor 10:6,11).

In Genesis, the first half of Exodus and in Numbers we have many histories. The second half of Exodus and the book of Leviticus give precepts. These precepts indicate how the people can be in connection with God and have fellowship with Him. This can be done on the basis of the offering, which is the central theme of the precepts. These precepts also have meaning for us. Primarily because in practice, Israel has never been able to adhere to these precepts (Amos 5:25-26). In the letter to the Hebrews the meaning to us is explicitly mentioned: they are “the copies of the things in the heavens” (Heb 9:23).

In this book we also look back to who we have been and what God has been for us. We learn how the blessings that are already our part can become a living reality for us. Heaven is already in us. The question that comes to Israel also comes to us: What is our inheritance worth to us? The shortest way from Egypt to the promised land is eleven days’ journey (Deu 1:2). But just like Israel, we too need a lot of time to learn who we are and Who God is. If we have learned that a little bit through the sometimes difficult and long-running experiences of everyday life, it is possible to focus our hearts on the land before us where the Lord Jesus is.

The whole book is set in the plains of Moab by the Jordan (Num 36:13; Deu 1:1). To know the meaning of the book for us, we must understand the spiritual meaning of these plains of Moab. To this regard, we can learn something from the letters of Paul. In the letter to the Romans he explains how someone is redeemed from the world, of which Egypt is a picture. He speaks in Romans 6 of baptism as the transition to a new life: "Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life" (Rom 6:4). We see this illustrated in the passage through the Red Sea (1Cor 10:1-2).

The baptized believer no longer belongs to the world. It has become a wilderness to him. In that wilderness he, just like the people of Israel, has all kinds of experiences, both with himself and with God. As he lives more by faith in the Son of God and less by circumstances, he approaches, so to speak, the plains of Moab. There is spiritual growth when the Holy Spirit is given the opportunity to increasingly focus the Christian's heart on Christ.

Someone has, spiritually speaking, arrived in the plains of Moab, when his heart is full of Christ. We see that in the letter to the Philippians. There we hear someone say, not as a doctrine, but learned by experience: "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me" (Phil 4:13). Why is it that every time we are hungry and in danger, we are upset? Because, spiritually speaking, we have not yet arrived in the plains of Moab. Someone who is no longer daunted by the dangers and problems of the wilderness has arrived in the plains of Moab. Such a person looks back upon the experiences of the wilderness as an experience of the Lord's goodness. Such a person is Paul in the letter to the Philippians. There he is full of "the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil 3:14).

The book of Deuteronomy is the Old Testament counterpart of the letter to the Philippians. The hearts are made warm for the land in Deuteronomy. In the letter to the Philippians, the hearts are made warm for heaven by the Holy Spirit through Paul. In Deuteronomy Moses does that. He is here a picture of the Lord Jesus as the One Who experienced the wilderness journey. He knows all the circumstances, He has preceded us, we may press forward in His footsteps. This Teacher is perfect. In Philippians 2 we see Him as the true Moses, tested in the wilderness where His mind and obe-

dience become clear. In Philippians 3 our eye is turned to the Lord Jesus in glory, He Who contains the blessings for us, to gain Him.

Also in the literal sense the Lord has been in the wilderness. He spent forty days there, while being tempted by the devil (Mt 4:1-10). He has answered every temptation with a quote from this book (Deu 8:3 in Mt 4:4; Deu 6:16 in Mt 4:7; Deu 6:13 in Mt 4:10). As we can see, the quotations come from the first part of the book, in which a review of the wilderness journey is given.

If we read this book and allow it to affect us, we will recognize ourselves in every part of Israel's history. Each time a different viewpoint is taken. The people are a whole new people, for the old generation – consisting of all twenty years and older – have perished in the wilderness, except Joshua and Caleb. Moses addresses his speeches to these new people in this book. This new generation needs to hear the history of the people to know what happened so they can learn the lessons from it.

We can divide the book of Deuteronomy as follows:

1. First great speech of Moses: looking back on the wilderness journey (Deuteronomy 1:1-4:43)
2. Second great speech of Moses (Deuteronomy 4:44-26:19), which can be subdivided into three parts:
 - a. Events at Horeb (Deuteronomy 4:44-5:33).
 - b. Commandments and statutes, obedience as a condition for enjoying the blessing of the land (Deuteronomy 6:1-11:32).
 - c. Statutes for the life in the land around the place that the LORD has chosen to establish His name there for His dwelling (Deuteronomy 12:1-26:19).
3. Third and fourth speech of Moses, his song and the message of his death (Deuteronomy 27:1-34:12), with subdivision:
 - a. Third speech: blessing and curse (Deuteronomy 27:1-28:68).
 - b. Fourth speech: renewal of the covenant, repentance and redemption, the choice to make (Deuteronomy 29:1-30:20).
 - c. Moses designates Joshua as his successor (Deuteronomy 31:1-8).

- d. Every seven years the law must be read out to all people (Deuteronomy 32:1-33:29).
- e. Song and blessing of Moses (Deuteronomy 31:9-13).
- f. The death of Moses (Deuteronomy 34:1-12).

Deuteronomy 1

Introduction

The book gives practical and spiritual lessons on the subject of the inheritance. We see a people being prepared for the inheritance that lies before them and that they are about to take possession of. It is the land that God looks upon with joy. Moses knows what he is talking about when he seeks to warm their hearts toward the land. In the first chapters he gives a historical review of the way in which the people have already dealt with the land. They have despised “the pleasant land” (Psa 106:24). Then a new generation and a remnant, presented in Caleb, come and take possession of it.

For us Christians, the land of Canaan is the picture of the heavenly places. Therein we are “blessed with every spiritual blessing ... in Christ” (Eph 1:3). The Lord Jesus, our true Moses, wants to focus our hearts on this. If there is real fellowship with God, it will be reflected in the interest we show in the things in which He is interested. God’s heart is full of Christ and everything He has done.

Deu 1:1-4 | Place and Date of Moses’ Speech

1 These are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel across the Jordan in the wilderness, in the Arabah opposite Suph, between Paran and Tophel and Laban and Hazeroth and Dizahab. 2 It is eleven days’ [journey] from Horeb by the way of Mount Seir to Kadesh-barnea. 3 In the fortieth year, on the first [day] of the eleventh month, Moses spoke to the children of Israel, according to all that the LORD had commanded him [to give] to them, 4 after he had defeated Sihon the king of the Amorites, who lived in Heshbon, and Og the king of Bashan, who lived in Ashtaroth and Edrei.

Moses addresses “all Israel”, no one excepted. The place and date at which he speaks are indicated. He gives his speech on the banks of the Jordan, the river that separates the people from the land. The environment, the wilderness, recalls the journey. They are located “in the Arabah”, which

means “on the Plain”, a place where no one can hide and from where they can clearly perceive the surroundings.

The book contains the words which Moses spoke (verse 1), entirely as the LORD wants (verse 3) and that Moses unfolds or explains (verse 5). That makes the whole book a direct authoritative speaking of God. He is the source of it. We would do well to realize this while reading and thinking about this book. Moses is the mediator – and the type of the Lord Jesus Who speaks God’s Word with authority – through whom God’s words come to us. He does everything to make the Word of God clear to the people and to make them understand it correctly.

The journey could have lasted eleven days. That time is needed for the journey from Horeb, which is Mount Sinai, to Kadesh-barnea, the southern entrance in the land. Due to unbelief, however, it took them forty years, counted from the exodus from Egypt to the entry into the land (for ‘forty years’ see Num 14:29-35; 32:13; Deu 8:2-5; 29:5-6; Heb 3:7-19). The number ‘forty’ speaks of trial, testing. It speaks of a period in which one’s heart and qualities are tested. For us it is not literally forty years, nor is it a literal wilderness. The spiritual lesson is that because of our own failure and unfaithfulness it often takes us longer to take possession of blessings than if we had remained faithful.

The dating in verse 3 shows that the end of the fortieth year is in sight. This means that there are a completely different people stationed in the plains of Moab than the people who have left Egypt. That moment provides apt opportunity for review.

Heshbon is the capital of Moab, but was conquered by Sihon, a king of the Amorites. Og is also a king of the Amorites. Sihon rules over the southern part of the wilderness side of the Jordan and Og over the northern part of it. The defeat of Sihon and Og is described in Deuteronomy 2:24-3:11.

The reference to defeating these two kings contains a spiritual condition for understanding what Moses is going to say. The spiritual blessings of the heavenly land will not be made known to us if we have not properly taken possession of the earthly blessings. (See further the explanation of Numbers 21:21-35 in ‘Numbers – Explained & Applied’.)

Deu 1:5-8 | Command to Enter the Land

5 Across the Jordan in the land of Moab, Moses undertook to expound this law, saying, 6 "The LORD our God spoke to us at Horeb, saying, 'You have stayed long enough at this mountain. 7 Turn and set your journey, and go to the hill country of the Amorites, and to all their neighbors in the Arabah, in the hill country and in the lowland and in the Negev and by the seacoast, the land of the Canaanites, and Lebanon, as far as the great river, the river Euphrates. 8 See, I have placed the land before you; go in and possess the land which the LORD swore to give to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to them and their descendants after them.'

Before the conquest of the land begins, Moses undertakes to expound God's law. He does not present the people with an artfully devised war plan. The only sure method of taking possession of and keeping the land is obedience to God's commandments. That also applies to us. If we want to know the blessings that are our part in Christ, it is not by incorporating them into our minds. We will only get to know them if we submit our lives totally in obedience to God's Word.

The start of the journey is at Horeb. The people have spent about a year there. Moses cites God's command to leave Horeb and go to Canaan. He also explains the reason: they have now been there long enough to be prepared for the upcoming journey. If God declares a length of time sufficient, it is because He has achieved His goal. He then lets His own move on to the next experience with Him. In Numbers 10 we read about the command to set out: "So they moved out for the first time according to the commandment of the LORD through Moses" (Num 10:13). Now they are told where to go.

Before there is talk of actual setting out in verse 19, Moses recalls two events at Horeb. The first is what God has said about the land. He presents it in its vastness. Now the enemies still live there, but He has given it to His people. Moses joins God in swearing to the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that He will give them and their descendants the land (Gen 15:18-21; 22:16-17; 26:3-5; 35:12). The 'land' is mentioned about 160 times in this book. Now they stand just before the fulfilment of the promise.

The land was not chosen *by* them, but *for* them. God has chosen this land for them and He has chosen them to live there. God's heart is full of the land. If their hearts were filled with the love of God, they would be just as full of His land as He is. But their hearts are filled with other things. That is the second thing Moses talks about, which we hear mentioned between the lines when he talks about appointing judges.

Deu 1:9-18 | The Appointment of Leaders

9 *"I spoke to you at that time, saying, 'I am not able to bear [the burden] of you alone. 10 The LORD your God has multiplied you, and behold, you are this day like the stars of heaven in number. 11 May the LORD, the God of your fathers, increase you a thousand-fold more than you are and bless you, just as He has promised you! 12 How can I alone bear the load and burden of you and your strife? 13 Choose wise and discerning and experienced men from your tribes, and I will appoint them as your heads.'* 14 *You answered me and said, 'The thing which you have said to do is good.'* 15 *So I took the heads of your tribes, wise and experienced men, and appointed them heads over you, leaders of thousands and of hundreds, of fifties and of tens, and officers for your tribes. 16 "Then I charged your judges at that time, saying, 'Hear [the cases] between your fellow countrymen, and judge righteously between a man and his fellow countryman, or the alien who is with him. 17 You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small and the great alike. You shall not fear man, for the judgment is God's. The case that is too hard for you, you shall bring to me, and I will hear it.'* 18 *I commanded you at that time all the things that you should do.*

At the same time that God was talking about the inheritance, Moses had to speak to them about their load and burden, which he could not bear alone, and about their quarrels. It is with him like the letter-writer Jude who "was making every effort to write you about our common salvation", but was forced "to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints" (Jude 1:3).

The people had increased in number to a great crowd. As a result, the quarrels among them also increased. The church is no different (Acts 6:1). To overcome the difficulties between the members of God's people, Moses proposed to appoint leaders. The people agreed. Thus, the burden was

shared among more people. If there were any disputes, they could go to their judges.

The judges had to meet four conditions:

1. judge righteously, whether it be a brother or a stranger;
2. judge without regard to the person, not taking into account someone's position;
3. judge without fear of human retribution, knowing that they were speaking justice on behalf of God;
4. acknowledge that there were cases too hard for them (having awareness of their own weakness and limitation) which they could bring to Moses.

Also in the church there are leaders, that is, believers who have been given responsibility (1Thes 5:12-13). As Moses appointed them in Israel, so the Lord Jesus does now. Such believers will meet the four conditions mentioned above. It is good to go to such believers with certain things and to ask their advice. There may also be things that require us to go directly to the true Moses. Lawsuits result from quarrels along the way.

Deu 1:19-21 | In Kadesh-barnea

19 *"Then we set out from Horeb, and went through all that great and terrible wilderness which you saw on the way to the hill country of the Amorites, just as the LORD our God had commanded us; and we came to Kadesh-barnea. 20 I said to you, 'You have come to the hill country of the Amorites which the LORD our God is about to give us. 21 See, the LORD your God has placed the land before you; go up, take possession, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has spoken to you. Do not fear or be dismayed.'*

The great and terrible wilderness served to create a longing for the land. The refreshments of the wilderness are bitter refreshments. We must learn to "exult in our tribulations" (Rom 5:3-5). The result will be that the love of God increases and with it the love for the brothers and sisters. Then the quarrels disappear and we enter the plains of Moab where we are filled with the love God has for us.

Moses does everything to encourage the people to take possession of the land. He tells them not to fear or be dismayed. This indicates that the peo-

ple were not eager to take possession of the land. This is also clear from the next section, where the people ask to send spies. Moses points out that God has spoken that they will have the land, and if God has spoken, no power can turn it back. The only thing that causes inability in taking possession of what God has promised is unbelief.

God makes everything available to us; we may take possession of it. God's grace grants the land to us. The Word of God's grace is enough to give us the inheritance (Acts 20:32). How then does it occur that there are those unable to take possession of it? Because in such one is an evil, unbelieving heart (Heb 3:7-12). It is all about the state of one's heart: is it evil and unbelieving or is the love of God poured out by the Holy Spirit in it?

Deu 1:22-25 | The Twelve Spies

22 "Then all of you approached me and said, 'Let us send men before us, that they may search out the land for us, and bring back to us word of the way by which we should go up and the cities which we shall enter.' 23 The thing pleased me and I took twelve of your men, one man for each tribe. 24 They turned and went up into the hill country, and came to the valley of Eshcol and spied it out. 25 Then they took [some] of the fruit of the land in their hands and brought it down to us; and they brought us back a report and said, 'It is a good land which the LORD our God is about to give us.'

Despite all the promises of God, the people want spies to be sent out first. The core of this request is distrust of God and His Word. What will the spies be able to tell beyond what God has already said?

In Numbers it says that God commands spies to be sent out (Num 13:1-2), while here we learn that the people wanted it. Their question came from a lack of trust in God. When God sees that their will is fixed in this, He gives what they ask for. It is like the question the people later ask to have a king. In so doing they reject God. Yet God gives them a king because He wants to teach them a lesson.

Moses agreed to the request. The spies travelled through the land and returned with the evidence of the land's wealth. The mention of "the valley of Eshcol" reminds us of the enormous bunch of grapes they have brought from the land (Num 13:23-24). They have also recognized that the land

God gives is “a good (or: fair) land”, an expression that appears ten times in this book (Deu 1:25,35; 3:25; 4:21,22; 6:18; 8:7,10; 9:6; 11:17).

Deu 1:26-28 | Refusal to Go up

26 “Yet you were not willing to go up, but rebelled against the command of the LORD your God; 27 and you grumbled in your tents and said, ‘Because the LORD hates us, He has brought us out of the land of Egypt to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites to destroy us. 28 Where can we go up? Our brethren have made our hearts melt, saying, “The people are bigger and taller than we; the cities are large and fortified to heaven. And besides, we saw the sons of the Anakim there.”’”

Moses reminds the people of the insurmountable problems they saw in taking possession of the land. In so doing they rejected God. So much so, they talked about God hating them (verse 27).

Deu 1:29-33 | God’s Faithfulness and the People’s Unbelief

29 Then I said to you, ‘Do not be shocked, nor fear them. 30 The LORD your God who goes before you will Himself fight on your behalf, just as He did for you in Egypt before your eyes, 31 and in the wilderness where you saw how the LORD your God carried you, just as a man carries his son, in all the way which you have walked until you came to this place.’ 32 But for all this, you did not trust the LORD your God, 33 who goes before you on [your] way, to seek out a place for you to encamp, in fire by night and cloud by day, to show you the way in which you should go.

Moses speaks to a generation that has scarce to non-existent awareness of what happened forty years ago. Yet he speaks to them as if it is about themselves: *they* were rebellious and did not want to go up, *they* grumbled in their tents. He can do this because he knows the germ of unbelief is also present in this generation. They are no better than their fathers. This new generation has also shown its unbelief and rebellion at the end of the journey (Num 21:5).

The believer is a new creation in Christ, but his old nature is incorrigibly evil. If he does not keep it at the place of death (Rom 6:11), even the believer will be able to come to the worst of sins.

We can blame God for not providing sufficient resources to occupy ourselves with the blessings. But the real question is whether we truly appreciate the blessings. If we do that, we will have the resources and the time for it. Generations in previous centuries have had to work much harder and longer than we do today. Yet they knew the Scriptures through and through. How is that possible? They genuinely appreciated the blessings, while we let ourselves become wrapped up in earthly things. In Christ are “hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col 2:3). The more we are occupied with Him, we will increasingly enjoy all that has been given to us in Him. A longing heart will learn from the truth that is in Jesus (Eph 4:21).

In verse 31 we see how God has led His people through that ‘great and terrible wilderness’. What Moses was not able to do (Num 11:14), God did: He carried them like a man carries his child. In his speech in the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch, Paul points out how God has cared for His people with the tenderness of a nurse: “For a period of about forty years He put up with them in the wilderness” (Acts 13:18; cf. Isa 66:13; Psa 103:13). This is His answer to their accusation that He hates them, an answer that should bring them to shame.

The people have sent out spies before them. Moses recalls that the LORD Himself had gone out before them every time as a spy to find a suitable place for them to camp there (verse 33). It is better for them to rely on Him than to determine their way as a result of human perceptions.

Deu 1:34-39 | The Anger of the LORD

34 “Then the LORD heard the sound of your words, and He was angry and took an oath, saying, 35 ‘Not one of these men, this evil generation, shall see the good land which I swore to give your fathers, 36 except Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him and to his sons I will give the land on which he has set foot, because he has followed the LORD fully.’ 37 The LORD was angry with me also on your account, saying, ‘Not even you shall enter there. 38 Joshua the son of Nun, who stands before you, he shall enter there; encourage him, for he will cause Israel to inherit it. 39 Moreover, your little ones who you said would become a prey, and your sons, who this day have no

knowledge of good or evil, shall enter there, and I will give it to them and they shall possess it.

The reaction of the LORD is in line with the rebellion of the people. Do they refuse to enter the land? The LORD swears in His wrath that no one of that generation will come there. Of the two exceptions, Joshua and Caleb, only Caleb is mentioned here. Joshua occupies a special place. He will succeed Moses as the leader of the people. In Caleb we have an 'ordinary' Israelite, someone to whom we can mirror ourselves.

His heart is full of the love of God. His name means 'wholeheartedly'. He has not spoken of a God Who hates. He was convinced of the love and goodness of God to bring His people into the land of promise. In Joshua 14 he refers to his account of the land (Jos 14:7). Even then he is still full of the land. He knew the pleasure of the LORD and deeply appreciated the inheritance of God. He has taken it in possession, while the others have perished in the wilderness.

God's love was active in his life. He had to go with the people through the wilderness, but in his heart that love worked, by which he persisted in following the LORD with an eye on the goal. Do we belong to the generation of Caleb? That is the case when our heart is directed toward Christ. Just as the heart of Caleb was directed toward the blessing of the land, for us the blessing of the land is Christ Jesus. If our hearts are full of the goodness and love of God through the Holy Spirit, our desire will also be to follow the Lord fully.

The Holy Spirit is also called 'pledge' (Eph 1:14). That He is the pledge means that we do not yet possess the inheritance. A pledge is a kind of guarantee provided with a down-payment as an inviolable indication of future receipt of what we do not yet have. The fact that the Holy Spirit is called 'pledge' only has to do with the *certainty* that the rest will follow. As He has been given to us we can already enjoy the inheritance, although we cannot *as yet* actually take possession of it.

The anger of the LORD also came upon Moses for their sake. This is reminiscent of the Lord Jesus Who underwent the anger of God for the sake of His people. Moses does not speak here about his own failure, but about the cause of the anger. It was with the people. This did not happen when

the people first reached the border, but only forty years later. Moses is not concerned with chronology, but he connects God's anger over himself with God's anger over the people in order to underline the holiness of God's judgment.

Moses points to Joshua as the new leader. Joshua was in his service. Here we see the picture of the Lord Jesus Who sent the Holy Spirit, that He may lead us into all the truth (Jn 16:13). The Holy Spirit does not lead the old man, but the new man, just as Joshua does not bring the old generation, but the new generation into the land.

The new generation is referred to here as "your little ones ..., and your sons, who this day have no knowledge of good or evil". It is those who will never reach the land by their own power, who depend on the help of others and who are ignorant. They are not informed about the land, but they want to be taught about it and about the conditions for getting there and living in it.

So it is with the things that God makes known: He does so to little children, not to those who rely on their minds (Mt 11:25-27). The mind of a child is necessary to enjoy the blessings for us in the heavenly places of Christ.

Deu 1:40-43 | The Presumption of the People

40 But as for you, turn around and set out for the wilderness by the way to the Red Sea.' 41 "Then you said to me, 'We have sinned against the LORD; we will indeed go up and fight, just as the LORD our God commanded us.' And every man of you girded on his weapons of war, and regarded it as easy to go up into the hill country. 42 And the LORD said to me, 'Say to them, "Do not go up nor fight, for I am not among you; otherwise you will be defeated before your enemies."' 43 So I spoke to you, but you would not listen. Instead you rebelled against the command of the LORD, and acted presumptuously and went up into the hill country.

The old generation is commanded to turn around and set out for the wilderness, in the direction of the Red Sea. For man there is only one possibility to participate in God's blessings: to go to the place that speaks of salvation from the power of satan, that is the cross. There the old man is judged (Rom 6:6).

In stubborn rebellion, the old generation again went against what God had said. The flesh “does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able [to do so]” (Rom 8:7). If the confession “we have sinned” sounds from their mouths, it is only by rote with no real meaning. Thus it is found elsewhere in the Bible, for example with Pharaoh, Saul, and Judas (Exo 9:27; 10:16; 1Sam 15:24; Mt 27:3-4). When they call to the LORD in this frame of mind, He does not listen (Jam 4:3).

Deu 1:44-46 | The People Crushingly Defeated

44 The Amorites who lived in that hill country came out against you and chased you as bees do, and crushed you from Seir to Hormah. 45 Then you returned and wept before the LORD; but the LORD did not listen to your voice nor give ear to you. 46 So you remained in Kadesh many days, the days that you spent [there].

The inheritance is despised by the people; the confession is not sincere – the inheritance is taken away from them. They also despised God’s government, for they acted against His command not to go up. God then gave them up into the hand of the enemies. These are pictures of satanic powers (Eph 6:12). They have been crushed by them. As a result, they had to spend thirty-eight years in the wilderness.

Deuteronomy 2

Introduction

Deuteronomy 2-3 show what the land is not. The people – and we – must learn to distinguish between what God’s land is and what is not. Of additional importance is knowing how they – and we – should deal with it. Our land, our inheritance, is heavenly. The life of the land is the eternal life and that is already our part. This will be elaborated further on in the book. We can already enjoy its richness in our hearts. But then we should not despise or confuse that heavenly land with other countries.

First they go along the countries of Edom – descendants of Esau – and of Moab and Ammon – both descendants of Lot. They are not allowed to attack them. Then come the kingdoms of Sihon (Gilead) and Og (Bashan). They must attack them and begin to inherit them, even if that is not yet the promised land. Both kinds of countries do not represent the heavenly blessings. From this there are lessons to be learned for our dealing with things on earth, how they relate to heavenly things. Some things we have to accept as they are, other things we have to conquer, subject them to ourselves, because they are a danger to the enjoyment of our heavenly blessings.

Edom, Moab and Ammon are related peoples. God’s providence has occupied itself with these peoples and has destined an inheritance for them that He has given them. Israel was not allowed to interfere with them, even if they would treat them as enemies.

Gilead and Bashan are hostile peoples. They are not part of the promised land, but they are close by. They are a constant danger and therefore they had to be overcome first, so that they would no longer be a danger to the enjoyment in the land. The immediate surroundings of the land have thus come under the rule of God’s people.

Deu 2:1-3 | Command to Set out from Seir

1 *“Then we turned and set out for the wilderness by the way to the Red Sea, as the LORD spoke to me, and circled Mount Seir for many days. 2 And the*

LORD spoke to me, saying, 3 ‘You have circled this mountain long enough. [Now] turn north,

By speaking in verse 1 about “we”, Moses includes himself in this. Due to the unbelief of others, all of them, including Joshua and Caleb and Moses, had to ‘turn’. The unfaithfulness of the whole has consequences for everyone who is faithful to conform to what the LORD gives. Grumbling is not good, nor are outbursts of criticism. That’s why they have to roam the wilderness for thirty-eight years. In a single sentence, this is indicated: they circled Mountain Seir “for many days” – every day of the thirty-eight years is felt. Until the LORD deems it sufficient time (cf. Deu 1:6).

This circling is not only a punishment for disobedience; it is also a preparation for entry into the land. This preparation meant the death of the whole old generation who refused to enter the land. A new generation is about to enter the land. This new generation has also spent a certain time in the wilderness. When this preparation is ready in God’s eye, He commands to set course to the north.

Deu 2:4-8 | Attitude Toward Esau

4 and command the people, saying, “You will pass through the territory of your brothers the sons of Esau who live in Seir; and they will be afraid of you. So be very careful; 5 do not provoke them, for I will not give you any of their land, even [as little as] a footstep because I have given Mount Seir to Esau as a possession. 6 You shall buy food from them with money so that you may eat, and you shall also purchase water from them with money so that you may drink. 7 For the LORD your God has blessed you in all that you have done; He has known your wanderings through this great wilderness. These forty years the LORD your God has been with you; you have not lacked a thing.”’ 8 “So we passed beyond our brothers the sons of Esau, who live in Seir, away from the Arabah road, away from Elath and from Ezion-geber. And we turned and passed through by the way of the wilderness of Moab.

Moses had to inform the people about the route to follow. They had to pass through the area of the sons of Esau. Moses also told the people how to behave toward these relatives. They were not allowed to take possession of this land, for the LORD had committed it to Esau .

For us, this means that there are relationships that are established by God and that we have to acknowledge as established by Him. Even if people treat this in a totally wrong way, it does not change God's intention. When a man and a woman marry, for whatever reason, an institution of God is met. We have to acknowledge that. A believer should never insist on its dissolution, for then he touches something of which God has said: "Let no man separate" (Mt 19:6).

If Israel were to ask Esau's favor, they should not beg for it, but pay for it. They were amply able to do so. In spite of all the grumbling and complaint, God had been with them, and they did not lack anything (Lk 22:35). If we look back on our journey through the wilderness, we can only say that the Lord has fulfilled His promise that He is with us (Mt 28:20).

Israel is a people interested in the land of promise. In this way it is distinct from other peoples who do not have this interest. But this must not exalt the people of God above the other peoples. God also has His involvement with these other peoples. He also gave the nations land (verses 9,19). So God is not only concerned with Israel. Israel has to respect what God has given others.

If by grace we may be among those who have understood anything of heavenly blessings, we must not look down upon or behave in an overbearing manner toward other believers. God has also given something to others, even though they do not know for example (spiritual) sacrifice service. In professing Christianity one meets regularly to listen to God's Word, but the priesthood of all believers is hardly exercised. God gave a lot through the Reformation. Certain truths came to the fore at the time, such as the justification based on faith alone. Still, the heavenly part of that truth which can be enjoyed by believers here and now – the blessing of eternal life – was only later (at the beginning of the nineteenth century) again put forward as a truth.

In certain circumstances, the people could be dependent on related nations. They asked if they could use their land, not to live there, but to go through it. The call for a favor did not make them charge a debt on themselves. God's people, on their way to the blessing of the land, are a rich people. They can use their wealth to give something back for what related

nations have given them. If we may benefit from believers who do not know the heavenly blessings, we in turn may give them of the riches God has given us in knowing the things of heaven.

Deu 2:9 | Attitude Toward Moab

9 Then the LORD said to me, 'Do not harass Moab, nor provoke them to war, for I will not give you any of their land as a possession, because I have given Ar to the sons of Lot as a possession.'

Israel's attitude toward Moab should be like that toward Esau. Moab was also a related nation. The LORD reminds of their origin by calling them "the sons of Lot".

Deu 2:10-12 | The Emim and the Horites

10 (The Emim lived there formerly, a people as great, numerous, and tall as the Anakim. 11 Like the Anakim, they are also regarded as Rephaim, but the Moabites call them Emim. 12 The Horites formerly lived in Seir, but the sons of Esau dispossessed them and destroyed them from before them and settled in their place, just as Israel did to the land of their possession which the LORD gave to them.)

Here Israel is informed about the original inhabitants of the area where the Moabites and Edomites now live. From this they can see that God governs everything and gives each nation its own place to live (Deu 32:8; Acts 17:26).

The Moabites called the inhabitants "Emim", which means "terrible" or "frightening". They were a formidable foe to be deeply impressed by. The fact that these terrifying peoples had been driven out of the land should have been an encouragement to Israel. As God had helped Israel's relatives to expel large and numerous nations, so He would help Israel do the same. Unfortunately, it underscores Israel's cowardice of forty years ago, because even with God's help they were afraid of these enemies (Deu 1:28; Num 13:28,33). Now, however, they get a new opportunity.

He also used these conquests as a chastisement for the original inhabitants. The lesson is that God takes away a blessing in the event of unfaithfulness

and can give it to another who then must undergo testing too. Additionally highlighted here is that acquired property is of a temporary nature.

Deu 2:13-15 | The Thirty-Eight Years Journey

13 'Now arise and cross over the brook Zered yourselves.' So we crossed over the brook Zered. 14 Now the time that it took for us to come from Kadesh-barnea until we crossed over the brook Zered was thirty-eight years, until all the generation of the men of war perished from within the camp, as the LORD had sworn to them. 15 Moreover the hand of the LORD was against them, to destroy them from within the camp until they all perished.

The memory of the thirty-eight years journey through the wilderness should lead the people to humiliation. It should make them aware that they will not get the land on the basis of their faithfulness.

The hand of the LORD was against them as long as there was any of the unbelieving generation alive. They had despised His caring hand; therefore, they had to deal with His disciplining hand. When the last one had died, His hand was no more against them. This also means that these people often did not die a natural death. Now, the LORD could move with them once more on the way to the promised land.

Deu 2:16-19 | Attitude Toward the Ammonites

16 "So it came about when all the men of war had finally perished from among the people, 17 that the LORD spoke to me, saying, 18 'Today you shall cross over Ar, the border of Moab. 19 When you come opposite the sons of Ammon, do not harass them nor provoke them, for I will not give you any of the land of the sons of Ammon as a possession, because I have given it to the sons of Lot as a possession.'

Israel's attitude toward the Ammonites had to be the same as toward the Moabites and Edomites. The Ammonites were also related to the Israelites via Lot, the nephew of Abraham.

Deu 2:20-23 | The Rephaim and the Caphtorim

20 (It is also regarded as the land of the Rephaim, [for] Rephaim formerly lived in it, but the Ammonites call them Zamzummin, 21 a people as great,

numerous, and tall as the Anakim, but the LORD destroyed them before them. And they dispossessed them and settled in their place, 22 just as He did for the sons of Esau, who live in Seir, when He destroyed the Horites from before them; they dispossessed them and settled in their place even to this day. 23 And the Avvim, who lived in villages as far as Gaza, the Caphtorim who came from Caphtor, destroyed them and lived in their place.)

The area that now belongs to the Ammonites, used to belong to the Rephaim (or: giants). Despite their imposing size and vast number, the LORD intervened to rid them of the land, so that the Ammonites could take up residence there. That too should serve an encouragement for Israel, who were also confronted with giants. For the LORD, no opponent is too big or too numerous. He exceeds everything in size and number.

Deu 2:24-36 | Sihon Given into the Hand of Israel

24 'Arise, set out, and pass through the valley of Arnon. Look! I have given Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his land into your hand; begin to take possession and contend with him in battle. 25 This day I will begin to put the dread and fear of you upon the peoples everywhere under the heavens, who, when they hear the report of you, will tremble and be in anguish because of you.' 26 "So I sent messengers from the wilderness of Kedemoth to Sihon king of Heshbon with words of peace, saying, 27 'Let me pass through your land, I will travel only on the highway; I will not turn aside to the right or to the left. 28 You will sell me food for money so that I may eat, and give me water for money so that I may drink, only let me pass through on foot, 29 just as the sons of Esau who live in Seir and the Moabites who live in Ar did for me, until I cross over the Jordan into the land which the LORD our God is giving to us.' 30 But Sihon king of Heshbon was not willing for us to pass through his land; for the LORD your God hardened his spirit and made his heart obstinate, in order to deliver him into your hand, as [he is] today. 31 The LORD said to me, 'See, I have begun to deliver Sihon and his land over to you. Begin to occupy, that you may possess his land.' 32 "Then Sihon with all his people came out to meet us in battle at Jahaz. 33 The LORD our God delivered him over to us, and we defeated him with his sons and all his people. 34 So we captured all his cities at that time and utterly destroyed the men, women and children of every city. We left no survivor. 35 We took only the animals as our booty and

the spoil of the cities which we had captured. 36 From Aroer which is on the edge of the valley of Arnon and [from] the city which is in the valley, even to Gilead, there was no city that was too high for us; the LORD our God delivered all over to us.

In their dealings with their related nations, Israel has had to respect their possession. They were not allowed to take possession of anything from the inheritance that those related nations had received from the LORD. Nevertheless, there are also nations whom they have met on their way to the promised land to whom they have had to adopt a very different attitude. With such nations they had to fight if they were not willing to give the land. Despite this, to these nations too, the Israelites were not allowed to approach with haughtiness.

Sihon, initially, was given a chance to capitulate without battle. He refused to, and thus, through his obstinacy lost his land, his empire and his life. The hardening of his heart by the LORD only confirms the already present inflexible attitude.

Sihon was the king of the Amorites. Heshbon originally belonged to the Moabites, but the Amorites had conquered it (Num 21:26-29) and expelled the Moabites. Already in the area on the wilderness side of the Jordan, the Amorites had to be destroyed and the land inherited.

The LORD has given His people the land. His people only had to take possession of it. What God gives must be conquered by us. He could have thrown it into our laps without a fight, but He has chosen that we have to conquer it. He wants us to show that we appreciate what He gives, by fighting for it to acquire it. He also teaches us that we are to depend on Him for the fight.

We must learn where to fight and where to avoid fighting. It is not a fight against believers, but against systems and teachings. The area before the Jordan is as much the inheritance as the promised land on the other side of the Jordan. The actual blessings of the land are not the only blessings reserved for us. Besides the blessings of the land – for us: the heavenly blessings – there are also earthly blessings, such as food, clothing, health. Of such blessings, the area before the Jordan, that is the area on the wilderness side of the Jordan, is a picture.

There are spiritual blessings like the new birth counted as earthly blessings too; a blessing to be enjoyed on the earth. Such spiritual blessings can be found for example in the letter to the Romans. When we read there about justification and other consequences of the death of the Lord Jesus, it has to do with our life as a righteous person on earth which has become for us a wilderness.

When the Lord Jesus speaks in John 3 of “earthly things” (Jn 3:12), He does so in response to what He has said earlier about being “born again” (Jn 3:3-8). Then He goes on to speak of “heavenly things” and tells us of eternal life (Jn 3:13-16). God wants us to receive the earthly blessings from His hand as well.

Taking possession of the area before the Jordan is presented here as the will of God. The end of the book of Ezekiel describes the division of the land in the future, when the Lord Jesus will reign. There we see that all tribes have a large part of the land and also a part of the area in the wilderness side of the Jordan.

The problem of the two and a half tribes is not that they wanted the area before the Jordan, on the wilderness side thereof, but that they *only* wanted that area and *nothing* of the land. All the people despised the land thirty-eight years ago and because of that, wandered in the wilderness all this time. The two and a half tribes did not learn anything and they did not want to enter the land even now. It is God’s purpose that we own the ‘area before the Jordan’, but according to the manner He provides it.

In the Reformation there was little eye for the heavenly blessings; only the earthly blessings were seen. How about us? How is the relationship between enjoying the earthly blessing and the heavenly blessing with us? Our prayers give an indication of this. What are the topics? Are we praying primarily for health, work and family, or are we talking to the Lord mainly about the spiritual growth and well-being of ourselves, our family members and the members of God’s church? It’s easy to point a finger of blame at the two and a half tribes, but what about us?

We can possess the earthly blessings in the manner of Sihon and Og. Then, we possess the earthly blessings as the world possesses them. Many unbelievers also have good health and clothing, while believers can be ill and

suffer lack. Taking possession of the heavenly blessings begins with taking possession of the earthly blessings as the LORD provides. Therefore the LORD says in verse 24 and in verse 31: “Begin to take possession” and “begin to occupy”.

God gives Sihon over to Israel. In this way we too can continue in spiritual strength in the awareness that no spiritual city is too high for us (verse 36). The Lord also makes everything available to us. That is not dogma, but something we learn in practice. Paul is at the end of his life, in the plains of Moab, as it were, looking back on his wilderness journey and can say: “I have fought the good fight” (2Tim 4:7), whereby no city was too high.

Deu 2:37 | The Obedience of Israel

37 Only you did not go near to the land of the sons of Ammon, all along the river Jabbok and the cities of the hill country, and wherever the LORD our God had commanded us.

Israel did not go near to areas of which the LORD had given specific prohibition. Here Moses underlines Israel’s obedience. There is not only a pointing to unbelief and its consequences. Also the doing of the will of God is remembered.

Deuteronomy 3

Deu 3:1-7 | Og Given into the Hand of Israel

1 "Then we turned and went up the road to Bashan, and Og, king of Bashan, with all his people came out to meet us in battle at Edrei. 2 But the LORD said to me, 'Do not fear him, for I have delivered him and all his people and his land into your hand; and you shall do to him just as you did to Sihon king of the Amorites, who lived at Heshbon.' 3 So the LORD our God delivered Og also, king of Bashan, with all his people into our hand, and we smote them until no survivor was left. 4 We captured all his cities at that time; there was not a city which we did not take from them: sixty cities, all the region of Argob, the kingdom of Og in Bashan. 5 All these were cities fortified with high walls, gates and bars, besides a great many unwalled towns. 6 We utterly destroyed them, as we did to Sihon king of Heshbon, utterly destroying the men, women and children of every city. 7 But all the animals and the spoil of the cities we took as our booty.

Og has not been warned by Sihon's defeat. Audaciously, relying on his own strength, he comes out to meet Israel to fight against them. With his gigantic length and with, which can be deduced from the size of his bed (verse 11), he must have made a great impression on God's people. Hence the encouragement of the LORD that they should not be afraid of him and that he would give him and his people and land into their hands. The previous victory, that over Sihon, is cited as evidence. As God spoke, so He did .

The victory over Og is often mentioned along with that over Sihon (Jos 9:10; Psa 135:10-11; 136:19-20). The areas ruled by these kings were the first areas to be conquered by Israel. They both lay on the eastern side or the wilderness side of the Jordan. For the Christian, they represent enemies with whom he will have to deal if he wants to take possession of the blessings of the heavenly land. Before that battle begins, the enemy he meets in everyday life must first be conquered.

In Sihon we meet a person who is proud and has a hardened heart. With him the emphasis is on the spirit, the intellect of man. He looks upon his possessions as his property; it is his. God is outside his thoughts. He is king of Heshbon. About the meaning of the name Heshbon, or Cheshbon, I got the following from a sister from Israel as an explanation:

‘Here is a brief explanation of Cheshbon. Each Hebrew verb consists of a root of usually three letters. In this case that is *ch’sh’v* (pronounce *chashav*) which means thinking or reflect on. The word cheshbon is used in the daily Ivriet of today for calculation lessons (at primary school) but also for an invoice or calculation.’

From this explanation we can make the application that in Sihon, who is king of Heshbon, we see someone who relies on his intellect, and who excludes God from his thinking. He says of his possessions: ‘I have worked hard for it, so why should I thank God for it?’ The question may be asked: How do we see for example our health and money and possessions? As something to which we are entitled to and what we can use for ourselves, or as something with which we can serve the Lord? The Lord wants us to learn to receive this as an inheritance from His hand. That is why we will have to conquer it in battle, that is to say, it is not without difficulty that our earthly blessings are realized.

With Og, the emphasis is more on the soul, the desire. He had a large bed. That’s the way Og enjoys what he has: in laziness and relaxation. Do we spend our holidays and leisure time as if it were something that belongs to us? We have to withdraw these things from Og’s area of power in order to do something with them for the Lord. The zeitgeist of the world also comes to us. We stand on our rights, without remembering that God has given them to us. If these things make our thankfulness go to God, we will relish engaging in ‘the land’.

We should not, by the way, go wrong to the other side either. We are not dead to everything of nature. Then we shouldn’t eat and drink anymore. The things of the earth are given to us by God and we thank Him for them, but they are not our specific Christian, heavenly blessings.

Og underwent the same fate as Sihon. The victory was great. After forty years of roaming through the wilderness, where they probably did not see

a city, they are now facing fortresses that are considered impregnable. But for a people with God at her side, no obstacle is too great. No less than sixty fortified cities were taken and also “a great many unwallled towns.” With God, the weakest people are the most powerful enemies.

There was no struggle not to be conquered and to remain free, but there was a struggle to conquer and take possession. The enemies were expelled, not because of a cruel, avenging God. God is a merciful God. He always gives the opportunity to escape judgment, but over unrepentance He metes righteous judgment.

Deu 3:8-17 | The Part of the Two and a Half Tribes

8 “Thus we took the land at that time from the hand of the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, from the valley of Arnon to Mount Hermon 9 (Sidonians call Hermon Sirion, and the Amorites call it Senir): 10 all the cities of the plateau and all Gilead and all Bashan, as far as Salecah and Edrei, cities of the kingdom of Og in Bashan. 11 (For only Og king of Bashan was left of the remnant of the Rephaim. Behold, his bedstead was an iron bedstead; it is in Rabbah of the sons of Ammon. Its length was nine cubits and its width four cubits by ordinary cubit.) 12 “So we took possession of this land at that time. From Aroer, which is by the valley of Arnon, and half the hill country of Gilead and its cities I gave to the Reubenites and to the Gadites. 13 The rest of Gilead and all Bashan, the kingdom of Og, I gave to the half-tribe of Manasseh, all the region of Argob (concerning all Bashan, it is called the land of Rephaim. 14 Jair the son of Manasseh took all the region of Argob as far as the border of the Geshurites and the Maacathites, and called it, [that is], Bashan, after his own name, Havvoth-jair, [as it is] to this day.) 15 To Machir I gave Gilead. 16 To the Reubenites and to the Gadites I gave from Gilead even as far as the valley of Arnon, the middle of the valley as a border and as far as the river Jabbok, the border of the sons of Ammon; 17 the Arabah also, with the Jordan as [a] border, from Chinnereth even as far as the sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, at the foot of the slopes of Pisgah on the east.

In the victory over the two kings of the Amorites, Moses had a taste of the victories that the people would achieve in the land. After recounting the victory over the Amorites, he recalls the division of the area on the wilderness side of the Jordan among the two and a half tribes (Num 32:31-40).

Here too he will have gained the same experience and tasted something of the division of the promised land when the people will arrive there.

Deu 3:18-20 | Commitment of the Two and a Half Tribes

18 "Then I commanded you at that time, saying, 'The LORD your God has given you this land to possess it; all you valiant men shall cross over armed before your brothers, the sons of Israel. 19 But your wives and your little ones and your livestock (I know that you have much livestock) shall remain in your cities which I have given you, 20 until the LORD gives rest to your fellow countrymen as to you, and they also possess the land which the LORD your God will give them beyond the Jordan. Then you may return every man to his possession which I have given you.'

Moses does not forget that wilderness side of the Jordan is not the promised land. The land where the blessing of God is enjoyed is still before them. He recalls the two and a half tribes' commitment to help conquer the land first.

We can learn from this that we should not only look for our own interests, but also for those of others (Phil 2:4). If we ourselves have rest, we will seek it for our brothers. We are members of each other and in the blessing of our fellow believer is also our blessing. We will work toward that.

Deu 3:21-22 | Joshua Encouraged by Moses

21 I commanded Joshua at that time, saying, 'Your eyes have seen all that the LORD your God has done to these two kings; so the LORD shall do to all the kingdoms into which you are about to cross. 22 Do not fear them, for the LORD your God is the one fighting for you.'

Moses, the elder believer, encourages Joshua, the younger believer. He shows him what God has done and what He has promised. Seeing something with one's own eyes makes God's acts of salvation toward His people actual for every generation. Moses uses this expression more often in this book (Deu 4:3,9; 7:19; 9:17; 10:21; 11:12; 34:4).

In Moses we also see here a picture of the Lord Jesus as the One Who died for us and also rose up. We see that in the picture of the Red Sea. Then we see how He leads us through the wilderness, which is a picture of what the

world is for the life of faith. Joshua is a picture of the Lord Jesus as the One risen from death and glorified, the Lord Who guides His people into the land and makes them share the blessing of the land.

Deu 3:23-25 | Moses' Prayer for Grace

23 "I also pleaded with the LORD at that time, saying, 24 'O LORD GOD, You have begun to show Your servant Your greatness and Your strong hand; for what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do such works and mighty acts as Yours? 25 Let me, I pray, cross over and see the fair land that is beyond the Jordan, that good hill country and Lebanon.'

Moses recalls how he begged the LORD if he could still enter the land. He does not speak here about his failure and the punishment of God, but about his desire to enter the land. After encouraging Joshua with a view to conquering the land, in Moses that deep desire to enter the land with the people will have risen.

He did not speak his question in rebellion. He has not asked to enter the land to be a leader, to assert himself. His question did not arise from envy of Joshua. To him it is about the land itself. He spoke with great admiration about the inheritance that the LORD has prepared for His people and called it "the fair land" and "that good hill country". He fully appreciates the land of God. Just like Moses, the Lord Jesus looked forward to that land. It was to Him "the joy set before Him" (Heb 12:2). Do we give Him the occasion to introduce us into that land as the true Joshua?

Moses appealed to God to finish what He had begun. Moses had already been allowed to see so much of Him, especially in the conquest of the kingdoms of Sihon and Og; now he would also like to see the completion of His endeavor here. God had said that he was not allowed to cross over. Nevertheless, he asked if he could cross over. Had not the LORD reversed a matter before through a prayer of Moses? Cast your mind back to God's intention to exterminate the people after the sin with the golden calf, and after the refusal to enter the land. On the basis of Moses' intercession, He had forgiven them then (Num 14:20).

Deu 3:26-27 | The Answer of the LORD

*26 But the LORD was angry with me on your account, and would not listen to me; and the LORD said to me, 'Enough! Speak to Me no more of this matter.
27 Go up to the top of Pisgah and lift up your eyes to the west and north and south and east, and see [it] with your eyes, for you shall not cross over this Jordan.*

The LORD had become angry with Moses, but it was on account of the people's past deportment. His deed was the result of the sin of the people (Psa 106:32-33). When we think about the inheritance, do we also think about the way in which we got it: because God was angry with the Lord Jesus on our account?

The answer of the LORD to the supplication of Moses is not a reproach. Moses' prayer was a prayer to God's heart. Thus the Lord Jesus prayed three times if the cup He was to drink could be taken from Him (Mt 26:39-44). His perfection is evident from that prayer and from His surrender to God's will: "Yet not as I will, but as You will."

Paul also prayed three times that an angel of Satan who tormented him would leave him: "Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me" (2Cor 12:7-8). He received an answer similar to the one Moses received: "My grace is sufficient for you" (2Cor 12:9).

Our prayer can please God without giving us what we ask for. He wants us to learn to entrust ourselves to His will. God and His peace, to us imparted, is more than anything we can ask for. When He says that we should no longer ask Him about a certain matter, we must learn that what He does not consider suitable to give us is not suitable for us to ask.

Yet Moses received an answer to his prayer. God allowed him to stand in a place from where he could see the whole land in its length and breadth (Num 27:12-14; Deu 34:1-4). God enabled him to look further than is conceivable with natural eyes. He has seen more than any Israelite would ever see. Not only is his gaze not darkened (Deu 34:7), God has clarified his gaze in such a way that he has been able to see the whole land. If God

keeps something from us and we trust Him in it, He gives something in its place that goes beyond what we have asked for.

Deu 3:28-29 | Joshua Will Bring the People into the Land

28 But charge Joshua and encourage him and strengthen him, for he shall go across at the head of this people, and he will give them as an inheritance the land which you will see.’ 29 So we remained in the valley opposite Beth-peor.

Strengthened by what the LORD would show him, he was to give Joshua his charges, and to encourage and strengthen him. Moses knew what he was talking about when he handed over the leadership to Joshua and pointed out to him what to do. It must also have been an encouragement for Moses knowing that the work the LORD started with him would be completed by Joshua. This is already the third time that the transfer of the leadership from Moses to Joshua is discussed (Deu 1:38; 3:21-22). It is important for Moses, for Joshua and for the people.

In the place where the people dwell, “opposite Beth-peor”, Moses makes his speech (Deu 4:45-46). There he is also buried (Deu 34:6).

After reading Deuteronomy 2-3, a succinct summation is: God’s actions in the past are an encouragement for the future.

Deuteronomy 4

Introduction

In Deuteronomy 2-3 God makes clear to His people what the land is and what it is not. They must respect God's ways and providence with certain countries. Other countries they have had to take possession of and start inheriting them. But even the countries they have begun to inherit are not yet the actual land. Deuteronomy 4 draws conclusions from the lessons of the past. Now there must be clear agreements between God and the people. Therefore Moses starts this chapter in verse 1 with "now".

The earthly people, Israel, are a reflection of the heavenly people, the church. The believers comprising the church find many lessons in the history of Israel about life on earth and blessings in heaven. It is about the blessings of the land as a picture for the Christian to live happily in fellowship with God, the focus being on where God's heart finds fulfillment. Everything that the land has to offer us can be summed up in everything that is truly and eternally important to God's heart.

The agreements that are made are the ground rules to enjoy what the land contains for us. These ground rules are discussed in Deuteronomy 4-11. They can be summed up in 'law' and 'covenant'. The law is: Love God above all else and your neighbor as yourself: ""Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And He said to him, ""YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.' This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF'" (Mt 22:36-39).

Now we, believers who belong to the church, are "not under law, but under grace" (Rom 6:14). That does not mean, however, that our lives are not based on obedience. The knowledge of the truth that we are not under law, but under grace, has no meaning if we have not learned what it means to have and keep the commandments of the Lord Jesus.

By “the commandments of the Lord Jesus” we cannot understand what God has given in the law. The Lord’s commandments go much further. Nowhere in the law, for example, is a person asked to give up his life. The Lord Jesus received this commandment from the Father: “For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. ... This commandment I received from My Father” (Jn 10:17,18b). The same goes for the believer who has the Lord Jesus as his life: “We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (1Jn 3:16).

The commandments of the Lord Jesus are of a different character. It is the desire of the believer’s new life to do everything He says whether He commands it explicitly or merely announces His wish. He who loves Him keeps His commandments and His word (Jn 14:21,23). Then the Father and the Son come and make Their abode with such a person. That is to say, with respect, that they feel at home there. That is fellowship.

The covenant, both the old and the new, is not made with the church, but with Israel (Heb 8:8,13). The new covenant is based on the blood of the Lord Jesus. What the church does have to deal with is the *blood* of the new covenant. Therefore the institution of Lord’s Supper is also in the first letter to the Corinthians (1Cor 11:23-26) and not only in the gospels. The apostles are “servants of a new covenant” (2Cor 3:6). They not only speak about the church, but also point to the future of Israel. The fact that the term ‘covenant’ is also used in connection with the church shows that the relations God establishes with us are subject to conditions.

Deu 4:1-5 | Listen and Do

1 “Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I am teaching you to perform, so that you may live and go in and take possession of the land which the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you. 2 You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you. 3 Your eyes have seen what the LORD has done in the case of Baal-peor, for all the men who followed Baal-peor, the LORD your God has destroyed them from among you. 4 But you who held fast to the LORD your God are alive today, every one of you. 5 “See, I have taught you statutes and judgments just as the LORD

my God commanded me, that you should do thus in the land where you are entering to possess it.

With the words “now, O Israel” with which Moses begins, he connects to the memory of the way God has gone with His people. He will now use history as an incentive for them to obediently fulfil their duty. The word “listen” means to take to heart and to do. This is the condition to enjoy the blessing of the land afterwards.

The teaching that Moses is going to give, aims to life: the real life in the land. Life in its fullness, as God intended for His people, is only really enjoyed when His statutes and judgments are listened to. By statutes are meant all that God has said with regard to serving Him. The judgments are all decisions concerning civil matters, everything concerning the mutual relations of the members of God’s people. The two expressions include the whole law of God. What God says is sufficient to protect our lives and to guarantee the enjoyment of the land.

It is “that you may live” Moses first speaks of, following which he mentions “and go in and take possession of the land”. That also applies to us. When the Word of Christ dwells richly in us, we experience the highest enjoyment of life from God and living with God and with each other. Then our whole life will be to the glory of God, and we will praise Him: “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms [and] hymns [and] spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Whatever you do in word or deed, [do] all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father” (Col 3:16-17).

The statutes and judgments do not contain conditions on how to become a believer, but how to enjoy the blessings as a believer. Even before Moses starts giving God’s commandments, he first points out the danger of doing or taking away from God’s commandments (Rev 22:18-19; Deu 12:32; Pro 30:5-6; Jer 26:2; Mt 5:19). They do not need additional rules or instructions and nothing is superfluous.

We can only keep God’s commandments by taking them as He gave them. The Pharisees add their own commandments to the law, they are the rituals of their days. The Sadducees remove from the law what they cannot

reason mentally. They are the rationalists of their days. We too are constantly in danger of adding to, or taking away from God's Word.

Secondly, Moses recalls Baal-peor right from the beginning of this teaching (Num 25:1-9; Psa 106:28,39; Hos 9:10). That is also significant. At Baal-peor the people connected themselves to the Moabites in body and mind and fornication was committed. They did so on the advice of Balaam (Num 31:16). God's judgment came upon it. They recently saw this with 'their own eyes'. Moses illustrates the consequences of disobedience and obedience to God's commandments.

In Revelation 2 we read about "the teaching of Balaam" (Rev 2:14). This teaching contains the connection between the world and God's people. In our days we see that everywhere where the world is brought within the walls of the church with all kinds of beautiful excuses. A strong example is making certain decisions in the church by voting and accepting a case by majority vote. Scripture is no longer the norm, but most votes.

Serving God cannot be linked to the use of the methods of the world. All those who believe that this is possible will be destroyed. The choice is presented by Moses in its consequences. It is a warning to the generation that stands before him. That generation is *alive* before him because they have held fast to the LORD. He that holds fast to the LORD holds fast to life. Then – and only then – can life be lived in its richest form. In that life the Spirit works. God has nothing to do with the generation of the flesh, but with the generation of the Spirit.

Moses passes on to the people what the LORD his God has commanded him. He is a type of the Lord Jesus as the great Teacher Who speaks the words of God. It is wisdom to listen to Him.

Deu 4:6-8 | God's People and the Other Peoples

6 So keep and do [them], for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' 7 For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the LORD our God whenever we call on Him? 8 Or what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today?

True wisdom and understanding are found in a life lived according to God's order. God has revealed it in His Word. He has given that Word to His people. The possession of that Word makes the big difference to the world around God's people. Not their prosperity or military power, but a life according to the statutes and judgments of God's Word distinguishes God's people from the world. If they are obedient, they will arouse the jealousy of all peoples.

The letter to the Colossians begins with a prayer for wisdom and spiritual insight necessary to enjoy the blessings of the land: "For this reason also, since the day we heard [of it], we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding" (Col 1:9). The true life is "hidden with Christ in God" (Col 3:3). Stretching out for it, being busy with it (Col 3:1) is true wisdom and understanding, for in Him are "hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col 2:3).

If we read God's Word in this way and discover more and more of Christ, in whom our blessings are already contained, we will walk "with wisdom toward outsiders" (Col 4:5). So says Moses too, to the people. Their listening to the commandments of God will be a testimony to the nations around them (cf. 1Kgs 10:4-5). The true right is rooted in God. If His people maintain this, He will become visible through it. He is honored. This honor also comes upon the people. Those who make the Word of God great in their lives will be made great by it themselves.

Moses tells the people how near the LORD is to them. He is so near that He hears them when they call. There is a real relationship. Do the people realize it? Are we aware of it? And God answers. In His Word we have His answer to any question. Moses then points to this. He speaks with full conviction of the unparalleled righteousness of God's laws (Psa 147:19-20).

Are we, am I, fully and deeply convinced of that? If there is no conviction of the truth of God's Word, we do not read it. If we do read it without that conviction: we do so without the awareness that the living and loving God speaks to us. "His commandments are not burdensome" (1Jn 5:3), that is, for the new life. They are the best and most righteous commandments. The foundation is love. He is so near to His people, and we are so near to Him.

We must learn to walk “not as unwise men but as wise” (Eph 5:15). We learn this by, among other things, dealing with the letter to the Ephesians. As a result, we receive wisdom and understanding. Wisdom is not to be found in learning and science, in education or in the world, but in the school of God. True wisdom cannot be learned from a booklet, but we learn it in God’s school of practice.

Deu 4:9-14 | The Lord Lets His Words Be Heard

9 “Only give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently, so that you do not forget the things which your eyes have seen and they do not depart from your heart all the days of your life; but make them known to your sons and your grandsons. 10 [Remember] the day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, when the LORD said to me, ‘Assemble the people to Me, that I may let them hear My words so they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children.’ 11 You came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire to the [very] heart of the heavens: darkness, cloud and thick gloom. 12 Then the LORD spoke to you from the midst of the fire; you heard the sound of words, but you saw no form—only a voice. 13 So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, [that is], the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone. 14 The LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that you might perform them in the land where you are going over to possess it.

There is always the danger that the things we have experienced and that have made a great impression on us will be soon forgotten. Moses insists that God’s people will keep in their hearts what God has shown them of Himself. God’s revelation departs from our hearts when we allow other things to fill our hearts.

Passing on to our children and grandchildren the things we have seen of God is a commission and also a means by which we ourselves are reminded of Him time and again. In this book the emphasis is not so much on priestly service or religious leadership, but more on the parents who are responsible for the spiritual forming of their children.

Moses recalls the day that the people stood at Horeb “before the LORD your God”. He speaks to those who were then under twenty, but it also applies to those who were still in the loins of their fathers and were born during the wilderness journey. God then had him summon the people, to make them hear His words. God therefore wanted them to learn to respect Him as long as they live on earth. Also now God teaches us, His people: the church, through His Word how to honor Him.

The mountain was on fire. It is not a fire that has descended upon an unfaithful people to consume them. It is a fire that “burned ... to the [very] heart of the heavens”. The fire is a symbol of judgment. The heart of the heavens is the Lord Jesus. Here we see in picture form that the fire of God’s judgment has come on the only One Who did not deserve that fire. God has sent the fire into the bones of the Lord Jesus (Lam 1:13), the heart of the heavens.

From the middle of the fire God speaks. God takes the foundation He found in the judgment that came on His Son. From that place, that righteous foundation, He speaks to His people. But God does not only speak, He also writes. God’s writing is a perfect representation of what He has spoken. Thus He made sufficient provision for His people with the understanding they needed to receive and keep the fullness of His blessing.

Deu 4:15-20 | Prohibition to Make Any Idol

15 “So watch yourselves carefully, since you did not see any form on the day the LORD spoke to you at Horeb from the midst of the fire, 16 so that you do not act corruptly and make a graven image for yourselves in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female, 17 the likeness of any animal that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the sky, 18 the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the water below the earth. 19 And [beware] not to lift up your eyes to heaven and see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, and be drawn away and worship them and serve them, those which the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven. 20 But the LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, from Egypt, to be a people for His own possession, as today.

For the second time Moses insists on watching carefully (verses 9,15), to avoid wickedness by making an image of God. How would they portray God? For they have not seen His likeness, but only heard His voice. If they did, they would take something from creation. There is nothing against the things in creation. Nevertheless, taking something that is created and loosening it from creation to make it an object of worship, is idolatry.

Moses lists all the things that can be abused. He begins with the highest in creation on earth, man and woman, and descends to the lowest kind of creatures, after the example of which a graven picture can be made. Direct worship of heavenly bodies as a form of worship elevated above the earth is also an abomination to God.

It is easy for man to come to worship heavenly bodies. They make a great impression by their height, their brilliance and their meaning for life on earth, while there is no thought of Him Who made them. Many are the sun worshipers, but few are the true worshipers of the Father who worship Him in spirit and truth (Jn 4:23). Any form of idolatry is a great insult to Him and a great deceit to the idolater himself.

The people of God are a redeemed people. God has redeemed His people, that they may be His own people. He has freed them from the "iron furnace, from Egypt". An iron furnace is fired as hot as possible in order to process the metal afterwards. For Israel, Egypt had been a place of great distress and misery, where the fire of the trial had burned hot. Their liberation from that must have provided tremendous enlightenment.

God wants His people to serve and honor Him alone and in the way He indicates. Any relationship that His people have with something He has created in order to give honor to it, which only He is entitled to, is sin. It is a denial of the special relationship He has with this people and the special work by which He has made them His own people. God had said that they would be His own people, and now that has become reality.

The last words of verse 20, "as today", sound like an exclamation that underlines the relationship of the people to God. It sounds like the exclamation "and we are" of John that immediately follows what he has spoken about the love that "the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God" (1Jn 3:1a).

Deu 4:21-24 | The Anger of the LORD

21 “Now the LORD was angry with me on your account, and swore that I would not cross the Jordan, and that I would not enter the good land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance. 22 For I will die in this land, I shall not cross the Jordan, but you shall cross and take possession of this good land. 23 So watch yourselves, that you do not forget the covenant of the LORD your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a graven image in the form of anything [against] which the LORD your God has commanded you. 24 For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.

Before Moses continues to speak about the land to which they are on their way, he points for the third time to the anger of the LORD with him on their account (Deu 1:37; 3:26). After what he has said about the danger of idolatry, he makes it clear that God’s consuming fire (verse 24; Heb 12:29) will destroy every form of idolatry. He says that God cannot allow in our lives anything that has been consumed on the cross by the fire of His judgment. Nothing of the old nature or the flesh may be introduced into the worship service, for God was angry with the Lord Jesus on account of that.

For the third time, this chapter (verse 23) warns to watch out for something (verse 23; verses 9,15). Here it is about not forgetting the covenant the LORD has made with them and the prohibition to make idols. The *covenant* specifies the status of the people in the special relationship in which God has placed the people to Himself. *Idolatry* is absolutely contrary to this and unacceptable. God cannot tolerate that. He is a jealous God, Who cannot possibly share the love of His people with others. He can’t bear it if His people don’t give all their love to Him alone. He has done everything for these people to expect their undivided love. He also has every right to punish any act of adultery of His beloved people.

Deu 4:25-28 | Consequences of Idolatry

25 “When you become the father of children and children’s children and have remained long in the land, and act corruptly, and make an idol in the form of anything, and do that which is evil in the sight of the LORD your God [so as] to provoke Him to anger, 26 I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that you will surely perish quickly from the land where you are going

over the Jordan to possess it. You shall not live long on it, but will be utterly destroyed. 27 The LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the LORD drives you. 28 There you will serve gods, the work of man's hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell.

Moses points out the consequences for children and grandchildren if the people fall into idolatry. Then follows a remarkable statement, in which Moses announces as a prophet, that the people will fail by committing idolatry. The result is that they will lose the land. They will die in it or be taken out. Do they want to serve the gods of other nations? Then so shall they find themselves in the lands of the idols they have brought into their own land (Jdg 10:14).

In Christianity it has been the same. By introducing idolatry, connecting to the world and introducing worldly elements into the worship service, the view of heavenly blessings has been lost. Where “the work of man's hands” takes over the guidance of God's Spirit in the church, death enters.

Things in which there is no life, things “which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell”, are given a place in the service to God. Theological strongholds have taken over. Papers are asked for and not life. When diplomas become the basis for accessing a ministry to God, the blessings in Christ that are part of every born-again person are forgotten.

Deu 4:29-31 | Repentance Brings the Promised Blessing

29 But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find [Him] if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul. 30 When you are in distress and all these things have come upon you, in the latter days you will return to the LORD your God and listen to His voice. 31 For the LORD your God is a compassionate God; He will not fail you nor destroy you nor forget the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them.

If the absence of spiritual, heavenly blessings is felt, it is the start of the way back to again enjoy the blessings (Lk 15:17). When repentance of this ‘work of man's hands’, in whatever form it may have gained access to the church, takes place the promised blessing can still or again be enjoyed.

God's grace brings restoration. This applies to Israel farther along in the future (Gen 49:1). Undeservedly, God works in their hearts to repentance. It also applies to the final phase of Christianity in which we find ourselves. God also wants Christians to work out in their hearts now, those measures necessary for their return to the blessings of the land. This means that they will again have an eye for the heavenly place and vocation of the church. In Christianity, this truth has largely been lost through the church's involvement in, and even interwovenness with, earthly things. Further still, by considering and presenting these earthly preoccupations as its very calling.

The fundamental truth of the letter to the Romans is that of righteousness based on faith alone. In the history of Christianity this truth was rediscovered, from beneath the dust, in the Reformation. In our personal lives, it may be necessary to rediscover this truth if in our Christian lives works become the basis through which we think we are accepted by God. With the influence of Roman Catholicism, this is indeed a matter worth paying careful attention to.

The truth of the letter to the Ephesians and the contents of the letters of John go beyond what is taught us in the letter to the Romans about justification. In these letters God unfolds to His children truths that have to do with heaven, with eternal life, with Christ in heaven, Who is the eternal life. This does not make for drifting Christians, but steadfast saints who know where and how to live true life, and who bear witness to this in their earthly relations.

The way to that blessing is opened by a compassionate God Who calls us to listen to Him. On His faithfulness we may count and call upon.

Deu 4:32-40 | Reason for Obedience

32 *"Indeed, ask now concerning the former days which were before you, since the day that God created man on the earth, and [inquire] from one end of the heavens to the other. Has [anything] been done like this great thing, or has [anything] been heard like it? 33 Has [any] people heard the voice of God speaking from the midst of the fire, as you have heard [it], and survived? 34 Or has a god tried to go to take for himself a nation from within [another] nation*

by trials, by signs and wonders and by war and by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm and by great terrors, as the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? 35 To you it was shown that you might know that the LORD, He is God; there is no other besides Him. 36 Out of the heavens He let you hear His voice to discipline you; and on earth He let you see His great fire, and you heard His words from the midst of the fire. 37 Because He loved your fathers, therefore He chose their descendants after them. And He personally brought you from Egypt by His great power, 38 driving out from before you nations greater and mightier than you, to bring you in [and] to give you their land for an inheritance, as it is today. 39 Know therefore today, and take it to your heart, that the LORD, He is God in heaven above and on the earth below; there is no other. 40 So you shall keep His statutes and His commandments which I am giving you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may live long on the land which the LORD your God is giving you for all time."

Moses does not tire of reminding the people of what God has done for them. He invites them to do research in the past and across the breadth of the earth if something similar has ever happened. They should check whether the scope of the event and its content can be found elsewhere. Is it not of unsurpassable magnitude that a people are brought to the heart of God? Is it not an unsuspected happening that God speaks out of the fire and that those to whom He addresses Himself remain alive? Is not the way in which He has made this people His own people far above all human thought and comprehension? Surely such a thing can only come from the one, unique God Who cannot be compared to anyone (verses 35,39; Deu 32:39; Isa 45:5a,21b)? And that God is their God!

The reason God has made them His people is His love for their fathers, and that He has chosen their descendants. Therefore He is ever active for them. Everything has gone forth from Him and continues to go forth from Him. He is the only One in heaven and on earth. It is altogether folly, contempt and the height of ingratitude to honor anything or anyone other than Him. Only when they – and we – see Him like this in the immeasurable fullness of his love and grace, will the heart be humbled and broken to keep His statutes and His commandments.

Deu 4:41-43 | Cities of Refuge on the East Side of the Jordan

41 Then Moses set apart three cities across the Jordan to the east, 42 that a manslayer might flee there, who unintentionally slew his neighbor without having enmity toward him in time past; and by fleeing to one of these cities he might live: 43 Bezer in the wilderness on the plateau for the Reubenites, and Ramoth in Gilead for the Gadites, and Golan in Bashan for the Manassites.

Suddenly Moses' speech is interrupted by an action: the designation of three cities of refuge in the area of the wilderness side of the Jordan for the manslayer. The sin of idolatry that came to the attention in the previous section is not the only evil of Israel. The second great evil is that they became the manslayer of the Lord Jesus.

It is pure grace that God has brought His people back into the land after idolatry. It is also pure grace that God provides cities of refuge for the people for a manslayer. These two sins of Israel are also present in Christianity. We find them in the introduction of strange elements into the worship service and the exclusion of the Lord Jesus. Such things mean a negation of His Person and His rights.

If we do not recognize His rights in our daily lives and in the meetings of the church, we are spiritually guilty of manslaughter. For us, the possession and enjoyment of the land means that we do not deny His Name (Rev 3:8). But there is also a city of refuge for us. We find it in the truth of His Word. Back to the Lord, acknowledging His Name, that is, His authority, means bowing to His Word.

These are the cities of refuge in the area of the wilderness side of the Jordan, so not yet in the land. It is about our life on earth before God, living in fellowship with Him. It is about the recognition of His rights in daily life. If, for whatever reason, we no longer acknowledge them and spiritually fall into idolatry and manslaughter, it is because we have forgotten what it means to be justified by faith. Then that meaning must again return to us afresh.

That meaning and life in accordance with it will return when we start reading God's Word again and let God's Spirit do His work in us. Then we discover again that the righteousness of God is the righteousness which is His own and which emanates from Him, and which we have received through

faith in the Lord Jesus. We will be safe in the city of refuge to experience the truth of the first verse of Romans 5 (Rom 5:1).

Deu 4:44-49 | Where Moses Sets the Law Before the People

44 Now this is the law which Moses set before the sons of Israel; 45 these are the testimonies and the statutes and the ordinances which Moses spoke to the sons of Israel, when they came out from Egypt, 46 across the Jordan, in the valley opposite Beth-peor, in the land of Sihon king of the Amorites who lived at Heshbon, whom Moses and the sons of Israel defeated when they came out from Egypt. 47 They took possession of his land and the land of Og king of Bashan, the two kings of the Amorites, [who were] across the Jordan to the east, 48 from Aroer, which is on the edge of the valley of Arnon, even as far as Mount Sion (that is, Hermon), 49 with all the Arabah across the Jordan to the east, even as far as the sea of the Arabah, at the foot of the slopes of Pisgah.

The final verses of Deuteronomy 4 are the introduction to Moses' next speech. They describe the place where and the circumstances under which the testimonies, statutes and ordinances are given: in the plains of Moab, after the liberation from Egypt, the wilderness journey and the taking possession of the land of Sihon and Og. Their feet stand on conquered ground as they listen to Moses' speech. Moses speaks from a position of victory. This must be a powerful motive for the people to follow up on what he has to say. The speech of Moses contains incentives, encouragements and conditions to obey – necessary for the blessing to be given.

"The law" (verse 44) is the general designation of God's commandments and is further specified in the designations "testimonies", "statutes" and "ordinances" in verse 45.

Deuteronomy 5

Deu 5:1 | Israel Is Called to Hear

1 Then Moses summoned all Israel and said to them: “Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the ordinances which I am speaking today in your hearing, that you may learn them and observe them carefully.

Moses calls Israel together. He is a picture of the Lord Jesus as the Teacher who speaks God’s Word. He calls on them to “hear” – a word that, alongside the word “listen” appears frequently in this book – so that they will learn what God says and then do what God says. Hearing and doing are inseparable. No pronouncement made is without obligation, because God has accepted this people to be His own people. Hearing is necessary to their survival as a people.

Deu 5:2-3 | The Covenant

2 The LORD our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. 3 The LORD did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us, [with] all those of us alive here today.

Moses points back to Horeb where God had brought the people into a covenant relationship with Himself and He had clearly declared that to them (Exo 19:4-5). The people to whom Moses addresses himself here were younger than twenty years of age at Horeb. Nevertheless, they represent the people who were present at Horeb at that time.

The LORD has not made this covenant with the fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but with a people He has redeemed. Furthermore, God has not made His covenant with a people who sigh under the bondage of sin and obstinate to His direction to enter the land. He made it with a new generation, a people who are alive

Deu 5:4-5 | Moses, the Mediator

4 The LORD spoke to you face to face at the mountain from the midst of the fire, 5 [while] I was standing between the LORD and you at that time, to de-

clare to you the word of the LORD; for you were afraid because of the fire and did not go up the mountain. He said,

With these new people the LORD has spoken face to face, Moses standing as mediator between the LORD and the people. Thus too the Lord Jesus stands between God and us. In His face God has shown Himself to us: "For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" (2Cor 4:6). Where Israel were afraid, fear is gone for us: "There is no fear in love" (1Jn 4:18a). We are not on the basis of the law, but on the ground of grace.

From the mouth of the LORD come the Ten Commandments. They are given to a people who have committed themselves to do everything the LORD says. They need to learn that they cannot meet them in their own strength. For us the law is not literally applicable, but there is certainly a spiritual application. Through the law we can learn a lot about our relationships toward each other and our relationship with God.

The lessons of this book are directly related to our Christian position. Moses tells them about the land they will soon enter, and on what basis they can possess and enjoy the blessings. That foundation is obedience.

The blessings of the Christian are twofold. There are earthly blessings and there are heavenly blessings. Earthly blessings are not specifically Christian. Even unbelievers can enjoy good health, nature and their jobs. The specific Christian blessings are those of the land, the heavenly places. There is the glorified Man Christ Jesus in heaven, and He shares all the blessings He has inherited as Man with the believers. That is why He became Man. Christ is seated in the heavenly places and the believer is there also seated in Him (Eph 1:3; 2:4-7).

The same Man Christ Jesus is also God the Son, of eternity. Hence the blessing of eternal life is also our part: "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (Jn 17:3). Deuteronomy shows that the blessings are not automatically obtained by us. For that to happen, we need to take possession of that land here and now, with battle. From Deuteronomy 4 onwards, the road along which we can take possession of the blessings is shown.

Love manifests itself in keeping the commandments and that results in fellowship in the 'land'. Loving God here corresponds for us with what the Lord Jesus says in John 14 (Jn 14:21,23). Believers who begin to be obedient, are going to see more and more of the heavenly things. Central to obedience are the Ten Commandments. For us, it is about the spiritual application of them.

Deu 5:6 | The Redeeming God

6 'I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

What we will see in verses 6-21, is not just a repetition of the Ten Commandments from Exodus 20. We can see this for instance when we look at the Sabbath commandment. In Exodus 20, the motive to keep the Sabbath is that the LORD made heaven and earth in six days and then rested (Exo 20:11), while here the motive is that God realized a work of salvation (verse 15). Furthermore, the last five commandments are explicitly linked here by the word 'and' between the commandments, which is lacking in Exodus 20.

God reminds them of the deliverance He has given them. He revealed Himself in the first place as the redeeming God, Who is now their God. This can't but bring about love for Him. He asks love, but He first loved us and first manifested His great love for us by sending his Son to be "the propitiation for our sins" (1Jn 4:9-10,19; Rom 5:8). At the same time there should be respect. The nearer we get to Him – and He wants us to be near to Himself! – all the more we will see His majesty and exaltedness.

Deu 5:7-10 | First and Second Commandment

7 'You shall have no other gods before Me. 8 'You shall not make for yourself an idol, [or] any likeness [of] what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. 9 You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, and on the third and the fourth [generations] of those who hate Me, 10 but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

For His people He is the exclusive, only God. It means that all areas of life are under His authority. We know God as the One Who has revealed Himself in the Lord Jesus. This is why we know Him so much more gloriously than Israel knows Him. He who loves Him will keep His commandments and worship Him. Then there is no room for other gods. But God sees the danger that the hearts of His people are always inclined to deviate from Him.

For us, that danger is no different. John speaks in his first letter about the blessing of eternal life in the believer. He ends his letter with the warning: "Little children, guard yourselves from idols" (1Jn 5:21). Anything that interferes between us and God to tempt us to give it any honor is idolatry. As soon as we indulge in that temptation, we lose the enjoyment of the blessing of eternal life, which is Christ Himself: "And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life" (1Jn 5:20).

God is a spirit and cannot be represented by anything. Each image can only be a caricature of Him Who cannot be portrayed by human hands. Then God would be in the hand of man, who takes something from creation and shapes it according to his own fantasy. Those who know Him by faith as Father may worship Him in spirit and truth. The Father seeks such people (Jn 4:23-24).

The only image we have of God is the Lord Jesus (Col 1:15). He can say: "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (Jn 14:9). Except for the Lord Jesus, nothing is known of God or is a blasphemous representation of Him. Every view of God according to his own thoughts is a graven image.

God does not share His honor with anything or anyone. Whoever wants to make anything of Him visible, will bear the iniquity thereof, even into the fourth generation, which with the taking over of idolatry will also suffer the anger of God. On the other hand, we see God's mercy in the lives of those who love Him and honor Him and serve Him as the only God. In effect, loving God carries much further: "to thousands", than hating Him: "on the third and fourth" generations. Love far exceeds hatred.

Deu 5:11 | Third Commandment

11 'You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.

The commandment not to take the name of the LORD in vain is not limited to not being allowed to curse. It concerns any use of the Name of the Lord Jesus in a context in which His Name is mentioned as a cover for one's own opinions. This can happen, for example, with swearing. The Lord Jesus warns of this (Mt 5:33-37). Other forms of the vain use of His Name are for example: mentioning His Name and at the same time allowing sin in your life, or mentioning His Name as the center of meeting and still arrange the meeting according to your taste; or calling upon His Name, while merely expressing faith in Him in a worldly way.

Deu 5:12-15 | Fourth Commandment

12 'Observe the sabbath day to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. 13 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 14 but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; [in it] you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant or your ox or your donkey or any of your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you, so that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. 15 You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out of there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to observe the sabbath day.

The first day of the week is not a disguised sabbath, to which all commandments must be transferred. What the sabbath is, is written in Hebrews 4 (Heb 4:8-9). It represents the peace of the realm of peace. We may observe the sabbath spiritually by living as if God's sabbath had already begun. From a spiritual point of view, we can live in peace.

The sabbath command is the core command of obedience. All other commandments can be understood even by unbelievers. The only reason for observing the sabbath is because God has commanded it. It is the great test for Israel for their obedience. Therefore the breaking of this commandment

is called several times as a ground for judgment (Lev 26:35; 2Chr 36:21). In the realm of peace the sabbath will be held again (Eze 45:17).

The reason Christians celebrate the first day of the week is not because the sabbath, the seventh day of the week, has been abolished, but because they spiritually died to the law. For them it is true: “Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead” (Rom 7:4). That is why Christians who died and are raised with Christ celebrate as risen people the day of Christ’s resurrection, the first day of the week.

Here we learn that besides creation, salvation is the reason for our obedience. God is entitled to our obedience because He is our *Creator*. Does He not have a much greater right to our obedience because of the *redemption* He has brought about? Salvation is a more powerful motive for our hearts to be obedient. This redemption will also lead us to be merciful to others.

Deu 5:16 | Fifth Commandment

16 ‘Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, that your days may be prolonged and that it may go well with you on the land which the LORD your God gives you.

From this verse begins the second table of the law with six commandments for the relationship to one’s neighbor. If that relationship is not in order, the believer cannot enjoy the blessings of the land either. On the first table of the law the relationship with God is regulated. In it we have His love for us and our answer to Him. “We love, because He first loved us” (1Jn 4:19). Our love does not only concern God, but also the brother. To love the brother is also a commandment.

The relationship with one’s neighbor begins with honoring father and mother, the first relation to one’s neighbor. Honoring father and mother has a purpose. It is about enjoying the blessings of the land. God has set up the family as a picture of God’s family, in which the relationship between parents and children should reflect the relationship between God the Father and His children.

In a spiritual sense, it means that the believers will honor those who are fathers and mothers in Christ in the church (Heb 13:17; 1Thes 2:7,11). In a similar way, we see it when young people are submissive to the elderly (1Pet 5:5). If these relationships are respected, blessing will be the result.

Recognizing the authority relationships that God has given in the family and in the church causes enjoyment of the blessing of the land (Eph 6:1-3). Whoever does not care about this authority will lose the blessing of the land, the delight in it will disappear.

Deu 5:17 | Sixth Commandment

| 17 *'You shall not murder.'*

Here it is about murder, not killing by command of God exercised by the authorities (Gen 9:6). Murder means taking away the blessing of the land from someone. Living means enjoying it. With hatred there is no enjoyment, no eternal life (1Jn 3:15). That hatred has a deadly effect, the Lord Jesus tells His disciples and us (Mt 5:21-22).

Paul points out how a brother can be lost through our misuse of liberty (1Cor 8:9-11). Instead of murdering, we should take care that our brother is given the space for an optimal enjoyment of the blessing of the land.

Deu 5:18 | Seventh Commandment

| 18 *'You shall not commit adultery.'*

This commandment maintains the unique relationship between man and woman in marriage. It is the basis of all other relationships between people. Whoever is unfaithful in marriage cannot be trusted in any other relationship, not in his relationship with God nor with his neighbor. The marriage relationship represents Israel's relationship with God and God calls Israel His bride (Jer 2:2). In the New Testament, marriage is the picture of the relationship between Christ and the church (Eph 5:22-33).

In the spiritual sense adultery is having a connection with the world. It is the result of the cooling of the love for the Lord Jesus, for which love for other things comes in its place. The "simplicity ... to Christ" (2Cor 11:3) is gone, that is, Christ is no longer the only object of love. Adultery is op-

posed to the relationship of the church to Christ. Paul says: “I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you [as] a pure virgin” (2Cor 11:2). In this relationship we see the affection of a bride in relation to the bridegroom. Then there can be no connection with the world.

Deu 5:19 | Eighth Commandment

| 19 *‘You shall not steal.’*

Stealing is taking away from another what that other person has received from the Lord and using for ourselves. It affects the right to personal property. It’s very different from getting. What you get is your property. Someone’s good name can be stolen, for instance, by spreading rumors or uncontrolled claims. One can steal a brother (Deu 24:7), that is, rob him of his freedom and make him dependent on oneself.

Absalom stole the heart of the Israelites by flattery (2Sam 15:5-6). Stealing is the work of false shepherds and a hired hand (Jn 10:1,10; Acts 20:30). They try to gather believers to themselves or their false doctrine instead of to the Lord Jesus.

Also words can be stolen (Jer 23:30). That is to parrot what others have said about God while pretending we have discovered it in God’s Word. When I read or hear something from someone else, it must first become my spiritual property before I can pass it on. Someone concisely put it like this: You only can say of any truth that it is your property if it has first entered your heart and returned to God in worship.

For the Christian who knows his blessings, it is not just about not stealing, but about doing the opposite of it, namely, to do good: “He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have [something] to share with one who has need” (Eph 4:28). That suits life in the land.

Deu 5:20 | Ninth Commandment

| 20 *‘You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.’*

God is “the God of truth” (Isa 65:16). His words are truth (Psa 119:142,151). He hates the false tongue and who utters lies (Pro 6:17,19). For the Chris-

tian, it is not only a matter of omission of what is untrue. He wants to speak the truth. He wants to speak of the things God has created us for: “Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one [of you] with his neighbor, for we are members of one another” (Eph 4:25).

Members of each other will not lie to each other, because a member realizes that he then lies to himself. Members are inextricably linked. Whoever knows and appreciates the unity of the body of Christ will search for what promotes unity.

Deu 5:21 | Tenth Commandment

21 ‘You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, and you shall not desire 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.’

This commandment lays bare the germ of sin. It is not about what man does, about taking away what belongs to another, something that is visible, but what underlies it: lust. Another person doesn’t see that. Sin is characterized and known by lust (Rom 7:7b-8a). By envy, jealousy, not being content with what man has received, sin has come into the world. Being jealous of a neighbor, over what he has, may be about his possessions but it may also be about his spiritual gifts. This commandment makes it clear to everyone that the law cannot be kept by a human being.

Paul can say that he did not covet anyone’s silver, gold, or clothing, but that he worked to be able to give (Acts 20:33-34). In the area where all is by grace given, it is a bad thing to covet what belongs to the other.

Deu 5:22 | A Complete Word

22 “These words the LORD spoke to all your assembly at the mountain from the midst of the fire, [of] the cloud and [of] the thick gloom, with a great voice, and He added no more. He wrote them on two tablets of stone and gave them to me.”

These “Ten Words” (Deu 10:4) God spoke directly to the people and wrote them down Himself. The other words He has told Moses, who has passed them on to the people (verse 31). The ‘ten words’ contain the basic code of conduct for all relationships with God and the neighbor, not only for the

generation of the people to whom God has addressed the word, but also for all future generations. This short list contains everything and is therefore complete.

This word is a complete word to enjoy the blessing, nothing has been added. As they have been spoken, they are written. God is the speaking and writing God. What He speaks is always true. He writes to record it in an unchangeable way for us, so that we can always consult what He has said (cf. Isa 30:8).

Deu 5:23-27 | The People Fear the LORD

23 And when you heard the voice from the midst of the darkness, while the mountain was burning with fire, you came near to me, all the heads of your tribes and your elders. 24 You said, 'Behold, the LORD our God has shown us His glory and His greatness, and we have heard His voice from the midst of the fire; we have seen today that God speaks with man, yet he lives. 25 Now then why should we die? For this great fire will consume us; if we hear the voice of the LORD our God any longer, then we will die. 26 For who is there of all flesh who has heard the voice of the living God speaking from the midst of the fire, as we [have], and lived? 27 Go near and hear all that the LORD our God says; then speak to us all that the LORD our God speaks to you, and we will hear and do [it].'

The people fear the LORD and ask Moses to take their place between them and the LORD. This is the means by which God wants to introduce us to the meaning of the mediator. A mediator is not only someone who stands between us and God, but he also guarantees the consequences of our failure. Our Mediator is the Lord Jesus (1Tim 2:5). He gave His life and then stood ceaselessly between God and us, His people.

At the mountain full of fire, we discover that we need a mediator. This can be seen on the cross. There is no place where we discover this more, for there God has revealed Himself in darkness and fire toward sin.

Deu 5:28-30 | The Desire of the LORD

28 "The LORD heard the voice of your words when you spoke to me, and the LORD said to me, 'I have heard the voice of the words of this people which

they have spoken to you. They have done well in all that they have spoken. 29 Oh that they had such a heart in them, that they would fear Me and keep all My commandments always, that it may be well with them and with their sons forever! 30 Go, say to them, "Return to your tents."

The LORD is pleased with the attitude of the people. He acknowledges their words and expresses His desire that they should keep His commandments. His heart goes out to His people and He longs for their continual happiness, which can only be found in doing what He says. We can fulfill His desires through the Spirit.

After God had told the people His words and after the reaction of the people who had rejoiced in His heart, they were allowed to go to their tents. In their daily lives, and especially in their domestic environment, they were given to cherish what God had said to them, what they had agreed to, and what He looked forward to see that in them.

Deu 5:31-33 | Command to Keep the Commandments

31 But as for you, stand here by Me, that I may speak to you all the commandments and the statutes and the judgments which you shall teach them, that they may observe [them] in the land which I give them to possess.' 32 So you shall observe to do just as the LORD your God has commanded you; you shall not turn aside to the right or to the left. 33 You shall walk in all the way which the LORD your God has commanded you, that you may live and that it may be well with you, and that you may prolong [your] days in the land which you will possess.

The people were allowed to go to their tents, but Moses still had to stand by the LORD. The LORD tells Moses, as a mediator, everything he needs to teach the people to do in the land (verse 31).

Moses urges the people to keep God's commandments. They must not deviate from this, neither to the right nor to the left. On such obedience did their abode and welfare in the land depend (verses 32-33).

Deuteronomy 6

Deu 6:1-3 | Obedience Gives Blessing

1 “Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which the LORD your God has commanded [me] to teach you, that you might do [them] in the land where you are going over to possess it, 2 so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. 3 O Israel, you should listen and be careful to do [it], that it may be well with you and that you may multiply greatly, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, [in] a land flowing with milk and honey.

After the mention in the previous chapter of the ten commandments and the necessity of a mediator, Moses now gives a more detailed description of the commandments. He only passes on what the LORD has commanded him, as befits every good servant (cf. Mt 28:19b). These are commandments to which the people of God are subject, in order to go over into the land and inherit the blessings there (Deu 5:33).

The blessing is presented in “flowing with milk and honey”. It represents abundance and fertility. The expression appears almost twenty times in the Bible (Exo 3:8,17; Lev 20:24; Num 13:27; 14:8; 16:13-14; Deu 6:3; 11:9; 26:9,15; 27:3; 31:20; Jos 5:6; Jer 11:5; 32:22; Eze 20:6,15). One time the expression is used by the rebellious and unbelieving people for the land of slavery, Egypt (Num 16:13). Furthermore, the expression always applies to the promised land.

Milk is a picture of the Word of God as a means to nutritional sustenance and healthy growth in spiritual living (1Pet 2:2). Just as a baby depends on its mother’s milk, so the believer is constantly dependent on God’s Word. This is indispensable for life in the land, but it is present in abundance. Honey represents the sweetness of natural relationships. If there is dependence on God, the mutual relationships will also be enjoyed. The living

together of God's children on that basis is beneficial to every member of God's people.

In that atmosphere all the other blessings and benefits of the LORD can be fully enjoyed; sharing blessings increases joy.

Deu 6:4-5 | The Core of Judaism

4 "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! 5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

After the fearing of the LORD in verse 2 as a result of the teaching of the commandments now follows the loving of the LORD as the One and Only (Zec 14:9). The religion of Israel is monotheistic. That gives certainty about God. That certainty is lacking in polytheistic religions. If there are several gods, someone can feel to be in the favor of one god, but live in fear of another god. Such gods never act in harmony in the thinking of their worshippers.

For Israel there is no such thing as a god of Sinai and a god of Hermon, a god for Reuben and a god for Levi. The unity of God guarantees perfect certainty about His will, as He reveals it in His statutes and ordinances. There is no other deity that proclaims something else.

The commandment to love was never given by an earthly ruler. In the face of God, fearing Him and loving Him belong together. To fear God is to have respect for Him.

Knowing God as the LORD Who is One is the core of the Old Testament, in which God's earthly people take the central place. It is also, but there according to God's complete revelation in Christ, the core of the New Testament (1Tim 2:5; 1Cor 8:6).

The core of Christendom consists of a completed work of redemption, a Mediator Who is glorified as Man in heaven and God the Holy Spirit who, since the day of Pentecost, lives in the church as a whole and in each individual believer on earth. The believers bear witness to this in their worship, both in their daily lives and in the meetings of the church.

In the Lord Jesus we have come to know God as the triune God: the Father, shown by the Son and revealed by the Spirit. We may know God as Father. Three Persons, yet one God. Because there is only one God, there can be nothing else that divides the heart that is entirely claimed by the LORD for Himself.

To love Him with all the heart and all the soul and all the might is supplemented by the Lord Jesus to include the 'mind' (Mk 12:30). To be able to satisfy this love with devotion, "the mind of Christ" (1Cor 2:16) is necessary. The thinking of Christ is as Christ thinks, it is His mind, in which the power of the Holy Spirit can be active. "And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding" (1Jn 5:20). Through this thinking, this understanding, we gain insight into Who God is. For Israel this will become true in the future, when the law will be given and written in their hearts and minds (Heb 8:10; 10:16).

This love and service of God, gives man the greatest possible satisfaction. To this end he is created and equipped by His Creator with qualities that are aimed at serving and honoring Him. When he does this, he finds true rest and peace. Through sin, however, man has become a sinner and an enemy and hater of God. Man does not serve Him and does not love Him. But by grace the believer is reconciled to God (2Cor 5:18) and has received new life, the "divine nature" (2Pet 1:4). This life wants to, and can love and serve God.

Deu 6:6-9 | Scope of the Commandments

6 These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. 8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. 9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

The truth about God should not be preserved purely as theory, but the people should know that truth as fact and live up to it in practice. In orthodox churches this truth is incorporated in creeds. It is known as dogma, but where is it worked out in daily life? If the core of Christendom is a

reality for everyday life, it will result in the Holy Spirit being given the guidance of personal and church life. God and His Word should be the normal themes of conversation for every member of God's people, everywhere and at any time.

In the families parents will imprint and engrave upon their children, the core of the faith and train them according to the requirement of their way (Pro 3:1,3; 22:6). This also applies to the family of God. In the local churches, older believers, the fathers in Christ, will impress these things upon the youth. This teaching will only have an effect if it can be seen in the lives of those older believers.

It has been noted that Moses considers his law so simple and easy to understand that every father must be able to teach it to his children. There is no excuse for being negligent in this. It is not a matter of intellect, but of mind, of heart. It is about the careful handing down of the Word of God entrusted to us, to those who come after us, so that they too may be confirmed and blessed in obedience to it.

Love of God is expressed in features that can be seen in us. God's words determine not only our speaking to our children but also our actions. This is indicated here by "bind them as a sign on your hand". It is visible to everyone, which is indicated by "frontals on your forehead". The forehead speaks of the open testimony (Rev 13:16; 14:1) that we give of our love for God. When we "set the LORD continually before" us (Psa 16:8), this is manifested throughout our lives. God wants to be involved in every detail of our lives. There is nothing in the lives of His children of which He says: "That does not interest Me."

Family life takes place in our houses. Family life is influenced by what enters our homes. We can apply the writing on the doorposts to the testing of everything we allow in our house against God's Word. Are they things that build up or break down family life according to God's thoughts? Does the relationship with each other, man and woman, parents and children and children among each other, bear the stamp of God's Word as a property feature? Parental authority, which should always be respected, will certainly be respected when children see that the starting point is love for the Lord and the desire to obey Him.

Because the LORD is One, He is entitled to our undivided devotion. All His features are in perfect harmony with each other. There is no feature that conflicts with any of His other features. He is perfect in love and perfect in righteousness. Never is His love in conflict with His righteousness or the other way around. When He shows love, it never is at the expense of His righteousness. When He exercises righteousness, it never sets His love aside. In all His actions, every feature of Himself is answered perfectly.

Deu 6:10-11 | The Blessing of the Land

10 "Then it shall come about when the LORD your God brings you into the land which He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you, great and splendid cities which you did not build, 11 and houses full of all good things which you did not fill, and hewn cisterns which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant, and you eat and are satisfied,

After the previous conditions, the land opens up to us, as it were. Here is the first time out of three times in this chapter which talks about entering the land; and every time it is added that God has sworn it (verses 10,18,23). When God affirms His own words with an oath, He does so to meet us in our weakness and thereby provide additional confirmation of His promise (Heb 6:17-18). The oath makes it clear that no matter what happens, God will give His people the land and thereby give them the full enjoyment of its blessing. The foundation is the work of Christ. If God has sworn like this, why should we still doubt?

We always find an oath of God under special circumstances. God swears on four occasions, each time in connection with the land:

1. God promises to Abraham on the basis of the sacrifice of the son of the promise a rich seed in the land of the promise and in his seed a blessing to the whole world (Gen 22:16-18).
2. If the people apostates from God, He swears that the people will not enter the promised land (Psa 95:11).
3. If the people are unfaithful, God will fulfill His promises in the Man of His right hand (Psa 110:1,4).

4. If Christ reigns in the land, every knee will bow before Him, and the repented remnant of His people, who will then be all Israel because all the wicked are cut off, will be in the land (Isa 45:23).

The blessings are ready for us, there is nothing of us in it, God has prepared them. Present in the land, in the first place, are “great and splendid cities”. The church is compared to a city (Rev 21:2,10). Cities can be seen as a picture of local churches, as representations of one church. The cities here find themselves in the land. It proposes local churches that have their permanent foundation in the land, where they live in the riches of the heavenly blessing.

Secondly, there are “houses, full of all good things”. A city consists of houses. A church consists of families. In the letters that especially speak about the heavenly blessings –the letter to the Ephesians and the letter to the Colossians –, Paul also explicitly discusses the family (Eph 5:22-33; 6:1-4; Col 3:18-22). That is the place where the riches of Christ are shared with each other.

Thirdly, the “hewn cisterns”. These are water basins where the water is collected and from which it can be drawn. It represents ministry through the Lord’s gifts to perfect the saints (Eph 4:11-13).

Fourthly, we find in the land the “vineyards and olive trees”. The vineyards show us that the land is an area of joy. Wine is a picture of joy (Jdg 9:13; Psa 104:15a). Fellowship with the Father and the Son and with each other gives a “joy” that is “complete” (1Jn 1:3-4). The olive trees represent the rich fruit and blessing of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23a). Oil is a picture of the Holy Spirit (1Jn 2:20; 1Jn 2:27).

In between it is pointed out time and again that God’s people did nothing for these blessings. By free grace God has given them His people. So it is with our heavenly blessings. There is no contribution from us. We have received them out of free favor on the basis of the work of the Lord Jesus, only because God has had it in His heart to give them to us. Three times we are reminded that we were slaves of sin, but God has delivered us from it (verses 12,21,23).

Deu 6:12-15 | Do Not Forget the LORD

12 then watch yourself, that you do not forget the LORD who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 13 You shall fear [only] the LORD your God; and you shall worship Him and swear by His name. 14 You shall not follow other gods, any of the gods of the peoples who surround you, 15 for the LORD your God in the midst of you is a jealous God; otherwise the anger of the LORD your God will be kindled against you, and He will wipe you off the face of the earth.

Sometimes we can be so busy with what we have been given, that we forget the Giver. Therefore the warning sounds that we should watch ourselves in our preoccupation with blessings, we then do not forget Who gave them to us.

The fall from the highest level is the most terrible fall. If we do not walk according to the truth that has been given to us, it will be to great harm. Then we are driven out of the land, we lose sight of the things of the land. The worst pain is for Him Who has sworn to bring us into those blessings.

It is about a land that the people will inherit. They are the heirs and as such they may take possession of it. This brings into view the sonship of the believers. The view of sonship, and the fullness of its enjoyment, has been lost because Christians have given in to Satan's temptation to seek their happiness in the visible world. Not standing before God, but being in an environment that is attractive to the flesh, has seized the hearts. The Lord Jesus did not give in to that temptation. He is the example of how we can stand to the temptation of the devil.

The words of verse 13 compose the first quotation of the three quotations from this book by the Lord Jesus during the forty days He is tempted by the devil in the wilderness (Deu 6:13,16; 8:3; Mt 4:1-10). The Lord uses these words in response to the devil's temptation to give Him all the kingdoms of the world and their lordship when He falls down before him and worships him (Mt 4:8-10). The devil also has countless means of asking us to kneel down. God has made man able to worship and has given him the need to do so. The only question is: to whom and what does he give his worship.

No man on earth has ever been so desiring to receive the heavenly blessings as *Man* from God's hand as the Lord Jesus. Therefore, during the temptation, He plants firm footing on the book of Deuteronomy. He puts himself on the true ground of responsibility and faithfulness, on which the people of God must place themselves in order to take possession of and preserve the heavenly land. He is forty days tried in the wilderness, as Deuteronomy 1-11 look back on the forty years of Israel in the wilderness. Israel has failed there, but He doesn't fail. The manner in which He takes His stand, we can follow and is the only way.

Deu 6:16-19 | Do Not Put the Lord to the Test

16 "You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested [Him] at Massah. 17 You should diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and His testimonies and His statutes which He has commanded you. 18 You shall do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD, that it may be well with you and that you may go in and possess the good land which the LORD swore to [give] your fathers, 19 by driving out all your enemies from before you, as the LORD has spoken.

Verse 16 gives the second text quoted by the Lord Jesus during the temptation by the devil in the wilderness (Mt 4:5-7). The temptation to which the people are subjected is their doubt as to whether the LORD is among them (Exo 17:7). If there is mistrust of the goodness and faithfulness of God, when there are so many undeniable proofs of it, the temptation arises to test Him to see if He still wants to bless His people. It is not about doubting oneself, but about doubting God, and that is unbelief. Can He forget His people or leave them?

The Lord Jesus cannot be made to doubt about this. In his temptation, the devil cites a few verses from Psalm 91 about God's safekeeping (Psa 91:11-12). If the Lord Jesus would put God to the test, whether it is indeed as it says, that would prove unbelief. The devil always quotes partially: he extracts text from its context. Thus he does not mention here that it is about walking *in the ways of the LORD*.

Whosoever walks in the ways of the LORD knows the LORD, and may count on his safekeeping. Such a man has no need of proof that God's faith-

fulness endures in blessing toward His people. A lively relationship with Him saves us from putting Him to the test. The Lord Jesus also enjoyed such fellowship uninterrupted during the forty days of temptation.

Israel will reach the land. As already mentioned, this chapter reminds us no less than three times that the LORD has sworn this (verses 10,18,23). What, then, is there still to be put to the test? It is not without vital significance that God confirms His promise with an oath.

This chapter is about inheriting or taking possession (verses 1,18) of the inheritance. It is in this light that the temptations must be seen, for the quotations to resist the devil come from this chapter. The quotation the Lord makes from Deuteronomy 8 is in connection with sonship. Inheritance and sonship belong together (Gal 4:7). The sonship of the believer is closely linked to knowing and enjoying the inheritance that God has given us, which are the blessings in the heavenly places (Eph 1:3-6).

Taking possession or inheriting does not mean getting something when the testator has died, but that God entrusts a certain property to someone. He can do that now or later. In the New Testament to inherit has to do with sharing with the Lord Jesus in His reign (Eph 1:10-11). To inherit is used for every blessing that God has given us and that we will receive in the heavens.

We are sons and therefore heirs. Through the Spirit of sonship, we are able to get to know the heart of the Father. We are *children* of God by birth, because we are born of God. This means that we have received His nature, which is light and love. We are also *sons*, which speaks more of maturity, of understanding God's thoughts and intentions, and of fellowship.

The highest aspect of the inheritance is the spiritual blessing in the heavenly land, which is our property and which we are already allowed to take possession of. We have received the divine nature that makes us suitable to be in heaven. We are accepted in the Beloved, chosen for the sonship before God. God wants sons for Himself. He wants to have spiritual contact with them to talk about the things in His heart.

Deu 6:20-25 | Testimony of the Father

20 "When your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What [do] the testimonies and the statutes and the judgments [mean] which the LORD our God

commanded you?’ 21 then you shall say to your son, ‘We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and the LORD brought us from Egypt with a mighty hand. 22 Moreover, the LORD showed great and distressing signs and wonders before our eyes against Egypt, Pharaoh and all his household; 23 He brought us out from there in order to bring us in, to give us the land which He had sworn to our fathers.’ 24 So the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God for our good always and for our survival, as [it is] today. 25 It will be righteousness for us if we are careful to observe all this commandment before the LORD our God, just as He commanded us.

In verse 7 the parents are commanded to speak to their sons about the commandments of the LORD. Here, in verse 20, the son comes with a question. We find four times a son asking a question:

1. The question concerning the Passover; this question is, in picture, about redemption (Exo 12:26).
2. The question about the redemption of the firstborn. Here, in picture, it is about separation for and devotion to the LORD (Exo 13:14).
3. The question regarding the passage through the Jordan, is, in picture, the conquest of the heavenly position by the church through her connection with an once dead, risen and glorified Man (Jos 4:6).
4. The question concerning the meaning of the Word of God (Deu 6:20).

The testimony of the parents is about the redemption from Egypt. But that’s not all. The LORD has redeemed his people from Egypt to bring them into the land which he promised the fathers.

That is also God’s purpose with our redemption. He did not only want to save us from the power of Satan, sin and the world, so that we could have forgiveness of sins and peace with God. His goal with us is also that we will enjoy the blessings of the land. This means that as His own sons we would be “holy and blameless before Him in love” (Eph 1:4-5).

Deuteronomy 7

Introduction

The main thought of this chapter is the sanctification of the people to God. This includes rejecting all the ways of the Gentiles and the Gentiles themselves. It is not about the sanctification of any particular class, for example priests, but of the whole people that God gathers around Himself as ordained to Him. Priests and Levites are hardly mentioned in this book. They are seen as part of the people. In the wilderness the differences between these groups are large; in the land they are relatively small.

Deu 7:1-5 | Utterly Destroy Nations and Their Idolatry

1 "When the LORD your God brings you into the land where you are entering to possess it, and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and stronger than you, 2 and when the LORD your God delivers them before you and you defeat them, then you shall utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them and show no favor to them. 3 Furthermore, you shall not intermarry with them; you shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor shall you take their daughters for your sons. 4 For they will turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods; then the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you and He will quickly destroy you. 5 But thus you shall do to them: you shall tear down their altars, and smash their [sacred] pillars, and hew down their Asherim, and burn their graven images with fire.

Until now we had more the inner condition of the people before us. Now we are being given the duty to the outside world. The nations must be utterly destroyed because they are an obstacle to inheriting and enjoying the land's blessing. God wants us to learn that the blessings He has given us can only be taken possession of by us through struggle to enjoy them.

They must destroy these nations, not on the basis of murder, but as executors of divine judgment. These nations have earned that judgment right-

teously from God. Research has shown that at that time they were the most depraved peoples of the earth. God has endured them for 400 years, but now their iniquity is full (Gen 15:16-21).

God could also have exterminated these nations by disease, hunger, or natural disasters (cf. Eze 38:21-22). But he lets His people do it, so that they may receive the serious lesson of how holy He is and how terrible sin is in His sight. The judgment they pronounce will be their portion if they follow the nations in their sins and abominations.

Seven nations are mentioned who have taken over the land of God unlawfully. The number seven shows that in these nations the complete power of wickedness is seen. They are a picture of the rulers and powers and world forces, spiritual powers of wickedness in the heavenly places. Against these powers is our struggle and not, as with Israel, against flesh and blood: "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual [forces] of wickedness in the heavenly [places]" (Eph 6:12).

The only way to take possession of the inheritance is through struggle and victory. We are placed in the inheritance by God – He "raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly [places] in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:6) – but enemies have taken possession of it and want to prevent us from experiencing actual proprietorship. In Israel's case, the promise is that the LORD will deliver the enemy to His people, so that they are capable of defeating them. For us, the Lord Jesus defeated all enemies on the cross and in His resurrection (Heb 2:14; Col 2:15). With Him as our Leader, victory is certain when we go in the armor God has made available to us (Eph 6:13-18).

Israel must not show these enemies any mercy or make any covenant with them. They must be "utterly destroyed". For us, believers of the church, it applies that we cannot make a covenant with unbelievers (2Cor 6:14), but we must show them grace and do them good. Proving grace and doing good suits the revelation of God our Savior in this day and age (1Tim 2:3-4).

What we should not show any mercy to are the wicked powers, which are the principles by which unbelievers let themselves be guided. That is why

we cannot commit ourselves to social groups that pursue noble goals, or to political parties that want to improve the world. The principles behind it are not from God.

In the land nothing can be tolerated that does not come from obedience to God. Only what He gives is appropriate for the land. Therefore, all that is not of Him must be destroyed with the axe and fire (verse 5). This means that the altars and sacred pillars used to serve the idols should not be cleansed and then consecrated to God. This happened in Christianity with the Christianization of originally pagan feasts such as Christmas and the worship of Mary.

The inheritance contrasts with things in our lives that make enjoyment impossible. The types do not speak about what we have become in principle, but about living and experiencing the truths of the New Testament. We have received an inheritance in the light (Col 1:12). This contrasts with our salvation from the power of darkness. What we already own, we must now enjoy. We do this in the midst of the world of darkness from which we are redeemed. To really enjoy, we must remove all remnants of darkness and thus make the heritage our actual property.

It is not God's intention that we own an inheritance without knowing about it and enjoying it to the full. When John speaks of eternal life in his letters, he does so as something we already own and not as something we will only get later. Therefore, the enemies must be driven out of our lives to enjoy it. We can overcome the powers in our lives through the power of the Spirit.

The more terrain the enemy possesses, the less we can enjoy the blessings. Everything that is attractive to the flesh is dangerous and must be disposed of, otherwise we lose the blessings (verse 16). God gives a blessing in place of every evil we drive out of our lives. He fills every terrain that we conquer from the enemy and adds abundantly when, to Him, we humbly submit.

It is a matter of expelling the enemy so that we may inherit the land and be a pleasure to God. An absolute separation is needed with the world forces of such darkness. God wants us for His own possession: to be in fellowship with us. This is only possible if our thoughts correspond to His and we

have the same interest as He does. What is it like in the families? Are the parents seeking this for their children?

Deu 7:6-11 | Chosen out of Love

6 For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. 7 “The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, 8 but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. 9 Know therefore that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments; 10 but repays those who hate Him to their faces, to destroy them; He will not delay with him who hates Him, He will repay him to his face. 11 Therefore, you shall keep the commandment and the statutes and the judgments which I am commanding you today, to do them.

We are a holy people for an own possession: “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for [God’s] own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1Pet 2:9; Tit 2:14). God wants a people for Himself. The heritage is for us, but we are for God. God has “predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself according to the kind intention of His will” (Eph 1:5). The same pleasure He has in His Son, He has extended to us. Then we should be a holy people who do not desire compromise, but drive out everything that does not belong to Him.

Deuteronomy 7 serves to highlight how much the heart of God goes out to His people. God has not chosen the people because of their attractiveness. There is nothing in ourselves prompting God to make us sons and bestowing the inheritance to us. It is a love that finds its source and motivation fully in God Himself: “God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8). When we think of ourselves, isn’t it a great miracle that He chose us? He is therefore worthy of worship for all eternity.

Sons of God and being under the law do not belong together. Sons are not under the law. Every action of God with His sons is out of love and because He is longing to have fellowship with them. That excludes all sin. For everything we remove, we receive a greater blessing in return from Him.

He also attached an oath, a promise, to the election which originated exclusively in Himself. For Israel this oath is connected with the patriarchs and ultimately, of course, with the Son. In our case, that promise is directly connected to the Son.

God always remains faithful to what He has said. He also has all the means at his disposal to do what He has said. When his people are in bondage, he redeems them. Salvation is a proof of His faithfulness to His Word. His faithfulness continues “to a thousandth generation.” He is also faithful, unchanging, to His announcement of the judgment. God is love, and God is also light (1Jn 4:8,16; 1:5). He cannot deny His nature, His being. He always remains faithful to Himself (2Tim 2:13).

For Him, the people are not a mass, but individuals who together form a people. Each of them is personally responsible for the acts committed. He retaliates to each and every one personally, without delay. The verdict He makes is perfectly just and directly executable. Appeal is neither possible nor necessary. A process that will take years to complete is unthinkable in His exercise of law.

All that has been said in the previous section is a great encouragement to listen to the call of Moses – for us, the Lord Jesus – in verse 11. There has been talk of their election by the LORD, the love of the LORD, His oath, the redemption from Egypt, His covenant with them, His faithfulness and lovingkindness toward them, His retribution upon those who hate Him.

1. “Commandments” are precepts in which God orders or prohibits clearly defined acts.
2. “Statutes” are guidelines for action in order to serve Him.
3. “Judgments” define the people by the right that God has over them. This concerns their daily life, public conduct, and their mutual association as members of God’s people.

Deu 7:12-16 | Blessing as a Reward

12 "Then it shall come about, because you listen to these judgments and keep and do them, that the LORD your God will keep with you His covenant and His lovingkindness which He swore to your forefathers. 13 He will love you and bless you and multiply you; He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your new wine and your oil, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock, in the land which He swore to your forefathers to give you. 14 You shall be blessed above all peoples; there will be no male or female barren among you or among your cattle. 15 The LORD will remove from you all sickness; and He will not put on you any of the harmful diseases of Egypt which you have known, but He will lay them on all who hate you. 16 You shall consume all the peoples whom the LORD your God will deliver to you; your eye shall not pity them, nor shall you serve their gods, for that [would be] a snare to you.

By keeping God's commandments, the people can show that they love God. This in turn results in God's special love. It gives Him opportunity, so to speak, to declare a new reason for His love for them. He loves the people from Himself, but He also wants His people to feel His love based on what He finds of them in the practice of their lives (verse 13).

This also applies to us and to a more intimate degree. The Lord Jesus speaks about this in the upper room with His disciples. There He tells how keeping the commandments and love for Him belong together (Jn 14:21). The reward of this is to experience the love of the Father and the Lord Jesus and to gain an insight into the further glory of the Son. Our knowledge of the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus will increase.

The commandments mentioned by the Lord Jesus are not the Ten Commandments. They don't promise a revelation of the Son. The commandments of the Lord Jesus go far beyond that. It is the commandments that indicate the desire of the new life to do the will of God. These are not limiting or prescriptive commandments – "you shall" and "you shall not" –, but it is every obedience to whatever the Lord Jesus asks us to do. "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome" (1Jn 5:3). These commandments are not

burdensome because they fit perfectly with the new life that finds its joy in keeping these commandments.

This is followed by an even more far-reaching proof of love toward the Lord Jesus. We find this in the Lord's words: "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word" (Jn 14:23). The reward of this is that the Father and the Son will come and make Their abode with such a person. This is not just about doing something that the Lord Jesus asks us to do, but about doing everything that we know pleases Him without His having expressly said it to us. When a father tells one of his children to do something, and the child does what he is told to do, it's a good thing. When a father tells his wife to do something and one of the children hears it and does it for his father, it goes beyond.

The way of obedience is the way of blessing. Love that manifests itself in obedience results in abundant blessing. There is multiplication of the earthly blessing. There is abundance in the fruit of the land and in the posterity, exaltation above other peoples, no diseases and ailments of Egypt. For us, spiritual prosperity is linked to obedience (Acts 9:31).

Prosperity is presented in three areas. First there is the fruit of the womb. That's about new life, in the land. Paul says of the Galatians, about whom he is in great concern because of the legalism that has entered there: "My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you" (Gal 4:19-20). The fruit of the womb is seen spiritually where a person is presented complete in Christ, that is to say that someone knows his position in Christ and lives by it (Col 1:28).

The second proof is the fruit of the land, summarized in "your grain and your new wine and your oil". These are for us symbols of Christ as our food (grain) and our joy (wine) that we enjoy in the power of the Holy Spirit (oil).

The third proof of prosperity is the fruit of cattle, in which the increasing possibilities of sacrificing can be seen, which for us means an increasing worship.

For us, illness is not proof of disobedience. The illnesses and ailments of Egypt speak to us of the spiritual attitude we used to suffer from (Tit 3:3). This attitude will again be visible in us as we stray from God.

God rewards His people for their walk. However, they must beware of the trap of protecting the hostile peoples and serving their idols. We fall into this trap when we are no longer pleased with everything the Lord has given us in blessings. Then we become jealous of what the people of the world or worldly-minded Christians can all afford and want the same.

Deu 7:17-24 | Encouragement

17 "If you should say in your heart, 'These nations are greater than I; how can I dispossess them?' 18 you shall not be afraid of them; you shall well remember what the LORD your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt: 19 the great trials which your eyes saw and the signs and the wonders and the mighty hand and the outstretched arm by which the LORD your God brought you out. So shall the LORD your God do to all the peoples of whom you are afraid. 20 Moreover, the LORD your God will send the hornet against them, until those who are left and hide themselves from you perish. 21 You shall not dread them, for the LORD your God is in your midst, a great and awesome God. 22 The LORD your God will clear away these nations before you little by little; you will not be able to put an end to them quickly, for the wild beasts would grow too numerous for you. 23 But the LORD your God will deliver them before you, and will throw them into great confusion until they are destroyed. 24 He will deliver their kings into your hand so that you will make their name perish from under heaven; no man will be able to stand before you until you have destroyed them.

The trap of verse 16 is an ill-considered pity. In verse 17 another trap is waiting, that of fear. God knows how His people are and how they picture themselves. He knows that the enemy can become too great an obstacle in the eyes of the people, so that they will be demoralized. Therefore He reminds them and encourages them by pointing out what He has been for them and has done with the Pharaoh and all Egyptians. In the same way He will help them again.

Just as God reminded Israel of His victory over the Pharaoh and Egypt, He reminds us of the victory of the Lord Jesus on Calvary. There we see how He defeated Satan and his demons (Col 2:15). He reminds us of our own salvation. No power could withhold Him from us when He set about our delivery from the slavery of Satan, the world and sin. The danger does not

lie in the power of the enemy, but in the point of reference He has in our hearts.

A people who have “a great and awesome God” among them need not be afraid at all. On the contrary, the presence of that God in their midst will fill their enemies with fear. If we rely on His power, we can rest assured (2Cor 10:3-6).

The LORD also points out that the conquest of the land must not go too fast (Exo 23:29-30) in order not to upset the balance of the land. If they drive out the enemies, but don’t live there because they move on, the conquered land will be taken over by the wild animals. So they have to drive out and dwell and then drive out and dwell.

That is not a discouragement. Taking possession of the land can’t happen overnight; the same applies spiritually. Spiritual growth has several stages. There are children, young men and fathers in faith (1Jn 2:13-14). Children, young men and fathers all have the same eternal life. But little children, those who have only recently come to faith, and young men, those who are a little further along the way of faith, still have to grow up to maturity. You are not first a father in Christ. There is a gradual growth to take possession of the blessing God wants to entrust to us. In this way, we always get new surprises in the land.

Deu 7:25-26 | Abhor What Is Banned

25 The graven images of their gods you are to burn with fire; you shall not covet the silver or the gold that is on them, nor take it for yourselves, or you will be snared by it, for it is an abomination to the LORD your God. 26 You shall not bring an abomination into your house, and like it come under the ban; you shall utterly detest it and you shall utterly abhor it, for it is something banned.

Achan is a warning example of what Moses is telling the people here (Jos 7:1; cf. 1Sam 15:9). It is important to note that we are asked to “utterly abhor” certain things. There are things that arouse our lusts and that our flesh desires, things that we do not naturally abhor, but cherish. It is precisely these things that are said to be despised. First and foremost, abhorrence is a decision we make out of obedience to God’s Word and not a feeling.

Deuteronomy 8

Introduction

Deuteronomy 7 is about the dedication, the sanctification of the people to God. Deuteronomy 8 is another retrospective of the journey through the wilderness. Here, it is the ways of God with the people that is spoken of, but not about the unfaithfulness of the people. Such unfaithfulness is dealt with in Deuteronomy 9. The issue here is how God made them go through all kinds of difficult circumstances. The purpose of this is to get to know their own heart, their own inability to face the difficulties, and then to trust Him. The application for us we find in Romans 8 (Rom 8:28).

Deu 8:1-6 | Purpose of the Journey Through the Wilderness

1 "All the commandments that I am commanding you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD swore [to give] to your forefathers. 2 You shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. 3 He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD. 4 Your clothing did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years. 5 Thus you are to know in your heart that the LORD your God was disciplining you just as a man disciplines his son. 6 Therefore, you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him.

Everything that Moses speaks to the people has the goal that the people will live the true life. And they will not only live, but there will also be multiplication of said life. Life is not only about staying alive, but also about growing. The climate in which this life thrives is the climate of the Promised Land. The commandments contain, so to say, the raw materials

for optimal enjoyment and growth of life – for increasing the quality and quantity of life.

At this special point in the life of the people of God, between the wilderness and the land, Moses calls for remembrance, to look back on the forty years behind them. Forty is the number of trial. The everyday life shows me what is in my heart; but God also shows what is in His heart. The question is what lessons we learn from the past to enter the land.

God humbles us, for every experience in the wilderness leads to more self-knowledge. Before we get to know ourselves through the trials, He sends us, there is usually a lot of self-deception within us. We do not get to know ourselves when we are in the meeting on the first day of the week, but rather in day-to-day life, that is the wilderness life. God's Word tells me that there is nothing good in me and that I am capable of all evil. Yet I do not believe, for example, how far adrift I can go until I am bullied by another person and the evidence is revealed. Also it is only when I am as hungry as the others around me, I experience how base I can be.

God deliberately lets us suffer hunger, so that we may gain more appreciation for the manna. Through the suffering of want we learn to know the inexhaustible resources of God. This is a great encouragement to the faith. The Lord Jesus connects hunger with the manna and with Himself, "the true bread out of heaven" (Jn 6:32). He says that He Himself – He is the eternal life – is the blessing of the land. In the wilderness we learn to know the Lord Jesus as the food that gives us strength to live in the wilderness to the glory of God, as He has lived here to the glory of God.

It also teaches us that our lives depend on all the words that emanate from the mouth of God. The people have the manna because it falls from heaven by His word, by His command. Not living from 'bread alone' means that man cannot live from nourishment obtained in independence or apart from His Word.

The Lord Jesus has walked in all the ways of God. He always stretched out His hand to the Word, He lived from it. He knew that God had not given the stones for food and that the Father could give him food without therefore having to do a miracle (Mt 4:3-4).

The food for our body is not the most important thing, but the food for our soul. Living off the Word of God is not only for difficult situations, but for all circumstances – for every step we take.

God gives not only food, but also clothing. We put on clothes. Thus we put on the Lord Jesus (Gal 3:27; Eph 4:24; Rom 13:14; Col 3:10,12). This clothing does not wear out. Clothing represents our outer revelation – what people see of us. Is that Christ? Every revelation of me in word and deed that is to the glory of God means I show in my life the life of the Lord Jesus on earth. In Him I see the perfect illustration of those principles.

The discipline or punishment that strikes us comes from the hand of a loving God. It is a proof of His love for us (Heb 12:4-11). It speaks of His pleasure in those whom He has chosen as sons to Himself (Pro 3:11-12; cf. Pro 29:17). The true Son has been perfectly a pleasure to the Father: “And behold, a voice out of the heavens said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased” (Mt 3:17). He needs no punishment or chastisement. The chastisement is not an end in itself, but aims to keep everything out of life and the heart that is not to a pleasure. Discipline is proof that we are sons. God wants us to share in His holiness by chastisement.

There is no book in the Old Testament that shows us so much of what the New Testament calls eternal life than the book Deuteronomy. Eternal life is the life of God Himself. Deuteronomy 8 and 9 show us what is in our hearts and also paints the blessings of the land. Everything is “to do good for you in the end” (verse 16); that’s how God is.

Deuteronomy 9 shows a rebellious people. The fact that we are a rebellious people is a discovery we make in the wilderness. Every ‘wilderness experience’ shows me a little more that there is nothing in me that would allow God to give me His blessings. We are rebellious in ourselves from salvation onwards. This discovery must lead us to deep humiliation.

In John 3, the Lord Jesus speaks of heavenly things. He calls it: the eternal life. We see this in the picture of the copper serpent and the meaning He gives to it (Jn 3:12-15). This is not a picture of how a sinner converts, but shows a phase in the history of the people of God, that is the end phase of the journey through the wilderness. After forty years, the people have not changed anything and see how they can still fall.

A new birth is not enough to understand eternal life. Everything you are by nature must be brought to the cross. It is to this end that the experiences of the wilderness lead. There too, eternal life is known by looking up to the cross. We can say that the blessing of the land is summarized in: the eternal life. This blessing is enjoyed where brothers and sisters live together (Psa 133:1-3), that is to say, being at peace with one another to enjoy their fellowship with God and Christ and with one another.

Deu 8:7-10 | Blessings and Gratitude

7 For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing forth in valleys and hills; 8 a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey; 9 a land where you will eat food without scarcity, in which you will not lack anything; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper. 10 When you have eaten and are satisfied, you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you.

The waters of the land we find in the Gospel of John. There the Lord Jesus speaks of “rivers of living water”, that is the Holy Spirit (Jn 7:37-39). The waters – “the brooks, fountains and springs” – are needed to bring out the fruit of the land. We need the Holy Spirit to understand the blessings.

The Lord Jesus came to declare us the Father. Knowing the Father, that is eternal life (Jn 17:3). The Holy Spirit has come to be in us “a well of water springing up to eternal life” (Jn 4:14b). The Holy Spirit is in us to give us the enjoyment of eternal life. The “brooks of water” are the streams that flow out of our innermost being by the power of the Holy Spirit (Jn 7:38). We do not keep the blessings of the eternal life for ourselves, but pass them on to others. The “fountains and springs” are found in everything the Lord Jesus speaks to His disciples in the upper room and then to His Father (John 14-17). In those chapters he says a lot about the Holy Spirit.

These are all waters other than those of Deuteronomy 6 (Deu 6:11). There it is about self-dug wells with a collection of water that is from what others have drawn. Here too we can refresh ourselves. Now in Deuteronomy 8 it is directly the Holy Spirit. These waters are in valleys and hills, in the

depths and on the heights of faith. The fruit in the land is everything that we learn to distinguish from the blessings of the land by the Holy Spirit.

Moses in his speech repeatedly speaks to the Israelites in the plains of Moab about “the good land” they will inherit (Deu 1:35; 3:25; 4:21-22; 6:18). After exploring Canaan, Caleb even speaks of an “exceedingly good land” (Num 14:7). It is “a land flowing with milk and honey” (Deu 6:3). The good land forms a great contrast with the great and terrible wilderness through which they have gone.

Here we find a detailed description of the land in which the LORD will bring them. In this description, the word “land” is mentioned seven times, indicating that it is a land where God gives perfect blessing. The land is:

1. a good land (verses 7a,10b);
2. a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs (verse 7b);
3. a land of wheat and barley, of vines, fig trees and pomegranates (verse 8a);
4. a land of olive oil and honey (verse 8b);
5. a land where there will be no poverty and no want of anything (verse 9a);
6. a land whose stones are iron and where one can dig copper out of the hills (verse 9b);
7. a land worthy of praise for rich blessing – the abundance which God has given them (verse 10).

Life in the promised land is a richly blessed life. Thus Christ now gives life and abundance to His own. He says: “I came that they may have life, and have [it] abundantly” (Jn 10:10). For that they may thank Him also.

This blessing of the land gives a picture of the multitude of blessings that the Christian finds in the heavenly places. “The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly [places] in Christ” (Eph 1:3). Our blessings are related to the knowledge of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Our position as children, sons and heirs is based on this. This should also result in great gratitude and praise with us for the Source of our blessing, as the Apostle also

clearly states: "Blessed [be] the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph 1:3a)!

The land is well supplied with water. God takes care of that. The streams of water are a picture of the heavenly gift we have received as believers in the Holy Spirit of Whom we are "given to drink" (1Cor 12:13). It is the Spirit who opens up to us and makes fruitful the good land which we have received as Christians, the land of blessing in the heavenly realms. If we sow in this "field", we will "reap eternal life out of the Spirit" (Gal 6:8). Eternal life, the precious fruit of the good land promised to us, is the knowledge of and the life community with the Father and the Son: "This is eternal life, that they know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Who sent You" (Jn 17:3).

That there is "a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs" is a sign of the abundance and rich working of the Spirit. When we think of "brooks of water", we should not think of small, shallow waters, but of rivers (Psa 65:9-10). The Spirit is the "well of water springing up to eternal life" (Jn 4:14). The "springs" are deep waters, floods of water, originating from subterranean water reservoirs – see the blessing of Joseph (Gen 49:25; Deu 33:13). Here we can think of "the depths of God" (1Cor 2:10), the mysteries of the wisdom of God, as revealed by the Spirit and recorded in the scriptures of the New Testament.

The waters can be found everywhere in the land, on the mountains and in the valleys. They appear in the valleys, but also in the mountains (Eze 31:3-4). God "does not give the Spirit in moderation" (Jn 3:34). If we cannot perceive the working of the Spirit in our lives, we must first seek the cause of it in ourselves. We can grieve the Spirit (Eph 4:30) and even extinguish Him (1Thes 5:19).

The fountains in the valleys point more to the working of the Spirit here below, on earth. He dwells in us on earth and fills our hearts and our lives. The springs on the hills remind us of Christ in glory Who has clothed us with power from on high (Lk 24:49).

The fruit that the land produces is seven-fold. Egypt has only six 'fruits': "The fish ..., the cucumbers and the melons and the leeks and the onions and the garlic" (Num 11:5).

The first fruits of the land that are mentioned are “wheat and barley”. In Leviticus 23 is the sheaf of the first fruits of the barley harvest. The two wave breads at the Feast of Weeks are of the wheat harvest. The sheaf of the first fruits speaks of the Lord Jesus in the resurrection. The wave breads speak of the church – the heavenly fruit of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

Barley and wheat appear in the Gospel according to John. In John 6 we read of “five barley loaves” (Jn 6:9). That makes us think of the resurrection. Four times in that chapter the Lord Jesus speaks about the resurrection and that in connection with eternal life. He is the bread that descended from heaven. Eternal life is resurrection life that we can possess because the Lord Jesus passed through death and rose.

In John 12 we read about the wheat: “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (Jn 12:24). There we see that life is not only resurrection life, but that it is heavenly life. The Lord Jesus speaks there about life to “keep it to life eternal” (Jn 12:25), which is enjoyed when we are with Him and the Father. Death then has no more power over us.

The third fruit comes from the “vines”. The wine is a picture of joy. In John 15, the Lord Jesus speaks of true, complete joy. The result of the connection with the Lord Jesus and the keeping of the commandments is joy (Jn 15:10-11). The bond of love and fellowship comes through knowing each other and leads to keeping the commandments that are characteristic of eternal life. Complete joy is the joy of knowing the Father and the Son.

The fourth, fifth and sixth fruits come from “fig trees and pomegranates” and “olive oil”. These fruits we find in the letters of Paul. The fig tree speaks of the “peaceful fruit of righteousness” (Heb 12:11), the pomegranate of the “fruit of sanctification” (Rom 6:22) and the olive tree of “the fruit of the Spirit” (Gal 5:22-23a).

The *fig tree* is a picture of the people of God from whom God could expect fruits. However, the fig tree has not given fruit and is cursed (Mt 21:18-19). After their sin, Adam and Eve “sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings” (Gen 3:7b), as if they could exist for God. But a self-made garment, a garment of one’s own righteousness, is reprehensible.

The fruit of righteousness originates from chastisement. Chastisement is the part of sons in whom the Father has a singular pleasure. He uses chastisement to remove what is not to His pleasure in those sons. The Father wants us to become conformed to the image of His Son (Rom 8:29). Chastisement is not pleasant, but gives that fruit of righteousness (Heb 12:11).

Pomegranates have to do with the high priest, the sanctuary and a closed garden:

1. They are on the high priest's garment (Exo 39:24-26).
2. They are also on the capitals of the pillars in the temple (1Kgs 7:18,20,42).
3. They are mentioned when the bridegroom compares his bride to a garden with pomegranate trees that is locked and is only open for him (Song 4:12-13).

It is a fruit that speaks of sanctification.

Olive trees speak of an abundance of activity of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is the fruit of the land (Gal 5:22-23a). There is no law – which is given to man in the flesh on earth – against such things. “The one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life” (Gal 6:8).

The seventh and last fruit, the “honey”, is not a fruit of trees, but a fruit produced by the zeal of bees. It is the sweetness of the affection of believers among themselves. It proposes to enjoy together with all believers the blessing of eternal life. God wants to gather His people together to enjoy with them of the Lord Jesus. In his first letter John speaks first of fellowship with the apostles and then of fellowship with the Father and the Son (1Jn 1:3).

The mineral resources (verse 9) are the most difficult to discover. To deepen this, a lot of effort is required. Not all blessings are on the surface. “Iron” and “copper” speak of strength. Iron speaks of victory; copper speaks of a righteousness so great that it can endure the judgment of God (Num 16:37-38).

In the blessing which Moses pronounces on Asher, he says that his bars will be iron and bronze (Deu 33:25). When the wall around Jerusalem is rebuilt, the bars for the sheep gate are not mentioned; apparently, they

are forgotten to be placed (Neh 3:1; cf. Neh 3:3). If the bars are not on the doors, the enemy can enter and rob us of the blessings.

In Job 28 we see the bars on the doors. They are hidden and the eye of the raptor has not discovered them. Iron and copper can be found, but wisdom, where is she found? But God knows, “God understands its way” (Job 28:23). The answer comes some verses further: “And to man He said, ‘Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; And to depart from evil is understanding’” (Job 28:28). For the avoidance of evil, to forbid it entrance, iron and copper are suitable. True wisdom and real understanding are awe and wonder for the Lord, and to depart from evil – they are the basic elements to preserve the blessing of the land.

It is a land of abundance, where the believer has no shortage of anything. The effect of all the blessings enjoyed must be that we praise God for it. Praising the Lord for all His blessings also prevents us from forgetting Him. If all Christians knew and appreciated the blessing of the land, the land would be full of praise (Eph 3:21). Heaven shall be full of praise to God, the Giver of every blessing, and to the Lamb, by Whom it has become possible for us to receive the full blessing.

Deu 8:11-16 | Do Not Forget the LORD

11 “Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes which I am commanding you today; 12 otherwise, when you have eaten and are satisfied, and have built good houses and lived [in them], 13 and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and gold multiply, and all that you have multiplies, 14 then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 15 He led you through the great and terrible wilderness, [with its] fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water; He brought water for you out of the rock of flint. 16 In the wilderness He fed you manna which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do good for you in the end.

Again Moses strikes the chord of warning to remember the LORD. God knows our hearts. He knows that even possessing everything that speaks

of His goodness can make us proud of what He has given us as if we had acquired it ourselves. We can be proud of our piety. But blessings do not give strength. Only the awareness that everything is grace preserves us from pride.

We become proud when we forget that we are lost sinners by nature and that we have been freed from a hopeless position by God. We also become proud when we forget how He saved us as Christians from so many dangers on our way. We become proud when we forget how He took care of us and gave us everything we needed.

He leads our way in such a manner that we do not become proud, but humble, and will see that what matters most to Him is to bring to be what makes for our ultimate good. Only when we are humble, can we be in a condition to enjoy all the blessings He has given us.

Deu 8:17-18 | Only in the Power of the LORD

17 Otherwise, you may say in your heart, 'My power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth.' 18 But you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, that He may confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as [it is] this day.

It is important to realize that we did not receive the blessing in our own power, but that the power of God has made everything available to us. All the experience of our own powerlessness and the rescues of the Lord are also meant to preserve us from crediting to our own merit something we have received .

God has given us strength to know what our blessings are. It is the power with which He raised Christ from the dead and seated Him at His right hand (Eph 1:19-20). It is this power, united with His mercy, that has united us with Christ in heaven and has given us all the blessings (Eph 2:4-7).

All the acts of God in favor and goodness are based on His promises and counsels. We may look at it as already fulfilled. We are blessed now with all spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, based on His election of us before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:3-4).

Deu 8:19-20 | If the LORD Is Forgotten

19 It shall come about if you ever forget the LORD your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I testify against you today that you will surely perish. 20 Like the nations that the LORD makes to perish before you, so you shall perish; because you would not listen to the voice of the LORD your God.

The consequence of forgetting the LORD will be that they will worship other gods. That in turn will lead to their perdition. If they want an example of how they will perish, they only need to remember how Sihon and Og were defeated.

Deuteronomy 9

Deu 9:1-3 | The LORD Crosses over Before His People

1 “Hear, O Israel! You are crossing over the Jordan today to go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than you, great cities fortified to heaven, 2 a people great and tall, the sons of the Anakim, whom you know and of whom you have heard [it said], ‘Who can stand before the sons of Anak?’ 3 Know therefore today that it is the LORD your God who is crossing over before you as a consuming fire. He will destroy them and He will subdue them before you, so that you may drive them out and destroy them quickly, just as the LORD has spoken to you.

The word “listen” (or “hear”) that this chapter begins with is characteristic of Deuteronomy (Deu 4:1; 5:1; 6:3). It is to call attention to the words of God, to what He has to say.

To describe the power of the enemy, Moses uses the same words as the unbelieving spies (Deu 1:28), for that power is reality. We should not belittle the power of the enemy, but rely on a much greater power: the power of God.

Deu 9:4-6 | Not Because of *Their* Righteousness

4 “Do not say in your heart when the LORD your God has driven them out before you, ‘Because of my righteousness the LORD has brought me in to possess this land,’ but [it is] because of the wickedness of these nations [that] the LORD is dispossessing them before you. 5 It is not for your righteousness or for the uprightness of your heart that you are going to possess their land, but [it is] because of the wickedness of these nations [that] the LORD your God is driving them out before you, in order to confirm the oath which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. 6 “Know, then, [it is] not because of your righteousness [that] the LORD your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stubborn people.

In Deuteronomy 8 the warning is that they should not think that they will have conquered the land by their own power (Deu 8:17). Here is a warning

against the thought that they got the land because they are better than the people in the land. Thus, as Christians, we should not think that God has given us spiritual blessings because we are better people than the people around us. As if we are more faithful and by our own merit have received those blessings.

Proof of undeserved grace can be abused by the flesh by interpreting it as proof of its own righteousness and inherent uprightness. God shows that it is not a question of their righteousness, where the flesh can make boast, but that they have entered the land because of the iniquity of the people. Israel is the rod in God's hand to judge those nations. Later Nebuchadnezzar will be the rod in God's hand to remove Israel from the land (2Chr 36:20-21a).

Another aspect is the promise made to the fathers. That is what we see in the counsel of God. He has intended it and promised it to his fathers. The time of fulfilment of that promise has come.

God emphasizes the fact that there is no righteousness from us that underlies the blessing He has given us (cf. Eze 36:32). That we may now possess blessings is only because Christ defeated our enemies on the cross: "When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him" (Col 2:13-15).

Deu 9:7-8 | Israel Provoked the LORD to Wrath

7 Remember, do not forget how you provoked the LORD your God to wrath in the wilderness; from the day that you left the land of Egypt until you arrived at this place, you have been rebellious against the LORD. 8 Even at Horeb you provoked the LORD to wrath, and the LORD was so angry with you that He would have destroyed you.

The history of the golden calf should remind them that they were not chosen because of their righteousness. They must remember how the LORD

was for them during the journey (Deu 8:2). He didn't make it difficult for them, but He was busy with them to finally do them good. In Deuteronomy 8 the failure of the people is not remembered. At the same time, as is said here, they must remember that they provoked the LORD to wrath (verse 9). They have shown, in different forms time after time, what is in them, even after forty years of wilderness experiences.

Deu 9:9-11 | Receiving the Law by Moses

9 When I went up to the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant which the LORD had made with you, then I remained on the mountain forty days and nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water. 10 The LORD gave me the two tablets of stone written by the finger of God; and on them [were] all the words which the LORD had spoken with you at the mountain from the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly. 11 It came about at the end of forty days and nights that the LORD gave me the two tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant.

Moses reminds the people how he was on the mountain with the LORD and received from His hand the law of the covenant.

Deu 9:12-14 | The LORD Wanted to Destroy Israel

12 Then the LORD said to me, 'Arise, go down from here quickly, for your people whom you brought out of Egypt have acted corruptly. They have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them; they have made a molten image for themselves.' 13 The LORD spoke further to me, saying, 'I have seen this people, and indeed, it is a stubborn people. 14 Let Me alone, that I may destroy them and blot out their name from under heaven; and I will make of you a nation mightier and greater than they.'

While Moses is on the mountain with the LORD, the LORD sees how the people have made a golden calf (Exo 32:1-5). He talks about how they were "quick" to deviate. That is man.

He says to Moses that they are a stubborn people and asks Moses permission, as it were, to destroy them. His proposal then is to make Moses a great people. Here we see how the people deserved the judgment. This should make them all the more grateful that they are now about to enter

the land that God has given them as a gift. They deserve to be destroyed rather than blessed with a gift.

Deu 9:15-17 | The Two Tablets Smashed

15 "So I turned and came down from the mountain while the mountain was burning with fire, and the two tablets of the covenant were in my two hands. 16 And I saw that you had indeed sinned against the LORD your God. You had made for yourselves a molten calf; you had turned aside quickly from the way which the LORD had commanded you. 17 I took hold of the two tablets and threw them from my hands and smashed them before your eyes.

When Moses saw the sin of the people, he smashed the two tablets of the law in pieces before their eyes. The people witnessed it for themselves. The smashing of the tablets into pieces expresses the fact that the people have smashed their relationship with the LORD. Moses seals that by smashing the tablets to pieces.

Deu 9:18-20 | The Intercession of Moses

18 I fell down before the LORD, as at the first, forty days and nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water, because of all your sin which you had committed in doing what was evil in the sight of the LORD to provoke Him to anger. 19 For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure with which the LORD was wrathful against you in order to destroy you, but the LORD listened to me that time also. 20 The LORD was angry enough with Aaron to destroy him; so I also prayed for Aaron at the same time.

After the tablets of the law were broken, it was not the people who fell down before the LORD in confession of their sin, but Moses. He was impressed by God's righteous anger. This led him to intercede for the people of God and brother. The fact that Moses prayed for Aaron makes it clear that the priesthood is also a work of God's grace. Later Aaron himself became an intercessor (Psa 99:6,8; cf. Lk 22:32). The LORD heard Moses, as God hears the Lord Jesus.

Moses and Samuel are valued by the LORD as intercessors for the people (1Sam 7:5,8-9; Jer 15:1). Are we, too, intercessors for God's people?

Deu 9:21 | The Calf Grinded Until Dust

21 I took your sinful [thing], the calf which you had made, and burned it with fire and crushed it, grinding it very small until it was as fine as dust; and I threw its dust into the brook that came down from the mountain.

Intercession does not make the exercise of judgment over sin superfluous. Moses has grinded the calf, which he calls “your sin”, until it was as fine as dust, and made it unfit for any reuse. It is infinite grace, which accepts the destruction and devastation of the idol instead of the destruction and devastation of the idolaters.

Similarly, any object that is connected with sin in our lives must be thoroughly disposed of from our lives. This is only possible after prayer. When we become aware of this, it is the result of the intercession of the Lord Jesus, the true Moses.

Deu 9:22-24 | Even More Rebelliousness

22 “Again at Taberah and at Massah and at Kibroth-hattaavah you provoked the LORD to wrath. 23 When the LORD sent you from Kadesh-barnea, saying, ‘Go up and possess the land which I have given you,’ then you rebelled against the command of the LORD your God; you neither believed Him nor listened to His voice. 24 You have been rebellious against the LORD from the day I knew you.

The sin of the golden calf has not been an isolated incident. The rebelliousness of Israel is a characteristic that has repeatedly manifested itself. For as long as Moses had known them, so they had been. The Lord Jesus also knows us as an ever-wandering people who are led by their own willfulness and are not willing to be led by Him.

1. At Taberah, the people were influenced by the rabble that went with Israel out of Egypt (Num 11:1-10). They became dissatisfied and grumbled against God.
2. At Massah they questioned the LORD’s presence in their midst (Exo 17:7). As if He had never cared about them before, whereas the evidence is so abundantly present in their redemption from Egypt.

3. At Kibroth-hattaavah they were carried away by their desire for meat (Num 11:31-34; Psa 78:29).
4. Kadesh-barnea speaks of unbelief. From there the spies were sent into the land because the people were not content with the promise of the LORD (Num 32:8-13).

Deu 9:25-29 | Even More Intercession of Moses

25 "So I fell down before the LORD the forty days and nights, which I did because the LORD had said He would destroy you. 26 I prayed to the LORD and said, 'O LORD GOD, do not destroy Your people, even Your inheritance, whom You have redeemed through Your greatness, whom You have brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand. 27 Remember Your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; do not look at the stubbornness of this people or at their wickedness or their sin. 28 Otherwise the land from which You brought us may say, "Because the LORD was not able to bring them into the land which He had promised them and because He hated them He has brought them out to slay them in the wilderness." 29 Yet they are Your people, even Your inheritance, whom You have brought out by Your great power and Your outstretched arm.'

These verses connect to verses 11-14 of this chapter. In both parts it is about intercession in the first forty days on Mount Horeb. In verse 18 it is the second forty days on Mount Horeb, after Moses broke the first stone tablets because of the golden calf.

In verse 27 we read the third "remember" (Deu 8:2; 9:7), but Moses doesn't say this here to the people, but to *God*. The true Moses says to God that He should not look at the stubbornness and wickedness of the people, but asks Him to think of His own Being. Here we see the intervening of the Lord Jesus and His performance as Advocate with the Father.

Before the times of the ages, the Father made the promise of eternal life (Tit 1:2a). The Son reminds us of this promise of eternal life before the times of the ages (Jn 17:1-2). For two thousand years now, He has said to the Father: "Remember." God has heard the Lord Jesus on behalf of us many times already (verse 19). On that basis, God's desire for a testimony on earth from a people longing for the blessing of the land is still being met.

Deuteronomy 10

Introduction

The section of verses 1-9 of this chapter is an intermediate line, because in verse 10 we see Moses again as intercessor, which connects directly to what precedes in Deuteronomy 9.

First a retrospective: In Deuteronomy 5 we have the covenant between God and His people and the mediator. In Deuteronomy 6 we hear the question for the people's answer to His love (Deu 6:4-5). In Deuteronomy 7 it is added that the answer of love must be accompanied by separation from evil, which means: the extermination of the enemy. In Deuteronomy 8 we learn that evil is present in the first place in their own hearts. God is disciplining us so that we may learn that.

Deuteronomy 9 shows what is present in the heart of the people. It is a wicked and rebellious people. According to the first revelation of God in the two tablets, the people can never enter the land. They have trampled on the covenant. Moses rightly broke them. If he had brought them to the camp, the whole people would have died. The tablets of the law can no longer form the basis on which they can enter the land. If the curse of the law had hit the people, no one could ever enter the land.

Moses intervened. He appealed to the promises of God to the fathers and to what the nations would say. It is an appeal to God's glory and God's truth. Then God came back on His decision. In the second forty days, Moses served as the true mediator and God granted Moses all he asked.

Deu 10:1-5 | The New Stone Tablets

1 "At that time the LORD said to me, 'Cut out for yourself two tablets of stone like the former ones, and come up to Me on the mountain, and make an ark of wood for yourself. 2 I will write on the tablets the words that were on the former tablets which you shattered, and you shall put them in the ark.' 3 So I made an ark of acacia wood and cut out two tablets of stone like the former ones, and went up on the mountain with the two tablets in my hand. 4 He

wrote on the tablets, like the former writing, the Ten Commandments which the LORD had spoken to you on the mountain from the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly; and the LORD gave them to me. 5 Then I turned and came down from the mountain and put the tablets in the ark which I had made; and there they are, as the LORD commanded me."

The first stone tablets were not cut out by Moses. They came from God, He has written His words on them, and He has given them to Moses. But they did not enter the camp, for Moses shattered them at the bottom of the mountain before he entered the camp (Exo 32:19). If they had come in the camp, the people would have been judged by it. The first stone tablets point to the Lord Jesus. He is the perfect display on earth of all that is God. Just as the first tablets at the foot of the mountain were broken, so Christ was put to death at His coming on earth.

There had to be new stone tablets, this time cut out by Moses. There is nothing else written on this second edition than what was written on the first one. No review is needed. There is also nothing else written on it than what He has spoken. God's spoken and written Word are equal to one another.

What's new, is that a place of storage is designated for the new stone tablets. For Israel, the second pair of tablets and the storage place are a reference to the new covenant, in which the law is written in their hearts (Jer 31:33; Eze 36:26). Israel will fulfil the law in the millennial realm of peace, when the new covenant will be fulfilled.

The second stone tablets also have an application for us, who are connected with Christ in glory, but still live on earth. We are a letter of Christ (2Cor 3:2-3). What is written on Him is written on us. With Him according to the flesh we can have no connection. God wants not only a people who stand on the basis of the death and resurrection of Christ, but also a people in which He can read what is in His Son.

We are a heavenly people. "Our citizenship is in heaven" and not on earth (Phil 3:20; Eph 2:6; Col 3:3). Our norm is Christ, not the law. We are brought to the obedience of Jesus Christ (1Pet 1:2), which means that the obedience that characterizes Him, also characterizes the believer. The law is not for

heavenly people. When we are obedient as Christ, “the requirement of the Law” will be fulfilled in us (Rom 8:4).

Moses had to cut them out. In it he is a type of the Lord Jesus. We are cut out of the rock, like Peter, whose name means ‘a piece of the rock’, is cut out of ‘Petra,’ which means ‘rock’ (Mt 16:18). The Lord Jesus is the Rock (1Cor 10:4). We are “living stones” (1Pet 2:5). A piece of stone, roughly cut out, is not suitable for writing on it. It must be polished to write on.

Thus is the true Moses busy with us, so that God can write on us what is written on the Lord Jesus. That is according to God’s pleasure, because He has predestined us to be sons for Himself. He wants us to be sons of pleasure in whom He can recognize the true Son (Rom 8:29). God is not satisfied that this will only be in heaven. He disciplines us, that all that is not according to His pleasure may already be cut away.

The first stone tablets are perfectly written; so they came forth from God’s hand. The Lord Jesus did not need any discipline. We must become conformed to the image of God’s Son. In Proverbs 8 we read about the delight of God (Pro 8:30). In the next verse we read about the delight of the Lord Jesus in men (Pro 8:31). The Lord Jesus is the Executor. His delight is with the children of men. He calls Himself ‘master workman’, a word that can also mean ‘artist’, but also can mean ‘favorite child’ or ‘sweetheart’. That One is the Artist, Designer and Master Builder of both the first and second creation (Jn 1:3; Rom 11:36a).

He had to do a lot for that. The only place where we can be found is in the ark: a picture of the Lord Jesus, carried by the priests. Here the emphasis is on the fact that the ark is made of wood, which points to the Humanity of the Lord Jesus. Only by becoming Man has He been able to connect us with Himself. That is the side of grace, after the side of our responsibility to behave like sons has been highlighted.

God sees us in Christ, made pleasant in the Beloved. In Him we are kept safe through the wilderness. We see herein God’s care in the midst of all experiences. The observation that the tablets are still there and that “as the LORD commanded me” (verse 5b), represents God’s counsel, untouchable to any power of the enemy. His counsel is as unshakeable as He Himself.

The tablets are still in the ark at the end of the journey. God carries out His plan on the basis of faithfulness to His own Word.

Deu 10:6-7 | Aaron Dies, Eleazar Becomes Priest

6 (Now the sons of Israel set out from Beeroth Bene-jaakan to Moserah. There Aaron died and there he was buried and Eleazar his son ministered as priest in his place. 7 From there they set out to Gudgodah, and from Gudgodah to Jotbathah, a land of brooks of water.

After the new stone tablets, we also meet a new priest here. At the inauguration of the new tablets it would still take another thirty-eight years before Aaron was replaced by Eleazar, but God mentions the replacement here because Aaron was the high priest for the wilderness journey. Eleazar is the high priest of the entry into the land. Moses leaps ahead here to the end of the journey. In verse 8 he again goes back to the sin of the people. Here there is no chronological order, but the events are ordered to emphasize their interrelated connection. Unbelief is blind to this fact.

God wants to recognize in us the picture of His Son. This is possible because the Son has become our life. By this we can show the Son, for what is true in Him is also true in us (1Jn 2:8). There is no other way. He is the new life in us and it is impossible that it will reveal itself in us in any other way apart from Him. Eternal life is in us, the life of the Father's house, that is the blessing of the land. Eleazar is the high priest who has to do with the conquests of the land. He is a picture of the Lord Jesus in the resurrection. Joshua and Eleazar bring the people into the land.

There is something new about it: a land of water brooks, "the springs of the sons of Jaakan", which is the meaning of "Beeroth Bene-jaakan". "Gudgodah" means "spring with lots of water". At the end of the wilderness journey we have gained experiences of who we are ourselves. That determines the value and meaning of the priesthood. There is also the abundant refreshment of the Word of God, of which water is often a picture. We learn to live in the wilderness by all the word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. The Word of God and the priesthood of the Lord Jesus are the great aids on our journey through the wilderness (Heb 4:11-16).

The experience of the bronze serpent is due to the wickedness of their flesh. That is why they have become humbled. The people there, in picture, have learned that self-judgment is necessary to enjoy the blessings of the land. It is about nothing but a total judgment of the old man. This can only be learned at the cross. There the door is opened for the blessing of the land, the eternal life. Then the water streams start flowing. One of the characteristics of the land is that there is an abundance of water. In the wilderness we can already get a taste of the spiritual realities we can enjoy. This is done by the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus speaks about this in the Gospel to John (Jn 4:13-14; 7:37-39).

Deu 10:8-9 | The Tribe of Levi Set Apart

8 At that time the LORD set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark of the covenant of the LORD, to stand before the LORD to serve Him and to bless in His name until this day. 9 Therefore, Levi does not have a portion or inheritance with his brothers; the LORD is his inheritance, just as the LORD your God spoke to him.)

The fourth element is the setting apart of the tribe of Levi. Even greater than the inheritance we have received, greater than the gift of eternal life is the Giver. The Lord Jesus is the Gift of God (2Cor 9:15). To understand this, we must spiritually belong to the tribe of Levi, of whom it is said that the LORD is his inheritance (Jos 13:33).

This tribe did not participate in the sin of the golden calf. They have not spared their brethren in exercising the judgment of that sin, filled as they have been with the holiness of the LORD (Exo 32:25-29). Three tasks of the Levites are mentioned: to carry the ark, to serve the LORD, and to bless in His Name. Knowing our blessings is one thing, but bearing those blessings on our hands through the wilderness is another.

The ark carries us, that is a mighty privilege; but we also carry the ark to protect it against the attacks of the enemy. If God brings enemies on our way, can we then defend the full truth – the ark represents the truth about the Lord Jesus and His work – because we know that truth with our heart? Every believer must be able to say “it is written” and is called above all to be concerned with Christian truth.

The second task is to stand before the LORD to serve Him. We must not only know the truth, but serve the Lord with it. The goal is to worship Him for the truths He has revealed. We will then enter the sanctuary with knowledge and insight and honor God in priestly worship for what He has given us in blessings. We see these blessings in the sanctuary represented in the candlestick, the table of showbread and the altar of incense.

The third task is to bless in His Name. When we have been into the sanctuary, we can proceed out to bless. It is a blessing for our environment, which concerns both our brothers and sisters and the world, when we show the virtues of God. Today it is the privilege of every Christian in a spiritual sense to belong to the tribe of Levi. The privilege is only enjoyed if we put it into practice.

Deu 10:10-11 | The LORD Listened to Moses' Intercession

10 "I, moreover, stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights like the first time, and the LORD listened to me that time also; the LORD was not willing to destroy you. 11 Then the LORD said to me, 'Arise, proceed on your journey ahead of the people, that they may go in and possess the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.'

The first occasion of intercession on the mountain is disclosed in Deuteronomy 9 (Deu 9:9). Of the second occasion, we also read in Deuteronomy 9 (Deu 9:18,25). On each occasion, Moses' intercession has been heard. He has been commanded to proceed ahead of the people to bring them into the land. He who is intercessor and mediator for the people, can also be the guide of those people. Moses is faithful to God and faithful to the people. In his person and service, he points to Christ, the perfect Intercessor and Mediator with God, Who also governs everything on earth for God's glory.

Deu 10:12-13 | To Love and Serve the LORD

12 "Now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, 13 [and] to keep the LORD'S commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good?

After responding with grace to the mediator's intercession, follows "now" the fitting answer to that great grace given. It is a summary of what is put forward in more detail in the following verses. The God-fearing believer asks: "What shall I render to the LORD for all His benefits toward me?" (Psa 116:12). If it has become clear to us from the foregoing that God has judged old man and what new things He has given instead of that, what can He expect from us? Is it not that we shall fear Him, walk in His ways, love and serve Him?

It goes further here than in Deuteronomy 6 where the exhortation to love Him also is present (Deu 6:5). Following on from Deuteronomy 6 we have heard and learned more about ourselves and God. This increases our desire to live to His honor. "His commandments are not burdensome" (1Jn 5:3), for we have the new nature, the new life, that is the Lord Jesus. Just as it has been a joy for Him to fulfil the Father's commandments on earth (Jn 4:34; 8:29; 15:10), so it is for the new life that every child of God possesses. The Holy Spirit is the power of the new life, He works in the new life so that it manifests itself. If we live by the Spirit, we will prosper.

Here and in the verses that directly follow, everything resonates with love. Verse 12 speaks of our love for God and verse 15 of God's love for us. In verses 18-19 the love of the stranger is also addressed.

Deu 10:14-22 | What the LORD Expects from His People

14 Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it. 15 Yet on your fathers did the LORD set His affection to love them, and He chose their descendants after them, [even] you above all peoples, as [it is] this day. 16 So circumcise your heart, and stiffen your neck no longer. 17 For the LORD your God is the God of gods and the Lord of Lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality nor take a bribe. 18 He executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and shows His love for the alien by giving him food and clothing. 19 So show your love for the alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt. 20 You shall fear the LORD your God; you shall serve Him and cling to Him, and you shall swear by His name. 21 He is your praise and He is your God, who has done these great and awesome things for you which your eyes have seen. 22 Your fathers went down

to Egypt seventy persons [in all], and now the LORD your God has made you as numerous as the stars of heaven.

The LORD is presented in His supremacy and exaltation. He is above creation; He is not a part of it. In the universe, He connected Himself only with the offspring of Abraham. The first reason for Israel to love God is therefore that God first loved them and chose them in this special relationship with Him. The apostle John writes about this: "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son [to be] the propitiation for our sins" and: "We love, because He first loved us" (1Jn 4:10,19; Rom 5:8).

The reaction of the people should be to circumcise their heart. An uncircumcised heart means a heart that is self-willing and harbors rebellion against God (Lev 26:41; Eze 44:7,9). In the Old Testament, too, faith understands that an exclusively outward circumcision cannot have any value to God. The external separation from the nations around them, of which the physical circumcision is the sign, must be accompanied by the circumcision of the heart (Deu 30:6; Jer 4:4; 9:25-26). For the believers of the New Testament it is not an external circumcision, but an internal circumcision, that of the heart (Rom 2:28-29).

Without circumcision of the heart, no true fear – which means respect for, or true love of God is possible. To confirm this exhortation, Moses points to the Being and acting of God. To penetratingly represent the infinite greatness and power of God, Moses describes Him as "God of gods and the Lord of Lords". As the God of the gods, He transcends all power and might. As the Lord of Lords, He has unlimited authority over all government and authority in heaven and on earth. He is above all that affects people and their decisions. He gives justice to those who are without protection, and He is full of love for those who are in distress.

The proof that we possess the Divine nature is provided by keeping God's commandments and showing love. These two characteristics are mentioned in the first letter of John again and again. God loves the stranger, and that also applies to us now. All the love we produce according to the will of God is modelled on the love of God's own heart.

God's love has been poured out within our hearts. That love we are therefore able to prove to others. Those who have been in trouble themselves, and have found mercy with God, must have a deep sympathy with those who are also in trouble. They must also be willing to prove their love. God does not see the person of man. He acts out of His own perfect love toward everyone who needs His help, while people tend toward exploitation of the helpless.

Fear or awe, respect for God, is expressed in verse 20 in three ways:

1. to serve Him which is shown through *deed*;
2. clinging to Him, as purposed in the *heart* (Deu 4:4);
3. swearing by His name, expressed by the *mouth* (Deu 6:13).

The God to whom they are so intimately connected is their praise. He is worthy of praise. The reason for Israel to do that is given in verse 22, where Moses points out that God has fulfilled His promise (Gen 15:5,13-21).

That God is our praise; He is the object and the content of our priestly service. To this end we are also called: "Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name" (Heb 13:15). He gives every reason to do so. From our side there is nothing impressive, everything is very meagre. What we have become comes all from God. The reflection of God's glory will be seen in numerous "stars" (Dan 12:3; 2Thes 1:10; Mt 13:43). This will be reason to praise Him eternally.

Deuteronomy 11

Introduction

Deuteronomy 11 is the last chapter of the first part of the book. This can be seen in the first verse of Deuteronomy 12 (Deu 12:1). In Deuteronomy 1-11 we have a retrospect on the wilderness journey and a look ahead to the land that Israel will take possession of. First they are taught what they are themselves, what is in their hearts, and what the flesh, that is sinful nature, is. Then the gaze is turned to the land they will inherit to warm the hearts of the people to take possession of it. Both aspects are discussed again in Deuteronomy 11.

Deuteronomy 11 can be divided into three sections:

1. Verses 1-9 look back on what lies behind them, so that they may learn lessons from it.
2. Verses 10-21 show what lies before them, a description of the land, to awaken the people to long to enter the land.
3. Verses 22-32 suggest that the people are responsible for making the right choice now: the blessing or the curse.

The love of God occurs in every section (verses 1,13,22). God has every reason to ask us for the love response.

Deu 11:1-7 | The Deeds of the LORD for the People

1 "You shall therefore love the LORD your God, and always keep His charge, His statutes, His ordinances, and His commandments. 2 Know this day that I [am] not [speaking] with your sons who have not known and who have not seen the discipline of the LORD your God—His greatness, His mighty hand and His outstretched arm, 3 and His signs and His works which He did in the midst of Egypt to Pharaoh the king of Egypt and to all his land; 4 and what He did to Egypt's army, to its horses and its chariots, when He made the water of the Red Sea to engulf them while they were pursuing you, and the LORD completely destroyed them; 5 and what He did to you in the wilderness until

you came to this place; 6 and what He did to Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben, when the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them, their households, their tents, and every living thing that followed them, among all Israel— 7 but your own eyes have seen all the great work of the LORD which He did.

Moses addresses the word to those who have seen with their own eyes (verse 7) what the LORD has done in Egypt (verse 3) and in the wilderness (verse 5). They do not belong to the family condemned to die in the wilderness because of their disobedience to Kadesh-barnea (Deu 1:35-36). They are people who were, at the time, between zero and twenty years of age (Num 14:29-30) and have remained alive (Num 14:31). Although young at the time, they have seen the great redemptive acts of God as a result of which they are now about to enter the promised land.

Moses speaks to men aged between forty and sixty, the most responsible, a generation rich in experience. Their children don't have that experience. He repeats his exhortation to love the LORD and to keep his commandments. Love and obedience always belong together.

The constant repetition of thoughts, words and sentences is characteristic of the message of this book. The repetition shows the intensity of the LORD's desire to mold His people so that they are ready to conquer Canaan and settle there. Through this repetition Moses tries to imprint the necessity of a full adherence to the LORD in the minds of the people. This chapter is a remarkable illustration of this hammering repeating style. We find the exhortations to love, to remember, to perceive, to worship and serve, to obey, to learn, and to walk in the ways of the LORD.

In the retrospective of the past, Moses points to three special lessons:

1. The redemption from Egypt (verses 3-4).
2. The journey through the wilderness (verse 5).
3. The rebellion of Dathan and Abiram (verses 6-7).

The LORD has destroyed Egypt "completely", literally "till this day". Although the extermination of the Egyptians took place forty years ago, its effect is noticeable on the day when Moses speaks his words to the people.

A spiritual application is that what God did to the world when His Son died on the cross (Gal 6:14) must have its effect on every day of our lives.

The lesson of Egypt is that the wisdom of the world has come to an end. The letter to the Colossians shows the danger of it. Everything of God is in Christ, of Whom it is said to us: "And in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority" (Col 2:10). Anyone who believes that the wisdom of the world can contribute something to taking possession of the land has not learned the lesson of what God has done with Egypt.

The second lesson is the journey through the wilderness, where I meet the second enemy: my own flesh. Do I know and recognize that enemy? Do I give up the flesh to the place where rightfully it belongs, death. Do I "consider" myself "to be dead to sin" (Rom 6:11a)? To take possession of the land, an enemy must always be expelled.

The third enemy, Dathan and Abiram, comprise the third lesson. This enemy is among the people of God, can be considered as the Christian testimony. Dathan and Abiram have attempted to appropriate the authority of Moses and rebelled against it. [Korah is not mentioned, possibly because his sons have been spared (Num 26:9-11).] This rebellion has been seen in the posturing of the roman catholic church since the Middle Ages. The question we can attach to it is: With us, does Christ have all authority?

Deu 11:8-12 | Difference Between Egypt and Canaan

8 "You shall therefore keep every commandment which I am commanding you today, so that you may be strong and go in and possess the land into which you are about to cross to possess it; 9 so that you may prolong [your] days on the land which the LORD swore to your fathers to give to them and to their descendants, a land flowing with milk and honey. 10 For the land, into which you are entering to possess it, is not like the land of Egypt from which you came, where you used to sow your seed and water it with your foot like a vegetable garden. 11 But the land into which you are about to cross to possess it, a land of hills and valleys, drinks water from the rain of heaven, 12 a land for which the LORD your God cares; the eyes of the LORD your God are always on it, from the beginning even to the end of the year.

Keeping the Word of God gives spiritual strength (1Jn 2:14b). If we take to heart the lessons of verses 1-7, the Word of God is given the opportunity to give us strength to take possession of the land: "Strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light" (Col 1:11-12).

The inheritance speaks of the realm of peace that encompasses both earth and heaven and over which, according to God's counsel, we will reign together with the Lord Jesus. Of this Paul says: "Which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, [that is,] the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will" (Eph 1:9b-11).

There is also an inheritance in the light that is already our part and can be enjoyed by us. That is the kingdom of the Son of the love of the Father, Who "rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son" (Col 1:13). That is where we are already. The fruits of the land of Canaan are a picture of the blessings of that inheritance.

In addition to the characteristic "flowing with milk and honey", a special land feature is added, namely that the land will drink water "from the rain of heaven" (verse 11). The rain of heaven makes the fruit grow well in the land (verses 14,17). This characteristic is the big difference with the way Egypt is supplied with water. Egypt has practically no rain. Fertility is obtained in Egypt by an annual overflowing of the river Nile and harnessing manmade irrigation systems. This means that fertility in Egypt mainly results of men's efforts and is not exclusively caused by the rain of heaven as in Israel.

Egypt says that the Nile is his (Eze 29:3). He does not think about its origin. Egypt represents the man of the world who believes that he derives all his blessing from natural sources. The natural man hogs this blessing without thinking of God. He believes he is entitled to it and sees it as the result of his own efforts.

The blessing of the promised land just comes from the heaven of God. The land is under His constant care. His eyes are always on it, all year round (Psa 65:9-13). Wouldn't these eyes notice all the needs of His children? And are not His love and His power great enough to meet these needs?

The rain has to do with doctrine, teaching. The teaching of Moses is also a rain (Deu 32:2). It represents the blessing we receive through the preaching that emanates from the glorious Head in heaven, and through His gifts comes to us to perfect us as saints.

The rain is here in connection with the land. This blessing is also present but obvious. It requires the coming down of the heaven, without natural resources. In all ecclesiastical systems where 'the water' is conducted through human regulations and statutes, very little can be heard about the heavenly blessings. That is not for nothing. Providing or obtaining blessing from the Lord does not involve theological instruction and diplomas, but obedience of the heart.

Deu 11:13-15 | Promise of Blessing

13 "It shall come about, if you listen obediently to my commandments which I am commanding you today, to love the LORD your God and to serve Him with all your heart and all your soul, 14 that He will give the rain for your land in its season, the early and late rain, that you may gather in your grain and your new wine and your oil. 15 He will give grass in your fields for your cattle, and you will eat and be satisfied.

The rain does not come on demand, but on God's time, when He gives it. He connects the rain to obedience. The early rain is the time for us to see for the first time something that goes beyond the forgiveness of sins. We live in the time of late rain, since the Lord in His goodness at the beginning of the nineteenth century again gave sight to the blessings of the land. Have we drunk and tasted of it?

The rain of the heaven is needed to collect "your grain and your new wine and your oil". In Psalm 104 we see that grain is meant for food, wine is linked to joy, and oil gives a glistening face (Psa 104:14-15).

For us this means that we may constantly feed on the food of the land, which for us is the Lord Jesus as the bread from heaven (Jn 6:47-58). Feed-

ing on Him as eternal life means that we realize inwardly that He is our life and that thereby we have fellowship with the Father and the Son. The Father and the Son are of eternity in that land. With this we may strengthen ourselves, we may share in a practical way with the Father of the things His heart is full of.

The new wine represents the complete joy we may know consequential to fellowship with the Father and the Son. That too is a blessing of the eternal life (1Jn 1:1-4). The oil represents yet another aspect of eternal life. Something of it we see in Psalm 133:

"A Song of Ascents, of David.

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is

For brothers to dwell together in unity!

It is like the precious oil upon the head,

Coming down upon the beard,

[Even] Aaron's beard,

Coming down upon the edge of his robes.

It is like the dew of Hermon

Coming down upon the mountains of Zion;

For there the LORD commanded the blessing—life forever" (Psa 103:1-3)

In this psalm eternal life is enjoyed by brothers and sisters who dwell together. It is a place where the LORD commands the blessing. That place is the heavenly places. Here, it is enjoyed in a place where brothers dwell together. In the beginning of 1 John 1 there is not only fellowship with the Father and the Son, but also with our brothers and sisters (1Jn 1:3). Things that could separate us on earth has disappeared there.

What unites us gives us an intense love for each other. That is because of the possession of the same eternal life. It is precisely where we are together that we can most intensely experience that fellowship with the Father and the Son. Our unity is incorporated into the closed unity of the Father and the Son. As a result of our divisions we often do not experience this, but in principle it is there and can therefore also be enjoyed. There the oil comes down.

Deu 11:16-17 | Warning of Idolatry

16 Beware that your hearts are not deceived, and that you do not turn away and serve other gods and worship them. 17 Or the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you, and He will shut up the heavens so that there will be no rain and the ground will not yield its fruit; and you will perish quickly from the good land which the LORD is giving you.

The blessing comes when the people are obedient. But if the people turn away from the LORD to serve other gods, then the anger of the LORD will be kindled against them. If they think that other gods will give them the blessing, the LORD will withhold from them the blessing.

Deu 11:18-21 | Impressing and Making Visible

18 “You shall therefore impress these words of mine on your heart and on your soul; and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. 19 You shall teach them to your sons, talking of them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road and when you lie down and when you rise up. 20 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, 21 so that your days and the days of your sons may be multiplied on the land which the LORD swore to your fathers to give them, as long as the heavens [remain] above the earth.

The warning words of verses 16-17 should be an extra incentive for God’s people to imprint God’s words on themselves and their children. They must be visible in the houses in which they live, in the families they form, and they must be taught by the children they have.

It takes a lot of energy to keep all this alive. It should permeate the whole of life. We can only talk about it fruitfully with our children when we show it ourselves. Eternal life is not only a delight in the meetings, but can be there every day of our lives in all circumstances. Then we already experience the days of heaven on earth. “As long as the heavens [remain] above the earth” not only means the quality of life, but also its duration. This is a life lived for as long as the heavens remain above the earth, that is, always, as long as the earth exists.

Deu 11:22-25 | Victory Through Obedience

22 For if you are careful to keep all this commandment which I am commanding you to do, to love the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and hold fast to Him, 23 then the LORD will drive out all these nations from before you, and you will dispossess nations greater and mightier than you. 24 Every place on which the sole of your foot treads shall be yours; your border will be from the wilderness to Lebanon, [and] from the river, the river Euphrates, as far as the western sea. 25 No man will be able to stand before you; the LORD your God will lay the dread of you and the fear of you on all the land on which you set foot, as He has spoken to you.

Obedience will give victory, while the previous blessings will be lost through disobedience. But first comes the encouragement resulting from obedience. We must take possession of what is still in the hands of enemies, who must be driven out. What areas in our hearts and lives still need to be conquered? Which enemies still reign there? We must break down strongholds “taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ” (2Cor 10:3-5).

Deu 11:26-28 | The Choice Between Blessing and Curse

26 “See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: 27 the blessing, if you listen to the commandments of the LORD your God, which I am commanding you today; 28 and the curse, if you do not listen to the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside from the way which I am commanding you today, by following other gods which you have not known.

This is not a repetition, but a new aspect in the speech of Moses. After all he has said, the people are now faced with a choice. It is a conclusion.

Deu 11:29-32 | Mount of the Blessing and Mount of the Curse

29 “It shall come about, when the LORD your God brings you into the land where you are entering to possess it, that you shall place the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal. 30 Are they not across the Jordan, west of the way toward the sunset, in the land of the Canaanites who live in the Arabah, opposite Gilgal, beside the oaks of Moreh? 31 For you are about to cross the Jordan to go in to possess the land which the LORD your God is giving

you, and you shall possess it and live in it, 32 and you shall be careful to do all the statutes and the judgments which I am setting before you today.

The blessing and curse are linked to two mountains. These mountains are situated in the land. Mount Gerizim is located on the south side, Mount Ebal on the north side. On Mount Gerizim the blessing is pronounced, possibly because the mountain lies on the south side, the side of the warmth and light. Mount Ebal lies on the north side, the side of cold and darkness.

The place where God causes us to choose is “opposite Gilgal”. Gilgal is the place where the people were circumcised just after entering the land. When this circumcision has taken place, the LORD says: “Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you” (Jos 5:9). Spiritually speaking, circumcision means that the judgment of the flesh is exercised (Col 2:11).

“Moreh” means “teaching”, for us: spiritual teaching. The word for “oak” has the meaning of “strong” or “hard” which is indicated in the long life of that tree. In the ‘oaks’ we can see in this context the spiritual power that is the result of the teaching received. If we take to heart the teaching of God’s Word, the choice between blessing or curse, between eternal life or destruction becomes simple.

Deuteronomy 12

Introduction

With this chapter begins the second part of the speech of Moses, which runs from Deuteronomy 5 to Deuteronomy 26. Deuteronomy 5-11 aim to make hearts willing to obey. Now comes that which will test their hearts. These are the conditions for their relation with God and thus for the enjoyment of the blessing.

Deu 12:1 | Statutes and Judgments

1 “These are the statutes and the judgments which you shall carefully observe in the land which the LORD, the God of your fathers, has given you to possess as long as you live on the earth.

From this chapter on it is not so much about the blessings, but more about the obligations required to fulfil. By keeping the commandments, being obedient to what God says in His Word, we can show our love for Him (Jn 14:21,23). God’s commandments are the test of whether we really love the Lord and appreciate His blessings.

“The statutes and the judgments” are not intended to govern life in all its details, although they regulate it as such, but to determine the quality of life. Living by them will give the people the highest and lasting enjoyment of life in the land. They are an aid to submit every area of life to the Lord and to destroy everything that can threaten this real surrender.

Although the land has yet to be conquered, Moses speaks of it as the land that the LORD “has given you”. For Moses, the promise of God is the same as fulfilment. That is how it should be for us too.

Deu 12:2-4 | Destroy Places of Idolatry

2 You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations whom you shall dispossess serve their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. 3 You shall tear down their altars and smash their [sacred] pillars and burn their Asherim with fire, and you shall cut down the engraved

images of their gods and obliterate their name from that place. 4 You shall not act like this toward the LORD your God.

The first task that must be fulfilled if the people are to continue to enjoy the possession of the blessing, as long as they live on earth is to utterly destroy any false religion. God does not tolerate any form of worship other than the worship to which He is entitled. He is entitled to the undivided tribute of His people. He knows that every form of worship of which He is not the object will plunge His people into misfortune and rob them of every blessing.

High mountains and hills as places where idols are served, find their origin in the widespread superstition that one is then closer to the deity and the heavens. The green tree is a beloved place for the Gentiles because of the shadowy darkness that fills the soul with a holy shudder for the nearness of a deity (Hos 4:13; Eze 6:13; 20:28; Isa 57:5). In such places and with such thoughts God does not want to be served. All these places must be destroyed. Even their names must disappear. Mentioning the name would focus attention on the idol again, giving them influence on their lives again (cf. Psalms 16:4).

To live a devoted life, we must first remove from our lives the things that take up our time and attention so much that they push the Lord to the second place. This can be a sin with which we do not want to break or think we cannot break. They can also be things that are not bad in themselves, but that prevent us from seeing the Lord. Even work for the Lord can become idolatry if it becomes more important than the Lord Himself.

Martha for example: "Martha was distracted with all her preparations" (Lk 10:40). Being totally occupied by something makes it so that there is no room left for anything else. Martha has taken on too much work. Work in itself is not wrong, but it is wrong if it obscures the view on the Lord. For Mary, all she can do for the Lord is nothing compared to what the Lord has to tell her. Thus, she sits at His feet and the Lord says of her: "Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her" (Lk 10:42).

Only when everything of man has been removed God can show the place where He dwells. Everything that still bears witness to man's contribution

in serving God is an obstacle for Him to make His thoughts known. It hinders man from getting to know God's thoughts.

Deu 12:5-14 | The Place Which the LORD Will Choose

5 But you shall seek [the LORD] at the place which the LORD your God will choose from all your tribes, to establish His name there for His dwelling, and there you shall come. 6 There you shall bring your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the contribution of your hand, your votive offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock. 7 There also you and your households shall eat before the LORD your God, and rejoice in all your undertakings in which the LORD your God has blessed you. 8 "You shall not do at all what we are doing here today, every man [doing] whatever is right in his own eyes; 9 for you have not as yet come to the resting place and the inheritance which the LORD your God is giving you. 10 When you cross the Jordan and live in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to inherit, and He gives you rest from all your enemies around [you] so that you live in security, 11 then it shall come about that the place in which the LORD your God will choose for His name to dwell, there you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the contribution of your hand, and all your choice votive offerings which you will vow to the LORD. 12 And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you and your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, and the Levite who is within your gates, since he has no portion or inheritance with you. 13 "Be careful that you do not offer your burnt offerings in every [cultic] place you see, 14 but in the place which the LORD chooses in one of your tribes, there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I command you.

The Gentiles worship in many places. For Israel, there is only one place and one manner. That also applies to us. Scripture does not speak here of *a* place, but of *the* place. In this chapter it is said six times (verses 5,11,14,18,21,26) and in the following chapters it occurs fifteen times more (Deu 14:23,24,25; 15:20; 16:2,6,7,11,15,16; 17:8,10; 18:6; 26:2; 31:11), a total of twenty-one times. To establish His Name there or to let His name dwell there means that He wants to reveal His divine presence to people there.

The cloud, the so-called 'shechinah', a word derived from the Hebrew verb *shachan*, which means 'to dwell', 'to stay', can be thought of here.

The book of Deuteronomy does not state which place the LORD has chosen to make his name dwell. From other scriptures we know that it is first Shiloh (Jos 18:1; Jer 7:12; 1Sam 1:3; Psa 78:60) and later Zion or Jerusalem (Psa 132:13). The temple is built in the four hundred and eightieth year after the exodus from Egypt (1Kgs 6:1). So it takes more than four centuries before they come to find where that place is.

We read of only one man who asked for the place God has chosen to make His Name dwell: David. He has thought about it and sought for it: "Surely I will not enter my house, nor lie on my bed; I will not give sleep to my eyes or slumber to my eyelids, until I find a place for the LORD, a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob" (Psa 132:3-5). David is exercised before God to get to know this place.

He does not search for this at the end of his life. He does that when he pastures the sheep in Efratha. There he hears about it and finds it in the fields of Jaär: "Behold, we heard of it in Ephrathah, we found it in the field of Jaar" (Psa 132:6). It becomes known to him through his fellowship with God. That is no different for us.

In this chapter the most important test is that they will search in the land for the place the LORD has chosen for His Name to dwell. He does not indicate it, does not give an address, but they have to search for it, ask for it. We see an example of this in the Lord's answer to the question of the disciples, where they are to prepare the Passover.

His answer is not to give an address, but to give an indication of how to find it: they must follow a man carrying a pitcher of water (Lk 22:8-13). That is, we must pay attention to people who come together according to the characteristics of the Word of God, of which the water is a picture.

Something similar we hear in the question from the bride to the groom in Song of Songs. If she wants to know where he is pasturing the flock and leaving it to rest, he gives the instruction: "If you yourself do not know, most beautiful among women, go forth on the trail of the flock" (Song 1:7-8). The Lord's answer to the disciples' question "where are You staying?"

is also instructive. Neither does He give them an address, but He invites them: “Come, and you will see” (Jn 1:37-40).

The place where God now dwells and wants to be worshiped is no longer Jerusalem or any other geographically determined place. The Lord Jesus says about this to a Samaritan woman: “Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. . . . But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (Jn 4:21-24). In this time, after the cross and the coming of the Holy Spirit on earth, the church is the dwelling place of God (Eph 2:22; 1Cor 3:16). This is not a stone building, but a spiritual place. In order to know where the place of worship for the church is at this time, the Christian must search for it by means of the Bible.

There is also now a place of worship on earth. This is where believers meet as believers only unto the name of the Lord Jesus (Mt 18:20). This can only be said and fulfilled if those believers bow before the authority of the Lord Jesus, His Name, which is expressed in obedience to God’s Word. This is illustrated in the man who carries a pitcher of water, the picture of the Word of God, and him the disciples must follow (Lk 22:10).

It is not left to Israel – nor to us – to choose the place where God wants to dwell. He chooses that place Himself. No one will dispute a person’s right to choose where he receives others. Many Christians do so with respect to God. In such an instance, His will and thoughts are often not inquired of. The standard is not then: “What does the Lord want?”, but: “Where do I feel good?” God, however, does not follow man’s thoughts, although in His grace He continues to bless as He perceives sincerity.

God wants His people to be one people in practice. This applies to Israel and also to the church. When Jeroboam invents other places of worship, the division among the people is given (1Kgs 12:26-30). God sees the church as a whole in Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit (1Cor 12:13). There is nothing that promotes this practical unity more than being gathered together to that one Name, the name of the Lord Jesus, where He

is the common object of worship. All the subdivisions among Christians detract from the unity of the church.

The true God may not be served by each in his own place. The great division in Christianity is not the expression of the versatility of the truth. To put the biblical unity into practice we should not go back to some Synod in the past, but to what the apostles have said. We should not go back to Rome or Jerusalem, but to the Lord.

God has His own place and He determines where it is. No nicknames such as Baptist or Lutherans or Darbyist, which make an unbiblical separation between believers, fit in with this. God does not want us to serve Him each according to our own favorite principles or in following the favorite teachers. He determines the basis upon which His people must meet.

Nor does the practice that every land has its own national church fit in with the church of God, as if the church were divided by national boundaries. That too is a denial of the spiritual, worldwide unity of the people of God. There is only one God and one Lord and only one place of meeting. For Israel this is literally the case, for us it is a spiritual place.

We do not have to travel to one particular place. There is a church in every town (1Cor 1:2). When in these different places people gather according to the same principles of God's Word concerning the church, spiritually speaking they come together in one place. Each place expresses that unity, in the recognition of each other as members of God's people. There should be no room for sectarianism on the one hand and independency on the other.

Coming into the presence of God at the place He has chosen is first and foremost to offering Him sacrifices. God's due is paramount. Then we also receive our due: we may eat before His face, that is, to feed ourselves with the Lord Jesus and think of Him together with God and His own. Then, finally, our hearts will overflow with joy and gratitude because of all the blessings that have become ours.

The blessings in verse 7 are not only seen as given by God, but as the result of their own work, which they have "undertaken". For the blessing of the land, the rain is indispensable, but not enough. Spiritual activity, such as ploughing, harrowing, sowing and harvesting is required of us. The more

activity, the greater the yield of wheat, new wine and oil. The enjoyment of spiritual blessings does not come to us overnight. Effort must be made: there is need to sow for the Spirit (Gal 6:8).

In the place where God dwells in the land, there will be rest. That peace is the result of the expulsion of the enemies. There is also protection and security. There is no such peace in the wilderness. That is what the people will have had to pass through. In the land there is no longer any need to wander, there the people dwell in their homes.

There is much repetition in this chapter, because the subject is so important. Each time, aspects are added to what has been said (verses 7,12).

Deu 12:15-18 | Eating in the Own Dwelling Place

15 "However, you may slaughter and eat meat within any of your gates, whatever you desire, according to the blessing of the LORD your God which He has given you; the unclean and the clean may eat of it, as of the gazelle and the deer. 16 Only you shall not eat the blood; you are to pour it out on the ground like water. 17 You are not allowed to eat within your gates the tithe of your grain or new wine or oil, or the firstborn of your herd or flock, or any of your votive offerings which you vow, or your freewill offerings, or the contribution of your hand. 18 But you shall eat them before the LORD your God in the place which the LORD your God will choose, you and your son and daughter, and your male and female servants, and the Levite who is within your gates; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God in all your undertakings.

Not every animal needs to be slaughtered in Jerusalem, as is the case with the tabernacle in the wilderness (Lev 17:1-6). The Israelites cannot always go to Jerusalem when they have slaughtered an animal. Yet they may not bring their burnt offerings home, for they belong in the place where the LORD dwells. Worship is something that happens together where the Lord Jesus dwells and the church meets as a church. Nevertheless, meat can be eaten at home. This, for us, means to be busy with the sacrifice and have fellowship with each other in enjoying the Lord Jesus together. Thus we may meet apart from the place where the Lord Jesus is in the midst.

There also those unclean are permitted to receive a blessing there. The uncleanness in question is not such that requires removal from among the

people of God. A person who is unclean in such a way is not allowed to eat of the holy things, but may eat of the general food.

While the meat may be eaten at home, the tithes may not be eaten at home. Bringing forth the tithes is the recognition of God's title to the land. It is the land He has given them. He is its Lord, and they owe Him "rent".

When we come together as a church, it is to remember the death of the Lord, the offering He has brought, and to worship God for it with our sacrifices of praise and thanks. But not only that. We also come together to eat the collected tithes. Eating the tithes means that together we enjoy before God's face all the blessings He has given us. We thank Him for it and share with each other what we have received from Him. This can be expressed nicely during a Bible discussion, for example.

Deu 12:19 | Caring for the Levite

| *19 Be careful that you do not forsake the Levite as long as you live in your land.*

The Levite has no inheritance (verse 12; Deu 10:9) and therefore no yield of the land itself to give the tithes thereof. But God has determined that the Levite will live of the tithes brought by the people (Num 18:21-24). And of the tithes thus given to the Levite, he may again give the tithes to the LORD, and enjoy them himself with others before God.

The people are not instructed to give the Levite tithes as a one-off, but as long as they live in the land. Whoever is aware of his spiritual blessings will also be aware of his responsibilities and will want to fulfil them. If we do not live in the land, that is to say, if the awareness that our citizenship is in heaven disappears, so does our care for the Lord's servants.

Deu 12:20-28 | Regulations for Eating Meat

| *20 "When the LORD your God extends your border as He has promised you, and you say, 'I will eat meat,' because you desire to eat meat, [then] you may eat meat, whatever you desire. 21 If the place which the LORD your God chooses to put His name is too far from you, then you may slaughter of your herd and flock which the LORD has given you, as I have commanded you; and you may eat within your gates whatever you desire. 22 Just as a gazelle or a deer is eaten, so you will eat it; the unclean and the clean alike may eat of*

it. 23 Only be sure not to eat the blood, for the blood is the life, and you shall not eat the life with the flesh. 24 You shall not eat it; you shall pour it out on the ground like water. 25 You shall not eat it, so that it may be well with you and your sons after you, for you will be doing what is right in the sight of the LORD. 26 Only your holy things which you may have and your votive offerings, you shall take and go to the place which the LORD chooses. 27 And you shall offer your burnt offerings, the flesh and the blood, on the altar of the LORD your God; and the blood of your sacrifices shall be poured out on the altar of the LORD your God, and you shall eat the flesh. 28 “Be careful to listen to all these words which I command you, so that it may be well with you and your sons after you forever, for you will be doing what is good and right in the sight of the LORD your God.

We have here a repetition of the permission to eat meat that is not intended as a sacrifice (verse 22; verses 15-16). A gazelle and a deer are not sacrificial animals. Some details are added, such as that the requirement remains in force even if there has been an extension of the land.

The power of repetition is that it gives certainty to what has been said before (Phil 3:1). Repetition is also of great significance for a learning process. God knows the strong tendency of the heart to deviate from Him and from the exclusive service due Him. Therefore, He does not get tired in His grace to point out the dangers on the one hand, and to accentuate what is appropriate for us on the other.

Doing what is right in the eyes of the LORD (verse 28) – and not what is right in our own eyes, as in the time of the book of Judges: “Everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Jdg 21:25) – guarantees that things will go well for them and their children forever. It is about things that are good and right in the eyes of the Lord our God. We are His guests, not the other way around.

Deu 12:29-32 | Do Not Imitate the Nations

29 “When the LORD your God cuts off before you the nations which you are going in to dispossess, and you dispossess them and dwell in their land, 30 beware that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, ‘How do these

nations serve their gods, that I also may do likewise?’ 31 You shall not behave thus toward the LORD your God, for every abominable act which the LORD hates they have done for their gods; for they even burn their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods. 32 “Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it.

Now follows the warning not to imitate the nations in their idolatry. This is at the same time the introduction to the next section. This warning means that the people will take all instructions concerning the place the LORD has chosen seriously and will not introduce anything that affects the character of that place.

This means, for example, that we should not be concerned with evil out of curiosity. This is often the first step in the field of Satan, the consequences of which are incalculable. These verses show the atrocities to which it can eventually lead. In the history of Israel, such evil practice has become one of the reasons for the exile (2Kgs 17:17-18).

Nothing may be added to or taken away from what God has said (Deu 4:2). Everything God has said is perfect in itself and does not need any addition or confinement. People who do add to it or take away from it show that they have no respect for the perfection of God’s Word.

Deuteronomy 13

Introduction

The important theme from Deuteronomy 12 onwards is the place the LORD has chosen to dwell there. That is for Israel a building, the temple, and a city, Jerusalem. For the church this is not a building or a group, but it is the spiritual foundation upon which believers who form the church meet and to which the Lord Jesus connects His presence by coming into their midst.

An important characteristic is that what is not God's must first be removed. Then you can search. When they have found that place, the danger will arise again that idolatry wants to penetrate. That is stated in the last verses of Deuteronomy 12. There should be no question about the gods of the nations (Deu 12:29-32).

How many times has God warned of idolatry in this book! Idolatry is an essential attack on God and the relationship He has with His people. Any warning about it increases the responsibility of the people. Idolatry is anything that the Lord Jesus and His authority, His Word, sets aside or other things put alongside that are given a higher place. How many times has God warned us of certain sins that the Lord Jesus sets aside?

Deuteronomy 13 connects directly to the last verses of the previous chapter. In this chapter we read about three forms of idolatry:

1. In verses 1-5 it is about a case of open deception. This can happen when someone with signs and wonders draws away the people of the LORD to serve other gods.
2. In verses 6-11 it does not go through open preaching, with signs and wonders, but it is a hidden deception through natural bonds, family members. This is a very refined form.
3. In verses 12-18 there is talk of a collective deception. We see how a whole city is drawn away by corrupt people from following the LORD.

Deu 13:1-5 | Public Temptation to Apostasy

1 "If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, 2 and the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods (whom you have not known) and let us serve them,' 3 you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the LORD your God is testing you to find out if you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. 4 You shall follow the LORD your God and fear Him; and you shall keep His commandments, listen to His voice, serve Him, and cling to Him. 5 But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has counseled rebellion against the LORD your God who brought you from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, to seduce you from the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall purge the evil from among you.

We can notice this form of deception and seduction to commit idolatry around us. We see this where believers subordinate the place of the Lord Jesus to things that seem more impressive and greater. These are places where preaching is accompanied by signs and wonders. Many Christians are deceived by this. Many movements where signs and wonders happen impress and many assume it is from God. These movements have great appeal.

The charismatic movement is not a new grouping. It is a movement that strives to bring wonder gifts within reach of all Christians. In their sermons and magazines, they call for the use of speaking in tongues and the healing of the sick, as if that were the task of every Christian. They are gifts that spotlight emotion and put the person in the foreground. Also, today emotion or feeling is given greater priority than obedience to God's Word.

What is the power of signs and wonders? They are only meant to support a spoken testimony of God: "How will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will" (Heb 2:3-4).

Satan can imitate signs and wonders. He will do this especially in the end times (2Thes 2:9; Rev 13:14). As we live in it, we increasingly see signs and wonders around us. The Lord Jesus warned: "For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect" (Mt 24:24).

Where signs and wonders happen for the signs and wonders themselves and not to support the preached Word of God, the origin must be looked upon with great suspicion. In the early days the Word of God was not yet complete and signs and wonders were given to confirm it, which means that even then the written Word had preeminence. That is not so in the modern charismatic movement.

A dream can come from God or from demons. False prophets can be recognized by their fruit (Mt 7:15-20). All who proclaim something in addition to or instead of the biblical message must be rejected (Gal 1:8). Any movement that highlights anything other than the Person of the Lord Jesus is not from God. Where it is said that faith is beautiful, but not enough because laying on of hands and speaking in tongues must follow, a spirit of lies is at work. He who is filled with the Holy Spirit will not speak about his being filled, but about the Lord Jesus. It is not the sign or the wonder that is decisive, but the Word of God.

The touchstone of what presents itself as signs and wonders is listening to the words that are preached. If it contains a call to follow other gods, it is not good. We are called to think back to "the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior [spoken] by your apostles" (2Pet 3:2). We have to go back to what has been from the beginning, to "the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints" (Jude 1:3). The Lord puts us to the test. He also provides us with all the means to pass the test.

Anyone who brings the people of God on a wrong path must be removed from the among them. This commandment occurs nine times (Deu 13:6,10; 17:7,12; 19:19; 21:21; 22:21,22,24; 24:7). Here, we have an example of what is commanded to the church in Corinth. Whereas in the Old Testament someone must be killed in a certain case, we find in the New Testament

the counterpart in the command: “Remove the wicked man from among yourselves” (1Cor 5:13b).

There is a distinction between hating evil and loving the sinner. There must be no fellowship with evil. We are told: “Hating even the garment polluted by the flesh” (Jude 1:23). That is to say, we must make sure that our external behavior does not show any characteristics of sin. At the same time, the Lord tells us that we must restore someone who “is caught in any trespass”, but we must do so “in a spirit of gentleness; [each one] looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted” (Gal 6:1). Both sides are important.

Israel must cling to the LORD. He has delivered them from Egypt and accepted them to be His people. He is not only their Creator but their Redeemer. He has given them commandments concerning the way they have to go. He did not do this by forcing them with His power, but by persuading them with His Word, by setting forth His arguments for that way. The call to serve other gods is a direct insult to Him and a denial of the redemption He, not an idol, has brought about. It is therefore also the greatest ingratitude. When we realize what the Lord Jesus has done for us, our only desire will be to cling to and serve Him.

Deu 13:6-11 | Hidden Temptation to Apostasy

6 “If your brother, your mother’s son, or your son or daughter, or the wife you cherish, or your friend who is as your own soul, entice you secretly, saying, ‘Let us go and serve other gods’ (whom neither you nor your fathers have known, 7 of the gods of the peoples who are around you, near you or far from you, from one end of the earth to the other end), 8 you shall not yield to him or listen to him; and your eye shall not pity him, nor shall you spare or conceal him. 9 But you shall surely kill him; your hand shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. 10 So you shall stone him to death because he has sought to seduce you from the LORD your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 11 Then all Israel will hear and be afraid, and will never again do such a wicked thing among you.

Here, family relationships and friendships are involved (Mic 7:5). A 'friend, who is as your own soul' (cf. 1Sam 18:3), is a friend who is so closely connected that it is as if one soul expresses itself by means of two bodies. Of a seduction by someone with whom we have the most intimate relationship, we have an example in the seduction by Eve of Adam.

If intimate ties in any relationship bring us on a path that deviates from the Lord and the Word, we must radically break with them. It takes a lot of spiritual strength. We may well know how to act in certain situations in matters of disciplinary actions, but when it comes to one's own husband or wife, son or daughter, brother or sister, or dear friends, sometimes quite different actions can be taken.

The gods who are near are those of the neighboring peoples such as Edom, Moab and Ammon. The gods far away are such of Babel and Persia. Moses includes all the nations of the earth in his warning, for all the nations of the earth have their gods. This shows the generality of idolatry. The most common idol is seen in the celestial bodies that can be seen everywhere above the whole earth.

This warning applies just as much to the church today. The oriental religions are increasingly exerting their influence. A mass mingling takes place. In the sermon at the funeral of Queen Juliana (Queen of the Netherlands) on March 30, 2004, the remonstrant female pastor referred to John 14 (Jn 14:2). She said: 'She [Queen Juliana] was convinced that many roads lead to the one God. Or, as Jesus poetically said, In My Father's house are many dwelling places.'

In this way the Word of God is cunningly falsified. The female preacher quoted a word from the Lord Jesus to prove that there is a place for all religions in the Father's house. This concealed call to idolatry, in which an apostasy to God is presented, is an evil that should have no place in the church of God.

Someone who is tempted should not give in to the temptation. He must turn away from it with disgust and indignation. The words "you shall not ... listen to him" may also refer to the question of the tempter not to report it if the tempted person does not give in to his temptation. Then the secret can be kept secret and he can continue his pernicious work with others.

In this way he, and thereby evil, is protected. But God's commandments must always govern over human feelings (Zec 13:3).

When stoning, the first witness of evil must be the first to take the stone and throw it. With this the witness shows that he has no part in the seduction and also confirms his testimony about the seducer. He cannot accuse someone and leave the execution of the judgment to others. This involvement will keep someone from lightly accusing someone else. Then it becomes a matter for the whole people. The exercise of discipline is not a private matter. The stoning does not happen with a few stones, but continues until the guilty person is dead.

This action can only be understood if we can empathize to some extent with what sin means to a holy God. If we love the truth above all else, we can come to disregard these bonds when God's holiness is at stake. As to the choice between the Lord Jesus and the family, the Lord Jesus says: "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me" (Mt 10:37; Exo 32:25-29; Deu 33:9).

Judgment of evil is a fulfillment of God's holiness. Judgment of evil also has a warning and frightening effect (Acts 5:10-11). Those involved in the exercise of judgment will be aware that the same will happen to them if they commit such an evil.

Deu 13:12-18 | Collective Seduction

12 "If you hear in one of your cities, which the LORD your God is giving you to live in, [anyone] saying [that] 13 some worthless men have gone out from among you and have seduced the inhabitants of their city, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods' (whom you have not known), 14 then you shall investigate and search out and inquire thoroughly. If it is true [and] the matter established that this abomination has been done among you, 15 you shall surely strike the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying it and all that is in it and its cattle with the edge of the sword. 16 Then you shall gather all its booty into the middle of its open square and burn the city and all its booty with fire as a whole burnt offering to the LORD your God; and it shall be a ruin forever. It shall never be rebuilt. 17 Nothing

from that which is put under the ban shall cling to your hand, in order that the LORD may turn from His burning anger and show mercy to you, and have compassion on you and make you increase, just as He has sworn to your fathers, 18 if you will listen to the voice of the LORD your God, keeping all His commandments which I am commanding you today, and doing what is right in the sight of the LORD your God.

This is a collective evil. There is talk of “worthless men” or ‘Belials-children’, which means devil’s children, who have got an entire city under their influence. If this comes to the notice of other cities, they should not go directly to that city with sword and violence, but first “investigate” and “search out” and then “inquire thoroughly” what they have heard (cf. Deu 17:4). This is also the way God Himself works, for instance in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 18:21).

Only when the truth of what they have heard has been established that this evil has indeed been done “among you”, that is, in the midst of God’s people, action should be taken. The city must be judged by all Israelites and they must act as if it were a Canaanite city. Regarding the church, Paul also warns of men who want to exert their pernicious influence among believers (Acts 20:29-30).

In the church of God there are no distances. Whether such an evil occurs in a neighboring local church or in a local church in another land or continent, all believers have a responsibility to judge it. It will then be an evil about which God’s Word pronounces the clear judgment of evil.

In practice it will mean that brothers from a nearby local church will investigate and inquire. They will share their findings with the local church where they belong. If it is established that the entire local church under investigation has been influenced by evil and that they refuse to judge that evil, there will no longer be fellowship possible for all believers with that local church.

If all members of God’s people are aware of the evil in that city, they must all act. An example we have is in Judges 20, where all cities are called upon to deal with the city of Gibeah in the territory of Benjamin. The crime committed in Gibeah requires retaliation. The whole people go up against it (Jdg 20:11; Deu 20:1).

Because this going up does not happen in the right mind, God must first teach the people a lesson. They first must be aware that the evil was enacted by their '*brother Benjamin*', i.e. in their midst. Once this awareness has permeated through, they will no longer act like the better Israelites. They make themselves as it were one with evil. Then the LORD helps to punish evil. Jabesh-gilead remains neutral (Jdg 21:8-10), putting themselves thereby on the side of evil and are judged.

In every disciplinary case in the church there must be a sense of shame that an evil '*among us*', in the midst of the church, has been able to take place. The evil of the one means the shame of the whole. Every member of the church must be deeply aware that this evil can be done by him or her. Evil is not done away with because the others are better, but because God dwells in the midst and His holiness requires it.

Obedience to this command to destroy the city will result in the purification of the land and spiritual renewal. In His mercy the LORD will not charge the sin of the one city to the whole land, despite the whole land being polluted by it. The extermination means a loss of people. But this act of obedience is linked to the promise of the LORD that He will increase the number of them again. Thus will He fulfil His promise to the patriarchs concerning the multiplication of their seed.

In a spiritual sense this is also true. If there is faithful dealing with sin in the church, the Lord can bless it by giving growth where the evil is removed.

Deuteronomy 14

Deu 14:1-2 | Prohibited Mourning Practices

1 “You are the sons of the LORD your God; you shall not cut yourselves nor shave your forehead for the sake of the dead. 2 For you are a holy people to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.

In verse 1 the members of God’s people are addressed separately in their privileged position: “You are sons of the LORD your God.” This does not mean that they are also all born again. There is a big difference between the sonship of Israel and that of the members of the church. Anyone born as an Israelite belongs to this people and is addressed as such. A person can only belong to the church through conversion and being born again. When applying the sonship of Israel to the sonship of the members of the church, it is important to remember this.

The characteristics of the sons are seen in Deuteronomy 12-16. Sons are connected to the place where God dwells. In such sons, nothing that disfigures may be present, but they shall be to the Father’s delight. The land is for the sons, the sons are for Him. What characterizes *the* Son, may also characterize the sons. That’s why instructions about eating clean food follow.

Israel is spoken of three times in connection with sonship, which belongs to them (Rom 9:4):

1. First, when the people are still in Egypt (Exo 4:22-23). In Exodus 4 God speaks of Israel as “My son”. This shows His purpose for the people as a whole. Although the people are in bondage, God has destined them to sonship.
2. The second time is in the wilderness, where God raises His sons, forms them to be sons in His “school of hard knocks” (Deu 8:5). There it is in a comparative sense. He chastises His sons so that they may remove from their lives what is not pleasing to Him, that they may be pleasing and joyful to Him.

3. The third time, here in Deuteronomy 14, sonship is connected to the land. God wants them to be a holy people before Him, for He has chosen them to be His own people.

Likewise we are sons before God; He has chosen us for Himself (Eph 1:5). The Lord Jesus is *the* Son and we may become like Him. Therefore

1. He has taken us out of Egypt, that is to say redeemed us from the world;
2. He disciplines us in the wilderness or in the circumstances of everyday life;
3. He has placed us in the land, which is for us the heavenly places.

Such a privileged position is not compatible with pagan practices of mourning. This also means that the way in which sons deal with death is completely different from the way in which the world deals with it (cf. 1Thes 4:13). The heathens around them flaw their bodies by cutting or tattooing them (Lev 19:28; Jer 16:6). Such mourning habits are associated with idolatry. These are signs of devotion to unclean beings that are worshiped by the heathen.

Adopting such practices disfigures the ‘sons’ and dishonors God. For He has sanctified them, separated them from all the nations of the world, and destined them for Himself to be His own people.

Deu 14:3 | Eating Nothing That Is Detestable

| 3 *“You shall not eat any detestable thing.*

The external defacement is the result of eating the wrong food. That is why the command now follows not to eat any detestable thing. Because sons are there for God, He wants them to eat the right food, food that further shapes their character as sons in the picture of the Son. Nothing in them should remind of the nations.

Deu 14:4-8 | Terrestrial Animals as Food

| 4 *These are the animals which you may eat: the ox, the sheep, the goat, 5 the deer, the gazelle, the roebuck, the wild goat, the ibex, the antelope and the mountain sheep. 6 Any animal that divides the hoof and has the hoof split in two [and] chews the cud, among the animals, that you may eat. 7 Neverthe-*

less, you are not to eat of these among those which chew the cud, or among those that divide the hoof in two: the camel and the rabbit and the shaphan, for though they chew the cud, they do not divide the hoof; they are unclean for you. 8 The pig, because it divides the hoof but [does] not [chew] the cud, it is unclean for you. You shall not eat any of their flesh nor touch their carcasses.

Sonship is a matter that must be put into practice every day. Sons are not ruled by rules, with what is and what is not allowed. Sons will always ask themselves how they can be a joy to the Father's heart as much as possible. That's why they will be careful with what they eat. Food builds up our bodies, it adds building blocks. Our bodies are formed by what we feed ourselves with. Healthy food has a healthy effect on our body.

What applies to our bodies also applies to our minds. With what we feed ourselves spiritually, what we read, what we look at, forms our spiritual life. We will adopt in our character the characteristics of the food we eat. It is therefore important to distinguish between clean and unclean food.

In Leviticus 11 only the unclean animals are mentioned by name and the message is addressed to Moses and Aaron. In Deuteronomy priests are rarely mentioned. It is a book that is addressed to a people of sons. Then the clean animals are named to give the sons their characteristics. The clean animals are often a type of the Lord Jesus. Sons feed on Him. He gives form and shape to their lives. The Lord Jesus becomes visible in them.

The first mentioned animal, "the ox", is a picture of the steadiness and strength in serving. The ox perseveres. We see this in the life of the Lord Jesus. It is also the largest animal that can be offered as a burnt offering (Lev 1:3), but here it is food for us. We also have to be steadfast, immovable continuing in the work of the Lord (1Cor 15:58). As He steadily continued, so do we steadily continue.

In "the sheep" we see other characteristics. A sheep speaks of passing through suffering patiently and longsuffering. In 1 Peter 2 these characteristics are given to us as an example (1Pet 2:23). If we feed ourselves with Him in this way, those features will more and more adorn us.

"The goat" is the animal of the sin offering. It shows how much the Lord Jesus has satisfied God's righteousness toward sin. To feed us with Him as the sin offering will work to maintain God's righteous standards in our

actions. It will restrain us from sin. We will live separately from sin for righteousness (1Pet 2:24).

After three domesticated land animals – which are a type of the Lord Jesus and can be sacrificed – seven animals are mentioned that live in the wild. They are clean animals. They may not be sacrificed, but they may be eaten. They have characteristics that remind us of the Lord Jesus.

In “the deer” we see the panting for the water brooks: “As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God (Psa 42:1a). If we feed ourselves with Him, it will cause a thirst for God in our souls. Nothing but fellowship with God can satisfy our deepest desires. To be with God gives the soul the true refreshment. The Lord Jesus experienced this and we can experience it.

“The gazelle” is characterized by the graceful and supple pace with which the animal rushes over the mountains (2Sam 2:18; 1Chr 12:8). Is there anything of that graceful pace to be seen with us? It is always there with the Lord Jesus, even when He walks through the streets of Jerusalem with the cross on His back. Through our conduct we can “adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect” (Tit 2:10).

There are things that disfigure sons of God (verse 1), but here we have the things that will adorn us. All these animals have the hoof split in two and chew the cud. Both characteristics must be present. Chewing the cud is not only reading from the Bible, but also thinking about it, studying God’s Word. Split hooves give the walking stability, that we are not “tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine” (Eph 4:14), but that we are steadfast in faith. Teaching and practice belong together.

All animals where both characteristics are not found, are not suitable as food for ‘sons’. If only one of the characteristics is present, it is, so to speak, one-sided food. If only the emphasis is placed on the doctrine, it is not good. That leads to legalism. With the Pharisees there is a separation between ‘saying’ and ‘doing’ (Mt 23:3). The sound doctrine must lead to a sound practice. If the emphasis is only on practice, it is not good either. How can there be good practice without proper teaching?

Deu 14:9-10 | Aquatic Animals as Food

9 "These you may eat of all that are in water: anything that has fins and scales you may eat, 10 but anything that does not have fins and scales you shall not eat; it is unclean for you.

With the second group of animals, the animals in the water, it is about the element in which they are. The water surrounds them from all sides. It then comes down to the fact that there is good protection. The scales are an armor, a separation between the animal and the environment in which it is in. There must also be fins for propulsion, to go the straight course to God's thoughts.

Lot is someone who had scales. He did not take part in evil. Nevertheless, he had no fins. He could not resist evil or escape. Joseph is the opposite of that. He lived in a corrupt environment. When the temptation came, he managed to flee from evil.

Deu 14:11-20 | Winged Animals as Food

11 "You may eat any clean bird. 12 But these are the ones which you shall not eat: the eagle and the vulture and the buzzard, 13 and the red kite, the falcon, and the kite in their kinds, 14 and every raven in its kind, 15 and the ostrich, the owl, the sea gull, and the hawk in their kinds, 16 the little owl, the great owl, the white owl, 17 the pelican, the carrion vulture, the cormorant, 18 the stork, and the heron in their kinds, and the hoopoe and the bat. 19 And all the teeming life with wings are unclean to you; they shall not be eaten. 20 You may eat any clean bird.

Birds speak of the spirit world. The clean birds speak of what is of God. The list begins with them and ends with them. Clean birds often point to the Lord Jesus as Man from heaven, His origin. The unclean birds speak of what is demonic, what is from the devil (Rev 18:2; Isa 13:21; 34:10-11; Jer 50:39).

We are called to deal only with things that have a good spiritual influence. The command to test the spirits (1Jn 4:1) is given to each son. The capacity to do so is given to him. The babies in the faith can recognize the antichrists because they have the "anointing from the Holy One" (1Jn 2:20). Every be-

liever can recognize the voice of the stranger because he knows the voice of the good Shepherd (Jn 10:27).

Only the unclean birds are mentioned here. Some are birds of prey, others are nocturnal, and others are carrion birds. The devil is always out for the destruction of the sons. If he cannot deprive them of their sonship, he will try to deprive sonship of its character by offering mixed forms of being Christian.

Deu 14:21 | How to Deal with a Dead Animal

21 "You shall not eat anything which dies [of itself]. You may give it to the alien who is in your town, so that he may eat it, or you may sell it to a foreigner, for you are a holy people to the LORD your God. You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk.

A carcass may be given or sold to the stranger, but a son of God may not eat it. The meat of a dead animal can be fine meat and he can give it to another to please him, but the standards of sons are higher. A carcass is something that has died of its own accord. There is no effort needed: no aforethought or preparation. It is not about a slaughtered animal. A son deals with the animal, he chooses it. He takes active steps to bring about slaughter and death.

If, for instance, it is fashionable in the world for women to wear long hair—in itself, that is in accordance with the Bible. Nonetheless, fashion is not a prevailing standard for those who share in sonship. The essence of what we do lies in the heart. It is about the motive from which something is being done. Are we doing it because the people in the world think it is better, or because God deems it so? The benchmark should be to how great a degree I can be a delight to the Father.

The instruction not to boil a young goat in its mother's milk occurs two more times in exactly the same terms (Exo 23:19; 34:26). Milk is for life for that goat. What is for the life of the goat, may not be used in connection with his death. It is unnatural.

God cares about nature. He does not want to see unnatural things happening. He wants sons to maintain what He has set in creation, in nature, such as marriage, family and work. We read about this especially in those letters

that show us the highest Christian standpoint: the letter to the Ephesians and the letter to the Colossians. In nature we can, if we still have an eye for it, receive objectively teaching of God's intentions (1Cor 11:14). This is also part of the formation of the characteristics of God in His sons.

Deu 14:22-27 | Eating of the Tithes

22 "You shall surely tithe all the produce from what you sow, which comes out of the field every year. 23 You shall eat in the presence of the LORD your God, at the place where He chooses to establish His name, the tithe of your grain, your new wine, your oil, and the firstborn of your herd and your flock, so that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always. 24 If the distance is so great for you that you are not able to bring [the tithe], since the place where the LORD your God chooses to set His name is too far away from you when the LORD your God blesses you, 25 then you shall exchange [it] for money, and bind the money in your hand and go to the place which the LORD your God chooses. 26 You may spend the money for whatever your heart desires: for oxen, or sheep, or wine, or strong drink, or whatever your heart desires; and there you shall eat in the presence of the LORD your God and rejoice, you and your household. 27 Also you shall not neglect the Levite who is in your town, for he has no portion or inheritance among you.

This is about the fruits of the land presented as blessings for the people in Deuteronomy 6-11 and them eating in the presence of God. Now there are given indications how the fruit of the land can be enjoyed in a way that it is a pleasure for God. God rejoices when His sons enjoy the blessings He has given.

The tithing of the fruit determines for the people that the land is the LORD's. When they come before Him with the tithes, they acknowledge His goodness and grace, and that He is their source of joy.

There are three different tithes. The first tithes are for the Levites (Lev 27:30-33; Num 18:24-26). The Levites are the servants of the priests. Each servant may contribute to the believers becoming better priests, better versed in bringing worthy offerings. The Levites' service promotes the effective functioning of the priestly service. Each service that the Levites do must be supported and therefore the people give tithes. If the people are

aware of their wealth, it is an enormous encouragement for the Levite. The Levite service is weak among a people who have no appreciation or awareness of God's blessings.

Deuteronomy is about a people who can collect the riches of the land. They give a second tithe. This tithe is already mentioned briefly in this book (Deu 12:11,17-19). Here, it is done in more detail. These tithes are taken to the place where the LORD dwells and eaten before Him there.

Such tithes can be found in the meeting. When we are occupied all week with the blessing of the Lord, we can all come with our tithes to the meeting to present them before to the Lord. The two going to Emmaus have enjoyed the blessing of the Lord in their house and they bring the tithes of it, as it were, to the place where the believers are together (Lk 24:32-36).

For some it is difficult to go to Jerusalem with the tithes. For them there is a solution. They may sell the goods, take the money with them and convert the money back into goods on the spot. This can be applied to believers who are not yet spiritually advanced enough to take all the different sacrifices with them to the place where the Lord is. They may not have had time to deal with the versatility of the Lord Jesus' work because of overly busy earthly things. They may come up with the price of those products, which in turn in that place is converted into sacrifices.

They come to the meeting with only the awareness of the price the Lord Jesus paid for their salvation. This is how they come to the meeting. When other brothers express themselves, they are involved in worship and the sacrifices are, as it were, revived again.

Deu 14:28-29 | The Tithe of the Third Year

28 "At the end of every third year you shall bring out all the tithe of your produce in that year, and shall deposit [it] in your town. 29 The Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance among you, and the alien, the orphan and the widow who are in your town, shall come and eat and be satisfied, in order that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do.

The third ten percent will be in the third year. In order to be able to bring them, one has to live in the land for two years. These tithes should not be

given to the Levites and should not be taken to Jerusalem. The Israelite keeps it at home and he invites people who have need of it.

This can be applied to any place outside of our meetings where we enjoy the blessings with each other. We can hand out to those who are needy, those who are not so blessed, whatever the cause, or those who hand out a lot themselves. We should not only invite to our homes who are as rich as we are. We may keep bible studies with those who know little or nothing of the spiritual blessings. The spiritually poor will always be present. What we pass on is not given away, but shared.

Deuteronomy 15

Deu 15:1-5 | The Year of Remission

1 “At the end of [every] seven years you shall grant a remission [of debts]. 2 This is the manner of remission: every creditor shall release what he has loaned to his neighbor; he shall not exact it of his neighbor and his brother, because the LORD’s remission has been proclaimed. 3 From a foreigner you may exact [it], but your hand shall release whatever of yours is with your brother. 4 However, there will be no poor among you, since the LORD will surely bless you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess, 5 if only you listen obediently to the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all this commandment which I am commanding you today.

The first two ordinances – verses 1-11 and verses 12-18 – connect with what has been said in the last verses of the previous chapter about distributing the tithes to the poor (Deu 14:28-29).

In Exodus and Leviticus, the sabbatical year is called the seventh year (Exo 23:10-11; Lev 25:1-7). The only issue there is that the land must not be cultivated in the seventh year and must remain fallow. There is no mention of a remission. Here, however, the theme of remission is expounded.

After a third year (Deu 14:28) there is talk here of a seventh year, which in verse 9 is called “the year of the remission”. In that year, a remission must be granted. Seven years indicates a completeness. Spiritually applied, this can be seen in the result of the work of the gifts given by the Lord Jesus to His body, the church. They are given to build up, so that the whole can come to full maturity (Eph 4:12-13).

Levitical service must be aimed at the spiritual maturity of believers. Then these believers have reached the seventh year, they have become fathers in Christ (1Jn 2:13-14). The seventh year is characterized by rest. We see this with the fathers in Christ: they have found everything in Christ, He is everything for them.

This chapter deals with the resting of debts. In the seventh year, debt is written off. Anxious thoughts concerning creditors are banished. If we are

treated unfairly, the other has a debt to us. Someone who has let his flesh working against us has a debt to us. It may be that this debt is never repaid. It is no good with such debtors, they have to make up for it. But this chapter, however, is about the creditor as someone who has reached the seventh year. He is in the year of remission.

Do we leave debt for what it is and don't we stand up for our right, and demand back what we have lent? Those who stand up for their rights are actually poor brothers and sisters, they do not know what it is to live in the 'seventh year'. When we insist on our rights in this way, we have learned little from the Lord Jesus. He was rich and became poor for our sake (2Cor 8:9).

Sons of God are like God: they are joyful givers following the God Who gave an indescribable Gift (2Cor 9:15). We can learn from the parable of the two debtors, one with a large debt and one with a small debt (Mt 18:21-35). When we demand that a small debt be paid to us, we forget that we have been forgiven a huge debt that we could never pay. The standard to which we as Christians should forgive is God and not ourselves. We must learn to forgive as God has forgiven us in Christ (Eph 4:32; Col 3:13; cf. Mt 6:12).

Difficulties in religious communities rarely arise due to really principle matters. It is often a collision of characters, which leads to debts. When a seventh year arrives, what a relief that can give. We don't dwell enough on the fact that we are a wealthy people, blessed with all spiritual blessings. We are wealthy sons of God. Those who have this awareness are capable of leaving debt to rest. That does not, as has already been said, take away the debtor's responsibility, but the accountability of the debtor is not the crux of the matter here.

It is "the LORD's remission" (verse 2). We will only be able not to claim our debts if we keep the Lord Jesus in view. That brings His blessing with it. It is as it were declaring guilt with Him. He always reimburses what is remitted for His sake. Remission does not make one poorer, but richer: God promises His blessing (verse 4) and does not fail that promise (verse 6). As a result of this, the people will be able to distribute blessings in a wider circle. Loaning places us in a position of liberty and authority.

Israel has been given the opportunity to become the richest and most prosperous people on earth. This prosperity cannot be achieved by technological efforts, but by obedience to what God has said. They have even been promised world domination through which they will have a pivotal position for all peoples to experience abundant blessing.

Deu 15:6-11 | Lend to the Poor

6 For the LORD 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. 7 "If there is a poor man with you, one of your brothers, in any of your towns in your land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart, nor close your hand from your poor brother; 8 but you shall freely open your hand to him, and shall generously lend him sufficient for his need [in] whatever he lacks. 9 Beware that there is no base thought in your heart, saying, 'The seventh year, the year of remission, is near,' and your eye is hostile toward your poor brother, and you give him nothing; then he may cry to the LORD against you, and it will be a sin in you. 10 You shall generously give to him, and your heart shall not be grieved when you give to him, because for this thing the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in all your undertakings. 11 For the poor will never cease [to be] in the land; therefore I command you, saying, 'You shall freely open your hand to your brother, to your needy and poor in your land.'

It is not about how the poor have become so poor, but it is about the attitude of the rich, to test their feelings of compassion and mercy. God expects us to open our hands freely and lend generously. In Christianity, as a whole, there is hardly any knowledge of heavenly blessings. God loves the joyful giver; we may pass on our riches which the Lord has given us. Rich Christians, that is, those who know their spiritual riches and live in them and live up to them, do not lend from others, but lend to others. Thus there will be equality (2Cor 8:13-14).

Those who know their spiritual riches have as sinful a heart as those who do not know them. The arguments not to give come from a sinful heart (verse 9). A hardened heart holds its hand closed. Excuses are sought to avoid the obligation to give to our poor brothers and sisters (cf. Jam 2:16).

He who has a hardened heart shows that he does not trust the Lord in the promise of blessing which He has given.

When the rich man closes his heart (1Jn 3:17), he charges sin upon himself, for which he will be called to account. The poor man shall call to the LORD when he has dealings with a man with a hardened heart. Calling to the Lord is to “draw near ... to the throne of grace” (Heb 4:16). There is help. In Him the poor finds a Friend Who hears his cry and does not put to shame.

The thought that borrowing just before the seventh year is equal to giving away should not prevent one from generously meeting the needs of another. Loaning, or giving, must be done with understanding and insight into the situation in which the other person finds himself. The LORD does not give the instruction to lend, or give, at will, but “sufficient for his need [in] whatever he lacks” (verse 8).

If rich Christians do not look after poor Christians and enjoy their wealth among themselves, they are acting unworthy of sonship. The Lord Jesus speaks about lending even to enemies (Lk 6:35). He makes it clear there that it is for sons to give and not to demand, thereby resembling their Father. They afford themselves the luxury of giving. Where demands are made, we are faced with poor believers.

Giving is God’s great feature. He wants us to follow Him in this as good sons who resemble their Father. We are encouraged to give with mildness and not reluctantly. “God loves a cheerful giver” (2Cor 9:7). He who gives may count on His blessing, both materially and spiritually (Isa 58:10-11; Pro 3:10; 28:27). Solomon may have thought of this word of Moses when he wrote down his proverb: “There is one who scatters, and [yet] increases all the more; And there is one who withholds what is justly due, [and yet it results] only in want” (Pro 11:24).

Verse 11 seems to contradict verse 4. The contradiction is in appearance alone. In verse 4 it is God’s intention, in which He gives the rich the responsibility to ensure that there will be no poor. In verse 11 it is a prophecy from the all-knowing God Who knows that by unfaithfulness, or to try the rich, there will always be poor (cf. Mk 14:7).

Deu 15:12-18 | Setting Free of Slaves

12 *"If your kinsman, a Hebrew man or woman, is sold to you, then he shall serve you six years, but in the seventh year you shall set him free. 13 When you set him free, you shall not send him away empty-handed. 14 You shall furnish him liberally from your flock and from your threshing floor and from your wine vat; you shall give to him as the LORD your God has blessed you. 15 You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you; therefore I command you this today. 16 It shall come about if he says to you, 'I will not go out from you,' because he loves you and your household, since he fares well with you; 17 then you shall take an awl and pierce it through his ear into the door, and he shall be your servant forever. Also you shall do likewise to your maidservant. 18 "It shall not seem hard to you when you set him free, for he has given you six years [with] double the service of a hired man; so the LORD your God will bless you in whatever you do.*

A person who is unable to pay his debt can sell himself as a slave to the creditor. If the amount of his debt makes it necessary for him to work as a slave for at least six years, he must be released in the seventh year. That year of release is not the same as the year of remission, but the year of his slave ministry.

The provision to release slaves in the seventh year makes it clear that God wants to see His people as a free people. He wants to guarantee them that freedom, even if they have lost it through their own fault. The starting point for that freedom is obedience of the master to this provision of God. Through the act of setting free he can show that his heart is attuned to God's heart and he can interpret God's heart.

This section is similar to the section in Exodus that is also about a Hebrew slave (Exo 21:1-11). However, the relationship between the two parts shows that, from a spiritual point of view, there are two different applications. In Exodus 21 the Hebrew slave is a type of the Lord Jesus. The wife and children of the slave are a picture of the church and the individual believers.

Here it is about a male slave and a female slave. There is no mention of a woman and children of the slave. Here it is written in verses 13-14 that the slave who is set free gets all kinds of gifts from his master, although he can

also stay voluntarily out of love for his master. The emphasis here, however, is not on the attitude of the slave, but on the mind of the master. This is about doing good to the brother, whether he is a debtor (verses 1-6), a poor person (verses 7-11), or a slave (verses 12-18).

The slave is released in the seventh year and must be set free with full hands. What he receives depends on the appreciation the master has of the blessing with which the LORD has blessed him. Through the slave, the master has earned much. If he had had to hire a man for all the work the slave did, it would have cost him twice as much.

It can already be difficult for us to forgive a brother who is morally committed to us. We do it, but sometimes with a grumbling heart. To set him free with full hands requires even more spiritual mindedness. Such an attitude can only be there if we realize ourselves that we have received everything we have from the Lord. That will make us grateful, and that thankfulness will bring us to this action in imitation of how the Lord has acted with us. We used to be slaves in Egypt ourselves. When the people leave Egypt, they are also overloaded with gifts. That's how God does it.

There is gratitude not only to God, but also to the slave who has served faithfully. The benefit the master has derived from this, he may reflect in what he gives to the slave. What or how much it should be, is left to the master.

Paul tells Philemon not only to forgive Onesimus, but to set him free and overload him with all the Christian love of his heart (Phlm 1:15-17). In so doing, he will fill the hands of Onesimus and win him and bind him forever to himself.

Deu 15:19-23 | Firstborn of the Herd and of the Flock

19 *"You shall consecrate to the LORD your God all the firstborn males that are born of your herd and of your flock; you shall not work with the firstborn of your herd, nor shear the firstborn of your flock. 20 You and your household shall eat it every year before the LORD your God in the place which the LORD chooses. 21 But if it has any defect, [such as] lameness or blindness, [or] any serious defect, you shall not sacrifice it to the LORD your God. 22 You shall eat it within your gates; the unclean and the clean alike [may eat it],*

as a gazelle or a deer. 23 Only you shall not eat its blood; you are to pour it out on the ground like water.

This section is a transitional section to the next chapter. The firstborn of the cattle must be sanctified and eaten, year after year, before the LORD. They are the food for the sons of God, with whom Deuteronomy 14 begins. Sons are also firstborn. They are redeemed by a lamb and sanctified to God (Exo 13:1-16).

The firstborn speaks of strength (Psa 78:51; 105:36). In this God struck down the Egyptians when He smote the all the firstborn. When people boast of their strength, they are always set aside. God cannot begin anything with them and must even judge them. Firstborn sons who have been hiding behind the blood of the Lamb are not only freed by God from judgment, but He wants to possess them for Himself (Eph 1:5). With God, every son has the character of a firstborn son. This is also how He calls Israel (Exo 4:22).

The Lord Jesus is the Firstborn among many brethren (Rom 8:29). We have become sons through Him (Heb 2:10-12). The whole church consists of firstborn sons (Heb 12:23). Thus they resemble Him, they are conformed to Him. The title 'Firstborn' indicates an order of precedence, a place above others. His unique, incomparable Person is expressed in another name, the name 'Only Begotten'.

The firstborn must be taken from the herd and the flock. These animals are a type of the Lord Jesus. In general, oxen and sheep are the food for sons. But the firstborn oxen and sheep are a special kind of food. They are sanctified before the LORD. This aspect is added here in connection with the place He has chosen to dwell there.

In Numbers it says that only priests may eat this near the sanctuary and after it has been sacrificed (Num 18:17-18). Here in Deuteronomy it is not about priests or sacrificing, here God expects the whole people to be a priesthood and that they all enjoy before God the blessing He has given.

We may eat of the blessings together with others, but we must never forget to involve God. He wants His share of sons who go into the sanctuary to honor Him. When there is talk of 'children', the emphasis is more on the care and love we receive from God, on Who God is for us. When there is talk of 'sons', the emphasis is more on what we are for God.

Firstborn animals that are deficient may not be brought to Jerusalem. They can be eaten at home. The norms for the fellowship of the church – the place where the Lord Jesus is in the midst – are different from home. This has to do with other responsibilities. In the church believers come as ‘wise men’ (1Cor 10:15) to honor the Lord. At home, the children also have their input in honoring the Lord, without there being any insight or ‘wisdom’ of the Lord’s things, for example, because of their age. The levels are different. In this way, children’s songs can be sung in the family, which for believers, when they come together as a church, would not be suitable.

Deuteronomy 16

Introduction

With verses 1-17 of this chapter, the section that started in Deuteronomy 12:1 is closed. It is its climax. This is not about the priests, but about the people in connection with the place the LORD has chosen to make His Name dwell. From verse 18 onwards the constitutional aspect of the life in the land is discussed more, and this is directly correlated with the LORD's dwelling place. They have to find that place.

The significance of the place is underscored by the obligation for all men to go there, three times a year, to celebrate there before the LORD. These feasts occur four times in the books of Moses. This does not happen as a mere repetition, but in accordance with the character of each of those books.

1. In Exodus 23 and Exodus 34 the feasts are mentioned
 - a. in connection with the laws God has given Moses (Exodus 23) and
 - b. in the covenant confirmation after the history with the golden calf when God acts in grace toward His people (Exodus 34).

The feasts are connected with the covenant.

2. In Leviticus 23, the three feasts are called 'appointed times'. They are in the priest's book. The feasts are an opportunity to bring offerings during a holy convocation. There we also see the feasts in their prophetic context. They refer to time periods in God's plan with His people.
3. In Numbers 28-29 the feasts are spoken about to the people in the wilderness, on their way to the land. God asserts His rights over the people. He calls the sacrifices on the occasion of these feasts, "My offering" (Num 28:2). That is to show what God desires for Himself. That is beautiful, especially in a wilderness situation.
4. In Deuteronomy 16 the feasts are connected with the place where God dwells. The whole people come together, not at the entrance of the tent of meeting as in Leviticus and Numbers, but in Jerusalem, near the temple.

Our meetings have characteristics of Leviticus. In our meetings with the brothers and sisters we express the unity of God's people. It also knows the characteristics of Deuteronomy. In Deuteronomy everything is in the singular. It is not primarily about doing this together with all the other Israelites, but about a personal meeting with the LORD at that place. Thus, when we come together, we corporately, but also personally, bring our sacrifices of praise and thanks to God. God sees the heart of each of His own.

The Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread belong together, it is a unity. The Feast of the first fruits is part of the Feast of Weeks. The Feast of the first fruits always is in the week of unleavened bread. Seven weeks later, in the third month, the Feast of Weeks is celebrated. In the seventh month, also three feasts are celebrated. So the three great feasts are in the first, third and seventh month.

These feasts are linked to the harvest. The Feast of the first fruits is celebrated when the barley harvest has ripened. Then comes, seven weeks later, the wheat harvest. Then the Feast of Weeks is celebrated with the first fruits of the wheat harvest (Exo 34:22) in the form of the two loaves of bread. The next stage of the harvest is the wine harvest. Finally, the olives are harvested.

When the entire harvest has been harvested, the Feast of Booths is celebrated, the feast of the entire collection. Then the harvest has already been processed: the pressing of the grapes and the threshing of the wheat has taken place. From the very beginning to the final phase, from the first to the seventh month, are the harvest months. The feasts mark the beginning and the end of it: "Also [you shall observe] the Feast of the Harvest [of] the first fruits of your labors [from] what you sow in the field; also the Feast of the Ingathering at the end of the year when you gather in [the fruit of] your labors from the field" (Exo 23:16).

Deu 16:1-8 | Passover and Unleavened Bread

1 *"Observe the month of Abib and celebrate the Passover to the LORD your God, for in the month of Abib the LORD your God brought you out of Egypt by night.* 2 *You shall sacrifice the Passover to the LORD your God from the*

flock and the herd, in the place where the LORD chooses to establish His name. 3 You shall not eat leavened bread with it; seven days you shall eat with it unleavened bread, the bread of affliction (for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste), so that you may remember all the days of your life the day when you came out of the land of Egypt. 4 For seven days no leaven shall be seen with you in all your territory, and none of the flesh which you sacrifice on the evening of the first day shall remain overnight until morning. 5 You are not allowed to sacrifice the Passover in any of your towns which the LORD your God is giving you; 6 but at the place where the LORD your God chooses to establish His name, you shall sacrifice the Passover in the evening at sunset, at the time that you came out of Egypt. 7 You shall cook and eat [it] in the place which the LORD your God chooses. In the morning you are to return to your tents. 8 Six days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a solemn assembly to the LORD your God; you shall do no work [on it].

“Abib” means ‘green ears’. That speaks of a new beginning, it is as it were Spring. It starts with the sacrifice of the Passover. This is mentioned six times in the Bible and every time from a different point of view, i.e. aligned with the character of the book in which it is mentioned.

1. In Exodus 12 the Passover is called for the first time, there the feast is kept for the first time (Exo 12:11). All subsequent times it will be a feast of remembrance, but the first time it will be the reality of salvation. It is the first feast mentioned in connection with entering the land.

In Egypt it is celebrated in the houses. In the land, and that is what it is about in this book, it may only be celebrated in the place where the LORD dwells. What once happened in the houses of the Israelites takes place in the land in connection with the house of God, the temple.

It represents the central idea that God’s intention was to save a people in the midst of which He can dwell. He has not only freed a people from judgment, but done so with a purpose. This purpose is presented here, while we think back to what we can call ‘the birth’ of God’s people.

2. In Leviticus 23, the Passover is the starting point for achieving the sabbatical rest (Lev 23:1-5). The Passover is the beginning of the months (Exo

12:2). In the prophetic application of Leviticus 23, the sabbath refers to the time when God can rest in all the creation.

3. In Numbers 9 the Passover gives strength to traverse the wilderness and reach the end of the journey (Num 9:1-14).

4. In Deuteronomy 16 it is related to the land and the meeting with the LORD (Deu 16:1-2; 2Chr 30:1-5; 35:1,16-19; Ezra 6:19).

5. In Joshua 5 the people entered the land and the Passover serves as a retrospective to the starting point (Jos 5:10-11).

6. In 1 Corinthians 5 it is said that Christ is the Passover (1Cor 5:7b).

Our feast as Christians is only one feast. That one feast is when we gather around the Lord. All feasts, the feast character, are expressed par excellence in the worship meeting. Christian holidays do not occur in the Bible.

Unfortunately, in the course of Israel's history, both the Passover and the Feast of Booths have increasingly lost their significance for the people of God. At the end of their history, when King Josiah celebrates the Passover, it appears that the meaning of the Passover has been lost since the days of Samuel: "There had not been celebrated a Passover like it in Israel since the days of Samuel the prophet" (2Chr 35:18a). For the Feast of Booths this is true even since the days of Joshua (Neh 8:18).

The Passover is "to the LORD", that is to say, in His presence, with Him (verses 1-2). He desires that His people should come to Him. Thus the Lord Jesus speaks of "My guest room" (Mk 14:14), a room where He and His disciples will celebrate the Passover. The LORD fervently desires that they should celebrate for Him and bring Him what is due to Him, a rich sacrifice service of burnt offerings and sacrifices of thanksgiving. It is said here to the individual Israelite.

This section begins with "bread of affliction" (or "bread of misery") in verse 3 and ends with "altogether joyful" in verse 15. When we come to Him, we do not only speak of the glories of the Lord Jesus, but also of our affliction or misery. We must not forget that, or think it is something inferior. At the end of his life, the great apostle Paul, who spoke of so many blessings, speaks of himself as the greatest of sinners (1Tim 1:15). And the

chapter on worship in this book, Deuteronomy 26, also speaks about that (Deu 26:5-8). We never must forget where we come from.

There is no exalted level without the 'bread of affliction associated with it. We see this also in Ephesians 1 where we read about sonship, but connected with "the redemption through His blood" and "the forgiveness of our trespasses" (Eph 1:5-7). This is the "Paschal aspect" of the Lord's Day when we gather as a church to celebrate the Lord's Supper at the Lord's Table.

Passover is what God was for me, how He turned away judgment and delivered me from Egypt and brought me into the land. The Lord's Supper has to do with the Lord Jesus' request to remember Him in what He has done. In the Lord's Supper we remember Him Who is the Lamb and has surrendered Himself in accordance with the will of the Father. The Lord also wants this remembrance not only to take place at His Supper, but "all the days of your life" (verse 3). We must never forget that He redeemed us at the expense of Himself and made us His property.

The period of "seven days" (verse 4) represents our whole life. Throughout our lives there may be present "in all your territory", that is in all areas of life, nothing unleavened, that is something of sin. I have to think about that at the place where the Lord Jesus dwells. Nothing that defiles thoughts and hearts should be allowed throughout the land. That's why we always have to add that 'bread of affliction. This will lead us to be impressed by our salvation over and over again, and not to resorting to old feelings.

The Passover may not be celebrated at one's own discretion or at a place of one's own choice (verse 5). The first letter to the Corinthians is the only one addressed in the full sense of the word to a local church (1Cor 1:1-2). In that letter is written about the celebration of the Lord's Supper at the Lord's Table (1Cor 10:14-17; 11:23-26). This celebration is part of the local revelation of the body of Christ. There believers come together, not just in their own cities, but based on the oneness of the church. There He is in the middle.

We celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the houses. We may live, seven days, on from the Passover. This period is at the same time also a preparation for the next Passover.

The place where the LORD dwells is a wonderful point of attraction for the whole people. This is in the heart of Hezekiah. He sends out the invitation to all twelve tribes (2Chr 30:1). The whole people must be welcome in that place. Some of them come to Jerusalem (2Chr 30:11). Then he can celebrate, even though many have not come.

The Passover is celebrated at the end of the day, at sunset (verse 6). It symbolizes that the death of the Lord Jesus is a conclusion. The old is past. The evil powers have been defeated. The liberation is a fact.

In verse 7 it seems as if the people return to their tents after eating the Passover. Nevertheless, the Feast of Unleavened Bread is part of it all. On the last day there is a solemn assembly (verse 8). Then the feast is over, i.e. after seven days, and the people return to their tents (2Chr 30:21; 35:17).

Deu 16:9-12 | The Feast of Weeks

9 "You shall count seven weeks for yourself; you shall begin to count seven weeks from the time you begin to put the sickle to the standing grain. 10 Then you shall celebrate the Feast of Weeks to the LORD your God with a tribute of a freewill offering of your hand, which you shall give just as the LORD your God blesses you; 11 and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you and your son and your daughter and your male and female servants and the Levite who is in your town, and the stranger and the orphan and the widow who are in your midst, in the place where the LORD your God chooses to establish His name. 12 You shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and you shall be careful to observe these statutes.

The first mowing stroke in the standing corn is for the sheaf of first fruits of the barley harvest. Then there must be counted, seven weeks. The sickle made its first stroke for us on the morning of the Lord Jesus' resurrection, a new beginning for us. We must count from the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and not from His birth.

The Feast of Weeks or Pentecost – according to the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, derived from the word *pentecost*, which is 'fifty' (Lev 23:16) – we may also celebrate every first day of the week. Therefore, that counting must have preceded it; we must learn to count according to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Then comes the working of

the Holy Spirit – Pentecost – as pleasure in our lives. He can feel at home with us when we have learned to appreciate the resurrection and glorification of the Lord Jesus.

In Acts 1 we see the disciples during those seven weeks, that is, until the ascension of the Lord Jesus. The Lord shows Himself as the Risen One and speaks of the kingdom. There is also an expectation of the Father's promise and learning to be a witness in the world. My position is one of a witness. I am also on my way to the place where the Lord has gone. I also go to the upper room, which the Lord Jesus calls 'My guest room', to be there with His disciples. There they persevere in prayer and keep His word. The consequences we see in Acts 2: The Holy Spirit comes (Acts 2:1-4).

The result is a "freewill offering" offered to the LORD their God (verse 10). We see this in the believers who have received the Holy Spirit: "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (Acts 2:42). They can renounce earthly blessings: "And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they [began] selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need" (Acts 2:44-45). They give what is due to the Lord and what is due to poor members of the church (cf. 1Cor 16:2).

The result is joy before God with all who are there too. The memory of origin – "you were a slave in Egypt" – does not fade away. The awareness of this and of what they are today only increases the joy and gratitude. They must share the abundant blessing God has given them with those around them who are less fortunate, so that they too may rejoice.

Deu 16:13-15 | The Feast of Booths

13 "You shall celebrate the Feast of Booths seven days after you have gathered in from your threshing floor and your wine vat; 14 and you shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter and your male and female servants and the Levite and the stranger and the orphan and the widow who are in your towns. 15 Seven days you shall celebrate a feast to the LORD your God in the place which the LORD chooses, because the LORD your God will

bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you will be altogether joyful.

The Feast of Booths is the climax. Unfortunately, celebrating it seems to have been only temporary, at least it is not celebrated for long in the way God intended. Only in Nehemiah 8 we hear of it again (Neh 8:14-18). Then it is celebrated by a weak remnant, as it has not been since the time of Joshua. These are the feasts of the LORD; therefore they are so quickly forgotten.

After four months, the entire harvest has been reaped. At the end of the year, as if there were no more months to come, harvesting takes place. In a spiritual sense it is celebrated when believers have learned to bring in the whole harvest, whatever can be brought in from the land. That is why the Feast of Booths is so easily forgotten. It takes spiritual growth to celebrate that feast. It is not just about collected food, but about food that has been prepared for consumption.

The threshing floor and the wine vat represent God's final actions in judgment (Rev 14:14-20). The threshing floor represents the judgment where the chaff is separated from the wheat; the wine vat represents the unsparing judgment of the earth's harvest, where the harvest is all vain, human religion. After this comes the full time of blessing for the earth. Blessing only comes after God has purified the ground for it.

Not every Israelite has an equally rich harvest. Therefore, those who have collected more, must share with the poor. In the application it concerns brothers and sisters who have collected from God's Word, in which we certainly should not primarily think of those who have a public service, such as brothers who serve with the Word.

If we see that a brother or sister has very little spiritual insight, we should not complain about it. It is much better – and this is God's intention – to see them as an occasion to share in the riches ingathered. This is possible in the houses, in the mutual contacts and also in the meeting of the believers. The meeting is not only for rich believers who, so to speak, have obtained a great harvest, but for rich and poor.

The result is that they can be "altogether joyful" (verse 15). This brings to mind what John writes in his first letter: "These things we write, so that

our joy may be made complete” (1Jn 1:4). The apostle John is such a rich brother. He speaks of eternal life as the fruit of the land. John has harvested it and distributes it in his letters, he seeks fellowship with others, poorer believers, and that gives him complete joy.

None of us has collected everything personally. We have received a lot from wealthier brothers. Paul is also such a wealthy brother. He desires to distribute to the Philippians, who are not as rich as he is (Phil 1:25). In this way he also wants to come with a fulness of blessing to the believers in Rome, to tell them of that fulness, and that will also give joy (Rom 15:29).

Deu 16:16-17 | Do Not Come Empty-Handed

16 “Three times in a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses, at the Feast of Unleavened Bread and at the Feast of Weeks and at the Feast of Booths, and they shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed. 17 Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God which He has given you.

Each one comes with a gift for the LORD according to the measure with which the LORD has blessed them. There is no excuse for not coming to that place. There are always brothers and sisters who have collected a lot and others who have collected less. No one should ever come empty-handed. It is unthinkable that one has not collected anything, because God blesses each of His own.

Deu 16:18-20 | Righteous Justice

18 “You shall appoint for yourself judges and officers in all your towns which the LORD your God is giving you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment. 19 You shall not distort justice; you shall not be partial, and you shall not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and perverts the words of the righteous. 20 Justice, [and only] justice, you shall pursue, that you may live and possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

Here begins a new section, which is related to the previous chapters because it still concerns the place where the LORD dwells. He is the center. From these verses up to and including Deuteronomy 19 it is about the civil,

political life, while in the previous chapters it is more about the religious life. The previous section is about worship, this section is about maintaining worship according to the law of God.

In the literal sense we have nothing to do with these precepts, but we have to do with them in a spiritual sense. Not only is the aspect of priestly service connected to our meetings, but the judiciary is also involved. It is about the life of the church in its legal aspects, about matters that give rise to disagreement and how these should be resolved.

These verses are about justice. In the wilderness the judges are appointed over a number of persons (Exo 18:25). Here it is related to the cities (cf. 2Chr 19:5,8) in which they will live, scattered over the land. In the land, justice is spoken in the gates of the city. The number of judges will also depend on the number of inhabitants per city.

Moses prescribes how the lower courts should be established. Not every issue between members of the people should be dealt with in the highest court. In our life as a church there is also a difference in disputes that require a ruling from the whole church and individual issues. Not every issue should be brought before the whole church, just as not every dispute between the Israelites should be settled in Jerusalem. God expects believers to be able to rule matters among themselves. Every believer can be a “judge” if he is spiritually minded (Gal 6:1), just as every believer can be a priest if he is spiritually minded.

Verses 18-20 contain the standards that judges should apply. These norms are determined by God. The emphasis is on righteousness, a word in verse 20 mentioned twice in succession. The main thing is that righteous justice is pursued, that is, as God is and sees things. A conscious deviation from the norm God has given is distorting justice.

The judge should look at the accused as someone he has never seen and does not know. This prevents the judiciary from being influenced by personal prejudices (Pro 18:5; 24:23). The judge must not succumb to bribery (Exo 23:8). The life in and possession of the land depends for them, and for their descendants, on fair justice.

Judges are people who have the right mind to make a statement between brothers. That is a difficult matter. One is not easily a judge; it is no easy

task to go to a brother or sister to point out something repulsive to him or her. The ‘judging’ in the church is something every believer must be able to do: “Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? If the world is judged by you, are you not competent [to constitute] the smallest law courts? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more matters of this life? So if you have law courts dealing with matters of this life, do you appoint them as judges who are of no account in the church? I say [this] to your shame. [Is it so, that] there is not among you one wise man who will be able to decide between his brethren” (1Cor 6:2-5).

Dealing with such matters in the church is a preparation for the service in the realm of peace, where we will judge angels, meaning we will say what they should do (1Cor 6:3). We can only exercise government after we have come to know ourselves as He has always known us. We gain this knowledge to the full when we are “revealed before the judgment seat of Christ” (2Cor 5:10).

It concerns the log and the speck (Mt 7:3-5). The speck is not good, it needs to be removed. To help in removing the speck from the eye of the brother is only possible when the log has been removed from one’s own eye. When someone says something about the speck, it should not be possible to refer to a log in his own eye. The ‘judge’ should be beyond such reproach.

Deu 16:21-22 | Nothing Beside and in the Place of God

21 *“You shall not plant for yourself an Asherah of any kind of tree beside the altar of the LORD your God, which you shall make for yourself. 22 You shall not set up for yourself a [sacred] pillar which the LORD your God hates.*

The first thing the judges will have to deal with is the trampling of the rights of God (verse 21). This is discussed in the section of Deuteronomy 16:21 to Deuteronomy 17:7. The rights of God always come first, before it comes to the brother who is defrauded. If God’s rights are violated, this has consequences for the relations within God’s people, between their members themselves. The corollary effect being the rights of the neighbor are also violated.

Unclean practices in worship must be condemned by the judge. It also means that a judge himself should not be condemnable in this. A judge

who in his life uses forms of worship originating in the world is unfit to be a judge. He must know and uphold the right of God in this.

In addition to the form, the content is also essential (verse 22). Sacrifice may only be made to God and not to ourselves. In worship, there should be no thought of our own importance. No honor should be brought to ourselves in any way. This can happen if we think too highly of our contribution, for example in the words used, or the song we have given out. If God's Spirit leads us, everything will only be to the glory of the Lord Jesus. If we are led by the flesh, it will be to our own glorification. This last is hateful to Him, "the LORD your God hates" this.

God's precepts about sacrifice must be the care of the judge. In a spiritual sense it is about knowledge of the Lord Jesus and His work. The glory and perfection of His Person may not be wronged. A judge shares in the appreciation that God has for the sacrifice of His Son. He ensures that it is only about the Lord Jesus and that all honor for the work He has done is brought to God alone.

In verses 21-22 we see the care for the altar of the LORD, which is for us the Table of the Lord. In the service at the Lord's Table, we may not add elements that do not belong there, we may not place anything beside it. This is most true for brothers who express themselves. The question is: what do we introduce in the sacrificial service? It must not be anything that is attractive to the flesh. It must certainly not be anything that glorifies ourselves. If we do not take these things into account, we despise the Lord Jesus in His rights.

Deuteronomy 17

Deu 17:1 | Not Sacrifice an Animal With a Blemish

1 *“You shall not sacrifice to the LORD your God an ox or a sheep which has a blemish [or] any defect, for that is a detestable thing to the LORD your God.*

The spiritual application of this verse is that God does not want anything from us that affects the preciousness of the Lord Jesus. That would testify to indifference (Mal 1:7-8). For example, if we say to God that the Lord Jesus could sin, but that He did not sin, it is a detestable thing for God.

Such a thought wrongs the perfection of the Lord Jesus, for He *could not and cannot* sin. Such a superficiality in sacrificing must not happen to God’s people. If someone says something like this in ignorance, he should be open to correction when once the error is pointed out. All sacrifices offered to God are types of the sacrifice of Christ. He is the perfectly spotless sacrifice, without defect, completely without sin, free from even the appearance of it.

Deu 17:2-7 | Penalty for Idolatry

2 *“If there is found in your midst, in any of your towns, which the LORD your God is giving you, a man or a woman who does what is evil in the sight of the LORD your God, by transgressing His covenant, 3 and has gone and served other gods and worshiped them, or the sun or the moon or any of the heavenly host, which I have not commanded, 4 and if it is told you and you have heard of it, then you shall inquire thoroughly. Behold, if it is true and the thing certain that this detestable thing has been done in Israel, 5 then you shall bring out that man or that woman who has done this evil deed to your gates, [that is], the man or the woman, and you shall stone them to death. 6 On the evidence of two witnesses or three witnesses, he who is to die shall be put to death; he shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness. 7 The hand of the witnesses shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.*

Deuteronomy 13 is about those who want to seduce others to idolatry (Deu 13:1-18). In these verses it is about those who are seduced. If the accusation is made that someone has been tempted to engage in idolatry, inquiry must first take place. The same happens also in Matthew 18 when someone is accused of sin. Only on the evidence of two witnesses or three witnesses, can justice be done (Mt 18:16; Num 35:30).

If someone sees that someone else is sinning, he should not take the matter to others to talk about it, but seek first to speak about it with the person in question. If I'm the only one who knows anything bad about someone, I must not talk about it with others. There may be no case brought before the church if we have not first spoken to the brother and then we have been with him with witnesses.

If the charge is well-founded, the hand of the witnesses will be first against him. This gives the witnesses a great responsibility and urges great caution when making an accusation about evil. This rule will therefore ensure that witnesses are extremely certain of their case and of the seriousness of the crime committed.

When the hand of the witnesses turns against the culprit, the death sentence is executed. Verse 7 states that they "put him to death". Afterward the hand of the all people must be against him. In this way they make it clear that they join the witnesses and confirm their testimony. This is how the evil must be removed from the church. Evil may not have a place in the people of God. This applies both to Israel then and to the church now.

Before the church reaches a decision on a case brought to it, the person who does so must be convinced of the case. If a case is brought before the church, it is not the same as a decision by the church. The church has yet to reach a verdict, a decision. This situation corresponds to what we read in Matthew 18: "If he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector" (Mt 18:17). This means that the individual believer progressing the matter, must view the person in question as a Gentile and a tax collector, even before the church removes him as an evil one from among themselves.

Conversely, this also applies to a brother's or sister's proposal to receive a believer who is unknown to others at the Lord's Table. The brother or

sister must himself be convinced of the correctness of the proposal. But only when two or three witnesses make clear to the church the correctness of this proposal, the church will receive such a person at the Table of the Lord.

Deu 17:8-13 | Jurisdiction in Difficult Cases

8 "If any case is too difficult for you to decide, between one kind of homicide or another, between one kind of lawsuit or another, and between one kind of assault or another, being cases of dispute in your courts, then you shall arise and go up to the place which the LORD your God chooses. 9 So you shall come to the Levitical priest or the judge who is [in office] in those days, and you shall inquire [of them] and they will declare to you the verdict in the case. 10 You shall do according to the terms of the verdict which they declare to you from that place which the LORD chooses; and you shall be careful to observe according to all that they teach you. 11 According to the terms of the law which they teach you, and according to the verdict which they tell you, you shall do; you shall not turn aside from the word which they declare to you, to the right or the left. 12 The man who acts presumptuously by not listening to the priest who stands there to serve the LORD your God, nor to the judge, that man shall die; thus you shall purge the evil from Israel. 13 Then all the people will hear and be afraid, and will not act presumptuously again.

This section concerns a penalty imposed by a competent authority. Where one revolts against it, a spirit of rebellion, of recalcitrance becomes visible. There is a spirit of contradiction and rebellion against God. It is the evil of disobedience to God or to those who are vested with authority under Him. The occurrence of such contempt and self-will, must be dealt in the same way as with sorcery and idolatry.

The purpose of the punishment is that others will hear and fear and not fall into the same evil. Some will be wise enough to refrain from crime. Others, if they have committed a crime and are punished, will rather submit to the judgment than sin against themselves and forfeit their lives by going against it. From this law the writer of the letter to the Hebrews deduces how severe is the punishment he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God and therewith His authority (Heb 10:28-29).

If a local authority makes a decision, it is the highest authority on earth. “Whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven” (Mt 18:18). The scope of the decision is the whole earth. This is because the Lord Jesus connects His presence to that local church: “For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst” (Mt 18:20).

In verse 9 the priest comes to the fore. Priests know God’s thoughts best because they are used to being in His presence. This determines the spiritual mind. Any brother or sister can be that priest. It is not about the gift that someone has, but about the mind that someone has through his or her dealings with God.

Deu 17:14-20 | Setting a King

14 “When you enter the land which the LORD your God gives you, and you possess it and live in it, and you say, ‘I will set a king over me like all the nations who are around me,’ 15 you shall surely set a king over you whom the LORD your God chooses, [one] from among your countrymen you shall set as king over yourselves; you may not put a foreigner over yourselves who is not your countryman. 16 Moreover, he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor shall he cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, since the LORD has said to you, ‘You shall never again return that way.’ 17 He shall not multiply wives for himself, or else his heart will turn away; nor shall he greatly increase silver and gold for himself. 18 “Now it shall come about when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this law on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests. 19 It shall be with him and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, by carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes, 20 that his heart may not be lifted up above his countrymen and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, to the right or the left, so that he and his sons may continue long in his kingdom in the midst of Israel.

After the laws for subjects laws for the king follow. The appointment of a king is not ordered, as is the case with judges. God foresees the demand for a king and already gives His directions for it. He rules over kings. Those who rule over others must remember that they themselves are also under the authority of a Superior.

The question God expects of the people when they are in the land is not that of 1 Samuel 8. There “all the elders of Israel” come to Samuel and say to him, “Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations” (1Sam 8:4-5; cf. Hos 8:4). God has always had a King in His mind. He expects from his people that they will come with this question, because He has spoken about it, in the words he puts in Jacob’s mouth when he blesses his sons (Gen 49:10). In 1 Samuel 8 they want a king after their *own* heart and not a king after the heart *of God*. They want a king there *instead of* the LORD.

The king pleasing to the heart of God is a picture of the Lord Jesus. He is one “from among your countrymen” (cf. Heb 2:14). A king is also a picture of the believers of the church, for they are made “a kingdom” (Rev 1:6). Soon we will rule as such (1Cor 6:2). What we will do openly in the future must already be done now in the interpersonal matters that may exist between believers.

However, we are not only members of the church, but also subjects in the kingdom, not rulers. Brothers with ‘royal dignity’ we recognize those who have the gift of government. They are given by the Lord and do not pretend to that position themselves. The aspiration toward being a supervisor is recommended, yet also stated are the prerequisite conditions (1Tim 3:1-7).

The king must be a countryman, or brother, and as such a servant and not a ruler. A man like Diótrefes, about whom John writes in his third letter, doesn’t care for this. He does not receive the brothers and behaves like a ruler, claiming the first place: “I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say. ... and not satisfied with this, he himself does not receive the brethren, either, and he forbids those who desire [to do so] and puts [them] out of the church” (3Jn 1:9,10b).

The king is warned of three things: horses, women and riches (silver and gold).

1. ‘Horses’ speak of natural strength and violence. The king may not boast on this, but he must trust the LORD: “Some [boast] in chariots and some in horses, But we will boast in the name of the LORD, our God” (Psa 20:7;

33:17; Hos 14:3). We can compare it to, for example, reliance on fluent speech. If we don't master that, we can learn it. An acquired speaking ability is highly regarded in the world. Nevertheless, we should not use verbal violence in the church to manipulate the opinion of the whole.

2. "Wives" in this context speak of temptations by which a deviation from the LORD comes. To this is connected the arousal of false desires, which together with greed leads to idolatry (Col 3:5).

3. The third commandment is that he shall not "greatly increase silver and gold". When this happens, it shows the search for the material as the true fulfillment of life. It will also lead to independence from God.

The three dangers mentioned can be summed up in the words power, pleasure and riches. For the three dangers mentioned above, the king, and we as kings, can only be preserved by constantly reading "a copy of this law". If this is in the heart, he abides in the right track and in the right mind. He will not then rise above his brothers. Such brothers and sisters can exercise justice among the believers in the right way.

In order to preserve himself from these dangers and to be a good king for his people, the king must write out a copy of the law himself. He is expected to read it daily. It will make him aware of the fact that indeed he rules over a people, but is also ruled over himself. It will keep him humble among his people. It will keep him from deviations in his kingship, so that it will be balanced and serving. The Lord Jesus points this out to His disciples: "And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called 'Benefactors.' But [it is] not this way with you, but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant. For who is greater, the one who reclines [at the table] or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines [at the table]? But I am among you as the one who serves" (Lk 20:25-27).

Deuteronomy 18

Introduction

After the law for the *king* in the last chapter (Deu 17:17-20) in this chapter follows the law for the *priests* and the announcement of the *prophet*. The three offices of king, priest and prophet, help us envision the Lord Jesus. He is the true King, Priest and Prophet. A notable difference between these three is that a prophet has no succession, whereas the king and the priest do.

They also have their meaning for us, believers of the New Testament. As for the position, the New Testament believer is a king (“a kingdom”, Rev 1:6; 5:10), a priest (Rev 1:6; 5:10; 1Pet 2:5) and a prophet, that is, he or she can do a prophetic service (cf. 1Cor 11:4-5a). In practice, however, it only applies to those who live up to it.

That is what is presented in the service and history of Israel in the Old Testament. There we do not see what we are in principle, but how the principle of the New Testament is lived out in practice. A difference is that in the New Testament all believers who belong to the church are priests, whereas in the Old Testament only the descendants of Aaron are priests.

Deu 18:1-2 | The Inheritance of the Tribe of Levi

1 *“The Levitical priests, the whole tribe of Levi, shall have no portion or inheritance with Israel; they shall eat the LORD’S offerings by fire and His portion.*
2 *They shall have no inheritance among their countrymen; the LORD is their inheritance, as He promised them.*

There are two types of inheritance. There is an inheritance that Israel owns and there is an inheritance of God. Israel has received its inheritance as a blessing from God. Of this the people return to Him, as David said: “From Your hand we have given You” (1Chr 29:14b). What the people give to God is food for God. He calls it “My food” (Num 28:2). That is also the food of the priests. But this food was first given by God as a blessing to His people.

The worship we bring to God can only be what we have taken in as food in a former stage.

The inheritance we possess is what God has given us in Christ. The inheritance that God possesses is what we give to God in Christ. Our inheritance is the whole of the spiritual blessings in the heavenly places, which is summarized: eternal life. We have been introduced to this in the previous chapters. God's portion is what we in turn give to God in Christ: the offerings by fire, the tithes, the first fruits.

The inheritance of LORD is also the inheritance of the Levites. The LORD Himself is their inheritance. What we offer to God is His own Son. We do so in the exercise of our priestly service as ordained by God. In this we also respond to our sonship, for God has "predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself" (Eph 1:5), to His own joy.

Deu 18:3-5 | The Priests Due

3 "Now this shall be the priests' due from the people, from those who offer a sacrifice, either an ox or a sheep, of which they shall give to the priest the shoulder and the two cheeks and the stomach. 4 You shall give him the first fruits of your grain, your new wine, and your oil, and the first shearing of your sheep. 5 For the LORD your God has chosen him and his sons from all your tribes, to stand and serve in the name of the LORD forever.

In what is said in Deuteronomy of the priests, their service or their clothing is not paramount, as is the case in Leviticus where a people go through the wilderness. In Deuteronomy, priests are seen as part of a people who have the inheritance and whose position must now be determined in more detail. This distinction can also be seen in the food of the priests. In Leviticus we read about the food of the priests, but there it is connected with the most holy. Here it is about sacrifices that the people both bring and partake of, regardless of the priesthood class, in which the people share with the priests.

The priests are kept alive by the sacrifices of the people, as are the Levites. This means that priestly service in the church, that is to say, worship, only flourishes when every member of the church in his daily life – so to speak, as a member of the people – presents their bodies a living and holy sacri-

fice, acceptable to God (Rom 12:1). Without daily dedication to God, not much will come of the priestly service.

It is good to see the difference between the priest and the Levite and what that means to us. Priests are offerors, they are worshipers. Levites are given to help the priests. Priests serve God, Levites serve the priests. The Levites maintain the priestly service. Levite service is all the service aimed at promoting priestly service.

We are both priests and Levites. The believer is both a worshiper and someone who helps to perform the priestly service. This help is particularly evident in the ministry of the Word. The ministry of the Word is especially focused on this and not primarily on our practical walk. Our practical walk is the means by which the priestly service can be performed in a good way.

The food and income of priests and Levites are described in detail in Numbers 18 (Num 18:2-32). Here it happens briefly, in accordance with the book that is not so much about priests and Levites, but about the whole people. This emphasizes the importance of our everyday life, how we behave in it. If we behave in a manner befitting one who is a member of God's people, it will strengthen both the Levite service and the priestly service. If we have a slovenly way of life, little will come of our service as Levites and priests.

Of the sacrifices the people bring, three parts must be given to the priest. The sacrifices mentioned here are those sacrifices that the people themselves are allowed to eat. The only sacrifice from which the people may eat is the peace offering. In a spiritual sense, food has the meaning that what we think and absorb in our mind forms our character. In other words: our character is partly determined by what we read and listen to.

The priest receives as his food "the shoulder and the two cheeks and the stomach". "The shoulder" of the sacrifice speaks of spiritual energy that the Lord Jesus has shown. He continued under all circumstances and completed the work in obedience to His God and Father. If the shoulder is my food, it creates this character trait in me. I then will also go my way in persevering obedience. It is from this that priestly service proceeds. But if it is only priestly service, without first having been food, it is quickly only form. "The two cheeks and the stomach" have connection to the digestive

system. The food ingested and the processes of digestion will be made manifest in various aspects of one's character.

These things apply to the Lord Jesus during His life on earth. He always walked in the way of His God, He contemplated God's law day and night (Psa 1:2), for God's law is within His heart (Psa 40:8). The things of His Father (Lk 2:49) were His constant occupation. There is also an application for us. As priests we must always be in the things of God. It is not enough only to hear the Word. It is important that we think about it, that we process it.

The priest also receives food from the first fruits. The first fruits are that which has just come from the land. So it is about what is fresh and not something that has been in the barns for years. This indicates how important it is that we keep on using "grain", which speaks of the Lord Jesus as the grain of wheat that fell into the earth and died, through which we received eternal life (Jn 12:24). Every time, every day, we must experience a new joy, "the new wine" in the Lord, through what we read of Him in the Word. Every time, every new day, we must feed on new, fresh food and experience the new power of the Holy Spirit, "oil".

When our life of faith loses its freshness and we rely on old knowledge and experiences, dead orthodoxy arises. In the meetings this will manifest itself in following a pattern of habits or even the drafting of a liturgy. In both cases a human order is followed and there is nothing to be noticed of freshness and spontaneity in the coming together. Then we eat from old stock. This is the consequence if we do not feed the priest within us and if we forget the Levite, if we do not have an eye for what he distributes to promote the priestly service.

In addition to grain, new wine, and oil, "the first shearing of the sheep" must also be given to the priest. The wool of sheep here speaks of what comes from the new nature in the brothers and sisters. It is the warmth of the fellowship of the brothers and sisters. The first blessing is noticeable in the priestly service. Priestly worship shows how the "first shearing" is doing. There is a cold service if the 'warmth of the wool' is missing in the meetings. Then the priestly service is carried out of habit, without the awareness that we belong together as brothers and sisters. We do meet in

the meetings, but during the week we don't care about each other, we live alongside each other, without any interest in each other.

Priestly service exists because of God's sovereign election. He desires priests in His presence, that they may serve in His name. No priest can stand there and serve on account of who he is in himself, as if he personally has any quality that God can appreciate. God has placed His Name upon them. That is why priests are pleasant to Him. Priestly service never comes to an end. God wants it to be a continuous activity (Heb 13:15).

Deu 18:6-8 | Each Levite Shares in the Food

6 "Now if a Levite comes from any of your towns throughout Israel where he resides, and comes whenever he desires to the place which the LORD chooses, 7 then he shall serve in the name of the LORD his God, like all his fellow Levites who stand there before the LORD. 8 They shall eat equal portions, except [what they receive] from the sale of their fathers' [estates].

The service is performed by Levites in Jerusalem, by those who are 'on duty'. If a Levite who lives somewhere else in the land also wants to, he may also go and serve. He must not be hindered in this. He will not be surplus, there is room for him. There is an application for us here. We may gather as a church in the Name of the Lord Jesus to listen to God's Word, as happens in many places on the first day of the week. For the ministry of the Word, every 'Levite' must be given an opportunity. If someone has it on his heart to do a service through the Spirit, he must be given the opportunity to do so, even though there are numerous "ministering" brothers.

The Levites in Jerusalem live from what the Israelites bring. Should a new Levite arrive, they are obligated to share it with one more. The Levites living in Jerusalem may have the low thought that they will get less. This low thought should not be conceded to. It is also irrelevant whether the new Levite has another source of income, for example by selling the land he had in his place of origin.

The same is true of the 'Levite' in this day and age. Every work for the Lord deserves to be rewarded by God's people who benefit from it (Gal 6:6). It does not matter whether such a worker has another source of income. No distinction should be made between those who are so-called 'full-time' in

the work of the Lord and those who, in addition to their secular jobs, are directly engaged in the Lord's work. If it is good, every believer is fully engaged for the Lord (1Cor 15:58). The Lord determines the work for each one, and everything should be done for Him (Col 3:17).

Levites are given to the priests to help them in their service (1Chr 23:28-32). All of our service in the character of the Levite must be aimed at doing better justice to our service as priests, i.e. bringing sacrifices to God. Those who make themselves free for the sake of that service are entitled to the support of God's people (1Cor 9:14; 1Tim 5:17-18).

Deu 18:9-14 | Prohibition of Occult Practices

9 "When you enter the land which the LORD your God gives you, you shall not learn to imitate the detestable things of those nations. 10 There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, 11 or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. 12 For whoever does these things is detestable to the LORD; and because of these detestable things the LORD your God will drive them out before you. 13 You shall be blameless before the LORD your God. 14 For those nations, which you shall dispossess, listen to those who practice witchcraft and to diviners, but as for you, the LORD your God has not allowed you [to do] so.

God tells His people what kind of detestable things they will meet in the land. He warns them not to get involved in any way in it or open themselves up to it. The detestable things occur in different forms. Here we recognize the occultism that has fascinated many people today and more and more people fall prey to it. To let children go through the fire occurs in witchcraft. Spiritism is to use demonic powers to penetrate things that are hidden from us in order to obtain information in that way (1Sam 28:7).

Both a medium and other practitioners of occultic arts and those who engage in them, are detestable to the LORD. A person can only be influenced by all these forms of demonic practices if he consciously opens himself up to them. One empties one's mind and surrenders to passivity, so that the evil spirit is offered his field of activity and can do his pernicious work.

Any form of religion in which we surrender our will except to God is demonic. This effect can also occur through a false form of quiet time, a kind of meditating, without consciously thinking of the Lord Jesus. In the so-called “centers of silence”, demons are offered an excellent means to fill man’s mind with everything but God and His Word. The only remedy against demonic influences is to listen to God’s Word that calls us to be active and sober (1Pet 4:7).

God wishes His people to be “blameless” before Him (verse 13). This corresponds to the teaching of the letter to the Ephesians. In it we read that God has chosen us, believers who belong to the church, to be “holy and blameless before Him in love” (Eph 1:4). It is inconceivable that He, Who has chosen His own to such a special position, can allow them to open themselves up to pernicious influences.

Yet also the believers in Ephesus, and we too, are warned of this (Eph 4:17-19). In contrast to the walk of the nations, in which they are not allowed to participate, is set what is taught to them concerning Christ (Eph 4:20-24). Paul then attaches to this the practical consequences which their new position should bring with it, both in word and deed (Eph 4:25,28).

Deu 18:15-19 | The True Prophet

15 “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him. 16 This is according to all that you asked of the LORD your God in Horeb on the day of the assembly, saying, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, let me not see this great fire anymore, or I will die.’ 17 The LORD said to me, ‘They have spoken well. 18 I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. 19 It shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require [it] of him.

In these verses the difference becomes clear between listening to whom the nations listen and listening to the Prophet Who the LORD will give. Standing opposite to all the demonic influences of the previous verses is the Word. Preservation for the influence of demons lies in the fact that we

are closed to everything mentioned in verses 9-14 and that we are open to everything mentioned in verses 15-18.

The Prophet mentioned in these verses is the Lord Jesus (Acts 3:19-23; 7:37). Moses is a picture of Him. That He is “from your countrymen” indicates that, in order to be that Prophet, the Lord Jesus became Man. In the Gospels we find several references to the fact that He is the Prophet Who is announced here by Moses. Sometimes it is only a feeling (Jn 6:14; 7:40), sometimes an expression of faith (Jn 1:45). It is also contained in words spoken by the Lord (Jn 5:46; 12:49-50). The character of the Lord Jesus’ service as a Prophet is similar to that of Moses, but He is far above Moses, however special Moses as a prophet is (Deu 34:10). He is the Beloved Son.

The circumstances under which the promise of the Prophet like Moses is made make it clear that the Prophet will be a Mediator. The confessor who does not listen to His words shall die (Heb 12:25). As believers who belong to the church, we are warned not to despise the prophecies, the word that comes to us in the church on behalf of God (1Thes 5:20a).

Deu 18:20 | The False Prophet

20 But the prophet who speaks a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.’

Many false prophets have risen in the history of Israel who have presumptuously said to speak in the name of God (Jer 23:25; Eze 13:6; 1Kgs 22:6). They are the forerunners of the false prophet, the antichrist, the worthless shepherd (Zec 11:17a). The antichrist will not only pretend to speak for God, but will pretend to be God himself (2Thes 2:4). It is the pinnacle of overconfidence.

A false prophet can also claim to speak on behalf of other gods. He adapted his image of God to the audience he has in front of him. Whoever is not familiar with the Word of God will fall prey to his misleading language and share in the same judgment that this false prophet will suffer.

Deu 18:21-22 | The Touchstone: the Word of God

21 You may say in your heart, ‘How will we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?’ 22 When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the

thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.

The touchstone is and remains the Word of God. What is false always becomes public by comparing it with what is true. God's Word is the truth. Wonders and signs that are not based on the Word of God come from a wrong source.

The true prophet opposes the false prophets, who will occur especially in the end times. In the end times, false prophets, under Satan's direction, do miracles and wonders and signs, as the Lord Jesus did during His life on earth (cf. Acts 2:22 with 2Thes 2:9). The real prophet is someone who speaks the Word of God. It is not the wonders and signs that evidence whether anything comes from God, but whether it is in accordance with the Word.

Therefore, we should not be impressed by vague uncontrollable wonders, or by half wonders or wonders of limited duration. We can think of healings or speaking in languages or other miraculous expressions attributed to the Spirit, but which require man to become without will and to surrender himself to a miracle worker. We should not be afraid announcing God's judgment to such prophets, even though they dare to claim of themselves that they are men of God.

Deuteronomy 19

Introduction

This chapter and the following two chapters deal with different situations in which life is in danger. In view of these situations, Moses gives instructions to protect life. He wants to awaken in the people a holy respect for the life of man. In this chapter, three commandments of the law are discussed in more detail:

1. The sixth commandment: you shall not murder.
2. The eighth commandment: you shall not steal.
3. The ninth commandment: you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

Deu 19:1-13 | The Cities of Refuge

1 “When the LORD your God cuts off the nations, whose land the LORD your God gives you, and you dispossess them and settle in their cities and in their houses, 2 you shall set aside three cities for yourself in the midst of your land, which the LORD your God gives you to possess. 3 You shall prepare the roads for yourself, and divide into three parts the territory of your land which the LORD your God will give you as a possession, so that any manslayer may flee there. 4 “Now this is the case of the manslayer who may flee there and live: when he kills his friend unintentionally, not hating him previously— 5 as when [a man] goes into the forest with his friend to cut wood, and his hand swings the axe to cut down the tree, and the iron [head] slips off the handle and strikes his friend so that he dies—he may flee to one of these cities and live; 6 otherwise the avenger of blood might pursue the manslayer in the heat of his anger, and overtake him, because the way is long, and take his life, though he was not deserving of death, since he had not hated him previously. 7 Therefore, I command you, saying, ‘You shall set aside three cities for yourself.’ 8 “If the LORD your God enlarges your territory, just as He has sworn to your fathers, and gives you all the land which He promised to give your fathers— 9 if you carefully observe all this commandment which I command you today, to

love the LORD your God, and to walk in His ways always—then you shall add three more cities for yourself, besides these three. 10 So innocent blood will not be shed in the midst of your land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance, and bloodguiltiness be on you. 11 “But if there is a man who hates his neighbor and lies in wait for him and rises up against him and strikes him so that he dies, and he flees to one of these cities, 12 then the elders of his city shall send and take him from there and deliver him into the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die. 13 You shall not pity him, but you shall purge the blood of the innocent from Israel, that it may go well with you.

Moses has already appointed Bezer, Ramoth and Golan on the wilderness side of the Jordan as cities of refuge for Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh (Deu 4:41-43). Anyone who kills his neighbor unintentionally can flee there. In accordance with God’s original instructions (Num 35:9-34), he instructs Israel that when they have entered the land, they must also set aside three cities of refuge there. The actual choice is made by Joshua (Jos 20:7).

Moses says in verse 3: “You shall prepare the roads for yourself.” Non-biblical history mentions that it was the duty of the Senate to annually check the roads to the cities of refuge. Decayed roads had to be repaired and obstacles removed. There should be no river over which there was no bridge. The road should not be too narrow, but should have a certain width. At intersections the direction had to be indicated by signs with the words ‘Refuge, Refuge’. It seems that Isaiah has borrowed this precept of ‘road maintenance’ when he says: “A voice is calling, “Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; make smooth in the desert a highway for our God. “Let every valley be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; and let the rough ground become a plain, and the rugged terrain a broad valley”” (Isa 40:3-4).

Although any manslayer may flee to the city of refuge, this city only offers protection to someone who killed someone else by accident. The example of the man cutting wood in the forest makes that clear. A forest is accessible to everyone and cutting wood is free for everyone. In the example it is assumed that someone unintentionally causes the death of his friend. It does not happen from intent or premeditation, but purely and simply by

accident. With the example given here, any similar case can be compared for assessment.

The example also shows how human life is in danger on a daily basis. Death surrounds us and can strike at the most unimagined moment, without any reason. It is necessary to always be prepared. "Moreover, man does not know his time: like fish caught in a treacherous net and birds trapped in a snare, so the sons of men are ensnared at an evil time when it suddenly falls on them" (Ecc 9:12).

However, it is not only "an evil time" for him who is killed, but also for the one who killed him. Even if it is by accident, God takes the termination of life so high, that the manslayer has to flee to a city of refuge. He must stay there until the death of the high priest (Num 35:32). Thereby he is deprived of the enjoyment of his inheritance all this time.

Fleeing to the city of refuge can be applied to the sinner. The sinner must fear the wrath of God. In the gospel he can be pointed to Christ, of Whom the city of refuge can be seen as a picture. The city of refuge is a refuge given by God and thus a proof of His love and mercy, which indicates the escape route to man in his greatest need.

However, it applies not only to the sinner, but also to the people of God. And the latter is what we are talking about here in the first place. The special character of the cities of refuge is therefore that God can offer, in His love and mercy, to His people a solution in cases of great sin, but committed in ignorance. The free city for Israel is (still) the church (Acts 2:37-41). Since the foundation of the church, every Jew who repents of his sins must separate himself from what has always been held as God's people. That makes the step difficult, but it is the only outcome. The confession of sin to be complicit of the death of Christ is necessary. Peter tells this to the people in his speech on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:23).

In a subsequent speech he speaks of their acting in "ignorance" (Acts 3:17). Therefore repentance and forgiveness are possible for them, and if they do, they can still receive the promised blessings (Acts 3:19-21). This is completely in keeping with the prayer of the Lord Jesus on the cross: "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Lk 23:34). In this

same sense mercy can be shown to Paul, who was such an ardent persecutor of the church and thus of the Lord Jesus (1Tim 1:13).

We see a similar practice in the laws on the sin offering, where forgiveness is for the sins that are unintentionally, unknowingly committed (Lev 4:1,13,22,27). There is no forgiveness for sin committed intentionally – which means the sin of rebellion and apostasy from God (Num 15:30).

There is an interesting connection to be noted between the Prophet announced by God in the last chapter (Deu 18:15-19) and the killed neighbor in this chapter. In both cases we see here a picture of the Lord Jesus. In both cases, the relationship with Israel is paramount. This is shown by the fact that the section about the prophet of Deuteronomy 18 is quoted twice in the book of Acts. Peter applies the first quotation (Acts 3:22) to the Lord Jesus. Moreover, in the verses before it (Acts 3:14-17) Peter refers to the case of the killing of neighbor in Deuteronomy 19 when he says that his countrymen did it in ignorance.

The announcement of the Prophet in Deuteronomy 18 (Deu 18:15) is quoted a second time and applied to the Lord Jesus, by Stephen (Acts 7:37). Stephen, however, does not stand in front of an ignorant people, but in front of those who consciously rejected the Lord Jesus. He does not speak to them of ignorance. They are guilty murderers. They are no longer ignorant. That is why they are being overtaken by the blood avenger. They resist the Holy Spirit and have killed the Righteous of Whom they became murderers (Acts 7:51-52). The judgment will come upon them and was also exercised in the year 70 in the destruction of Jerusalem.

But there is also an application for Christianity. We live in the same position in which Israel has been in the days of the Lord Jesus. What has Christianity done with what has been entrusted to her? Israel is entrusted with the truth of the one God and of the coming Messiah. The truth of Christ as the Glorified One in heaven is entrusted to the church. What is left of it? For the mass of confessing Christians applies that, “they are enemies of the cross of Christ” and that they think of “the earthly things” (Phil 3:18-19) and not the things that are above (Col 3:1-2).

The result is the great mistake of ignoring the Holy Spirit on earth. The sin against the Holy Spirit is that sin which is directed against the Per-

son of the Holy Spirit, that He is set aside and ignored. Expressions of this are: Bible criticism with intellectual people, fanaticism with emotional people and legalism with strong-willed people. These are some great sins of Christianity that stand against the free working of the Holy Spirit and also of the Word.

We live in the time when we experience the downfall of Christianity, the post-Christian period. Characteristic of this period is the return to paganism (cf. Rom 1:22-32 with 2Tim 3:1-9). In 2 Timothy 3 it is said of Christians: "Holding to a form of godliness" (2Tim 3:5). These Christians are mentioned in the same breath as magicians and women molded in the character of Jezebel.

There is no way out for Christianity as a whole, but there is a way out for individuals. But to flee is necessary. We can think of what *God* gave in the Reformation. This work can be so depraved by man that it is necessary to flee to a place of refuge. This can be applied today to the church where you have always been, but where spiritual life has become suffocated, perhaps by ignorance.

The way of escape is shown: "Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness." Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these [things], he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work. Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love [and] peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart" (2Tim 2:19-22). This means to separate from the vessels of dishonor and go the way God indicates. Whoever doesn't flee, will eventually fall into the hand of the blood avenger.

The cities of refuge are priestly cities and Levite cities. Whoever takes refuge there comes to a place of blessing. The manslayer leaves a lot behind, but gets more in return. He may share in the blessings that are part of priests and Levites. He comes into a dwelling place of people for whom the LORD Himself is their inheritance. These cities lie on the mountains,

a picture of the heavenly things that are pondered there, the blessings of the church. [N.B. Many good orthodox churches still set their minds on earthly things. For example, they think they have to involve in politics.]

In verses 8-10 there follows a separate instruction with regard to three extra cities of refuge. Those may be added by the Israelites to the six already assigned cities when the LORD has enlarged their territory in accordance with the promises to the fathers (Gen 15:18). That enlargement of their area is again dependent on their obedience to the LORD. Because they have been unfaithful, they have not (yet) had the expansion of the area and therefore neither the cities.

Where are the priestly and Levite cities today that really serve as cities of refuge? As God's people today, we have not done any better than the Israelites did then. We too have become unfaithful. Therefore, the number of churches where the heavenly blessings are enjoyed is not really increasing. Because of our unfaithfulness, because the blessings do not really live for us, the road to the city of refuge, the local church, has become full of obstacles. Instead of clearing them away, we are adding more obstacles. This prevents the 'manslayer' from taking refuge there.

Deu 19:14 | Do Not Move the Boundary Marks

14 "You shall not move your neighbor's boundary mark, which the ancestors have set, in your inheritance which you will inherit in the land that the LORD your God gives you to possess.

This verse is not about caring for one's own inheritance, but about that of one's neighbor. This means that everyone recognizes and respects the right of the other to his or her inheritance. They have to make sure that everyone can fully enjoy their inheritance. Someone like Ahab doesn't care about that. He deprives Naboth of his inheritance (1Kgs 21:1-15).

Every brother and every sister has his and her own inheritance. That is first and foremost to be enjoyed by oneself in fellowship with God. As it is an inheritance *in* the land, the enjoyment is shared with others who also have an inheritance there. That is how we can all benefit from each other. It is therefore important to ensure that the neighbor is not deprived of his inheritance. It is a loss for all if one's inheritance is reduced. If one member

suffers loss, all members suffer loss: "And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it" (1Cor 12:26a).

A spiritual class does not exist in God's Word. The blessing of God does not come to us through only one channel. The exercise of the gifts is for the benefit of all. In the church therefore must be given the opportunity to do so.

To restrict the neighbor's boundary by moving his boundary mark is a great evil (Hos 5:10; Pro 22:28; Deu 27:17; Job 24:2; Pro 23:10). It means a restriction of his life in the land and thus a reduction of the joy over his inheritance. He who is guilty of it wrongs his neighbor. In a spiritual sense, it can happen when we make a fellow believer dependent on ourselves and do not teach him to live his life independently with the Lord. This can be done by manipulating the other person, bringing him to a behavior that he does not dare to decide without our permission.

Also in a practical sense, boundaries set by God can be ignored. With regard to sexuality and marriage, it is important to observe the boundaries set by God. In 1 Thessalonians 4 those boundaries are given: "For this is the will of God, your sanctification; [that is,] that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; [and] that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is [the] avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned [you]. For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. So, he who rejects [this] is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you" (1Thes 4:3-8).

Here it is clearly stated that one's own body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord (1Cor 6:13). It is equally clear that a given person has no right to the wife of his fellow brother. The Christian community fully upholds this boundary. The boundary of sexual intercourse lies around the marriage of that one man with that one woman. To violate that is to commit great injustice against his brother that the Lord will not let go unpunished.

Deu 19:15 | Two or Three Witnesses

15 "A single witness shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed.

A judge may not make a judgment on the basis of the testimony of one single witness in the event of a crime. For a case to be valid, there has to be two or three witnesses (Deu 17:6; Num 35:30; 1Jn 5:7; 2Cor 13:1).

This principle must also be followed by the New Testament church in the case of sin: "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen [to you], take one or two more with you, so that BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED" (Mt 18:15-16). The church may not judge on the basis of what one person says, even if it is a most reliable brother or sister. It must be investigated first and indeed with the first aim to win the offender. Only when sin is confirmed and it is confirmed that the offender does not want to confess his sin, should the matter be brought in and before the church.

What applies as a general rule to a brother or sister who sins, applies especially to someone who sins, while he occupies a prominent place in the church (1Tim 5:19). Those who are concerned in a special way with the welfare of the church are also exposed to criticism in a special way. Their mistakes also have greater consequences than those of an inconspicuous member of the church. A sin that leads to an accusation must be clearly proven. An accusation should not be based on suspicion and even less on an offended feeling.

Deu 19:16-21 | False Witness

16 If a malicious witness rises up against a man to accuse him of wrongdoing, 17 then both the men who have the dispute shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges who will be [in office] in those days. 18 The judges shall investigate thoroughly, and if the witness is a false witness [and] he has accused his brother falsely, 19 then you shall do to him just as he had intended to do to his brother. Thus you shall purge the evil from among you. 20 The rest will hear and be afraid, and will never again do such an evil thing

among you. 21 Thus you shall not show pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

A dispute between two persons, where a malicious witness charges someone for an offence, but where there are no witnesses, must be brought before the priests and judges. That comes down to presenting oneself before the LORD. The judges must carefully examine the charges. They will discuss their findings with the priests. The priests who are in the presence of God shall bring the matter before the LORD. It may then turn out that the charge was made up to do harm to the accused.

A false witness may not go unpunished (Pro 19:5,9). If an indictment is found to be false, the prosecutor should receive the punishment that would have been imposed if the indictment had been found to be true. If the crime of which he has accused his neighbor must be punished with death, then the false witness must be put to death; if the crime must be punished with scourging, then he must be scourged; and if it is a fine, then he must be fined for the same amount.

This practice will have a preventive effect on people who intend to harm their neighbor with a false accusation. They will think twice about doing so when they realize that if their falsehood is discovered, they themselves will suffer the fate they have sought to bring upon others.

The Lord Jesus did not dissolve the 'law of retribution'. Life for life, eye for eye, etc. remains fully in force for official law enforcement agencies. What the Lord does do, however, is to declare the use of the "law of retribution" inapplicable in *personal* matters. For those cases, He prescribes a different attitude: "You have heard that it was said, 'AN EYE FOR AN EYE, AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH.' But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you" (Mt 5:38-42). It does not befit a disciple of the Lord Jesus that he seeks personal retaliation or revenge for being personally wronged.

Deuteronomy 20

Introduction

In this chapter we find a people who possess the promised land and want to conquer more (Deu 19:8). This is in accordance with God's thoughts, for He wants to give expansion. Which in turn, is linked to the responsibility of man. There will be no expansion if there is no fight. These are voluntary wars, there is no obligation. That is why some exemptions are given. Additionally, to those afraid is given the opportunity to go home. There are other wars which God commands, and from which no one should escape, such as the ones against the Canaanites.

We can apply this to the local church. We may ask ourselves how many believers have been added to the local church in recent years. Has the area been expanded? It has to do with our spiritual power, through which we can evince where the church stands as aligned to God's thoughts. If there is a real desire to make that happen, it is possible to win others.

Defending the truth is not only defensive, but also offensive. We can win souls through the gospel and bring them to the place God has chosen to make His Name dwell. In New Testament language, this is the bringing of those who accepted the Lord Jesus into the local church of which the Lord Jesus Himself says: "I am there in their midst" (Mt 18:20).

Deu 20:1-4 | Encouragement by the Priest

1 "When you go out to battle against your enemies and see horses and chariots [and] people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them; for the LORD your God, who brought you up from the land of Egypt, is with you. 2 When you are approaching the battle, the priest shall come near and speak to the people. 3 He shall say to them, 'Hear, O Israel, you are approaching the battle against your enemies today. Do not be fainthearted. Do not be afraid, or panic, or tremble before them, 4 for the LORD your God is the one who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.'

With a view to the battle, the priest first addresses the people. In verse 5, the “officers” do so. The priest encourages the people. He points to the LORD their God, Who goes with them (Isa 41:10) to fight for them and to give them the victory. To know what it means that the LORD goes with them, Moses reminds the people of the redemption out of Egypt. The priest who speaks encouragements is a picture of the Lord Jesus. He encourages by His word (Jn 16:33) and by His intercession (Lk 22:32; Heb 7:25).

The enemy shows himself in his power and vast array and thereby tries to impress and deter God’s people. Horses and chariots essentially make up the army of hostile nations with which Israel must deal (Jos 17:16; Jdg 4:3; 1Sam 13:5; 2Sam 8:4; 1Chr 18:4; 19:18). Inclined as Israel is to be impressed by that display of strength, the priest gives a fourfold encouragement to face the enemy:

1. do not be fainthearted,
2. do not be afraid,
3. do not panic and
4. do not tremble.

The reason for this is the presence of the LORD. Together with the Lord, we need not fear the greatest and most powerful enemy (2Chr 32:7), for he is a defeated enemy from the outset. Without the Lord, however, even the most insignificant enemy has the upper hand.

Believers who encourage us as true priests, that is, from God’s presence, are urgently needed. There is no need for believers who want to impose on us a certain strategy or tactic, often derived from the model of the world. The gospel and the truth of God are not articles to be sold through management techniques. Believers who work with these means live predominantly in the presence of the world. They are under the influence of the thinking that reigns in the world, and not in the presence of the Lord and under the influence of His thinking.

Deu 20:5-9 | The Officers Speak to the People

5 The officers also shall speak to the people, saying, ‘Who is the man that has built a new house and has not dedicated it? Let him depart and return to his

house, otherwise he might die in the battle and another man would dedicate it. 6 Who is the man that has planted a vineyard and has not begun to use its fruit? Let him depart and return to his house, otherwise he might die in the battle and another man would begin to use its fruit. 7 And who is the man that is engaged to a woman and has not married her? Let him depart and return to his house, otherwise he might die in the battle and another man would marry her.' 8 Then the officers shall speak further to the people and say, 'Who is the man that is afraid and fainthearted? Let him depart and return to his house, so that he might not make his brothers' hearts melt like his heart.' 9 When the officers have finished speaking to the people, they shall appoint commanders of armies at the head of the people.

After the priest, the officers speak to the people. The priest *encourages* in view of the battle. The officials *discourage* certain categories from taking part in the battle. They must ensure that only qualified soldiers take up the fight. A believer is a qualified soldier if he can devote himself completely to the Lord, without having to deal with anything else (2Tim 2:4). This means that he goes into the battle in complete confidence on the Lord and only focused on Him.

The officers do not prohibit these categories from participating, but suggest that they first deal with the situation they have just found themselves in. These are people who have recently entered into a new situation to which certain expectations apply, expectations not yet realized by such as these. It concerns those who have

1. built a new house,
2. planted a vineyard, and
3. become engaged to a woman.

Anyone who has built a new house, but has not yet lived in it, may first move into it. This can be applied to someone who has just been converted. As a result he has come to live in the house of God. Now such a person must learn how to behave in that house (1Tim 3:15). The saying that we are 'saved to save' may sound good, but doesn't originate from the Word of God. A person must first learn to take his place in the local church. Only then can he go out.

Also someone who has planted a vineyard, but has not yet enjoyed its fruit, need not join the battle. He may wait for the first fruit to enjoy it. This waiting time can be as long as five years (Lev 19:23-25). Wine is a picture of joy (Jdg 9:13a). Here is the lesson that first we can and must enjoy the blessings ourselves in order to be able to distribute them. We can't testify truthfully to something we haven't enjoyed the experience of ourselves.

Someone who is engaged to a woman, also, need not join the battle (Deu 24:5). He may first marry and rejoice in intimacy with his wife; this includes sexual intercourse. The joy of sexual intercourse in marriage is also associated with the conception of offspring. It is the experience of the intimacy of love with the resulting fruit. This can be applied to the experience of the fellowship with the Lord Jesus and the fruit that this produces for Him. The exercise of fellowship with the Lord Jesus must come first. Then one can set off to the battle.

Another category is mentioned in verse 8. Everyone will have been afraid in the fight once. However, if someone is marked by a spirit of fear, the Lord cannot use him. Such a person may go back home. Paul acts as an officer when he sends John Mark back home (Acts 15:38). Mark spent some time with Paul, but the hardships have become too much for him (Acts 13:13). Being a Christian cost him too much. Taking someone like him to the work poses more of a hindrance than a help to the furtherance of the gospel.

With Gideon we too see the effect of this verse. He receives from the LORD the instruction to act according to the directions of this verse. As a result, no less than 22,000 men have dropped out of his already small army (Jdg 7:3)!

After everyone has had the opportunity to make a personal decision not to take part in the battle, the battle can begin. The army is provided with army commanders. They go first and are examples for the soldiers who follow. They do not define the way of fighting. God does.

Deu 20:10-15 | The Offer of Peace

10 "When you approach a city to fight against it, you shall offer it terms of peace. 11 If it agrees to make peace with you and opens to you, then all the

people who are found in it shall become your forced labor and shall serve you. 12 However, if it does not make peace with you, but makes war against you, then you shall besiege it. 13 When the LORD your God gives it into your hand, you shall strike all the men in it with the edge of the sword. 14 Only the women and the children and the animals and all that is in the city, all its spoil, you shall take as booty for yourself; and you shall use the spoil of your enemies which the LORD your God has given you. 15 Thus you shall do to all the cities that are very far from you, which are not of the cities of these nations nearby.

In the preceding verses, we have seen the preparations for the battle. From verse 10 onwards we have the actual battle. Yet the battle does not immediately ensue. The first thing to do is to offer peace to a city that one wants to conquer. Listening to this results in a covenant relationship. In this way what has been in the realm of the world is brought into the realm of God's people and put into their service. Not all cities submit so quickly. In instances of resistance, judgment must be exercised.

The full counsel of God is also contained in the proclamation of the gospel. When that truth is presented, we often encounter resistance. That resistance must be done away with. This is necessary, so that others can be won. The passage puts it in stark terms: the men (actioning resistance) are killed, the women (who submit) remain alive.

In the life of the believer there are different kinds of fights. We must distinguish between *our* fight and *God's* fight. Our fight stems from the fact that sin still dwells within us (Gal 5:17). This fight often prevents us from fighting God's fight.

If the flesh is kept down, we can put on the full armor of God and fight God's fight (Eph 6:12-13). This battle is fought in propagating, proclaiming and defending what God has entrusted to us. Thus Paul can say that he fought the good fight (2Tim 4:7). That is the God-given battle delivered to him: the gospel of peace.

'Battle' and 'service' are the same word in Hebrew. The proclamation of the Word is Levitical service and it is also battle. We are obligated to go out in that service. God sees the people as in the land. Similarly, He sees the

Christian as seated in Christ in the heavenly places. From that established position, in full awareness thereof, we may proclaim God's truth.

Deu 20:16-18 | Cities to Be Utterly Destroyed

16 Only in the cities of these peoples that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, you shall not leave alive anything that breathes. 17 But you shall utterly destroy them, the Hittite and the Amorite, the Canaanite and the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite, as the LORD your God has commanded you, 18 so that they may not teach you to do according to all their detestable things which they have done for their gods, so that you would sin against the LORD your God.

Nothing can be spared from the enemies mentioned in these verses. They should not be offered peace. The offer of peace applies only to cities *outside* the land. The cities of the nations of the land represent the strongholds of evil in which the wickedness in the heavenly places is expressed (Eph 6:12).

Deu 20:19-20 | Trees with Edible Fruit

19 "When you besiege a city a long time, to make war against it in order to capture it, you shall not destroy its trees by swinging an axe against them; for you may eat from them, and you shall not cut them down. For is the tree of the field a man, that it should be besieged by you? 20 Only the trees which you know are not fruit trees you shall destroy and cut down, that you may construct siegeworks against the city that is making war with you until it falls.

In a besieged city, elements may be present that are useful to the people of God. That is why we must work with distinction in the fight. Whatever is created by God as food and therefore is good (1Tim 4:4-5), we must spare. Here we must distinguish between the things of the world and the things of the earth or creation. For example, we may use the things from creation for spiritual purposes, thinking of things like buildings, implements and technique.

Trees do no harm to people. On the contrary, there are trees that bear fruit for the benefit of man. Only trees that do not produce fruit, that occupy the ground without generative purpose, should be cut down. Yet even the

destruction of inanimate things must be done with discernment. The Lord Jesus makes His disciples “gather up the leftover fragments so that nothing will be lost” which serves the maintenance of the life of man (Jn 6:12).

Deuteronomy 21

Introduction

This is a special chapter, which also forms a whole in the five sections that make it up. We find here the holiness of life and personal rights, seen from different angles. We also discover a marvelous overview of God's plans with His people. There are also spiritual applications to make.

Deu 21:1-9 | Removal of the Guilt of Innocent Blood

1 "If a slain person is found lying in the open country in the land which the LORD your God gives you to possess, [and] it is not known who has struck him, 2 then your elders and your judges shall go out and measure [the distance] to the cities which are around the slain one. 3 It shall be that the city which is nearest to the slain man, that is, the elders of that city, shall take a heifer of the herd, which has not been worked and which has not pulled in a yoke; 4 and the elders of that city shall bring the heifer down to a valley with running water, which has not been plowed or sown, and shall break the heifer's neck there in the valley. 5 Then the priests, the sons of Levi, shall come near, for the LORD your God has chosen them to serve Him and to bless in the name of the LORD; and every dispute and every assault shall be settled by them. 6 All the elders of that city which is nearest to the slain man shall wash their hands over the heifer whose neck was broken in the valley; 7 and they shall answer and say, 'Our hands did not shed this blood, nor did our eyes see [it]. 8 Forgive Your people Israel whom You have redeemed, O LORD, and do not place the guilt of innocent blood in the midst of Your people Israel.' And the bloodguiltiness shall be forgiven them. 9 So you shall remove the guilt of innocent blood from your midst, when you do what is right in the eyes of the LORD.

Here it is about someone who has died a violent death, while the perpetrator is unknown. The scene of the crime is the open country, not a city. The first murder in the history of mankind also occurs in the field (Gen 4:8). If no perpetrator is known, in society everyone normally goes unpunished. For God this is not so. For Him it is certain that there is guilt and to that

awareness the people must come. One of them is a murderer. The people must learn to see that guilt as *their* guilt.

The blood that has been shed is innocent blood (verses 9-10) in the sense that one does not know who the perpetrator is. Yet there is guilt, because it happened among the people. The whole land is involved (verses 1,8). To atone for the guilt of the land (verse 8), a sacrifice must be brought. God provides a means by which the general guilt of people and land will be removed. Should crime go unpunished, justice is not satisfied. If the perpetrator can't be traced, the guilt that rests on the land and the people must be removed in another way. The general guilt of the individual's act can also be seen in Joshua 7 (Jos 7:1; cf. 2Sam 21:1-2).

In Deuteronomy 19 a provision has been made for manslaughter in which the manslayer is known (Deu 19:1-13). In this chapter a provision is made in case the murderer is not known. To work forgiveness for the shed blood, a heifer's neck must be broken by the elders and these elders must then wash their hands over the heifer. During this washing of hands, the elders, as representatives of the people, have to declare themselves innocent of this shed blood. Then they must ask the LORD to keep his redeemed people innocent.

There is no atonement in the usual sense of the word here. Nothing happens with the blood of the heifer. It is rather atonement through justice. The heifer dies instead of the unknown murderer, through which the land is cleansed of guilt (cf. Num 35:33).

The prophetic application lays ahead in Israel's future. Israel will realize their culpability in the death of the Lord Jesus (Zec 12:10) at that time. Those alive at that time will not be literally responsible for His murder. They are literally innocent, but as a people they are guilty of bloodshed. Thus, the people, represented in the elders, stand in the valley: personally innocent, but corporately guilty. The fact that it takes place in a valley symbolically indicates the humiliation related to this event.

The heifer is brought "down to a valley with running water, which has not been plowed or sown". The running water speaks of the never-ending grace of God. The fact that the valley has not been plowed or sown indicates the absence of any human work or any human effort with the hope

of a future result. The work that God does for atonement is exclusively the result of His grace without any contribution from man.

The laying on of the hands is the identification with the murderer present in their midst, although he is unknown. By the sacrifice, the people are freed from the guilt that rests on them. The judgment strikes the heifer and not the guilty people as a whole. They wash their hands as a sign of identification with the sacrifice (Psa 26:6; 73:13) and not like Pilate, who didn't want to have anything to do with the sacrifice (Mt 27:24).

Both the murdered and the heifer represent the Lord Jesus. The murdering of the Lord Jesus (Acts 7:52) is the result of His rejection by man. Giving Christ as a means of reconciliation is the answer of God's grace. This can be seen on the cross. There man has brought the Christ and at the same time God gives Him as reconciliation.

There is also an application to the church. Evil that is present in a local church affects all the people of God. The borders of the land do not apply to the church of God. Yet not every person in the local gathering is equipped to deal with the evil that is present. This is done by the 'cities' closest to them, and not every single one of these, but specifically the elders and judges who represent the element of responsibility. It is important to know where the first spiritual responsibility lies. There must be a 'measured' approach as to who has the first responsibility.

An individual can only deal with evil if there is no guilt on his own hands. Only then can there be identification in the awareness that the whole people are guilty. It is about brothers who are closest in a spiritual sense. They can deal with it. They are brothers who, as priests, are accustomed to being in God's presence. They are not only concerned with serious evil as murder, but with "every assault" (verse 5). For such believers, it is important that the priestly and the judicial element are in balance.

Deu 21:10-14 | The Captured Woman

10 "When you go out to battle against your enemies, and the LORD your God delivers them into your hands and you take them away captive, 11 and see among the captives a beautiful woman, and have a desire for her and would take her as a wife for yourself, 12 then you shall bring her home to your house,

and she shall shave her head and trim her nails. 13 She shall also remove the clothes of her captivity and shall remain in your house, and mourn her father and mother a full month; and after that you may go in to her and be her husband and she shall be your wife. 14 It shall be, if you are not pleased with her, then you shall let her go wherever she wishes; but you shall certainly not sell her for money, you shall not mistreat her, because you have humbled her.

This section (verses 10-14) and the following section (verses 15-17) both deal with marriage and the special relationship between husband and wife. In both sections the Bible presents the relationship between God and His people as a pattern for marriage relationship.

The first section is about the marriage between an Israelite man and a woman from a foreign people imprisoned from war. This cannot be a woman from the nations of Canaan (Deu 20:16-18), but from one of the nations outside of the land (Deu 20:15). By marrying her he becomes her husband instead of her master. In this way, the woman enters into the rights of a daughter of Israel. The man may not therefore just send her away if he is no longer pleased with her (cf. Exo 21:8). God has allowed that someone sends away his wife. That is because of the hardness of man's heart, for "from the beginning it has not been this way" (Mt 19:7-8). He also binds to this consent various command for the protection of the woman.

Before the Israelite can take the captured woman to be his wife, various conditions must also be met. It should not be just an excitement of lust. When he comes home, she shall shave her head, trim her nails and remove her former clothes. Everything that has made her attractive in her previous state and has characterized her, must be disposed of.

The woman's long hair indicates the place she has in creation in relation to the man (1Cor 11:15). She indicates with it that she wants to be submissive and devoted to the man. If she cuts it off, she detaches herself from that place. For the captured woman, cutting her hair and trimming her nails denotes disavowal of her previous relationship status. She renews vows as it were, by letting them grow again in the new relationship into which she now has come. She may also mourn the previous relationship from which she was removed for a month. She is given time to grieve for what

came before, in preparation for what is yet to come. That too is a gracious provision from God.

In the prophetic application, this section (verses 10-14) precedes the previous section (verses 1-9). As said, the relationship between God and Israel is compared with that of husband and wife (Eze 16:1-14). In that relationship there is an engagement time, a time of detachment from the old state, here a month. This happened when God redeemed Israel from Egypt and accepted it as His people (Jer 2:2).

A time comes, however, when God can no longer be pleased with her. In verse 14, specific indication is not given as to the root cause of displeasure. In the break that has come between God and His people, there is no question or doubt. The root cause of God's displeasure with her is entirely due to Israel's behavior. He sent her away because of her unfaithfulness that culminated in the rejection of His Son, which is evident in the picture of verses 1-9.

God did not sell His people, but let them go where they themselves wanted to go. Nonetheless, He has not given up His rights to His people. This is discussed in the following section (verses 15-17).

Deu 21:15-17 | The Right of the Firstborn

15 "If a man has two wives, the one loved and the other unloved, and [both] the loved and the unloved have borne him sons, if the firstborn son belongs to the unloved, 16 then it shall be in the day he wills what he has to his sons, he cannot make the son of the loved the firstborn before the son of the unloved, who is the firstborn. 17 But he shall acknowledge the firstborn, the son of the unloved, by giving him a double portion of all that he has, for he is the beginning of his strength; to him belongs the right of the firstborn.

Having two women is not according to God's thoughts. Yet God, through circumstances brought about by sin, can teach us something about the relationship He has with the two peoples to which He has committed Himself: Israel and the church. As the bond of marriage is inseparable and the relationship in marriage is that of love, the picture of marriage is apt to understand these relationships.

In the example we see a man who has two wives. One wife is loved by him, the other is unloved. Each of the wives has borne him sons. The right of the firstborn comes to the fore here. In such an instance, the man may not be led by his natural feelings. If the firstborn son is the son of the unloved wife, he must give him the right of the firstborn. He is entitled to the double portion of the inheritance. In this case, the man may not give that double portion to the son of the beloved.

When we apply this to the relationship God has with His earthly people, Israel, and His heavenly people, the church, we see the following. God had to reject His earthly people, as verse 14 indicates. They have been given the place of the unloved (cf. Hos 1:6,8-9).

Following on from the rejection of His earthly people, another people took their place. This people are a people from the nations that are not God's chosen. Now, however, they are accepted by Him to be His people (Rom 9:25). In so doing, God has established analogous relationships. The church is now God's beloved.

That does not mean that God has rejected Israel forever. The firstborn is the son of the unloved and he gets the rights of the firstborn. God will indeed fulfil all the promises He has made to this people; they get their double part.

In Jacob and his two wives – Lea and Rachel – we see such an illustration. Jacob works for Rachel and gets Lea. After that he works for Rachel and gets her too. In a similar vein, the Lord Jesus came for Israel yet He received the church. But He will also have Israel, as Jacob received Rachel. Israel has the rights of the eldest. The people are now the unloved wife, but soon the people will again become the beloved wife and will have the rights that are in connection with the Firstborn, the Lord Jesus, Who was born from her.

The church is now connected with the Lord Jesus (2Cor 11:2). Can He find His pleasure in us? God allows also for the Christian testimony to go its own way. On the whole, He no longer is pleased with it. Nevertheless God continues to recognize in that Christian testimony what this principle of first birth represents: in the midst of this Christian testimony is "the

church of the firstborn” (Heb 12:23). God will never fail to acknowledge what He Himself has worked in it.

Deu 21:18-21 | The Rebellious and Disobedient Son

18 “If any man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey his father or his mother, and when they chastise him, he will not even listen to them, 19 then his father and mother shall seize him, and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gateway of his hometown. 20 They shall say to the elders of his city, ‘This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey us, he is a glutton and a drunkard.’ 21 Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death; so you shall remove the evil from your midst, and all Israel will hear [of it] and fear.

Both with Israel and the church the important thing is a remnant. That remnant will repent and receive the blessing of the firstborn. The whole will have the character of “a stubborn and rebellious son”. They don’t want to obey and will be judged. As the parents have to do with the rebellious son, likewise God deals with stubborn confessors.

In this section it is about an extraordinary contempt for God’s commandment to honor the parents. All the men of the city must stone the rebellious son to death. This son is a picture of the wicked mass of the people who will die in judgment.

The remnant, which is miserable and poor, is reconciled, while the whole of the firstborn son once called out of Egypt by God (Exo 4:22) will perish. The same applies to the church. Those who belong to the church bear the name ‘son’, but God cannot recognize them as such if they do not separate themselves from evil (2Cor 6:17-18).

Deu 21:22-23 | Burial of a Hanged Person

22 “If a man has committed a sin worthy of death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, 23 his corpse shall not hang all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him on the same day (for he who is hanged is accursed of God), so that you do not defile your land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance.

In these verses we have a third aspect of the cross of Calvary: the death of the Lord Jesus as the Accursed, "for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"" (Gal 3:13). The cross reveals:

1. The guilt of mankind, because he brought Him to the cross (verses 1-9).
2. God's grace toward mankind (verses 10-13).
3. That God must renounce Him when He makes Him a curse (verses 22-23).

The remnant has earned nothing. They exist as "a remnant according to [God's] gracious choice" (Rom 10:5). In itself it is nothing better than the wicked mass. It owes everything to Him Who has become a curse. They will look on Him "Whom they have pierced" (Zec 12:10) and that is their salvation.

Verse 23 prescribes that a hanged person must be buried. This also happened to the Lord Jesus. The spiritual application of this to us is important. Our old man must be buried. We testify of this in baptism (Rom 6:4a). We must constantly take this into account throughout our lives. The question is: Do we make true what we confessed in baptism? Nothing more of the old man should become visible in our lives (Rom 6:6). God no longer wants to see anything of the curse. The grave is locked above us and nothing more of our old life should be visible.

God wants to see in our lives the new, that we walk in newness of life (Rom 6:4b). God has more pleasure in us if we behave as true firstborn sons, which is the case if we would understand more of the curse that God has pronounced on, and exercised upon the Lord Jesus.

Deuteronomy 22

Introduction

This chapter concludes a section of the book that started in Deuteronomy 12. Deuteronomy 12-22 are an elaboration of the commandments God has given on the stone tablets. In the section of Deuteronomy 12:1-16:18 we see explicated the commandments of the first tablet that govern the relationship between God and man. The second tablet is about the relationship between man and his neighbor. This can be seen in the section of Deuteronomy 16:18-22:30.

Deu 22:1-4 | Caring for the Property of Others

1 "You shall not see your countryman's ox or his sheep straying away, and pay no attention to them; you shall certainly bring them back to your countryman. 2 If your countryman is not near you, or if you do not know him, then you shall bring it home to your house, and it shall remain with you until your countryman looks for it; then you shall restore it to him. 3 Thus you shall do with his donkey, and you shall do the same with his garment, and you shall do likewise with anything lost by your countryman, which he has lost and you have found. You are not allowed to neglect [them]. 4 You shall not see your countryman's donkey or his ox fallen down on the way, and pay no attention to them; you shall certainly help him to raise [them] up.

Here we see the opposite of "you shall not steal", namely that we must see to it that our countryman or [literally:] brother does not lose anything. What applies in the case of an enemy (Exo 23:4), applies all the more to a brother. For us, the literal meaning of the ten commandments and its effect is not the first meaning, but the spiritual meaning.

Three times in these verses we read about the need to pay attention to the care of a brother's property. Not bringing back something our brother has lost, after having witnessed said loss occurring, is the same as stealing. We have a responsibility to bring it back. It is an act according to the principle of Matthew 7 (Mt 7:12), with the difference here being that the starting

point is not ourselves, but our brother. There is no self-interest present. Everything speaks of the care for the fellow brother or sister (cf. Phil 2:21) and not the most advantageous personal position.

A brother who has lost an ox or a sheep, has less to sacrifice. We can apply that to a brother who has lost his gratitude. He no longer has a view of the blessing in the heavenly places and sees only his entanglements in earthly worries. We may give him back his gratitude for the wonderful works of the Lord Jesus. We do this by talking to him about it.

Many Christians have lost sight of the heavenly blessings. These are blessings that are connected with the glorified Man in heaven and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the church. Many are – spiritually speaking – far removed from the place where the Lord Jesus is in the midst. They do not know that place of separation. If we meet them, we can give this back to them.

If they are too far away, we can keep it at home, as a picture of the local church. When they come into the house, when they find it after they have searched for it, they get those blessings back. These are their own and actual blessings. Those who look for it will find it again.

The donkey is a pack animal and represents here the service to Christ. The donkey that has been lost speaks of the fact that the service for Christ is no longer performed. This may be the result, for example, of an overly busy job in society or of giving priority to all kinds of earthly things over serving Christ. In so doing, sometimes others must exert themselves more for the kingdom of God than would be otherwise necessary. Returning the donkey suggests that someone is given a new view of his call and commitment to service.

The garment speaks of the comportment that people see of us. Christian comportment can be subject to loss. The garment also represents our Christian standing. Hence we are clothed with garments of salvation, and a robe of righteousness (Isa 61:10). Many do not know their Christian standing or comportment in Christ Jesus. We can tell them about it or wait for the right opportunity to do so.

In verse 4, donkey and ox are both a picture of service (verse 10). A person who wants to do a service for Christ can be so weighed down by it that he

succumbs and gives up. If we see that, we should not impose any more burdens on him. It is important to encourage him and to help him to stand up.

Deu 22:5 | Dress Code

5 "A woman shall not wear man's clothing, nor shall a man put on a woman's clothing; for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD your God.

In verses 5-12 it is about the natural aspects of our existence. The first aspect is the distinction between man and woman. God wants this to be visible in the position both occupy and in the behavior of both, of which clothing speaks. It is about public manifestation, of the behavior perceived by others.

It is true that in Christ "there is neither male nor female" (Gal 3:28). That concerns the position in Christ before God. Here it is about the behavior in the world, about the order of creation of God. This is also what the believers have to deal with: "But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman" (1Cor 11:3).

It is an abomination to God if the distinction in manifestation vanishes outwardly. Everyone has been given his and her special place by God. One is not allowed to take the place God has given to the other. It is about the complete assemblage that belongs to the man or woman and is put on by the other person. This change of role is an abomination to God.

God wants the difference in behavior between men and women to be taken into account in His house. In the rules of conduct He has given for His house (1Tim 3:15), this difference is clearly expressed: "Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension. Likewise, [I want] women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments, but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness. A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. For it was Adam who was first created, [and] then Eve. And [it was] not Adam [who] was

deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression” (1Tim 2:8-14). The pursuit of emancipation in the world, which has also nestled itself in Christianity, does not change these indications.

Deu 22:6-7 | Nest with Mother and Young or Eggs

6 “If you happen to come upon a bird’s nest along the way, in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs, and the mother sitting on the young or on the eggs, you shall not take the mother with the young; 7 you shall certainly let the mother go, but the young you may take for yourself, in order that it may be well with you and that you may prolong your days.

By the addition “that it may be well with you and that you may prolong your days”, there is a connection between this regulation and the fifth commandment, that of honoring father and mother. A similar addition is given to the fifth commandment (Deu 5:16). In the application we can see the relationship between the elderly and the young in the church. There are fathers, young men and little children (1Jn 2:13). Older and younger believers are brothers of each other, but there is also a distinction in spiritual growth.

In this regulation we can learn something from motherly feelings. God knows motherly affections: “As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; and you will be comforted in Jerusalem” (Isa 66:13). The apostle Paul and his associates also have these: “But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing [mother] tenderly cares for her own children” (1Thes 2:7). In the church, these motherly feelings should not be absent. God’s intention is that motherly feelings should be able to express themselves freely and that the fruit of motherly feelings should be enjoyed. This promotes the quality and duration of life in the land.

Deu 22:8 | A Parapet for the Roof

8 “When you build a new house, you shall make a parapet for your roof, so that you will not bring bloodguilt on your house if anyone falls from it.

When building a new house, attention should be paid to the safety of those who come into that house. The builder must carefully consider others’

wellbeing. He has to make sure that residents and visitors of the house do not get killed by accident.

Motherly feelings should not be at the expense of safety. The construction of a parapet on the roof of the house – an elevated part around the roof, a safety wall, to prevent anyone from falling off the roof – is also an activity that comes from the care of a mother. We can apply that to spiritual activity in teaching believers about their behavior in the house of God. It can be about believers newly arrived at a local church. It may also involve establishing a new local church.

Consideration must be given in that situation to believers that they do not fall or stumble. Paul exhorts us not to become a stumbling block, that is to say to do nothing that tempts another to sin (1Cor 8:9). He also applies this to himself (1Cor 8:13). Having such a mindset ensures the wellbeing of the other person, these are affections in which the other person is central.

Deu 22:9-11 | What Shall Not Go Together

9 “You shall not sow your vineyard with two kinds of seed, or all the produce of the seed which you have sown and the increase of the vineyard will become defiled. 10 “You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together. 11 “You shall not wear a material mixed of wool and linen together.

These verses deal with the prohibition of mixing things that should not be mixed. Three things are mentioned:

1. the vineyard, which speaks of joy,
2. plowing with an ox and a donkey together, which speaks of the service to the Lord,
3. a garment of a material mixed of wool and linen together, which speaks of behavior.

Here we find pictures of what Paul says in the second letter to the Corinthians: “Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols?” (2Cor 6:14-16a).

The sowing has to do with the sowing of the Word of God. "The seed is the Word of God" (Lk 8:11). That must be pure and only God's Word and must not be mixed with some word of men. The preaching of the Word must be balanced. For example, both God's love and God's holiness must be spoken of. A one-sided preaching with all emphasis only on God's holiness or only on God's love is wrongful seed sowing.

It is wrong seed, for example, if Christians are told to bear political responsibility. We should not, on the one hand, teach the corruption of the flesh and, on the other, point to means that are in fact tantamount to restoring the flesh.

Here it is about the seed for a vineyard. We see in this the picture that a right, balanced preaching of the Word will promote the joy of fellowship with God and the Lord Jesus, the Father and the Son, "so that our joy may be made complete" (1Jn 1:4). To know this true joy, only good and unmixed seed, that is "the living and enduring word of God" (1Pet 1:23), must be sown.

If two varieties of seed are sown, the increase of the vineyard will become defiled. The increase must be excluded from consumption and is a loss. The expected 'joy' is not that in which God can share.

It is forbidden to plow with an ox and a donkey together. This represents doing a work together for the Lord. An ox is a clean animal and a donkey is an unclean animal. Its application we see in the above mentioned word of Paul in 2 Corinthians 6 (2Cor 6:14). A believer cannot do a work for the Lord together with an unbeliever.

Wool and linen shall not be used together for the purpose of making one garment out of them (cf. Lev 19:19; Zep 1:8). Wool is good and linen is good, but not to be mixed together. Linen has to do with the service in the sanctuary. We see this in the linen in the curtains and court of the tabernacle and the linen clothes of the priests (Exo 26:9; 28:4b-5). However, there is no room for wool in this service (Eze 44:17).

Wool reflects the natural warmth of the animal. Natural feelings are not wrong. They have their own place. But they must be put aside in what has to do with the sanctuary. There the service must be done according to what Scripture says about it and not according to human feelings. It is not

about a service that makes us feel comfortable, but that with which God is comfortable toward. This is fulfilled if we follow the instructions of His Word.

Deu 22:12 | Tassels on the Corners of the Garment

12 “You shall make yourself tassels on the four corners of your garment with which you cover yourself.

The four corners of the garment are related to our entire conduct in all contacts to produce spiritual fruit therein. Here there is no question of a cord of blue (Num 15:38), for the precepts in this book refer to the land and not to the wilderness. We are not in the wilderness anymore; we are in the land. Spiritually speaking, therefore, we do not need the memory of heaven, the cord of blue. If we are heavenly minded, this is reflected in all our actions.

Deu 22:13-21 | Accusation of Not Being a Virgin

13 “If any man takes a wife and goes in to her and [then] turns against her, 14 and charges her with shameful deeds and publicly defames her, and says, ‘I took this woman, [but] when I came near her, I did not find her a virgin,’ 15 then the girl’s father and her mother shall take and bring out the [evidence] of the girl’s virginity to the elders of the city at the gate. 16 The girl’s father shall say to the elders, ‘I gave my daughter to this man for a wife, but he turned against her; 17 and behold, he has charged her with shameful deeds, saying, “I did not find your daughter a virgin.” But this is the evidence of my daughter’s virginity.’ And they shall spread the garment before the elders of the city. 18 So the elders of that city shall take the man and chastise him, 19 and they shall fine him a hundred [shekels] of silver and give it to the girl’s father, because he publicly defamed a virgin of Israel. And she shall remain his wife; he cannot divorce her all his days. 20 “But if this charge is true, that the girl was not found a virgin, 21 then they shall bring out the girl to the doorway of her father’s house, and the men of her city shall stone her to death because she has committed an act of folly in Israel by playing the harlot in her father’s house; thus you shall purge the evil from among you.

The marriage relationship provides vital evidence as to our required conduct with regard to heavenly things. The situations Moses presents here are all deviations from God's blueprint for marriage. They show what man is capable of in the most intimate relationship. The marriage relationship is a picture of the connection between God and His earthly people Israel, and also of the connection between the Lord Jesus and the church, the heavenly people.

There are practical and spiritual lessons to be learned for us personally and for the church. In verse 13 it becomes immediately clear what the order is: first marry and only then sexual intercourse. Marital intercourse can only exist after husband and wife are "joined in holy matrimony". All sexual intercourse outside of a marriage coupling is fornication.

In verses 13-21 the case occurs of a man who develops an aversion toward his wife. He accuses her of previous fellowship with another man. The accusation may be false. This will become clear when the girl's parents can provide the evidence of her innocence. In that case, the man is disciplined, has to pay a fine and may never send her away.

If the accusation turns out to be true, the girl must be stoned in front of the doorway of her father's house. Until her marriage she is attached to her father's house. She therefore committed this shameful act in connection with her father's house. The fact that the death penalty must be carried out in order to eliminate evil from the midst of Israel shows how seriously God takes this shameful act.

The prescription in these verses is a protection against false accusation by the man. The prescription mitigates against a man dealing arbitrarily with his wife. With such regulation, he will be careful not to falsely accuse his wife.

We can apply these verses to the relationship between God and His people. It is a question of making manifest whether His people are faithful to Him or unfaithful. For God this is not a question. Of course, His knowledge is perfect. For Him, there is no need for such a search. And He certainly does not act arbitrarily.

The question is whether our spiritual parents – not we ourselves – can provide the proofs of our loyalty to God or not. If we have surrendered

to things that are not connected with Christ, the proofs of our 'virginity' cannot be provided. The opposite will be the case. Unfaithfulness is in connection with our past life, without God and without Christ. This should be recognized and judged as such. Virginity represents a principle that applies to every believer. It means that there is no fellowship with persons or teachings who are not in fellowship with Christ (Rev 14:4; 2Cor 11:2-3).

Christ will soon tell the false church that it she not virginal. The false Christian church, the great Babylon, the roman catholic church, which pretends to be the bride of Christ, is called "the great whore" and "the mother of the whores" (Rev 17:1,5). The false accusations against those who wish to be faithful to the Lord will then turn out to be unfounded. Proof will be provided.

Deu 22:22 | Penalty for Adultery

22 "If a man is found lying with a married woman, then both of them shall die, the man who lay with the woman, and the woman; thus you shall purge the evil from Israel.

Here is no suspicion, but someone is caught in adultery. The sin of adultery and fornication demands discipline. In Israel this means death, which brings an end to life in the land and the enjoyment of its blessing. In the church it means being removed from among the church, both from the Lord's Supper and from other forms of fellowship (1Cor 5:13b).

Excommunication by the church has for a purpose that the sinner will repent, confess and break with sin. After this, the discipline can be undone, forgiveness can be pronounced, and there can be a return to the fellowship of the believers: "Sufficient for such a one is this punishment which [was inflicted] by the majority, so that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort [him], otherwise such a one might be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. Wherefore I urge you to reaffirm [your] love for him" (2Cor 2:6-8).

Deu 22:23-24 | Adultery in the City

23 "If there is a girl who is a virgin engaged to a man, and [another] man finds her in the city and lies with her, 24 then you shall bring them both out to the

gate of that city and you shall stone them to death; the girl, because she did not cry out in the city, and the man, because he has violated his neighbor's wife. Thus you shall purge the evil from among you.

Those who are engaged have entered into a connection with commitments. The engaged woman is called “his neighbor’s wife” at the end of verse 24. In the event of unfaithfulness to this existing connection, disciplinary action must be taken. This case views our relationship with the Lord Jesus from the point of view that the wedding of the Lamb has not yet taken place. That, however, is not a license to seek satisfaction in the world and to enter into relationships that push the Lord Jesus to the background. Anything that makes Him jealous is a denial of our connection with Him.

Sexual intercourse involving someone who is engaged, here has two distinguishing factors: unfaithfulness that takes place in the city and unfaithfulness that takes place in the field. When there is sexual intercourse in the city, there is guilt and the woman and the man both must be stoned to death. In case of sexual intercourse in the field, the engaged woman is not guilty and only the man has to die.

If an engaged woman in the city has sexual intercourse with another man, it means that she has contributed to the unfaithfulness. She might have been able to shout for help. On a balance of probabilities, there is a greater likelihood that a cry for help in a well populated city will meet with speedy assistance. In the city, someone who is engaged is not in as great a danger. It is a safe environment, because there are other people around.

This can be applied to a local church. If someone is part of it, but he allows influences in his life that leads away from Christ, then he deliberately withdraws from the fellowship of the believers. Such a person could have asked for help from fellow believers. To belong to a local church with the corrective influence of spiritual fathers and mothers is a great blessing, and provides safeguard from evil. That is the blessing of the city.

Deu 22:25-27 | Penalty for Rape in the Field

25 “But if in the field the man finds the girl who is engaged, and the man forces her and lies with her, then only the man who lies with her shall die. 26 But you shall do nothing to the girl; there is no sin in the girl worthy of death,

for just as a man rises against his neighbor and murders him, so is this case. 27 When he found her in the field, the engaged girl cried out, but there was no one to save her.

Believers are not always in the company of other believers. They sometimes are in the field, the world. There they can be abused against their will. There are situations in which one cannot always escape corruption. We could think, for example, of believing children with wicked parents or a believing wife who has an unbelieving, hostile husband. They sometimes live in a family situation where impurity still reigns supreme. Whenever help is called for, God's grace is present.

Deu 22:28-29 | Sexual Intercourse Before Marriage

28 "If a man finds a girl who is a virgin, who is not engaged, and seizes her and lies with her and they are discovered, 29 then the man who lay with her shall give to the girl's father fifty [shekels] of silver, and she shall become his wife because he has violated her; he cannot divorce her all his days.

This is an extramarital sexual intercourse, but without unfaithfulness to an existing connection, either by marriage or by engagement. Nevertheless, this act has consequences. The man is obliged to take her to wife and give the girl's father a dowry.

It is against God's will that sexual intercourse happens before marriage. If it happens, then those who have done it must bear the consequences of their deeds. They must not shirk their responsibilities. The man may never send her away. They are connected for life.

[However, see also Exodus 22, which adds to the same case that the father has the right to refuse to allow his daughter to be attached to that man: "If a man seduces a virgin who is not engaged, and lies with her, he must pay a dowry for her [to be] his wife. If her father absolutely refuses to give her to him, he shall pay money equal to the dowry for virgins" (Exo 22:16-17).]

Deu 22:30 | Unnatural Sexual Intercourse

30 "A man shall not take his father's wife so that he will not uncover his father's skirt.

This case of sexual intercourse goes against the natural feelings of sexual intercourse. This is not only about extramarital sexual intercourse, but also about unnatural sexual intercourse. There is not only a lack of respect for God's institution of marriage, but also a lack of respect for parents (Gen 35:22; 49:4).

This case occurs in the church in Corinth: "It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife" (1Cor 5:1). It is therefore not surprising that all kinds of fornication are also found in many churches today.

What should surprise us is that such sexual sins are no longer called sin. The church has become a free state for sin instead of a place wherein discipline is exercised. Fortunately, in Corinth the instructions given by Paul regarding this has been obeyed (2Cor 7:10-12).

Deuteronomy 23

Introduction

The spirit of all the precepts given here and in the previous chapter is instructive. God deigns to take note of all these things. He also teaches His people sensitivity, courtesy, respect for others, tenderness. They are feelings that repel the roughness and drive the hardness out of the peoples' hearts.

Deu 23:1-2 | The Emasculated and the Illegitimate Child

1 "No one who is emasculated or has his male organ cut off shall enter the assembly of the LORD. 2 No one of illegitimate birth shall enter the assembly of the LORD; none of his [descendants], even to the tenth generation, shall enter the assembly of the LORD.

In verses 1-14 we see two names for the people of God:

1. the assembly of the LORD (verses 1-8, six times) and
2. the camp (verses 9-14, six times).

With the "assembly of the LORD" is meant the meetings of God's people; the "camp" is about fighting and being able to do so. Both are connected with God's presence in the midst of His people. It is about the assembly of God, not our own. If we understand this properly, it will save us from seeking what we like. We then will also want to guard the holiness of that place.

Not "enter the assembly of the LORD" seems to refer to the meetings of God's people to honor Him. Four categories are excluded from participation in the religious meetings of Israel. This exclusion should prevent any member of the people from entering into a relationship with any of the persons mentioned.

In the case of an emasculated person, external intervention was made in the God-created nature of the reproduction of life. These are those whom the Lord Jesus speaks of, when He speaks of "eunuchs who were made

eunuchs by men” (Mt 19:12). Such an act is contrary to the character of God’s people. Therefore, such a person may not be accepted as a member of God’s people.

[NB This prohibition also gives food for thought when it comes to modern means and techniques to prevent conceiving children without any medical necessity.]

The eunuch mentioned in Acts 8 is an example of the grace that goes beyond the law (Acts 8:26-39). The word “eunuch” (Acts 8:27) is literally “emasculated”, which is castration. Yet he is introduced into the blessing of God. Grace gives that way because grace in the work of Christ nullifies the previous state (cf. Isa 56:3-5).

The holiness of God never disables the grace of God, by which obstacles can be removed. Without the commandment being invalidated, all people can be brought into the church of God. Grace never nullifies God’s holiness, but maintains it completely. Grace unlocks a way in which God’s holiness is fulfilled. That way was opened by the Lord Jesus on the cross.

The emasculated can also be seen as someone who confesses with his lips that he is a Christian, but his life does not show it. There can be no fruit with ‘an emasculated’. He has no connection with the vine (Jn 15:4). Superficially, it is often difficult to determine whether someone is ‘emasculated’ or not.

An illegitimate child or mongrel person is someone who has been conceived in fornication. The word is found one other time in the Old Testament in Zechariah chapter 9: “And a mongrel race will dwell in Ashdod” (Zec 9:6). The time period “the tenth generation” does not mean that the eleventh generation can be part of it. This expression should be understood as an always enduring matter. Thus the Lord Jesus says that forgiveness must be accorded up to “seventy times seven” times (Mt 18:22). That is also in the sense of always.

In a spiritual sense, illegitimate children are people who do not participate in the discipline of God, because God does not know them as sons (Heb 12:8). They seem to belong to God’s people, but that is only to the eye. Inwardly there is no life from God.

Deu 23:3-8 | Who May Not Enter the Assembly

3 No Ammonite or Moabite shall enter the assembly of the LORD; none of their [descendants], even to the tenth generation, shall ever enter the assembly of the LORD, 4 because they did not meet you with food and water on the way when you came out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you. 5 Nevertheless, the LORD your God was not willing to listen to Balaam, but the LORD your God turned the curse into a blessing for you because the LORD your God loves you. 6 You shall never seek their peace or their prosperity all your days. 7 "You shall not detest an Edomite, for he is your brother; you shall not detest an Egyptian, because you were an alien in his land. 8 The sons of the third generation who are born to them may enter the assembly of the LORD.

Apart from given individuals, certain peoples are also not allowed to join God's chosen population. The Ammonite and Moabite have a distinct connection with God's people, but in the course of their history they have proven averse to God's people. On the one hand they refused the people of God the food they had asked for, and on the other they sought to curse the people of God.

As in the previous verses, there is a prohibition on the entering into the people of God of members of these peoples up to the tenth generation. That this is a prohibition forever is evident from the application of this law by Nehemiah (Neh 13:1). By the time of Nehemiah, we are in excess of ten generations.

God not only reminds His people of the evil treatment these nations have perpetrated, but that He has turned the curse into a blessing. The reason for this is that He loves them. So, they have not missed any good thing from the refusals faced and the hatred directed their way. On the contrary, it gave God the opportunity to assure them of His love.

In the same way, we may view the conduct that some so-called kindred people sometimes show toward the believers. Those who truly belong to the Lord will face the rejection and hatred of nominal Christians. Ammon and Moab are of Israelite family stock. There is an evident connection with God's people. We can think of people who grew up in a religious family, but then turned away and even tried to bring curse upon God's people.

That notwithstanding, in these peoples there are persons who, despite the prohibition, are introduced into God's people. Ruth, the Moabitess, is a good example of this. She is an object of grace, who changes her state, without compromising holiness.

Edom and Egypt never shared the blessing of God's people. Edom is about as close a natural relatives as there can be to the people of God. With Ammon and Moab this relationship is further away. They are the children of Lot, the nephew of Abraham and therefore family of Jacob - the ancestor of God's people. Edom is a brother in the flesh. "Esau (that is Edom)" (Gen 36:1), is Jacob's twin brother.

Edom is always the irreconcilable enemy of Israel. This can clearly be seen in the book of Obadiah (Oba 1:1-21), which is entirely devoted to Edom and his attitude toward Israel. The prophet leaves no doubt that Edom's judgement will be made complete. But that is only after Edom has shown his perseverance in hatred toward his brother throughout his history. God will not seal the fate of a man or a people until He has tried all means to convert a people or a person. When there is no hope of conversion, He exercises His righteous judgment. Here it is not so far, and the door of grace still lies open for Edom.

Egypt represents the people of the world, of whom we are included. Egyptians can enter, not because of their former connection or a friendly act, but because of the sacrifice of Christ - His death and resurrection. The harsh treatment that the people had endured in Egypt is not mentioned here. Only the good things they experienced there are recalled here. We can think of the early days, when Joseph was viceroy of Egypt (Genesis 42-50).

Grandchildren are allowed to enter the people of God. The third generation does not mean the third generation after the promulgation of this law. It is counted from the time that someone from these nations yields to the true religion and serves the true God. Their sons are the second generation and their grandchildren are the third generation. The grandchildren are given part in the religious and social privileges of God's people. They have recognized standing and can enter into various unions, including marriage, without hindrance.

Deu 23:9-14 | Cleanness of the Camp

9 *"When you go out as an army against your enemies, you shall keep yourself from every evil thing. 10 "If there is among you any man who is unclean because of a nocturnal emission, then he must go outside the camp; he may not reenter the camp. 11 But it shall be when evening approaches, he shall bathe himself with water, and at sundown he may reenter the camp. 12 "You shall also have a place outside the camp and go out there, 13 and you shall have a spade among your tools, and it shall be when you sit down outside, you shall dig with it and shall turn to cover up your excrement. 14 Since the LORD your God walks in the midst of your camp to deliver you and to defeat your enemies before you, therefore your camp must be holy; and He must not see anything indecent among you or He will turn away from you.*

This is about battle, not the battle itself, but preparation and equipment. Every admission of evil, even the slightest, reduces the power to fight. The power to fight lies in the presence of the LORD in their midst. When the army goes out, He goes out along with them. That is a powerful consolation, but also a matter of great seriousness. We see here that God cares about everyday things that have a negative impact on our spiritual strength, for these are "the little foxes that are ruining the vineyards" (Song 2:15).

Moses mentions two forms by which a warrior can become unclean: by a nocturnal emission, the so-called 'wet dream', and by fecal matter. The warrior can't help these two things. No blame is on him. He is not liable for them, because they belong to man's natural existence.

These are indeed things that make someone unclean, but they are not forms of uncleanness that arise from the will of man. We can regard them as everyday matters. It's about what we call little things, about which we don't tend to dwell upon or fuss over too much. Yet they are forms of impurity. In order that we may remain aware that God cannot tolerate any form of impurity in His presence, Moses gives instructions for these matters.

Deu 23:15-16 | Mercy Toward an Escaped Slave

15 *"You shall not hand over to his master a slave who has escaped from his master to you. 16 He shall live with you in your midst, in the place which he*

shall choose in one of your towns where it pleases him; you shall not mistreat him.

It is about a slave from a foreign land, not a countryman. The land of God is a place of refuge for such persons. David deals in this way with the Egyptian young man who fell into his hands. This boy is the slave of an Amalekite man whom David takes care of (1Sam 30:11-15).

The assembly should be a place of warm welcome, safety and freedom of movement for people who have escaped from their hard master. The Israelites know from experience the meaning of service under a hard master, and what it means to be made free from it.

Nevertheless, it must not be a flight to avoid a just sentence. Paul does send Onesimus back (Phlm 1:10-12) and the Angel of the LORD commands Hagar to go back to Sarah (Gen 16:9). The reasons for returning in these instances are different. Be that as it may, they are not sent back to merciless masters.

Deu 23:17-18 | Against Cult Prostitution

17 "None of the daughters of Israel shall be a cult prostitute, nor shall any of the sons of Israel be a cult prostitute. 18 You shall not bring the hire of a harlot or the wages of a dog into the house of the LORD your God for any votive offering, for both of these are an abomination to the LORD your God.

The prohibition of cult temple prostitution should not be necessary. That Moses mentions it, indicates that he knows the people, that they are capable of such abominations. This commandment in fact proved necessary, for it was later shamefully transgressed (Hos 4:14; 2Kgs 23:7; Mic 1:7). This instruction concerns both male and female prostitutes. The word for male prostitute is 'dog' and is used figuratively here in the expression "wages of a dog" (cf. Rev 22:15).

God absolutely does not want any sacrifice from such people. It is "an abomination" to Him (cf. Pro 15:8). The possibility exists that such persons may go so far as to pay certain vows with money obtained by this shameful way. In their own estimation, it gives them some kind of approval to continue their sinful business (Pro 7:14-15). But God cannot accept anything that puts aside penance and repentance.

We can only honor God with sacrifices that we have obtained in an honest and honorable way. So it's not only about what we give, but to God, how we acquired it is also important.

Deu 23:19-20 | Not Charge Interest to a Countryman

19 "You shall not charge interest to your countrymen: interest on money, food, [or] anything that may be loaned at interest. 20 You may charge interest to a foreigner, but to your countrymen you shall not charge interest, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all that you undertake in the land which you are about to enter to possess.

Moses forbids taking interest of a countryman. The brother who has come to the point that borrowing money is necessary, has become poor and is in great need. He does not require the money to afford more luxury, but to stay alive. Charging interest to such a person only makes his situation worse. Whoever contravenes this dictate, reveals a greed for money. To a stranger, however, interest may be charged. Such a person lends for business purposes, not to stay alive.

Deu 23:21-23 | A Vow Must Be Performed

21 "When you make a vow to the LORD your God, you shall not delay to pay it, for it would be sin in you, and the LORD your God will surely require it of you. 22 However, if you refrain from vowing, it would not be sin in you. 23 You shall be careful to perform what goes out from your lips, just as you have voluntarily vowed to the LORD your God, what you have promised.

Making vows is taken seriously. It should keep us from making rash statements (Pro 20:25; Ecc 5:4-5). It is also good to think when singing songs of dedication, in which we promise to live completely for the Lord. We should not sing such a thing thoughtlessly, but consciously. At the same time is the need for prayer seeking the Lord's help in making the vow a reality. A vow must be performed.

Deu 23:24-25 | Taking the Fruit of One's Neighbor

24 "When you enter your neighbor's vineyard, then you may eat grapes until you are fully satisfied, but you shall not put any in your basket. 25 "When you

enter your neighbor's standing grain, then you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not wield a sickle in your neighbor's standing grain.

This law indicates that there will be an abundance of wine and grain in Canaan. The little bit taken and enjoyed by someone, will not be missed by the owner due to abundance. This is a law concerned with welfare, seeking to provide help and support for the needy. For example, poor travelers can be strengthened and refreshed by the implementation of this law. The disciples of the Lord Jesus make use of this ordinance (Mt 12:1). They are not reprimanded by the Pharisees because they do it, but because they do it on the sabbath. According to their homemade laws isolated interpretation, this is forbidden, but not by God's law.

God wants His people to be a giving people. He wants them to learn not to stand on the right of possession, but to grant to others of their abundance. It is proof of hospitality. It teaches us to be sharing. What we give away is not lost at all but will increase gratitude. Notwithstanding that, care is taken to ensure that this sharing is not abused. When an inch is given, a mile should not be taken.

The vineyard speaks of the joy in the heavenly land. The grain speaks of the Lord Jesus as the food of the land. Everyone has a personal joy stemming from fellowship with God, and receives personal strength by being occupied with the Lord Jesus.

We may also enjoy blessing each other and building each other up, from what the Lord has graciously given to one and the other. This, however, must be done with due caution. We may enjoy and be edified by what others have written, but it should not just be glibly repeated when we pass it on to others. It must first be processed intelligently and put into practice. If we only flippantly repeat what others have discovered in the Word of God, we have been busy with the basket and sickle in another's field.

We may use what someone else has written, but we must do it in the right way. For example, when preparing for a ministry, we should not quickly go through a commentary and then pass on what we quickly read. It must first become a fruit of our own vineyard by processing it in our own heart with the Lord. Then it has become our property and we can pass on what we enjoyed ourselves and by which we are edified.

Deuteronomy 24

Deu 24:1-4 | Divorce and a Certificate of Divorce

1 “When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts [it] in her hand and sends her out from his house, 2 and she leaves his house and goes and becomes another man’s [wife], 3 and if the latter husband turns against her and writes her a certificate of divorce and puts [it] in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her to be his wife, 4 [then] her former husband who sent her away is not allowed to take her again to be his wife, since she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the LORD, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance.

It seems that this arrangement is being made because divorce is already regularly happening. Possibly it has even been practiced in Egypt. The purpose of this prescript seems to be to discourage a light-hearted divorce. If someone has sent his wife out from his house and she is married again and is then sent away again, then the first husband is not allowed to have her back to be his wife.

Although God, because of the hardness of their hearts, has allowed them to send their wives away, He states that the woman has been defiled by the next marriage. Therefore the Lord Jesus says that anyone who marries a woman who is sent away by her husband commits adultery. This could not be so if God were to recognize divorce as a lawful thing. In God’s sight, there can be no legitimate reason for divorce.

There is no explicit consent to divorce anywhere in Scripture. It is permitted, because of the hardness of heart (Mt 19:8). Nonetheless God hates divorce (Mal 2:16). This arrangement is also made to prevent a man from fickle willful acts, at his every caprice. He could change wives as often as he likes. What a confusion that would cause in family life! Finally, there would also be no clarity about the inheritance.

The reason for sending away can be anything the man describes as “some indecency”. In any case, it has nothing to do with adultery, because therefore the death penalty would apply (Deu 22:20-22). If he sends the wife away, he must give a certificate of divorce. She then has proof that her first husband renounces her and is no longer allowed to take her to wife.

God has given Israel a certificate of divorce: “And I saw that for all the adulteries of faithless Israel, I had sent her away and given her a writ of divorce” (Jer 3:8a). Did God not prolong His hesitation before giving that letter? Finally, God had to write the certificate of divorce, because it is an apostate people in question who, as it is, will never return to blessing. For the people as a whole there is no recovery. What is being restored is a remnant of the election of grace (Rom 11:5,23-24). Grace goes beyond the law. Through this remnant God accepts His people again although, as a whole, they have been whoring away from Him.

For the church in nominal Christianity, the moment of the certificate of divorce also comes. No restoration is possible for this Christianity either (Rev 18:21; Rom 11:21-22). In the present time, however, a “Philadelphia” (Rev 3:7-13) persists. This is indicated in verse 5.

Deu 24:5 | Dispensation for a Man Recently Married

5 “When a man takes a new wife, he shall not go out with the army nor be charged with any duty; he shall be free at home one year and shall give happiness to his wife whom he has taken.

Like the previous section, this verse also emphasizes the importance of marriage. It would be rather harsh to send a newly married man into battle with the specter of his death there. Then there is no chance of offspring and his name disappears from Israel. Therefore, he gets a year off to give happiness to his wife, which also means to experience sexual intercourse with her. This also makes the evil of the previous verses happen less.

This verse contrasts sharply with the previous verses. This is about a new wife taken by a man, whereas the previous verses are about a wife that is sent away. This man may stay at home for a whole year to give happiness to his wife. That’s how great the wife is for her husband! It is not a second wife, in addition to his first, but a new one.

For us, in practice, it is not that we give happiness to our wives for the duration of one year only, but it is our privilege to do so throughout our entire life (1Cor 7:33,39). The church is that wife to the Lord Jesus. The Lord is now free from battle and free from burdens and is committed to His church to give happiness to her. That is what He as Man in glory is doing now.

Deu 24:6 | Grinding Instrument Is No Pledge

6 *“No one shall take a handmill or an upper millstone in pledge, for he would be taking a life in pledge.”*

The interests of the brother are dealt with in the section of Deuteronomy 24:6-25:16. When our brother's interests conflict with our own, our brother's interests take precedence: “Do not [merely] look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. ... For I have no one [else] of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare. For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus” (Phil 2:4,20-21).

God allows for much, but He also gives limitations to protect the other. Someone may take something in pledge from his brother. Notwithstanding that, the fact a brother is asking for such a loan it shows his great vulnerability, and therefore his need for protection. God indicates here what may not be taken in pledge. It is not so much the value of what is taken in pledge, but the great significance in its usage.

For example, if someone has to borrow grain, the instrument with which that grain has to be grinded may not be taken in pledge. He needs this instrument to process the grain so that it can be consumed as food and he can stay alive. This instrument is his life, and whoever takes this instrument in pledge, takes the life of his brother in pledge.

This can be applied to the ministry of someone who brings the Word. The spiritual ministry that comes to the believers in the words of the servant means spiritual food for the believers. What has been spoken, nevertheless, still has to be worked out by the believer. It is not suitable for consumption. It must be proved, tested. It is fit for consumption only when it

has been worked out. The Word that comes to us has yet to be grinded, it has to undergo a process in our hearts and conscience to extract nutrition. In this work, no brother or sister may be hindered by having their millstone taken. No obstacle shall be created to frustrate the full enjoyment of the food. Anyone who brings the Word may not connect any of the hearers to himself and make him dependent on him for spiritual growth. Each one must process the food himself in fellowship with the Lord.

Deu 24:7 | Kidnapping

7 "If a man is caught kidnapping any of his countrymen of the sons of Israel, and he deals with him violently or sells him, then that thief shall die; so you shall purge the evil from among you.

The danger of dependency of the previous verse has grown here into kidnapping. Here someone is not only impoverished, but is additionally subjugated by someone else, to make a profit of him. In Christianity this finds its horrible fulfillment in the roman catholic church. She assumes herself to be the bride of Christ, and that there is no salvation without her. She is called "the great harlot" and "BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS" (Rev 17:1,5). It says of her that she trades in "human lives" (Rev 18:12-13).

For this world church, the spirits are made ripe by the advancing charismatic movement. People with charisma who manipulate the (often large) audience through their rousing language and impressive manifestations of powers, signs and miracles exercise an enormous power over their followers. In their words they honor God, but in practice they manipulate the feelings of the Christians who admire them. People who regard any criticism of 'their' preacher or miracle worker as a slander of the Spirit often turn out to be completely under the spell of that preacher or miracle worker. They have sold themselves to such a person.

Spiritual leaders are always in danger of connecting people to themselves. If they do that, they become party leaders. An example of this is Absalom of whom we read: "So Absalom stole away the hearts of the men of Israel" (2Sam 15:6). By flattering the men, he won them for his party and loosened them from King David's dominion. A party leader is a sect leader. Of a

sectarian man it is written: “Reject a factious man after a first and second warning, knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned” (Tit 3:10).

How very different is the Lord Jesus. He is committed to the sheep and gives His life for them. The contrast with the thief who “comes only to steal and kill and destroy” is enormous. He is “the good Shepherd”, He “lays down His life for the sheep” (Jn 10:10-11).

Deu 24:8-9 | Infection of Leprosy

8 “Be careful against an infection of leprosy, that you diligently observe and do according to all that the Levitical priests teach you; as I have commanded them, so you shall be careful to do. 9 Remember what the LORD your God did to Miriam on the way as you came out of Egypt.

Leprosy is a picture of sin with communicability as its hallmark and death as its result. The precept on the plague of leprosy seems to focus on preventing the plague. The thought seems to be: Be careful against the plague of leprosy, beware that it does not strike you through your rebellion against what the priests teach by the LORD’s command. It is about the Levitical priest’s teaching, not so much about the priest’s research of the plague. The importance of this teaching is emphasized by the fact that twice in this verse we read “be careful”.

Here in this book, by way of exception, something of the priest is mentioned again. A priest knows the holiness of God and teaches about it. Its purpose is that the flesh will not reveal itself. To add strength to this prescription Moses refers to what happened to Miriam.

Miriam is a concrete example (Num 12:2-10). In her there has been an eruption of sin. It is not about moral evil, but about forming a faction. She contested Moses’ leadership out of jealousy. The result was that the people could not continue their journey for seven days (Num 12:14).

This prescription to be careful against an infection of leprosy connects to the previous verse. That verse denounces the domination over others. The precept here points to the consequences of this: domination causes the infection of leprosy.

Deu 24:10-13 | Procedure in Case of Taking a Pledge

10 "When you make your neighbor a loan of any sort, you shall not enter his house to take his pledge. 11 You shall remain outside, and the man to whom you make the loan shall bring the pledge out to you. 12 If he is a poor man, you shall not sleep with his pledge. 13 When the sun goes down you shall surely return the pledge to him, that he may sleep in his cloak and bless you; and it will be righteousness for you before the LORD your God.

As said, God allows His people to take a pledge as security for the repayment of the loan. He who makes a loan, however, is not free to choose his pledge himself. In verse 6 there is something mentioned that may not be taken in pledge. Now we are told how this pledge can be taken. Giving in pledge is a matter for the borrower. The one who takes in pledge may not enter the private property of the one who gives in pledge for this purpose.

God also imposes restrictions on the duration of taking items in pledge. If someone is entitled to the pledge of another, he still may not keep it for an unlimited period, despite the debt being unpaid. For example, a garment must be returned when the sun goes down if it belongs to a poor man. That gives blessing and will be accounted as righteousness. Here someone renounces his own interest, in favor of the interest of the other. The prophet Amos condemns the people for the transgression of this very commandment (Amos 2:8a).

This arrangement preserves the pledgor's own responsibility and personal freedom. Sect leaders have no respect whatsoever for this. They push through decisions that they consider important for their cause, without acknowledging the voice of the vulnerable individual. Impoverished circumstance and personal conscience are not taken into account.

Deu 24:14-15 | Treatment of a Hired Servant

14 "You shall not oppress a hired servant [who is] poor and needy, whether [he is] one of your countrymen or one of your aliens who is in your land in your towns. 15 You shall give him his wages on his day before the sun sets, for he is poor and sets his heart on it; so that he will not cry against you to the LORD and it become sin in you.

This is not a question of borrowing and debt, but of fairly earned wages. The employer must give each of his employees their entitlement, and must not postpone payment: “The wages of a hired man are not to remain with you all night until morning” (Lev 19:13b; Mt 20:8; Job 7:2). If the wages are not paid in time, their outcry is made to the LORD (Jam 5:4). Anyone to whom a service is provided is obliged to pay the amount due in respect thereof. Employers should realize that they also have Someone above them: “Masters, grant to your slaves justice and fairness, knowing that you too have a Master in heaven” (Col 4:1).

It also applies spiritually. Anyone who is “taught in the Word” is expected “to share all good things with the one who teaches [him]” (Gal 6:6). “For the laborer is worthy of his wages” (Lk 10:7). Where the spiritual is sown, it is only logical that the material things are reaped (1Cor 9:11).

The obligation to pay must be fulfilled before sunset, as with the return of the cloak taken in pledge (verse 12). The previous regulation concludes with a blessing for the pledgor and justice from the LORD if it is met. The regulation for payment of wages concludes with a cry to the LORD and the committing of sin if it is not met.

Deu 24:16 | Everyone Dies for His Own Sin

16 *“Fathers shall not be put to death for [their] sons, nor shall sons be put to death for [their] fathers; everyone shall be put to death for his own sin.*

Each one receives the punishment for his own fault and not a descendant (2Kgs 14:6; Eze 18:4,20). There seems to be a contradiction with the statement that the sins of the fathers are visited on the third and fourth generations (Exo 20:5). The answer is that we must always distinguish the *punishment* over sin from the *consequences* of sin. David receives forgiveness, but he cannot escape the consequences of sin (2Sam 12:1-13). We all too often meet the consequences of the fathers’ sin in the lives of their descendants.

Deu 24:17-22 | Alien, Orphan and Widow

17 *“You shall not pervert the justice due an alien [or] an orphan, nor take a widow’s garment in pledge. 18 But you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and that the LORD your God redeemed you from there; therefore*

I am commanding you to do this thing. 19 "When you reap your harvest in your field and have forgotten a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the alien, for the orphan, and for the widow, in order that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. 20 When you beat your olive tree, you shall not go over the boughs again; it shall be for the alien, for the orphan, and for the widow. 21 "When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not go over it again; it shall be for the alien, for the orphan, and for the widow. 22 You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I am commanding you to do this thing.

God upholds the right of the weak. We are referred back to what God has done for us. And then we see Someone Who has not thought of Himself, but only of our interests. He has freed us from the power of sin at the expense of Himself. That is the abiding example for our attitude toward others. We see this in the parable that the Lord Jesus tells of the debtor with a large debt that is forgiven him. This man forgets that so much has been forgiven him. This is evident from the fact that he constrains another who owes him a much smaller debt, without mercy, to repay it (Mt 18:21-35).

This deals with maintaining the rights of the other. In the church of God, it is different than in the world. In the world the norm and standard is upholding of self-focused human rights: 'I have rights the other is obliged to respect.' The defense of my own rights is my principal stance. In the church of God, on the other hand, my brother has only rights and I only duties. We cannot assert any rights. It is about heeding what God says to me. Of course, what He says is just as applicable to the other as well, but that is not my concern here. The memory of my own oppression and my liberation from it, helps to shift my stance to one defending others, including those who are oppressed.

What has remained on the land or on the olive tree and in the vineyard may not be collected later by the owner (see also Lev 19:9-10; 23:22). God determines that the reaping of what is left over is for those who have no other support than Him.

What has not been collected has been forgotten by the mowers. They have overlooked it. It is, so to speak, a fruit that sometimes is not obvious. Those to whom God has bestowed this fruit of the land must make an effort to

find it, collect it, and enjoy it. It is not thrown into their laps or delivered to their homes. Ruth has to be active to appropriate these blessings (cf. Rth 2:2,7).

Just as the exhortation of verse 17 is followed by a reminder of the liberation from Egypt, so is the case with the reaping of what is left of the harvest. It is to be expected from those who have been shown mercy that they themselves will show mercy to others. The memory of proven goodness urges us to show goodness to others.

Deuteronomy 25

Deu 25:1-3 | Righteous Punishment

1 "If there is a dispute between men and they go to court, and the judges decide their case, and they justify the righteous and condemn the wicked, 2 then it shall be if the wicked man deserves to be beaten, the judge shall then make him lie down and be beaten in his presence with the number of stripes according to his guilt. 3 He may beat him forty times [but] no more, so that he does not beat him with many more stripes than these and your brother is not degraded in your eyes.

Punishment should be given where necessary, but not more than necessary. The punishment must be in accordance with the crime and with the responsibility of the criminal: "And that slave who knew his master's will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, will receive many lashes, but the one who did not know [it], and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few. From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more" (Lk 12:47-48).

The number of forty stripes is a maximum, where the number forty stands for a full punishment (Gen 7:12; Num 14:33-34). In giving the punishment, the rabbis, for fear of violating the letter of the law, have determined that forty minus one stripes must be given in case one should count wrong. Paul has received this maximum five times (2Cor 11:24). It indicates that he was seen by the Jews as a great criminal.

In the church of God, what is called justice here is discipline. Discipline is exercised by the entire church. In practice, spiritually-minded brothers will prepare a disciplinary case. Here, too, it is important that a disciplinary measure is in accordance with the committed sin. For example, someone who lives an undisciplined Christian life is unfaithful and must be designated so. While this does not revoke his status as a brother, such unfaithfulness vitally requires admonishing (2Thes 3:14-15, Darby Translation). The heaviest disciplinary measure of removing from the church

does not fit in this case (1Cor 5:13b). That would be tantamount to degrading the brother.

The stripes must be given in the presence of the judge. This emphasizes the fact that the sentence is executed as it was pronounced and that the sentence must be executed immediately.

Deu 25:4 | Not Muzzle a Threshing Ox

| 4 *"You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing.*

As the previous section teaches that punishment should be given according to the offence, so this verse brings to bear that nourishment may be enjoyed according to the work done. Just as a criminal is deserving of punishment, so the laborer is worthy of his wages.

This verse is quoted twice in the New Testament:

1. "For it is written in the Law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing." God is not concerned about oxen, is He? Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written, because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher [to thresh] in hope of sharing [the crops]" (1Cor 9:9-10).

2. "The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages"" (1Tim 5:17-18).

The first quotation shows that this instruction was not given primarily out of concern for the ox, but that it is intended for the worker in God's kingdom. It is not just an abstract application but a practical explanation of this verse.

This precept makes it clear to believers that those who do spiritual work are entitled to material support from those who benefit from this spiritual work (cf. Gal 6:6).

Deu 25:5-10 | The Duty of a Husband's Brother

| 5 *"When brothers live together and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the deceased shall not be [married] outside [the family] to a strange man. Her*

husband's brother shall go in to her and take her to himself as wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. 6 It shall be that the firstborn whom she bears shall assume the name of his dead brother, so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel. 7 But if the man does not desire to take his brother's wife, then his brother's wife shall go up to the gate to the elders and say, 'My husband's brother refuses to establish a name for his brother in Israel; he is not willing to perform the duty of a husband's brother to me.' 8 Then the elders of his city shall summon him and speak to him. And [if] he persists and says, 'I do not desire to take her,' 9 then his brother's wife shall come to him in the sight of the elders, and pull his sandal off his foot and spit in his face; and she shall declare, 'Thus it is done to the man who does not build up his brother's house.' 10 In Israel his name shall be called, 'The house of him whose sandal is removed.'

In these verses an arrangement is made to protect the inheritance, that it may not fall into other hands. It describes the situation of two brothers who live in the same inheritance, of whom one is married and the other yet unmarried. If the married brother dies without a descendant, the other brother must take the widow as his wife. This is called "the duty of a husband's brother" (verses 5,7). The son who is then conceived shall assume the name of the first husband and is his heir. This use, now enacted as law, has been known for some time (Gen 38:8).

With Boaz's marriage to Ruth it is about a family member further away, because there is no brother (Rth 4:1-8). There, too, the land has already passed into other hands. Boaz must become both the redeemer and the one who performs the duty of a husband's brother. God has now enacted this existing, unwritten law and also brought it to the human level. This allows the brother to evade the duty of a husband's brother. He can do this because he simply does not want it or because he puts his own interests at risk.

The pulling off the sandal, is a symbolic indication. To put the sandal or shoe upon a given thing, speaks of taking possession of it, appropriating it and making it your own (Jos 1:3; Psa 60:10; 108:10). Pulling off the shoe speaks of the opposite and means abandoning a given thing. That is what the man does in the case of Ruth (Rth 4:7). He does so because he ruins his own inheritance by marrying Ruth. He thinks more of his own interests.

He then renounces the woman and the land. Here the woman pulls the sandal off his foot. Such an instance, results in a name of insult for the man.

In the book of Ruth is a redeemer who is nearer. This first redeemer is a type of law. The law is given as the first obligation to man in order to receive life through it. The law says: "Do this and you will live" (Lev 18:5). But this first redeemer cannot redeem. People who enforce the law are like thieves and robbers. The Pharisees and scribes think only of their own interest and not of the people. They impose heavy loads.

Then comes the Redeemer Who can do it and does it, the Lord Jesus. He does not think of Himself. He is not afraid to lose His own inheritance. He wants to be "cut off and have nothing" (Dan 9:26b). The Lord Jesus is the true Boaz, which means 'in him is strength'. Ruth is a picture of the remnant of Israel and Naomi of the Israel that has lost everything. How aptly Ruth, who is a Moabitess, shows the disenfranchisement of the remnant and that everything that is obtained is only on the basis of grace.

The meaning for us is what we have to do for the other. It shows that we have to step aside for the other. Are we prepared to prioritize the interests of the brother, or do we look like the first redeemer? It may take some time or effort, but how important is it to us that the other person keeps his inheritance?

The Sadducees refer in one of their discussions with the Lord Jesus to the duty of a husband's brother to "prove" the implausibility of the resurrection (Mt 22:23-33). The Sadducees are the liberals of that time. They only believe in what they can reason. Therefore they do not believe in the resurrection, nor in angels and spirits (Acts 23:8). They propose to the Lord the case invented by them of seven brothers who marry the same woman in succession. They explain from their corrupt thinking how the situation develops in their fabricated example.

Yet still, the Lord makes an effort to enlighten their darkened minds. He refers to the Scripture that speaks of God as the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob (Exo 3:6,15-16). The Lord quotes this Scripture to show that in the days of Moses the patriarchs live in another world, although they then have not yet been raised from the dead. The fact

that their spirits are in the other world guarantees that they will share the fulfillment of the promises with resurrected bodies.

When God says this to Moses, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob have long since passed away. But God has given them His promises. Will He not then be able to make them come true? Certainly, He will make them come true. He will do that in the resurrection. How very different is the faith of Abraham from that of the Sadducees. He has believed that God is able to raise even the dead (Heb 11:18).

Deu 25:11-12 | Improper Method of Delivery

11 "If [two] men, a man and his countryman, are struggling together, and the wife of one comes near to deliver her husband from the hand of the one who is striking him, and puts out her hand and seizes his genitals, 12 then you shall cut off her hand; you shall not show pity.

This case is related to the previous part, but as a counterpart. If her husband's brother refuses to perform duty of the husband's brother in marrying her, the woman, being very independent, may express her contempt (verse 9). But in these verses it is made clear that this freedom must not tempt her into unauthorized, shameless actions. It is understandable that she wants to stand up for her husband, but the way she does it shows cruel malice. She wants to make her husband's opponent unfit to conceive offspring.

The physical mutilation that should be used here as a punishment is the only example given in the law. The evil that is happening here must be punished with a punishment that has a lasting effect. In the execution of the sentence, pity, for example because it concerns a woman, should not play a role (cf. Deu 13:8; 19:13,21).

The Lord may point to this precept when He speaks of cutting off the hand that can cause us to fall into sin. Preventing an inappropriate act is done by judging oneself. Whoever cuts off his hand spiritually speaking, will not literally have to lose it. The Lord goes much further: whoever cuts off his hand spiritually, thereby escapes the judgment of hell (Mk 9:43).

Deu 25:13-16 | A Full and Just Weight and Measure

13 "You shall not have in your bag differing weights, a large and a small. 14 You shall not have in your house differing measures, a large and a small. 15 You shall have a full and just weight; you shall have a full and just measure, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you. 16 For everyone who does these things, everyone who acts unjustly is an abomination to the LORD your God.

The prohibition of dual weights and measures impinges not only on their use, but also on their possession. The bad merchant has a large measure for the purchase and a small measure for the sale. The prophet Amos also speaks against this evil with clear language (Amos 8:5b). The prohibition has been given before (Lev 19:35-36). In the same line we read in Psalm 12 about speaking "with flattering lips and with a double heart" (Psa 12:3).

The evil of two measures can so easily play a role in our own hearts and in church life. When it comes to ourselves, we often apply different standards than when it comes to others. We are often much more lenient toward family members than toward outsiders. That is why it is wise, for example, to stay out of a disciplinary case as a family.

For God, such a conduct of ambivalence is an abomination (Pro 20:10; 11:1; 20:23). In verse 16 it is said of everyone who measures with two measures that such a man is "an abomination to the LORD your God". The LORD wants judgment without regard to persons. In His ways of government, He takes considers what measure we have used for others. How we have judged others, according to that standard we ourselves will be judged by Him, as He Himself says: "For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return" (Lk 6:38c).

God rewards honest conduct with a long life in the land. Those who are honest do not do themselves any harm, even though it sometimes seems so. The full blessing that God grants His people to enjoy in the land He, is the heavenly places for the Christian. Honesty in all relationships is a prerequisite for the enjoyment of spiritual blessings.

Deu 25:17-19 | Command to Blot out Amalek

17 "Remember what Amalek did to you along the way when you came out from Egypt, 18 how he met you along the way and attacked among you all the strag-

glers at your rear when you were faint and weary; and he did not fear God. 19 Therefore it shall come about when the LORD your God has given you rest from all your surrounding enemies, in the land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance to possess, you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven; you must not forget.

Amalek is a cruel people who attack the weakest points of a people who have barely escaped slavery (Exo 17:8,14-16). They also attack a people who not only have no experience of fighting, but also have occasioned them no harm. In this attack of God's people, they reveal a mindset without fear of God.

God does not forget what this cowardly enemy has done to His people. The verdict is to totally blot out the memory of this enemy by a complete judgment. It can be compared to the judgment of the flood in the days of Noah and the overturning and burning of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 6:5-7; 18:20-21; 19:24-25). Saul is commissioned to blot out Amalek, but fails by disobedience (1Sam 15:1-3,18-19). Some time later David beats the Amalekites (2Sam 1:1). In the days of Hezekiah the final liquidation of Amalek takes place (1Chr 4:41-43).

Amalek is a picture of the sinful flesh. The flesh, the sin in us, must be completely set aside. Faith knows that sin in the flesh is judged when Christ died under God's judgment on the cross and that we are crucified there with Him (Rom 6:6; 8:3). Now it is our responsibility to consider ourselves dead to sin (Rom 6:11).

Just like Amalek, the sinful flesh is also very cruel. It attacks us at times of weakness and at our weakest points. Right then it is important to think of Christ and His work and of our union with Him in that work. Then the flesh has no chance to assert itself and seduce us to sin through which we suffer defeat.

We must go far in our love for others, but we must not give any room to the flesh. We must allow God to preside in all our affairs, in all our relationships. Then things like charity, resolve, and discernment – all will find their place and be found in all our ways. Love for the flesh, for Satan and his powers, must never be there, otherwise we will never apprehend the beautiful message of the next chapter.

Deuteronomy 26

Introduction

This chapter is about offering the LORD a basket containing the first fruits of all the fruits of the land. It is the conclusion of a long speech by Moses and the climax of it. All the preceding chapters are the preparation for what is presented in this chapter. In Deuteronomy 1-11 we get to know the land. In Deuteronomy 12-16 it is mainly about getting to know the place where the LORD dwells.

In other words, the LORD tells us here with what to fill the baskets (Deuteronomy 1-11) and where to take the filled baskets (Deuteronomy 12-16). Deuteronomy 17-25 is about the effect of the commandments that God gives. There, what is spelled out is the appropriate mindset for God's people when coming together, like in this chapter, with their filled baskets. With Deuteronomy 27 a new section begins. The spiritual application for us is easy to make: laid before us here, is the essence of worship.

Deu 26:1-11 | The Offering of the First Fruits of the Land

1 *"Then it shall be, when you enter the land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance, and you possess it and live in it, 2 that you shall take some of the first of all the produce of the ground which you bring in from your land that the LORD your God gives you, and you shall put [it] in a basket and go to the place where the LORD your God chooses to establish His name. 3 You shall go to the priest who is in office at that time and say to him, 'I declare this day to the LORD my God that I have entered the land which the LORD swore to our fathers to give us.' 4 Then the priest shall take the basket from your hand and set it down before the altar of the LORD your God. 5 You shall answer and say before the LORD your God, 'My father was a wandering Aramean, and he went down to Egypt and sojourned there, few in number; but there he became a great, mighty and populous nation. 6 And the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, and imposed hard labor on us. 7 Then we cried to the LORD, the God of our fathers, and the LORD heard*

our voice and saw our affliction and our toil and our oppression; 8 and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with great terror and with signs and wonders; 9 and He has brought us to this place and has given us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. 10 Now behold, I have brought the first of the produce of the ground which You, O LORD have given me.' And you shall set it down before the LORD your God, and worship before the LORD your God; 11 and you and the Levite and the alien who is among you shall rejoice in all the good which the LORD your God has given you and your household.

This section is about worship. In order to comply with what is written here, the Israelites must first have fruit. They will only be able to have it in the land. Bringing the fruit is therefore proof that they have arrived in the land. By bringing the first fruits of this fruit they confess that they owe the land to the LORD.

The fruit is described in Deuteronomy 8. But the Israelite must not only know *what* to bring, he must also know *where* to bring it to. This is described in Deuteronomy 12. He has to look for that place as soon as he enters the land. Only then will he be able to do what is written here in verse 10, which is “worship before the LORD your God”. Thirdly, it is about the way in which the first fruits are to be brought. The fruit must be put in a basket and confession must be made when presented.

The application for us is whether we have something to bring to God and whether we know the place where He dwells, the place He has chosen. We can also worship personally, at home, but that is not the same as this place. There we do not come as individuals, but there we come together as a people, as a church.

In the wilderness too, a place was stipulated for the people to gather: the tabernacle. But this is about the land and therefore a different place, with different characteristics. With which one do we have to do? With both places. Thus, in the first letter to the Corinthians and in the letter to the Hebrews the believers are seen and addressed as living in the wilderness. We meet on the first day of the week in the awareness that we are still in the wilderness.

We can also have awareness of being in the land. The land means to us what we find in the letter to the Ephesians: the heavenly places with the spiritual blessings as the fruit of the land. If the believer comes with worship on the first day of the week, he comes not only as someone with a sacrifice from the wilderness, but also as someone who has collected fruit in the land.

This is not just about entering and taking possession of the land, but about *living* in the land. Owning the land does not mean that we live there. Living means to rest in it, to be at home there. The introduction of Israel into the land of promises corresponds for the believer to the enjoyment of his privileges in Christ, in the practice of the life of faith. To 'live' in those privileges means to know the fulfilment of the blessings and to be satisfied with them.

That is what is proposed to us in the letter to the Ephesians. Before Paul mentions the spiritual blessings with which the believer is blessed in Christ in the heavenly places, he begins to praise Him from Whom all blessings come forth: "Blessed [be] the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly [places] in Christ" (Eph 1:3). This praise is addressed directly to God, the Giver of all riches. This must be the result of enjoying the Divine blessings.

What do I find in the land, what blessings do I enjoy there? First of all, I meet in heaven a glorified Lord at the right hand of God. Further to this, I enjoy my personal attachment to this Lord, because I share in the sonship He affords. Thirdly, I find there that I am part of the body of Christ and that I am therefore also intimately connected with Him in that way. There too I discover the house of God, where the Holy Spirit now lives. And because the Lord Jesus is my life, His Father is my Father – I may enter the sanctuary as one of the sons who say "Abba, Father", to worship Him!

The basket also says something of the zeal needed to fill it. The fruits we bring must have cost us something. Collection is done with effort. We cannot bring old fruits; it is about the first fruits.

God wants us to bring the fruits to the place He has chosen. For an Israelite, the city of Jerusalem is the only place on earth, where the people have to gather to celebrate the feasts of the LORD. And for us? For the redeemed

of Christ there is only one center of meeting. It is not left to our own insight to discover that place. The Word clearly lets us know through the Lord Jesus: "For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst" (Mt 18:20).

The pagans bring sacrifices in every place they consider good. God Himself will designate this place for His people, and He expects His people to seek it. Not until four hundred years after they are in the land does it become known where that place is. That's because then, there is one who genuinely seeks it: David.

Psalm 132 describes the exercises associated with this search. David finds the ark in the fields of Efratha (Psa 132:1-7). At this time he is still young. Youthfulness should serve no prohibition in finding that place of fellowship. If interest in that place abounds, God will give the means to ensure that it is found.

Geographically, believers meet in many places as a church. But it is always the same God, the same altar, the same Table of the Lord, and not, as with the pagans, different gods and tables. It is not the intention that a new group with its own insights should meet at every location. It is also important to be open to all the children of God who live in fellowship with God. That place can only be where the characteristics of the body of Christ are practiced. His authority applies there.

In that place we not only bring fruits, we also eat there. Which is to say, we have fellowship with God and with each other. We share what we ourselves have collected of fruits with others. The first fruits are for God. We offer our thanks to God for it. As we do so, the other attendees enjoy of what, as the result of a fresh collection, is offered in thanksgiving to God.

In Deuteronomy 16 there is the danger that not everyone comes with something in his heart, because it is not offered loudly to the Lord. Sisters may think that they need not have anything, because they cannot speak it loudly anyway (1Cor 14:34). But what matters is what is in the heart; that is what God sees, and there He expects fruit. There is no excuse whatsoever for someone coming empty-handed, i.e. with an empty heart. The first fruits must be taken from all the fruit and put in a basket (verse 2). We are that basket ourselves. We must not appear empty, there must be some-

thing in our hearts of the Lord Jesus. Everything we have seen of Him, we may offer to God.

In verses 3-4 we again have one of the rare mentions of the priest in this book. That is because worship is mentioned here, a more familiar theme and occurrence in the book of Leviticus. In Leviticus it is about bloody sacrifices. They are placed *on* the altar. Deuteronomy, however, deals with the fruits of the land. These sacrifices do not come onto the altar, but are placed *before* the altar. In worship there is a personal aspect – “I declare ... that I have entered” (verse 3a) – and a joint aspect – “our fathers to give us” (verse 3b). God is praised by us personally that He has blessed His people, the church, according to His counsels.

In the foregoing we have seen what the Israelite must *do* by order of the Lord. In what follows, we find what he should *say* when he is in the presence of the priest. What the Israelite must remember is important to show the grace of which the people are the object of, from the LORD’s side. He mentions the old state of the people (verses 5-7), the liberation of which the people are the object of from the side of the LORD (verse 8) and the part given to him according to the promise of the LORD (verse 9).

These three aspects are important to our worship. We remember:

1. That we were in bondage to sin.
2. That Christ freed us from it at the cost of His life.
3. That we are now blessed with many and great blessings.

Will not the remembrance of these things elevate our worship?

The Supper He left for us for the time of His absence is a remembrance meal. It focuses our thoughts on Christ, our beloved Savior, Who has given Himself as a propitiation for us. We owe everything to His death on the cross. In no other place than the worship service with the Supper as the center, does it suit us better to be aware of the various and rich blessings. Our God and Father overloaded us with them in Christ. We may enjoy them through the Holy Spirit. They are listed in the letter to the Ephesians.

The Israelite gives a personal testimony in verses 5-9. When we meet as a church, the individuality of the believer does not disappear. We eat personally and together. He not only brought *me* into the land, He brought *us*

into the land. The meeting on the first day of the week is the perfect day to glorify God together. In worship we tell Him what we have seen of the Lord Jesus. We tell Him what we used to be. But we don't stop there.

Jacob is "a wandering Aramean" because he lived in Syria for twenty years and because his mother comes from there. There he also had a wife and children from whom the people are built (Hos 12:13). He has been at death's doorstep, because Laban has tried to kill him. This part of the confession emphasizes the humiliating origin. As far as origin is concerned, there is nothing that the Israelite can boast of.

But God is the God of Jacob, and He has freed him from his distress. He has turned a man who was in danger of being killed into a great people. The act of liberation is an act of mercy and compassion. Making a great people and bringing the people into the blessing of the land are acts of God's intention and sovereignty. Thus we have found ourselves in the world (Egypt), and God has led us out of it, and in so doing has formed the church according to His counsel.

The wilderness is not mentioned here. That is not part of God's counsels. The wilderness belongs to the ways of God with us, our upbringing. That's why we don't tell God on the first day of the week what we have all experienced in the world. We can do this on other occasions, such as the meeting for prayer.

In the worship service we speak about how we used to belong to the world and what He did to bring us into the land. We praise Him for the great blessings we have found there. The most important thing, however, is not the gift, but the Giver Who is the cause of our joy.

We find in these verses a beautiful painting of worship. This exalted Christian service on earth is experienced by us weak and imperfect. Despite that, it is a foretaste of what will be perfectly and for all eternity realized in the glory by the countless redeemed.

The name 'worship service' is sometimes given to some religious gathering of which the purpose is prayer or listening to the Word of God. That, however, that is not what biblical worship means. Here we have a picture of what this service truly consists of. The Israelite comes in the presence of the LORD to bring Him an offering which He has prescribed. For the

Christian, the worship service is a service where he offers up to God the Father “spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1Pet 2:5).

The above does not weaken the value of prayer and the reading and studying of Scripture in the meeting. On the contrary, if this is done in a way that is pleasing to the Lord, it will result in the hearts expressing themselves more fully in praise and worship.

In order to be able to offer something to God, it is important that we can say: “For all things come from You, and from Your hand we have given You” (1Chr 29:14b). Mary of Bethany, who offers at the feet of the Lord Jesus very costly perfume of pure nard, performs worship (Jn 12:1-8). Her deed is a striking picture of it. Hence, it can be said of our worship service to God: “The sweet scent of our praise is nothing but that of Your love.”

In these eleven verses the word ‘given’ occurs regularly. It points out to us that God makes Himself known as Giver, not as Someone Who demands. And He has given “all the good” (verse 11). He only gives good gifts: “Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow” (Jam 1:17; Mt 7:11). If an Israelite must rejoice at all the good that the LORD had given his God to him, how much more reason do we have than to bow down, just like the Israelite, in holy reverence before God and His Son?

Deu 26:12-15 | The Triennial Tithes

12 “When you have finished paying all the tithe of your increase in the third year, the year of tithing, then you shall give it to the Levite, to the stranger, to the orphan and to the widow, that they may eat in your towns and be satisfied. 13 You shall say before the LORD your God, ‘I have removed the sacred [portion] from [my] house, and also have given it to the Levite and the alien, the orphan and the widow, according to all Your commandments which You have commanded me; I have not transgressed or forgotten any of Your commandments. 14 I have not eaten of it while mourning, nor have I removed any of it while I was unclean, nor offered any of it to the dead. I have listened to the voice of the LORD my God; I have done according to all that You have commanded

me. 15 Look down from Your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless Your people Israel, and the ground which You have given us, a land flowing with milk and honey, as You swore to our fathers.'

When the worshiper enjoys grace and fellowship with God (verses 1-11), the spirit of grace immediately reveals itself toward others. The Levite, the stranger, the orphan and the widow in Israel are the objects of it (Deu 14:28-29). For us this means doing good to the servants of the Lord, "the Levite", to the unbelievers who cross our path, "the stranger", and to those who are deprived of their natural support, "the orphan and the widow".

Apart from being invited to continually offer sacrifices of praise to God through Christ, there are other sacrifices to be made to those around us. For it is written: "And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased" (Heb 13:16). These sacrifices are called directly connecting to our spiritual sacrifices, the sacrifices of praise, which is the fruit of our lips (Heb 13:15).

If we have performed worship on the first day of the week, we may then offer our money. But the text tells us that these sacrifices are not to be limited to that occasion. We are privileged to make these sacrifices whenever the opportunity arises. That of course requires faithfulness and devotion to the Lord.

As with the bringing of the basket of first fruits (verses 3-10), the Israelite also pronounces an explanation when bringing the tithes. This statement gives us important teaching for our practice of giving. These tithes are not given to the LORD, but directly to those for whom they are intended. They are not taken to the sanctuary, like the annual tithes, but to their towns to be distributed.

By expressing this explanation or prayer, the giver is placed in God's direct presence. In this way these tithes are, as it were, given to Him first. They are sanctified by this prayer, set apart for God. The sincere worshiper confirms that in no circumstances in his life has he changed anything in his benefits toward others. He has not taken anything for himself from what he has set apart for those in need. He has kept in mind what God has said about this and has not forgotten it.

Having showed in the practice of his life that he is a righteous man, he can ask for God's blessing and count on His attentive intervention (cf. Jam 5:16b). The scope of his prayer goes beyond his personal interests. He does not pray for blessing for himself, but for the whole people and the land. He is aware that what he gives is the yield of the land that the LORD has given to His people because of His fidelity to the promises He has made to the fathers.

There is certainly something lacking in worship if we do not feel the desire that the 'stranger', he who does not know the Lord, should also get to know Him. The same applies to those who are in trial and therefore miss much of what we can enjoy together. The collection held in connection with worship is proof that our love for the Lord is translated into a contribution to His work. The result will be that He will be worshiped by those who receive this love service.

The service to meet the needs of others will have an end. Praise and worship, however, will continue forever to the glory of our God and Father and of the Lord Jesus Christ, His Beloved Son.

Deu 26:16-19 | Obedience and Promise

16 "This day the LORD your God commands you to do these statutes and ordinances. You shall therefore be careful to do them with all your heart and with all your soul. 17 You have today declared the LORD to be your God, and that you would walk in His ways and keep His statutes, His commandments and His ordinances, and listen to His voice. 18 The LORD has today declared you to be His people, a treasured possession, as He promised you, and that you should keep all His commandments; 19 and that He will set you high above all nations which He has made, for praise, fame, and honor; and that you shall be a consecrated people to the LORD your God, as He has spoken."

The enjoyment of all the blessings that the people have received is inextricably linked with obedience to God's commandments. We can only enjoy the spiritual blessings in the heavenly places if we obey Him in everything. This obedience will be used by God to set His people for praise, fame and honor high above all nations.

In Zephaniah God says it like this: "Behold, I am going to deal at that time with all your oppressors, I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will turn their shame into praise and renown in all the earth. At that time I will bring you in, even at the time when I gather you together; indeed, I will give you renown and praise among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes," says the LORD" (Zep 3:19-20; Jer 13:11).

God's people are the means through which He will receive praise and God's Name will be exalted. In so doing, God's people will radiate His glory as an ornament. God's intention is not only to set His people high above all nations, but also to possess them as a consecrated people, in effect, a people separated from all nations for Him. God's people are there for Him.

Deuteronomy 27

Introduction

There is a distinction between the foregoing and what we read in the coming chapters. In the foregoing, the people are seen in a certain state of blessing, a people also subject to certain responsibilities in order to be able to enjoy that blessing. From Deuteronomy 27 up to and including Deuteronomy 33 we find a lot that relates to the history of Israel. From this are lessons to be learned regarding the history of Christianity on earth.

History is the sequence of events. The people, here, start to deviate. It is a story of decay. Deuteronomy 28 starts with that. Deuteronomy 27 is a transitional chapter, in which we have two themes. Mount Ebal is central to both themes. In the first part, the theme is the erection of memorial stones and an altar on Mount Ebal. In the second section, the second theme comes up. It consists of curses that are pronounced on the same mountain Ebal. Explicitly, Ebal is the mountain of the curse.

The Samaritans choose Mount Gerizim as a place of worship (Jn 4:20a), because it is the place of blessing (Deu 8:11; Jos 8:30-35). However, there is no question of Gerizim, or blessing, here. The blessings mentioned in the first verses of Deuteronomy 28 are in contrast with the then following verses and not in connection with Deuteronomy 27.

Notwithstanding that, Deuteronomy 27 and Deuteronomy 28 belong together. They represent a people in the blessing of the land, with a monument as a sign of it. Then we hear a series of curses. And in Deuteronomy 28 we see the blessing contrasted with the curse. In Deuteronomy 27 the curses are personal and eternal, while in Deuteronomy 28 they are not, there they are national. There we see what God will do in their history should they deviate and the curse of God strike them, while He, when they convert, will give a change for the better.

Deu 27:1-8 | Set up of Memorial Stones and an Altar

1 Then Moses and the elders of Israel charged the people, saying, "Keep all the commandments which I command you today. 2 So it shall be on the day when

you cross the Jordan to the land which the LORD your God gives you, that you shall set up for yourself large stones and coat them with lime 3 and write on them all the words of this law, when you cross over, so that you may enter the land which the LORD your God gives you, a land flowing with milk and honey, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, promised you. 4 So it shall be when you cross the Jordan, you shall set up on Mount Ebal, these stones, as I am commanding you today, and you shall coat them with lime. 5 Moreover, you shall build there an altar to the LORD your God, an altar of stones; you shall not wield an iron [tool] on them. 6 You shall build the altar of the LORD your God of uncut stones, and you shall offer on it burnt offerings to the LORD your God; 7 and you shall sacrifice peace offerings and eat there, and rejoice before the LORD your God. 8 You shall write on the stones all the words of this law very distinctly."

Moses, together with the elders, underlines once again the necessity of keeping the commandments. As an aid he says that the people should set up stones and coat them with lime. These stones serve as a memorial on which everything that Moses has spoken must be written. When entering the land, as the first act a remembrance of the law must be set up. All further actions in the land must be based on the law. If the people remember this, it is the guarantee that they will continually enjoy the blessings that God has given.

In addition to a monument in memory of the law, an altar made of natural stone is also built on Mount Ebal. On it can be sacrificed as a response of gratitude. It points to the goal that God has in mind once His people are in the land.

The law of God comes to us here in three aspects. The first aspect we see in verses 1-10. It is the meaning of the law, as described in Deuteronomy 4-26, in order to enjoy the blessings of the land. We can apply that aspect to us in its spiritual scope. There are also commandments for us as conditions to enjoy the blessings.

The second aspect is found in verses 11-26. There the law is applied to those who are on the basis of the law. The principle of law is that every man who bases himself on law to produce works for God comes under the curse (Gal 3:10).

In Deuteronomy 28 we meet the law in a third meaning. It is not the spiritual meaning of the law, not even its formal meaning for every human being, but the law as the norm of God for His people on earth to experience the blessing or the curse in the reign of God.

For us, the place of curse is the place where we found the altar. Our altar is the Lord Jesus. He became a curse on Calvary.

Verse 4 is fulfilled in Joshua 8 (Jos 8:30-34). We hear here for the third time about writing the law. The first and second time the writing of the law is mentioned in Deuteronomy 10: the first time as a referral back to Horeb (Deu 10:2), the second time in connection with the tablets cut out by Moses (Deu 10:4).

Here the people write. Thereby they say 'yes' to the commandments of God. You have to be in the land for it, surrounded by the blessings of God. Then it is not difficult to say 'yes' to what God has said. Then there is care to write down the words of the law "very distinctly" (verse 8), so that those who pass by can read what is written without difficulty (Hab 2:2). It also means that nothing is taken away from it or forgotten, but that the people will keep what is as God has given it.

For the believer, the will of God is everything. The people's writing of the law is the people's answer to God that they would like to know His will. In the application to us we can read about this in some letters in the New Testament (Eph 1:9; Col 1:9; 4:12; Heb 13:21). In the land one gets a special impression of that will.

Next to that monument stands an altar. Whoever has so wholeheartedly said 'yes' to God's Word, will want to sacrifice. Through what is written on the monument God speaks to man. Through the altar man directs to God. On the monument God asks for obedience as a condition of blessing. Through the altar man worships God for the blessings which He has given in Christ, the Sacrifice.

The altar must be built in the manner prescribed by God. No human activity is allowed (cf. Exo 20:25). The stones only need to be stacked, they may not be cut. Human reworking of that place leads to catastrophe. Thus we may fulfill God's Word, we may establish and maintain a testimony for Him, but we may not rework it according to our own thoughts.

There is no talk of sin offerings, but of burnt offerings and peace offerings. The sacrifices on this altar are an expression of gratitude toward God as the Giver of all blessings. The sin offering determines us by our sins and that is not what we are talking about here. Burnt offerings represent Christ in His work on the cross, as completely dedicated to God. Peace offerings represent Christ in His work on the cross by which fellowship has become possible between God and His people and between the members of God's people.

Deu 27:9-10 | Israel Has Become God's People

9 Then Moses and the Levitical priests spoke to all Israel, saying, "Be silent and listen, O Israel! This day you have become a people for the LORD your God. 10 You shall therefore obey the LORD your God, and do His commandments and His statutes which I command you today."

Here Moses, together with the Levitical priests, speaks to the whole people. In verse 1 Moses speaks together with the elders. There it is about obedience to God's commandments. That is what we are talking about here as well, but the priests are more involved in its observance. Obedience affects the fellowship between God and His people. Here God declares Israel to be His people. This is a special moment of the nearness of God. Priests play an important role in this. For us, it is about priestly feelings.

Deu 27:11-12 | Blessing on Mount Gerizim

11 Moses also charged the people on that day, saying, 12 "When you cross the Jordan, these shall stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin."

God first presents blessing to His people. It is always in His heart to bless His people. At the same time it becomes clear that His people do not want this blessing. What the blessing contains is not elaborated here. The emphasis is placed on the curse that is pronounced on various sins in the following verses. God knows the heart of His people. That is what He tells His people, for He wants them to recognize it.

The tribes standing on the mountain of blessing are all descendants of Lea (four sons) and Rachel (two sons). There are no sons of the slaves. They are, so to speak, only descendants of the 'free' (Gal 4:31).

Deu 27:13-26 | Curse on Mount Ebal

13 For the curse, these shall stand on Mount Ebal: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali. 14 The Levites shall then answer and say to all the men of Israel with a loud voice, 15 'Cursed is the man who makes an idol or a molten image, an abomination to the LORD, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and sets [it] up in secret.' And all the people shall answer and say, 'Amen.' 16 'Cursed is he who dishonors his father or mother.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.' 17 'Cursed is he who moves his neighbor's boundary mark.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.' 18 'Cursed is he who misleads a blind [person] on the road.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.' 19 'Cursed is he who distorts the justice due an alien, orphan, and widow.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.' 20 'Cursed is he who lies with his father's wife, because he has uncovered his father's skirt.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.' 21 'Cursed is he who lies with any animal.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.' 22 'Cursed is he who lies with his sister, the daughter of his father or of his mother.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.' 23 'Cursed is he who lies with his mother-in-law.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.' 24 'Cursed is he who strikes his neighbor in secret.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.' 25 'Cursed is he who accepts a bribe to strike down an innocent person.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.' 26 'Cursed is he who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'

Man has to deal with the curse as soon as he expects something from himself. If that is the case, he always will fail. He forfeits the blessing and receives the curse he has called about himself in case he fails. The six sons who have to pronounce the curse are four sons of the female slaves, and Reuben and Zebulun, who are born of Lea. Reuben probably belongs to this category because he has forfeited his birthright (1Chr 5:1). There is nothing known about Zebulun that would indicate that he should belong to this group.

In verse 14 come the Levites. They serve, read the law and explain it. They point out the consequences of disobedience. Disobedience is never without

consequences. Even if a disobedience takes place secretly (verses 15,24), the curse will hit its mark. No sin remains without righteous punishment. That applies to each of the twelve sins mentioned here.

The last-mentioned curse (verse 26) concerns any violation of the law and not only the more or less horrible sins mentioned above. Anyone who does not persevere in all that the law says is under the curse (Gal 3:10). There is no escape clause.

Deuteronomy 28

Introduction

This chapter is about the government of God over His people. When there is faithfulness there is blessing for the whole people. When there is unfaithfulness there is curse and there are disasters and plagues for the whole people. The blessing contains only fourteen verses, while the curse is widely reported in no less than fifty-four verses. In a long speech Moses unfolds the blessing and curse: blessing when there is obedience to the law and curse when there is disobedience to the law. Here he takes up again the promises and threats of the law of Exodus 23 (Exo 23:20-33) and Leviticus 26 (Lev 26:1-39), summarizes them and expands them.

In the history of Israel there is obedience and therefore blessing only in the time of David and Solomon. For the rest, their history is one of unfaithfulness and curse. The revivals under some faithful kings have not been able to turn the final curse, because they are only temporary revivals. Here blessing and curse are national and temporary, not eternal.

God will bless the remnant of His people on the basis of the new covenant. Then he has written His law within them, and put away their sins (Jer 32:33; Eze 36:26; Heb 8:8-12). All the conditions of the new covenant have been fulfilled by the Lord Jesus.

In the history of Christianity as a whole, we do not see the people of God in a state of blessing, but of curse. That is the result of our unfaithfulness. In the Christianity, blessing and growth only occur in the beginning. Thereafter there is unfaithfulness and decline. Also in Christianity there are times of revival. But these too are phenomena without permanent effects. The general line is a descending one.

We learn this from the description of church history presented to us in the seven letters in Revelation 2-3. At each new beginning only the first phase is a time of blessing, after that the decay comes. For Christianity, there is no final recovery. It ends in the great Babylon, about which the judgment is described in Revelation 17-18.

Deu 28:1-14 | The Blessing of Obedience

1 *"Now it shall be, if you diligently obey the LORD your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. 2 All these blessings will come upon you and overtake you if you obey the LORD your God: 3 "Blessed [shall] you [be] in the city, and blessed [shall] you [be] in the country. 4 "Blessed [shall be] the offspring of your body and the produce of your ground and the offspring of your beasts, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock. 5 "Blessed [shall be] your basket and your kneading bowl. 6 "Blessed [shall] you [be] when you come in, and blessed [shall] you [be] when you go out. 7 "The LORD shall cause your enemies who rise up against you to be defeated before you; they will come out against you one way and will flee before you seven ways. 8 The LORD will command the blessing upon you in your barns and in all that you put your hand to, and He will bless you in the land which the LORD your God gives you. 9 The LORD will establish you as a holy people to Himself, as He swore to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in His ways. 10 So all the peoples of the earth will see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they will be afraid of you. 11 The LORD will make you abound in prosperity, in the offspring of your body and in the offspring of your beast and in the produce of your ground, in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers to give you. 12 The LORD will open for you His good storehouse, the heavens, to give rain to your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hand; and you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. 13 The LORD will make you the head and not the tail, and you only will be above, and you will not be underneath, if you listen to the commandments of the LORD your God, which I charge you today, to observe [them] carefully, 14 and do not turn aside from any of the words which I command you today, to the right or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them.*

The blessings that are presented to the people in these fourteen verses are subject to conditions. Only if these are met the blessing will remain. It is God's desire to bless. He always has blessing on reserve, even if there is only limited recovery. Moses presents the blessings as powers that will follow the people closely and overtake them. The blessing concerns all areas of life (verses 3-6) and circumstances and situations of life (verses 7-14).

Verses 3-6. The blessing “in the city” represents the blessing that believers experience in the daily fellowship with each other (cf. Psa 133:1-3). By blessing “in the country” we can think of the activities each has in his own field of work. Blessed in “the offspring of your body”, points to the spiritual fruit that is there for God because of a state of faithfulness and devotion. “The produce of your ground” indicates (spiritual) food and “the offspring of your beasts, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock” indicates (spiritual) sacrifices.

The “basket”, in which the fruit of the land is put, and the “kneading bowl”, in which the daily bread is made, indicate that the blessing is processed into food for the heart. We can think of reading or listening to the explanation of the Word as food to the heart. The blessing “when you come in” and “when you go out” speaks of freedom in Christ (Jn 10:9); the whole walk is under God’s blessing.

Verses 7-14. A people living in the blessing in this way need not fear any enemies. Their safety is guaranteed. There are enemies, but they can’t do anything. Their enemies are a prey to the LORD. He delivers them defeated to His people. All they have to do is to chase them away. This is also the case with our spiritual enemies. The enemy has been defeated. We can resist the devil if we have taken up “the full armor of God” (Eph 6:13). Then the devil will flee (Jam 4:7).

The result is new blessing, an abundance of blessing, which is commanded by the LORD. “His good storehouse, the heavens” will open (cf. Job 38:22). He delivers that blessing out of His own inexhaustible fullness. He will bless the work of their hands, indicating that blessing is obtained through work. On the one hand God gives the blessing, on the other hand we have to make it our own, which means that we have to work for it (Pro 10:4).

In addition to all the personal enjoyment of the blessing, His people will be a blessing to others. From their own fullness they will be able to give others. A people who are faithful and blessed, and who distribute that blessing, will command respect. All who see this people will acknowledge that the name of the LORD is proclaimed upon them. The Name of the LORD is the revelation of His glorious Being. The head of this people will

be the head of all peoples. The blessing has no end, as long as they listen to the commandments the LORD has given.

God is willing to give us also “the fulness of the blessing of Christ” (Rom 15:29). That fulness of the blessing can be found in Christ Himself, “in Whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col 2:3). God wants us, that is, “all the saints” (Eph 3:18), to “be filled up to all the fullness of God” (Eph 3:19). For this we may pray, for He “is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us” (Eph 3:20). If only we are focused with all our hearts on the source of all blessings, on the Giver Himself, and if our only goal is to give Him “the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever” (Eph 3:21).

Deu 28:15-19 | When Blessing Turns into Curse

15 “But it shall come about, if you do not obey the LORD your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you: 16 “Cursed [shall] you [be] in the city, and cursed [shall] you [be] in the country. 17 “Cursed [shall be] your basket and your kneading bowl. 18 “Cursed [shall be] the offspring of your body and the produce of your ground, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock. 19 “Cursed [shall] you [be] when you come in, and cursed [shall] you [be] when you go out.

The verses that follow form a great contrast with the previous verses. It is a dramatic section full of warnings. These are prophecies that have literally been fulfilled.

The interpretation of Scripture is threefold: literally in history, prophetically in the future and the spiritual or practical application for us. It is a serious section not only for Israel, but also for us. This section is also written that we may learn from it. In Romans 11 we hear the same warning and prophecy for Christianity (Rom 11:16-24). Christianity has experienced the same. The question is: What do we do with the lesson that this section contains?

In verses 16-19, everything in which the people in verses 3-6 will be blessed by obedience is turned into a curse by disobedience. The curse runs paral-

lel with the blessing. The curse hits them in the blessing. This is a penetrating presentation of the matter. From a spiritual point of view, we see that unfaithfulness causes the blessings to disappear – the insight in them and the enjoyment of them – and instead evil teachings come in, destroying the life of faith in every way.

Deu 28:20-26 | Curse of Disease, Drought and Flight

20 “The LORD will send upon you curses, confusion, and rebuke, in all you undertake to do, until you are destroyed and until you perish quickly, on account of the evil of your deeds, because you have forsaken Me. 21 The LORD will make the pestilence cling to you until He has consumed you from the land where you are entering to possess it. 22 The LORD will smite you with consumption and with fever and with inflammation and with fiery heat and with the sword and with blight and with mildew, and they will pursue you until you perish. 23 The heaven which is over your head shall be bronze, and the earth which is under you, iron. 24 The LORD will make the rain of your land powder and dust; from heaven it shall come down on you until you are destroyed. 25 “The LORD shall cause you to be defeated before your enemies; you will go out one way against them, but you will flee seven ways before them, and you will be [an example of] terror to all the kingdoms of the earth. 26 Your carcasses will be food to all birds of the sky and to the beasts of the earth, and there will be no one to frighten [them] away.

The plagues mentioned in this and the following verses do not all affect the people at once. Every time the people sink further into disobedience, God will send other plagues to make the people return to Himself. Forsaking the LORD causes evil deeds and forces God to bring the curse upon them, until the people will have been exterminated and ruined.

The first plague mentioned is the deadly pestilence. The result is that they are swept away from the land. Before that the LORD shall strike them with seven diseases, by which they shall be persecuted and ruined. The threat is terrible, the warning penetrating. God will not only take away from them the good, but He, the LORD, will also bring evil upon them (verses 21-22).

Diseases and plagues that break out mean to us the breakout of sin, false teachings that are taught, the wrong that creeps in. There is also the loss of

the good. They are deprived of the pleasure of blessing until God deprives them of the land itself. They will then be deprived of the fruits of the land; they will not know about it anymore. For us it means that we lose sight of heavenly Christendom and the place where the Lord Jesus dwells among His people and comes together with them.

Instead of a refreshing and fruit causing rain, the LORD will rain “powder and dust”. Disobedience is answered with drought in which no life is present and even the promise of life is lacking. Every hope of it is gone.

Other masters will rule over them. Those who profess to be God’s people will be ruled by the flesh and their own thinking. They will experience: “If you are living according to the flesh, you must die” (Rom 8:13a). They no longer ask for what God is interested in, but for what satisfies their own pleasures. The corpses, the dead bodies, the bodies without spirit, are prey to the birds of the sky and the wild beasts, that is to say of demonic powers.

Deu 28:27-34 | Torments and Robberies

27 “The LORD will smite you with the boils of Egypt and with tumors and with the scab and with the itch, from which you cannot be healed. 28 The LORD will smite you with madness and with blindness and with bewilderment of heart; 29 and you will grope at noon, as the blind man gropes in darkness, and you will not prosper in your ways; but you shall only be oppressed and robbed continually, with none to save you. 30 You shall betroth a wife, but another man will violate her; you shall build a house, but you will not live in it; you shall plant a vineyard, but you will not use its fruit. 31 Your ox shall be slaughtered before your eyes, but you will not eat of it; your donkey shall be torn away from you, and will not be restored to you; your sheep shall be given to your enemies, and you will have none to save you. 32 Your sons and your daughters shall be given to another people, while your eyes look on and yearn for them continually; but there will be nothing you can do. 33 A people whom you do not know shall eat up the produce of your ground and all your labors, and you will never be anything but oppressed and crushed continually. 34 You shall be driven mad by the sight of what you see.

The first bundle of plagues has ended with death (verse 26). In these verses, Moses proposes a second bundle of plagues that the LORD will bring

upon them. He talks about skin diseases that belong in Egypt. Then he mentions mental illnesses. They will be driven mad. Any sense of orientation will have disappeared. They will not know where they are or where to go. Their most intimate relatives and their possessions will be taken away from them. They will see it happen before their eyes, but are totally powerless to do anything against it.

Deu 28:35-37 | Paralysis and Carried Away

35 The LORD will strike you on the knees and legs with sore boils, from which you cannot be healed, from the sole of your foot to the crown of your head. 36 The LORD will bring you and your king, whom you set over you, to a nation which neither you nor your fathers have known, and there you shall serve other gods, wood and stone. 37 You shall become a horror, a proverb, and a taunt among all the people where the LORD drives you.

The diseases of verse 27 do their exhausting work in verse 35 “on the knees and legs”. Going and standing are made impossible, while there is no view of improvement. On the contrary, the disease affects their whole body. They themselves cannot do anything, but also their king, on whom they have placed their hope, cannot do anything for them (2Kgs 6:24-27). Finally, they are rejected, taken away from the promised land and brought to a foreign land. There they will serve other gods. Also in the land of their captivity they will have no rest. They will be an object of ridicule (1Kgs 9:7; Jer 24:9).

This bundle of plagues can also be seen in Christianity. Deviation from the Lord, from the Word of God, will lead to madness. The most senseless solutions are put forward to get out of a situation in which God’s people have ended up by their own unfaithfulness. Deviation from God’s Word brings hatred in the most intimate relationships. Relationships in families are broken. It happens before their eyes, but they are not able to turn the tide. Then other gods are served. Instead of returning to God and His Word, they resort to the paranormal, making them a mockery for the world.

Deu 28:38-44 | The Harvest Cursed

38 “You shall bring out much seed to the field but you will gather in little, for the locust will consume it. 39 You shall plant and cultivate vineyards, but you will neither drink of the wine nor gather [the grapes], for the worm will devour them. 40 You shall have olive trees throughout your territory but you will not anoint yourself with the oil, for your olives will drop off. 41 You shall have sons and daughters but they will not be yours, for they will go into captivity. 42 The cricket shall possess all your trees and the produce of your ground. 43 The alien who is among you shall rise above you higher and higher, but you will go down lower and lower. 44 He shall lend to you, but you will not lend to him; he shall be the head, and you will be the tail.

The first bundle of plagues ends with death (verse 26), the second with the exile (verse 36). In verse 38 Moses begins again with a people who are in the land amidst the blessings they possess. The curse will fall on every work they undertake to enjoy the blessing of the land – corn, wine and oil (Hag 1:9-11). God uses “the worm” and “the cricket”, among other things. Everything from which they expect any result will disappoint them terribly.

Even the idea that their descendants might then enjoy their work is not granted to them. Their children will go into captivity. Israel will become poorer and poorer, will sink further and further away. The alien is given the opportunity to rise above Israel. Israel will become dependent on the favor of aliens. Because of this, the opposite of verses 12-13 will happen.

Deviation from God and His Word never delivers what is expected of it. In contrast, God has means to ensure that the expected proceeds are lost. Despite all the effort that is made, it will not be enjoyed.

About Who the Lord Jesus – of Whom seed to the field is a picture (Jn 12:24) – is according to God’s thoughts, nothing is heard when God’s Word is replaced by a word of men. Real joy – of which the wine speaks (Jdg 9:13) – is not enjoyed if only earthly pleasure is sought. The work of the Holy Spirit – represented in the olive oil (1Jn 2:20) – does not take place when carnal means are used to obtain God’s blessing.

The descendants, which we can apply to the spiritual products, will not have a long life in the land of God. The spiritual products of own effort will end up in the world, because there they belong.

Deu 28:45-46 | The Reason for the Curses

45 “So all these curses shall come on you and pursue you and overtake you until you are destroyed, because you would not obey the LORD your God by keeping His commandments and His statutes which He commanded you. 46 They shall become a sign and a wonder on you and your descendants forever.

These words of Moses do not yet form the conclusion of his speech, but he makes, as it were, a short break. After three bundles of threats, which are warnings not to deviate, he refers with these verses back to verse 15. There he started to denounce the curses. By reiterating it in between, he emphasizes the serious consequences of disobedience. The tone also becomes more threatening now. In verse 15 he still says: “If you do not obey the LORD your God”. Now he says: “Because you would not obey the LORD your God.”

He adds that the curses are also a sign and a wonder. They serve to amazement and dismay by their size and horror, in which the people must recognize the supernatural intervention of God. Forever, the wicked people will acknowledge the origin and righteousness of judgment. This does not alter the fact that God will not judge the whole people. God will keep His promises to make them true to a remnant to the election of grace (Isa 10:22; Rom 11:5).

Deu 28:47-57 | Among the Cruellest Enemies

47 “Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joy and a glad heart, for the abundance of all things; 48 therefore you shall serve your enemies whom the LORD will send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in the lack of all things; and He will put an iron yoke on your neck until He has destroyed you. 49 “The LORD will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as the eagle swoops down, a nation whose language you shall not understand, 50 a nation of fierce countenance who will have no respect for the old, nor show favor to the young. 51 Moreover, it shall eat the

offspring of your herd and the produce of your ground until you are destroyed, who also leaves you no grain, new wine, or oil, nor the increase of your herd or the young of your flock until they have caused you to perish. 52 It shall besiege you in all your towns until your high and fortified walls in which you trusted come down throughout your land, and it shall besiege you in all your towns throughout your land which the LORD your God has given you. 53 Then you shall eat the offspring of your own body, the flesh of your sons and of your daughters whom the LORD your God has given you, during the siege and the distress by which your enemy will oppress you. 54 The man who is refined and very delicate among you shall be hostile toward his brother and toward the wife he cherishes and toward the rest of his children who remain, 55 so that he will not give [even] one of them any of the flesh of his children which he will eat, since he has nothing [else] left, during the siege and the distress by which your enemy will oppress you in all your towns. 56 The refined and delicate woman among you, who would not venture to set the sole of her foot on the ground for delicateness and refinement, shall be hostile toward the husband she cherishes and toward her son and daughter, 57 and toward her afterbirth which issues from between her legs and toward her children whom she bears; for she will eat them secretly for lack of anything [else], during the siege and the distress by which your enemy will oppress you in your towns.

In the previous bundles of plagues, the curse has been placed on all sides and terrains of life. Love for his people leads Moses to paint an even more terrifying picture, so that the people will remain obedient to God's commandments.

The LORD has given His people blessing in abundance. This can only be a reason to serve Him with "joy and a glad heart" (verse 47). If that does not happen, it is the coarsest form of ingratitude. God cannot but surrender His people to the cruelest oppression.

When we think of "a people from afar" (verse 49) we can think of the Assyrians, the Babylonians, or Chaldeans, and the Romans. All three have done much harm to Jerusalem. In these verses it seems to be more about the oppression by the Romans – tellingly they have an eagle (verse 49) in their banner! – while the previous verses more describe the Chaldean as an enemy.

Verses 52-57 deal with the siege of Jerusalem and describe bewildering, unreal scenes. Distinguished, spoiled women of Jerusalem who have let themselves be carried in better times – “who would not venture to set the sole of her foot on the ground” –, will lose any natural love for their children and turn into monsters with inhuman, beastly behavior. In their indescribable distress, they do not resort to God, but to the lowest conceivable: eating their own children (Lam 4:10; 2Kgs 6:28-29). To this deep depravity leads the disobedience to God.

Deu 28:58-68 | The Full Measure of God's Curse

58 “If you are not careful to observe all the words of this law which are written in this book, to fear this honored and awesome name, the LORD your God, 59 then the LORD will bring extraordinary plagues on you and your descendants, even severe and lasting plagues, and miserable and chronic sicknesses. 60 He will bring back on you all the diseases of Egypt of which you were afraid, and they will cling to you. 61 Also every sickness and every plague which, not written in the book of this law, the LORD will bring on you until you are destroyed. 62 Then you shall be left few in number, whereas you were as numerous as the stars of heaven, because you did not obey the LORD your God. 63 It shall come about that as the LORD delighted over you to prosper you, and multiply you, so the LORD will delight over you to make you perish and destroy you; and you will be torn from the land where you are entering to possess it. 64 Moreover, the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth; and there you shall serve other gods, wood and stone, which you or your fathers have not known. 65 Among those nations you shall find no rest, and there will be no resting place for the sole of your foot; but there the LORD will give you a trembling heart, failing of eyes, and despair of soul. 66 So your life shall hang in doubt before you; and you will be in dread night and day, and shall have no assurance of your life. 67 In the morning you shall say, ‘Would that it were evening!’ And at evening you shall say, ‘Would that it were morning!’ because of the dread of your heart which you dread, and for the sight of your eyes which you will see. 68 The LORD will bring you back to Egypt in ships, by the way about which I spoke to you, ‘You will never see it again!’ And there you will offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but there will be no buyer.”

These verses are about the words of “this book” and the Name of the LORD God (verse 58). The whole book is an enthusiastic eulogy to the land. But God says in verse 63 that He will delight to tear the people from the land if they are not faithful to Him and His Word. Thus, Christianity went into exile, as it were, because it did not keep its heavenly position and became earthly oriented. Taking an outward position is never a guarantee of remaining in the truth.

Holding the words of this book and holding or fearing the Name summarizes everything that is necessary to enjoy the blessings. Where these two things are abandoned, the people of God lose their place in the land and the place God has chosen to make His Name dwell. For us, this means the loss of our heavenly position and the loss of the place where the Lord Jesus gathers His own around Himself, to His Name.

The scenes of unprecedented distress described so far will not yet be the end of misery if the people refuse to be warned. God will bring the full measure of the curse upon His people. Nothing will be spared them. The fact that the previous disasters and plagues did not mean the end is testimony to God’s perseverance to do everything possible to make His people return to Himself. It is only when there is no hope of conversion that He makes the final judgment. He also reserves the right to save up a remnant according to His gracious choice.

There will always be fear for the day to come (verse 67). Even the night offers no rest. One is just as afraid of the night (cf. Job 7:4; Psa 91:5-6). The fear arises not only because of what they see with their eyes, but also because of the fear of the heart. In other words: not only real dangers will make them afraid, but also imaginary dangers. When one comes to investigate the causes of fear, they often turn out to be merely the creatures of the imagination.

Just as the liberation from the slavery of Egypt can be compared to the birth of the people, so the return to slavery can be compared to their death. No one will see anything useful in them and will spend even a penny to own them. It indicates a state of complete contempt and rejection.

Deuteronomy 29

Deu 29:1-15 | A New Covenant

1 These are the words of the covenant which the LORD commanded Moses to make with the sons of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which He had made with them at Horeb. 2 And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them, "You have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh and all his servants and all his land; 3 the great trials which your eyes have seen, those great signs and wonders. 4 Yet to this day the LORD has not given you a heart to know, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear. 5 I have led you forty years in the wilderness; your clothes have not worn out on you, and your sandal has not worn out on your foot. 6 You have not eaten bread, nor have you drunk wine or strong drink, in order that you might know that I am the LORD your God. 7 When you reached this place, Sihon the king of Heshbon and Og the king of Bashan came out to meet us for battle, but we defeated them; 8 and we took their land and gave it as an inheritance to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of the Manassites. 9 So keep the words of this covenant to do them, that you may prosper in all that you do. 10 "You stand today, all of you, before the LORD your God: your chiefs, your tribes, your elders and your officers, [even] all the men of Israel, 11 your little ones, your wives, and the alien who is within your camps, from the one who chops your wood to the one who draws your water, 12 that you may enter into the covenant with the LORD your God, and into His oath which the LORD your God is making with you today, 13 in order that He may establish you today as His people and that He may be your God, just as He spoke to you and as He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. 14 "Now not with you alone am I making this covenant and this oath, 15 but both with those who stand here with us today in the presence of the LORD our God and with those who are not with us here today

Here begins a new section in the book. It is about the big question of how the people can be put into the blessings of the land and how they can remain in possession of them. In Deuteronomy 28 God's Spirit has shown them in warning how they will behave in the land and what the conse-

quences will be. In Deuteronomy 29 He does this again, but now in connection with a new covenant. Here we hear about expelling from the land as a possibility, while very gradually it is being transferred to a security. It is no longer a probability, but a prophecy. Fortunately, there will also be a fixed prophecy of recovery in a later period.

For us it is about dwelling and staying in the heavenly places and in the place where the Lord makes His Name dwell. Here we can bring the blessing of the land, as shown in Deuteronomy 26.

There is a new covenant here, in addition to that of Horeb. It is not a renewal of an old covenant. It is an extra covenant, which does not destroy the covenant of Horeb. There is also the covenant with the fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (verse 13). The latter is an unconditional covenant. That covenant is made entirely by God alone. Man cannot set conditions to which God should submit Himself.

In every covenant the conditions are set by God, sometimes taking on Himself certain obligations. A covenant assumes two parties. Thus we know the covenant with all creation between God and Noah and his descendants. There is also the covenant with the fathers, whereby only conditions are on the side of God, to give Abraham a rich offspring and to bring him into the land of promises.

Then we hear here of the covenant God made with Israel at Horeb. This covenant is essentially based on grace, what God has done. But the moment the people reject living by grace and place themselves under responsibility, God gives them the law. This makes the covenant dependent on their obedience. The covenant of Horeb is therefore a covenant based on the law, and on that basis, it is impossible for the people to enter the land.

Here we have another covenant, the one in the land of Moab. This covenant brings together the principles of the grace of God expressed in the covenant with the fathers, and the law of God as the foundation of the covenant of Horeb. For the establishment of this covenant, Moses again places the actions of God in the past before the eyes of the people. This particularly concerns those under twenty years of age at the start of the wilderness journey. They have seen everything. The people he addresses are the new generation who will enter the land. All who are over twenty

years of age at the beginning of the wilderness journey, have been killed in the wilderness.

Do those of this new generation have an eye for what the LORD has done? Do they understand how dependent they are on His grace? Did they listen to His voice? The LORD has given them no heart, eye, or ear, by which they turn to Him. This did not happen because the LORD did not want it, but because *they* did not want it. They did not ask Him for it! Their rebelliousness and evil prevented Him from giving them what He wanted to give.

They have already seen God's deeds, but they have not understood the language God has spoken through them. This is how it goes with the signs and wonders that the Lord Jesus does especially in the Gospel according to John. If the people do not see the glory of the Lord Jesus through the signs, they are spiritually blind. That also applies to us.

Moses also reminds them that the clothes and shoes they wear since their exodus from Egypt are not worn out. After forty years in the wilderness, their clothes and shoes have suffered nothing (Deu 8:4). They have not survived because of their own facilities and self-made supplies of bread and wine. All this time God has miraculously ensured that they have not lacked food and drink. The daily manna and the water from the rock are a testimony of His love and mercy, of His involvement with their ups and downs. By this they can know that He is the LORD their God.

Also with respect to their enemies, God has taken care of them. They have already been able to capture land. Thus it is clear that God has thought of them in all circumstances and provided them with all that is necessary. From His side, nothing has been lacking. Surely this is a tremendous exhortation to listen to Him, with new prosperity in prospect. God wants nothing but bless them, as long as the people listen.

This covenant of the LORD is made with all ranks of the people. Even all those who are still in the loins of the people, "those who are not with us here today", the generations to come, are involved. They all form His people. He solemnly declares that they are. He will fulfil His promises to them, made to their fathers. But if they want to experience the blessings of

His promises and the declaration that they are His people, they will have to keep the words of the covenant.

Deu 29:16-28 | How the People Can Lose Everything

16 (for you know how we lived in the land of Egypt, and how we came through the midst of the nations through which you passed; 17 moreover, you have seen their abominations and their idols [of] wood, stone, silver, and gold, which [they had] with them); 18 so that there will not be among you a man or woman, or family or tribe, whose heart turns away today from the LORD our God, to go and serve the gods of those nations; that there will not be among you a root bearing poisonous fruit and wormwood. 19 It shall be when he hears the words of this curse, that he will boast, saying, 'I have peace though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart in order to destroy the watered [land] with the dry.' 20 The LORD shall never be willing to forgive him, but rather the anger of the LORD and His jealousy will burn against that man, and every curse which is written in this book will rest on him, and the LORD will blot out his name from under heaven. 21 Then the LORD will single him out for adversity from all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant which are written in this book of the law. 22 "Now the generation to come, your sons who rise up after you and the foreigner who comes from a distant land, when they see the plagues of the land and the diseases with which the LORD has afflicted it, will say, 23 'All its land is brimstone and salt, a burning waste, unsown and unproductive, and no grass grows in it, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, which the LORD overthrew in His anger and in His wrath.' 24 All the nations will say, 'Why has the LORD done thus to this land? Why this great outburst of anger?' 25 Then [men] will say, 'Because they forsook the covenant of the LORD, the God of their fathers, which He made with them when He brought them out of the land of Egypt. 26 They went and served other gods and worshiped them, gods whom they have not known and whom He had not allotted to them. 27 Therefore, the anger of the LORD burned against that land, to bring upon it every curse which is written in this book; 28 and the LORD uprooted them from their land in anger and in fury and in great wrath, and cast them into another land, as [it is] this day.'

These verses suggest how we can lose everything again. In verse 18 the dangers are summarized. First of all, we lose our blessings when we regain

an eye for the things that are found in the world outside the people of God. In the second place we lose our blessings, not because of what comes from outside, but because of what can be within man, a root bearing poisonous fruit and wormwood.

Decay originates from what comes in from outside and from what comes out from ourselves. If we get an eye for the things of the world and are attracted by them, it will not miss its inner effect. When believers get bitter (wormwood is bitter) against each other, it is often because the world has entered into the thinking (Heb 12:15).

Wormwood or gall is the name of an intensely bitter plant. Wormwood is probably the very bitter broth of that plant. It is often used in the Bible as an indication for bitterness (Jer 9:15; 23:15; Lam 3:15,19; Amos 5:7; 6:12; Rev 8:10-11). This poison (or gall) worked as a kind of opium. Therefore it has been used to intoxicate or anaesthetize those who were executed (Mt 27:34).

When the intoxication of bitterness is present, apostate thoughts come. This leads people to talk about peace (cf. Jer 23:17), although there is no peace, but on the contrary destruction is imminent: "While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape" (1Thes 5:3). The Lord will neither forgive nor spare such preachers of peace.

In verses 19-21 it concerns an individuals. The responsibility of the individual comes to the fore. Because the people are unfaithful and do not remove evil from the midst, the LORD Himself will take care of this individual. But then we see how Moses' speech passes from the individual who has to be removed to a whole people being driven away.

God does not destroy the people, but "uproots them" (verse 28). Unfortunately, in the history of the people, this is becoming a reality. The ten tribes are taken away by the Assyrians. The two tribes are carried away to Babylon. In this way the people experience the reality of the loss of the blessings. God makes sure that they can no longer enjoy His land and His dwelling place.

In an application to us, we can say that He takes away from the believers who are unfaithful the knowledge of the true place of the believer in the

heavenly places and of the place where the Lord gathers His own around Himself. These are the two main subjects in this book.

Deu 29:29 | Secret Things and Things Revealed

29 *"The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.*

"The secret things" refer to God's gracious acts with a remnant if He must punish the people as a whole as a result of their transgression of the law. In the next chapter some of these secret things will become visible. If He wants to give restoration, that is a secret thing. For faith it is a revealed matter, the fulfilment of which will take place in the future.

"The things revealed" refer to the law in which He has made His will known. These are the ways of God in His government, which He communicated in the previous chapter and in this chapter by Moses. For this and the coming generations, those revealed things form the basis for living in the land.

This verse is no excuse not to occupy ourselves with the things of God as if they were secret things. Scripture encourages us to concern ourselves with all that God has revealed to us. What He has revealed is found in the Scriptures. What we find in the Scriptures we can understand through His Spirit Whom He has given us (1Cor 2:9-10). God has revealed to us through the light of the New Testament what is meant by the secret or hidden things we read about here.

Deuteronomy 30

Deu 30:1-10 | Returned to the Lord and Brought Into the Land

1 *“So it shall be when all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call [them] to mind in all nations where the LORD your God has banished you, 2 and you return to the LORD your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I command you today, you and your sons, 3 then the LORD your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you. 4 If your outcasts are at the ends of the earth, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you back. 5 The LORD your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers. 6 “Moreover the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live. 7 The LORD your God will inflict all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate you, who persecuted you. 8 And you shall again obey the LORD, and observe all His commandments which I command you today. 9 Then the LORD your God will prosper you abundantly in all the work of your hand, in the offspring of your body and in the offspring of your cattle and in the produce of your ground, for the LORD will again rejoice over you for good, just as He rejoiced over your fathers; 10 if you obey the LORD your God to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this book of the law, if you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and soul.*

This chapter shows that God can always give restoration. This applies to Israel and it also applies to us today, to the church. The return of Israel will begin when they are scattered. God will work in their hearts the longing for return to Him and His land. They will realize that they have been removed from the land because of their sins, and will confess this to God with shame: “Then those of you who escape will remember Me among the nations to which they will be carried captive, how I have been hurt

by their adulterous hearts which turned away from Me, and by their eyes which played the harlot after their idols; and they will loathe themselves in their own sight for the evils which they have committed, for all their abominations” (Eze 6:9).

We see a pre-fulfilment of the return from the scattering in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, although there it almost exclusively concerns the return from Babylon and not from all kinds of peoples. We hear in the prayer of Nehemiah how he pleads with God for the scattered Israel on the basis of this promise (Neh 1:5-11). The final fulfilment will be done on the basis of God’s promise to His Messiah (Isa 49:6a).

We live in a time of great decay which marks Christianity as a whole. On the whole is written ‘Babylon’ – that means ‘confusion’. The believers are scattered in all directions. But for all those who bow before God under this situation, it is possible to return to the lost blessings.

God wanted to show us much of the blessing of the land and the place where He dwells through this book of the Bible. We may lose sight of these things if we do not stay with the Lord. But always He can give restoration, as here in verse 2. Restoration can be the matter of the individual, but it can expand. God wants to gather His whole people around Himself. There is also restoration of the land.

To the blessing of the land belongs a circumcised heart (verse 6). The circumcision of the heart is a spiritual circumcision (Rom 2:29). This circumcision can only happen in connection with the work of Christ (Col 2:11). For Israel, it means the recognition that, as far as personal responsibility is concerned, every blessing is hopelessly lost.

Only in someone who has been circumcised in heart there is love for God. Then man’s heart and soul turn to God and he gains an eye for the secret things. This happens when God works in grace, where man has corrupted everything in his works. God works the conviction of this in the hearts. The circumcision He performs is to bring to self-judgment and to take the place of grace. That attitude is answered by Him with blessing.

The first consequence of such a sincere and profound return is love for the LORD their God, and that with their whole being. That is both the starting point and the motive for their lives. A second consequence is that they will

receive a more abundant blessing from the LORD than they have lost. As for their enemies, they will perish by the plagues that first came upon the people.

When the people repent, God does everything for the good for them. With the inveterate enemies of His people He does everything for evil. On a people that repent or a person who repents, the pleasure of God rests. They please Him because they give Him His place and they take their rightful place before Him. Harmony has been created. The following verses show how that happened.

Deu 30:11-14 | Not Too Difficult and Not Out of Reach

11 "For this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach. 12 It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will go up to heaven for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?' 13 Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will cross the sea for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?' 14 But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it.

The purpose of these verses is to show us that what God asks of a man or His people is not burdensome. No personal effort is required: it is "not too difficult ... nor ... out of reach". God's commandment is also given in audible – "in your mouth" – and comprehensible – "in your heart" – language. God, from His side, has made everything so that man can fulfil His commandments without any effort and thereby enjoy the blessing. Why? Because every human effort is doomed to fail. Why? Because man is naturally corrupt.

This is what Romans 10 is talking about, where these verses from Deuteronomy are quoted and explained: "For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness. But the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows: "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 the dead)." But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart"" (Rom 10:5-8a).

Paul speaks here of people who have pursued a law of righteousness, but without achieving that goal. Only when a person sees the uselessness of his efforts does he see Christ as the end of the law. Then he has finished his efforts and believes for righteousness (Rom 10:3-4). The end of the law is not achieved if one keeps it, but if one acknowledges that it is impossible to keep the law. Then the heart is focused on Christ.

Then the purpose of the law is quoted: 'Do this and you shall live' (Rom 10:5; Lev 18:5). God thus indicates that one can earn one's own righteousness by keeping the law. But no one has kept the law. There is another way to get righteousness and that is by faith. Only then there is no longer any question of one's own righteousness.

When it comes to faith, all personal effort to come to heaven is excluded. That is what Paul means when he quotes from this section in Deuteronomy and says, ""Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" In the word 'ascend' lies the thought of reaching heaven by one's own strength. As long as that is thought, the work of Christ falls short and He is brought down again.

Paul adds not to say in the heart: "Who will descend into the abyss?" With this he indicates that one does not have to descend into the abyss to erase one's own guilt in a kind of penance. That is also impossible. Who can ever descend into the depths of misery in which Christ descended? Whoever tries to do so, brings Christ up from the dead, as it were. Own attempts to penance are proof that it is considered superfluous that He died, for he who does this thinks he can pay his own debt.

Moses also speaks about crossing to the other side of the sea. As if somewhere on earth, in a faraway place, the commandment is available. If any man could pick it up from there, we could accomplish it. But it is not necessary to travel around town and country or make pilgrimages and then believe that we have fulfilled God's commandments. For example, many people have travelled to the east to find their salvation in Eastern religions.

Moses speaks to the remnant that has come to conversion in the foreign world and has learned that it is totally dependent on the grace of God. They have not been able to accomplish the law, so what should they do? How can they be restored? Should they go and get that grace in heaven or

on the other side of the sea? These questions cannot be understood without the key of Romans 10 and therefore certainly cannot be solved.

Once the people have accepted their Messiah, Christ, God will give His laws into their minds and write them in their hearts (Heb 8:10). Then all the promises made by God will be fulfilled to a people who know Him. He is gracious to their iniquities, and will not remember their sins (Jer 31:31-34).

How can God bestow grace on a people who have spoiled all completely? This is only possible through Christ. For those who are connected with Christ by faith, the commandments of God are neither unattainable nor impracticable. For them God works in the mouth and in the heart, so close. The heart believes, the mouth confesses. It is about Christ. He that has Him has salvation, has restoration.

For us, the path of restoration begins when we confess Jesus again as Lord. This means that every member of the people will acknowledge the rights of the Lord Jesus to his life. For such believers the commandments of God are not burdensome (1Jn 5:3). Those commandments are not those of the law of Moses; for those commandments are given to sinful man, and he is not able to keep them. The commandments John writes about, are commandments that fit completely with the new life, the eternal life.

Whoever believes in the righteous actions of God knows that God has come very close in Christ. He has come so close that He has put His word "in your mouth and in your heart". We have been saved because the word of faith has been preached to us. The content of the preaching is: confess Jesus as Lord with the mouth and believe with the heart that God raised Him from the dead (Rom 10:9).

The order is remarkable: first the mouth and then the heart. The mouth is mentioned first because our faith can only be perceived by others through what they hear and see from us. You can't say that someone is saved if you don't notice anything of it in his speaking and behavior.

Deu 30:15-20 | Faced with the Choice

15 "See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity; 16 in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk

in His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, that you may live and multiply, and that the LORD your God may bless you in the land where you are entering to possess it. 17 But if your heart turns away and you will not obey, but are drawn away and worship other gods and serve them, 18 I declare to you today that you shall surely perish. You will not prolong [your] days in the land where you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess it. 19 I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, 20 by loving the LORD your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him; for this is your life and the length of your days, that you may live in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them."

Moses summarizes the whole content of his speech on the law in the terms "life and prosperity, and death and adversity" (cf. Deu 11:26). Love is the condition for fulfilling the commandments (Deu 6:5). The choice that Moses sets before them also has consequences for their offspring. Parents who choose to follow the Lord wholeheartedly can generally count on it that their children will follow them in their choice. The same applies to a choice for adversity.

In the choice that Moses sets before the people here, we stand at the beginning of the history of the people in the land. At the end of the history of the people in the land, Jeremiah will once again set this choice before the people just before they go into exile: "You shall also say to this people, 'Thus says the LORD, "Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death"' (Jer 21:8). The choice there is to voluntarily take the place of judgment and leave the city and surrender to the enemy sent by God.

Love is the motive, obedience is the expression and holding fast to Him gives the power to persevere (verse 20). If that is present, life can be lived as God intended. The expression "this is your life" can also be translated as "He is your life".

Deuteronomy 31

Introduction

By proposing to the people the choice between blessing and curse and life and death, Moses has completed the expounding and diligently teaching of the law (Deu 1:5) and completed the legislation. To finish all the work the LORD has given him, some things have to happen. Just before his death he wants to turn over the leadership of the people to Joshua. He then wanted the book of the law he had just written to be kept by the priests next to the ark of the covenant.

The LORD also commands him to write another song and to teach it to the people as a testimony. About the contents of that song we read in Deuteronomy 31-32. In Deuteronomy 33 we hear how this man of God blesses the tribes of Israel in a farewell speech. Finally, Deuteronomy 34 describes the death of Moses. Herewith the Pentateuch closes.

Deu 31:1-8 | Moses Encourages the People and Joshua

1 So Moses went and spoke these words to all Israel. 2 And he said to them, "I am a hundred and twenty years old today; I am no longer able to come and go, and the LORD has said to me, 'You shall not cross this Jordan.' 3 It is the LORD your God who will cross ahead of you; He will destroy these nations before you, and you shall dispossess them. Joshua is the one who will cross ahead of you, just as the LORD has spoken. 4 The LORD will do to them just as He did to Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites, and to their land, when He destroyed them. 5 The LORD will deliver them up before you, and you shall do to them according to all the commandments which I have commanded you. 6 Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the LORD your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you." 7 Then Moses called to Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, "Be strong and courageous, for you shall go with this people into the land which the LORD has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall give it to them as an inheritance. 8 The LORD is the one who goes ahead of

you; He will be with you. He will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed."

Moses knows that the time to say farewell has come. In verse 14 the LORD tells him so too. He is now one hundred and twenty years old, far above the age that other people reach, as he himself says in the psalm written by him (Psa 90:1,10). God has something to say to us with his life. It is not without reason that the Scriptures divide the one hundred and twenty years of his life into three special periods of forty years (Acts 7:23,30).

Moses says farewell, but does not leave the people to themselves. Joshua will take over and continue his task. We do not hear any complaint or reproach from Moses. With love he passes on the leadership. It is in God's way to determine that not he, but Joshua will bring the people into the land.

In Joshua we have a picture of the Lord Jesus leading His people through the Holy Spirit. In our time the Holy Spirit leads the church through brothers who have authority by their way of life and wisdom. Not acknowledging this is a denial of the authority of the Spirit.

In every possible way Moses encourages both the people and Joshua. He recalls the victories over Sihon and Og. When we think back to the victories God has given us in the past, it also encourages us with a view to a future battle. What God has done in the past, He can still do today. This idea gives confidence for the future.

Men who have walked with God in their lives are pre-eminently capable to encourage others. The encouragement "be strong and courageous" is not a hollow sound, nor is the promise that the LORD will go with them and not fail or forsake them. Moses has shown and experienced this himself.

"Not fail" means that we can always count on Him for advice and guidance, for strength and courage. "Not forsake" means that He is always with His people on the way to and in the battle in the land to make it their own. So He is always with us, to help us make our blessings our own and enjoy them with Him. He is with us according to His promise until our whole task on earth is accomplished: "And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Mt 28:20). Therefore we do not have to fear for the enemy, for "if God [is] for us, who [is] against us?" (Rom 8:31).

We too always need to hear this encouragement. Blessed when God gives people who have experienced this in their lives and encourage us with this. In this way, Paul encourages the Corinthians: “Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong” (1Cor 16:13). Also the Hebrews are encouraged: “He Himself has said, “I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you”” (Heb 13:5). We are also encouraged by these statements of Scripture.

Deu 31:9-13 | Reading of the Law Every Seven Years

9 So Moses wrote this law and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel. 10 Then Moses commanded them, saying, “At the end of [every] seven years, at the time of the year of remission of debts, at the Feast of Booths, 11 when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God at the place which He will choose, you shall read this law in front of all Israel in their hearing. 12 Assemble the people, the men and the women and children and the alien who is in your town, so that they may hear and learn and fear the LORD your God, and be careful to observe all the words of this law. 13 Their children, who have not known, will hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as you live on the land which you are about to cross the Jordan to possess.”

After Moses has transferred the leadership to Joshua in the presence of all of Israel, he takes the law he has written. He makes sure that the people will always be reminded of God’s Word. In the same way Paul, when he says farewell, commends the believers “to God and to the word of His grace” (Acts 20:32). Peter also wants God’s people to always be reminded of God’s Word when he is no longer among them: “Therefore, I will always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you [already] know [them], and have been established in the truth which is present with [you]” (2Pet 1:12-13). People fall away, but God’s Word remains.

This section is about the Word of God. Next the authority of the Spirit, presented in Joshua, belongs the Word of God. God’s Spirit and God’s Word belong together. The authority of the resurrected and glorified Lord Who exercises that authority through His Spirit and guides us through His Spirit will never conflict with the Word of God. It is always consistent with it.

Knowledge of God's Word is of great importance to test everything that presents itself as the voice of the Spirit. We can read and study God's Word at home, but here is the reading in a meeting of God's people. The meetings to preach the Word are of great importance. The expression "the place which He will choose" appears here for the last time in this book. It gives extra emphasis to the meeting of the church around the Lord Jesus to listen to God's Word.

The reading should be done in the year of remission of debts, the sabbatical year (Deu 15:1) and at the Feast of Booths (Deu 16:13-15), which is celebrated when the whole harvest has been gathered. That is the appropriate time to read out the whole law. At this Feast of Booths in the sabbatical year not only the men are present (Deu 16:16), as in the six previous years, but also the women and children come.

This seven-yearly reading is not a substitute for teaching in the houses (Deu 6:1-9) or teaching by priests (Deu 17:11; 24:8). It is much more to support and confirm or, if necessary, to correct all other teaching. It will bring the thoughts of the people as a whole back into line with the Word of God. This will keep the unity of the people.

Both the sabbatical year and the Feast of Booths speak of the realm of peace. That is the time when all God's promises have been fulfilled and everyone lives in his original inheritance. Reading the law will bring to the people the memory of all these promises and the ways of God to its fulfilment. The people only can confirm that all that God has said has come true. They will honor Him for it.

The book of the law is given to the priests who carry the ark. Normally, it is the task for the Levites to carry the ark (Num 4:15). On special occasions the priests do so (Jos 3:3-8; 6:6; 1Chr 15:11-12). The book of the law is also given to the elders. They are by their age the natural leaders of the people and should give the example of obedience.

Deu 31:14-18 | The Apostacy of Israel Foretold

14 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, the time for you to die is near; call Joshua, and present yourselves at the tent of meeting, that I may commission him." So Moses and Joshua went and presented themselves at the tent of meet-

ing. 15 The LORD appeared in the tent in a pillar of cloud, and the pillar of cloud stood at the doorway of the tent. 16 The LORD said to Moses, "Behold, you are about to lie down with your fathers; and this people will arise and play the harlot with the strange gods of the land, into the midst of which they are going, and will forsake Me and break My covenant which I have made with them. 17 Then My anger will be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them and hide My face from them, and they will be consumed, and many evils and troubles will come upon them; so that they will say in that day, 'Is it not because our God is not among us that these evils have come upon us?' 18 But I will surely hide My face in that day because of all the evil which they will do, for they will turn to other gods.

The days of Moses are numbered by the LORD (Job 14:5). Now He is going to confirm the succession of Moses through Joshua. Moses has already openly called Joshua to be his successor (Num 27:22-23) and appointed him (verse 7). Moses and Joshua stand together at "the tent of meeting". Then the LORD appears to them in the pillar of cloud. This is the only appearance in this book. It is also the only time that the tent of meeting is mentioned.

True leadership always begins with a special look at the Lord Jesus, in the sanctuary, near to the Lord. Only then can leaders go outside to perform the task given to them. When deeply impressed by the glory of the Lord, they will serve the people as leaders in the right mind.

What the LORD says is not encouraging. He foretells in no uncertain terms that the people will turn away from Him. He does not speak of the possibility of this, but puts it as certainty. After the impression of His glory He now gives them a thorough impression of who the people are. Both impressions are necessary in order to serve in the right way. Something similar we see when Elijah takes his successor Elisha by the hand and leads him along a few places (2Kgs 2:1-11). They stop at every place. This is to be impressed on the one hand by God's vision on them and on the other hand by what man has made of it.

At some point the people will see that the disasters hit them because the LORD is not among them. But God will continue to hide His face from them, for their feeling of God's absence is not yet true conversion. The

LORD hides His face from them by withdrawing from the temple the symbol of His favor and protection, the *shechinah*, the cloud as the dwelling of His glory (Eze 9:3a; 10:18-19; 11:22-23). It has not returned to the rebuilt temple in the days of Ezra. This will only happen when the people, that is to say a remnant, have repented.

Deu 31:19-30 | Moses Has to Write a Song to Teach

19 *"Now therefore, write this song for yourselves, and teach it to the sons of Israel; put it on their lips, so that this song may be a witness for Me against the sons of Israel. 20 For when I bring them into the land flowing with milk and honey, which I swore to their fathers, and they have eaten and are satisfied and become prosperous, then they will turn to other gods and serve them, and spurn Me and break My covenant. 21 Then it shall come about, when many evils and troubles have come upon them, that this song will testify before them as a witness (for it shall not be forgotten from the lips of their descendants); for I know their intent which they are developing today, before I have brought them into the land which I swore."* 22 So Moses wrote this song the same day, and taught it to the sons of Israel. 23 Then He commissioned Joshua the son of Nun, and said, *"Be strong and courageous, for you shall bring the sons of Israel into the land which I swore to them, and I will be with you."* 24 It came about, when Moses finished writing the words of this law in a book until they were complete, 25 that Moses commanded the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, saying, 26 *"Take this book of the law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may remain there as a witness against you. 27 For I know your rebellion and your stubbornness; behold, while I am still alive with you today, you have been rebellious against the LORD; how much more, then, after my death? 28 Assemble to me all the elders of your tribes and your officers, that I may speak these words in their hearing and call the heavens and the earth to witness against them. 29 For I know that after my death you will act corruptly and turn from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days, for you will do that which is evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him to anger with the work of your hands."* 30 Then Moses spoke in the hearing of all the assembly of Israel the words of this song, until they were complete:

After the book of law comes the song. This is the song written down in Deuteronomy 32. The book and the song form a wonderful whole: God's counsel contained in His book and His ways of warning and grace contained in the song. It is a sad song that ends happily with the triumph of God's grace. Is it possible to make a song about the decline and sad history of God's people? Yes, it is, because it ends well by the grace of God.

Moses teaches the people the song. He teaches them the content of it, he tells them what it means. He lets them repeat it over and over again, so that it is engraved deep in their memory. A national anthem has a powerful influence on the deepest feelings of a people. A song can be learned by heart and taught to the children. The content of the teaching of God's Word can very well be passed on through a song (Col 3:16). But men made songs must be checked if they are according to the Scriptures.

After the command to write down the song, God says, as only He can do, in one verse (verse 20), what He will do and what the people will do. He fulfils His promise and brings them to the delight of blessing, but the people turn to other gods and despise Him.

He knows their mindset. Their hearts are an open book to Him (Heb 4:13). That is why it is all the more striking that He lets Moses write a song. In it are sung of the rebellious deeds of the people and the gracious deeds of God. God needs a just basis for this compassionate action. He has found this in His Son.

After the prophecy of the deviation of the people it is necessary to encourage Joshua again (verse 23). This time the LORD does that Himself. If young people in the church see much weakness and failure of older believers who should be an example, it is necessary that they seek their strength in the Lord and do not give up. In a time of decline, Paul encouraged his child in faith, Timothy: "You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2Tim 2:1).

Once again, following Joshua's encouragement, there is an indication concerning the book. Moses commissions the book to be placed next to the ark of the covenant. This determines us by God's faithfulness to His covenant. When Moses speaks of their rebellion, he speaks not that they were against

him, but against the *LORD*. What is done to the *LORD* weighs heavier for him than what is done to him.

Moses is ready to pronounce the words of the song which the *LORD* puts in his mouth. He calls all elders and overseers to him. He takes the heavens and the earth as witnesses against them. It is possible that this means the inhabitants of heaven and earth, men and angels, who will all agree with the truth expressed in this song.

It is also possible that heaven and earth are represented here as persons. The heavens and the earth are maintained by God's Word and guided to the purpose He has with them (Heb 1:3). They do not oppose it (Psa 119:89-91). Creation speaks a reproaching language for all who disobey God's commandments (Job 20:27). See also Psalm 19 where God's creation and God's Word both bear witness to God's majesty (Psa 19:1-12).

The words Moses speaks in verse 29 show a striking connection with the words of Paul in his farewell speech to the elders in Ephesus: "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock" (Acts 20:29). In their farewell address, Moses and Paul both show insight into the true condition of the people to whom they have devoted their lives. They speak prophetic words in view of the development of that people after their passing away, which in both cases have proved to be true.

Deuteronomy 32

Introduction

The book has a beautiful ending. It ends with an impressive song and a great blessing. The song culminates in a jubilation, because God ultimately gives restoration above prayer and thinking. In this song, which is an education song, we learn two things we have often come across: who we ourselves are and Who God is. We need to learn that deeper and deeper. For this education, the teaching field at the end of the wilderness journey in the plains of Moab and at the border of the land is an ideal terrain.

In this song Moses describes the whole history of Israel including the future: their origin, building and acceptance by the LORD, their ungratefulness and apostasy, their surrender to the Gentiles, their re-acceptance by the LORD and the ultimate blessing and glorification of the people in the realm of peace.

Deu 32:1 | Call to Give Ear

1 *“Give ear, O heavens, and let me speak;
And let the earth hear the words of my mouth.*

Heaven and earth are involved in this song (cf. Isa 1:2a; Mic 1:2), because the teaching that Moses brings concerns the whole universe. The final result will show that the Lord Jesus will rule over all that is in heaven and on earth (Eph 1:10). That’s where the song works toward. It is the area where His righteousness will be revealed.

Deu 32:2 | Teaching as Rain

2 *“Let my teaching drop as the rain,
My speech distill as the dew,
As the droplets on the fresh grass
And as the showers on the herb.*

The song has the character of “rain”, “dew”, “droplets” and “showers”. That speaks of refreshment, fertilization and life. It is Moses’ desire that

this will be the effect of his song on the hearts of the Israelites. His teaching comes first as drops, drop after drop, very gradually. It is for ear and heart soft and lovely like dew. Then they become droplets that cause a soft rain, finally causing the water as showers that stream down.

The education of God's Word, the teaching, is in many ways a refreshment, which is experienced in obeying the admonition. The Lord Jesus gives several teachers, who all have their own distinctive way of teaching. He wants to use them all to refresh. What at first does not seem like refreshment, such as pointing out man's unfaithfulness, becomes refreshment as soon as man recognizes the admonition. Consent to God's truth about who man is, enlightens the conscience directly and invigorates the mind. It is the rain of heaven, the rain of blessing (Deu 11:11).

Deu 32:3-4 | God's Greatness

3 *"For I proclaim the name of the LORD;
Ascribe greatness to our God!*
4 *"The Rock! His work is perfect,
For all His ways are just;
A God of faithfulness and without injustice,
Righteous and upright is He.*

Moses receives the words of this song from the LORD. He stands as it were beside the LORD. He sees Him and sees man's actions with the eyes of the LORD. When Moses is so close to Him, he must necessarily first describe the greatness of the LORD (Psa 150:2) in His glorious attributes. It only increases the contrast between the LORD and man in favor of the majesty of God, both in His Being and in His actions.

Moses is deeply impressed by the LORD. He proclaims His Name. That is not a vain use, but a proclamation of that Name. The Name contains everything that God is. Surely, nothing can be added to that, can it? Yet Moses proclaims that Name and calls to ascribe greatness to "our God". This is similar to what John says in his relationship to the Lord Jesus: "He must increase, but I must decrease" (Jn 3:30). We can't add anything to God's greatness, but we can get an ever deeper impression of His greatness and tell Him so.

God is the rock, we are dust. All our actions do not change the stability of God and His throne. That is the peace of God. He is the rock and His work is perfect, there is nothing missing, as the Preacher discovered: "I know that everything God does will remain forever; there is nothing to add to it and there is nothing to take from it" (Ecc 3:14a). All his ways are just (Hos 14:9). Every injustice is strange to Him (Psa 92:15).

He is "righteous" in making His promises and "upright" in fulfilling them. Both features can be seen on the cross, where Christ has fulfilled God's righteous demands and thereby paved the way for a true fulfillment of all God's promises. Therefore in Christ all the promises of God are yes and amen (2Cor 1:20).

Deu 32:5-14 | God's Care for His People

5 *"They have acted corruptly toward Him,
[They are] not His children, because of their defect;
[But are] a perverse and crooked generation.*
6 *"Do you thus repay the LORD,
O foolish and unwise people?
Is not He your Father who has bought you?
He has made you and established you.*
7 *"Remember the days of old,
Consider the years of all generations.
Ask your father, and he will inform you,
Your elders, and they will tell you.*
8 *"When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance,
When He separated the sons of man,
He set the boundaries of the peoples
According to the number of the sons of Israel.*
9 *"For the LORD's portion is His people;
Jacob is the allotment of His inheritance.*
10 *"He found him in a desert land,
And in the howling waste of a wilderness;
He encircled him, He cared for him,
He guarded him as the pupil of His eye.*
11 *"Like an eagle that stirs up its nest,*

*That hovers over its young,
 He spread His wings and caught them,
 He carried them on His pinions.
 12 "The LORD alone guided him,
 And there was no foreign god with him.
 13 "He made him ride on the high places of the earth,
 And he ate the produce of the field;
 And He made him suck honey from the rock,
 And oil from the flinty rock,
 14 Curds of cows, and milk of the flock,
 With fat of lambs,
 And rams, the breed of Bashan, and goats,
 With the finest of the wheat—
 And of the blood of grapes you drank wine.*

The attitude of the people is one of the greatest folly. In this attitude God cannot acknowledge them as His sons (cf. Deu 14:1). A good son is just like his father, but in this people God does not recognize anything of Himself. He calls His people "a perverse and crooked generation" (verse 5). Paul uses these same words when he speaks of the world (Phil 2:15). This indicates that God's people have become equal to the world.

The same we see in Christianity. Being conformed to this world is the major evil we suffer. This is reflected in the way we talk and interact with each other and the things we strive for. If we behave in this way, God cannot recognize us as His children (2Cor 6:17-18).

God's indictment of His people is presented as a question. This must appeal to their conscience and lead them to think about it. For that purpose, God more often asks questions to man (Gen 3:9; 4:9) or to His people (Mic 6:3-4).

Verse 6 speaks of God as Father. This happens only a few times in the Old Testament (Isa 63:16; 64:8; Mal 2:10). It is always about the relationship with His people as a whole, of which He is presented as the Creator, the origin. He formed that people. From the foundation of the world He has been dealing with that people.

That is a big difference with God as Father in the New Testament for the believers of the church. There it is emphatically about the personal relationship of the believer to God. We may address Him as 'Abba, Father'. This is unthinkable for the individual Israelite. This has only become possible after the death, resurrection and return of the Lord Jesus to heaven, after which the Spirit of sonship has come to earth (Jn 20:17; Rom 8:15; Gal 4:5).

The people are called to think back to the past, to what God did for His people. They just have to ask their father and their elders. They will be able to testify of God's mighty deeds in Egypt and His care for them in the wilderness.

They are already in God's thoughts when He, through the confusion of tongues at Babylon, expels the peoples to their own territory. He has set the limits of each people (Acts 17:26) and has done so as Moses says here "according to the number of the sons of Israel" (verse 8). There is no question of that people at the time of the confusion of language, but it already exists in God's counsel. And what exists in God's counsel is as true to God as if the people already exist in reality.

In His wonderful election and grace the LORD has chosen this people for His own inheritance (Psa 33:12). To Him belongs "the world ..., and all it contains" (Psa 50:12b), but Israel is His property in a special way. That people are His "garden locked" (Song 4:12) to which He has given His love in a special way and from which He may expect a special love. This election originates exclusively from Himself. There is nothing in that people that has given Him an additional incentive to do so (Deu 7:7). And He knows what He has begun.

God in Christ has this special bond in this time with the church. He has chosen the members of the church with an election that is from "before the foundation of the world" (Eph 1:4; 3:9). He saved them "from the domain of darkness, and transferred" them "to the kingdom of His beloved Son" (Col 1:13).

To fulfill His purpose, His election, the LORD has delivered them from Egypt. Then He took care of them in the wilderness. He taught them how to behave in all kinds of circumstances (Hos 11:1-4). For this He has given

them His good statutes. They are to Him as the most sore and sensitive “pupil of the eye” (verse 10; Zec 2:8; Psa 17:8), whom He will protect from every painful touch. Every time they threaten to stumble, He is with them to catch them like an eagle protects his young when they learn to fly (verse 11; cf. Exo 19:4).

God is not dependent on the help of anyone else for this protection and preservation. He has all the possibilities in Himself to express His love and care for His people. Thus He has acted completely independent and in His own power. This is also an argument to keep Israel from resorting to other gods.

Then Moses places himself in the spirit behind the entering into the land and looks back on God’s actions. He recounts how the LORD has made the people to ride at their heights, that is to say has made them to overcome mighty enemies. Furthermore, they enjoy an abundance of blessings. Their part is the very best that soil, cattle and land can produce.

The richest fruit, honey and oil, comes as proof of God’s working of the most barren soil that is impossible for man to cultivate. The cattle are healthy and produce the best milk, from which the purest curds can be made. The cattle also provide the best meat. The wheat is of the finest and most nutritious kind, every year the wine is of the best quality. It is all evidence of God’s goodness that is given to them by grace. What is their answer?

The same applies to the church, which may also enjoy abundantly the spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. The most glorious blessings are for them. Their blessings exceed those of all the other generations. What is their answer?

Deu 32:15-18 | The Ingratitude of Israel

*15 “But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked—
You are grown fat, thick, and sleek—
Then he forsook God who made him,
And scorned the Rock of his salvation.*

*16 “They made Him jealous with strange [gods];
With abominations they provoked Him to anger.*

17 *"They sacrificed to demons who were not God,
To gods whom they have not known,
New [gods] who came lately,
Whom your fathers did not dread.*
18 *"You neglected the Rock who begot you,
And forgot the God who gave you birth.*

The answer to so much goodness is shocking – if we don't know ourselves at all. Despite all God's cares, provisions, and blessings, the people reject Him. They sink deeper and deeper into their revolt against God. After kicking to Him there is talk of forsake, scorn, neglect, and finally forget. Rebellion against God eventually leads to a state in which He no longer exists. Any bond with Him, the Rock Who has begotten them, is meaningless to them. Even the thought of the God who brought them forth is gone. Moses here compares God to a father ("begot you") and a mother ("gave you birth").

This free fall of God's people begins with enjoying the blessings without thanking God for it. The blessings are enjoyed, but the Giver is not involved. Complacency arises. It is the language of the church in Laodicéa: "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing" (Rev 3:17). But the Lord had to withdraw Himself and to stand outside: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock" (Rev 3:20).

Moses calls the people "Jeshurun" which means "sincere" or "upright". God has given His people His own attributes. But instead of being a reflection of God, the people began to boast on their own righteousness. They have drawn all honor to themselves.

Because man cannot do without an object of worship, they have fallen prey to idolatry. Instead of remaining faithful to Him Who has shown such faithfulness to them, they have turned to strange gods. That is extraordinarily offensive for Him. The sacrifices they bring to those gods are received by demons. An idol of wood or stone is nothing, but behind these dead materials truly living evil spirits are hidden (1Cor 10:19-20; Psa 106:36-37).

Deu 32:19-25 | The Judgment Announced

| 19 *"The LORD saw [this], and spurned [them]*

Because of the provocation of His sons and daughters.

20 *"Then He said, 'I will hide My face from them,*

I will see what their end [shall be];

For they are a perverse generation,

Sons in whom is no faithfulness.

21 *'They have made Me jealous with [what] is not God;*

They have provoked Me to anger with their idols.

So I will make them jealous with [those who] are not a people;

I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation,

22 *For a fire is kindled in My anger,*

And burns to the lowest part of Sheol,

And consumes the earth with its yield,

And sets on fire the foundations of the mountains.

23 *'I will heap misfortunes on them;*

I will use My arrows on them.

24 *[They will be] wasted by famine, and consumed by plague*

And bitter destruction;

And the teeth of beasts I will send upon them,

With the venom of crawling things of the dust.

25 *'Outside the sword will bereave,*

And inside terror—

Both young man and virgin,

The nursling with the man of gray hair.

If God's people forget God, He must spurn them. That is what this report is about. He is faithful to Himself and must therefore judge them. He says such harsh words precisely because they are His beloved children. He rejects His people, because His people rejected Him first.

In verse 5 He denied that they are His sons. There the LORD sees them as unrepentant and unattainable. Here is spoken of "His sons and His daughters", not as a recognition from His side that they are this, but because they themselves claim to be this. But He cannot recognize them as such. He hides His face from them, that is, He looks not upon them in favor. He looks down upon them in anger and wants to see how things are going with them.

When He made the connection with His people, He called them children who will not act unfaithfully (Isa 63:8). However, this has not remained the case. They have turned to the idols, which has provoked God to jealousy. God's answer is that He will also make His people jealous. God uses surrounding peoples to discipline them and bring them back, but He also uses them to make His people jealous. Therefore God sends out salvation to the nations. Not the judgment He brings upon them through the nations, but the grace He has for the nations is intended to bring His people to repentance (Rom 10:19).

Moses also mentions how consuming fire as a symbol of God's judgment will do its consuming work. It will consume the yield of the land that made them fat and thick. Natural disasters will do their devastating work. With His arrows He will find and strike those who try to escape. Hunger, fever and disease will make their victims. The wild animals also have their share in the performance of God's wrath. There will be no place that offers safety and there will be no feelings of pity for anyone.

Deu 32:26-38 | The LORD Is the Rock of His People

26 *'I would have said, "I will cut them to pieces,
I will remove the memory of them from men,"*
27 *Had I not feared the provocation by the enemy,
That their adversaries would misjudge,
That they would say, "Our hand is triumphant,
And the LORD has not done all this."*
28 *"For they are a nation lacking in counsel,
And there is no understanding in them.*
29 *"Would that they were wise, that they understood this,
That they would discern their future!*
30 *"How could one chase a thousand,
And two put ten thousand to flight,
Unless their Rock had sold them,
And the LORD had given them up?*
31 *"Indeed their rock is not like our Rock,
Even our enemies themselves judge this.*
32 *"For their vine is from the vine of Sodom,*

*And from the fields of Gomorrah;
 Their grapes are grapes of poison,
 Their clusters, bitter.*
 33 *"Their wine is the venom of serpents,
 And the deadly poison of cobras.*
 34 *'Is it not laid up in store with Me,
 Sealed up in My treasures?*
 35 *'Vengeance is Mine, and retribution,
 In due time their foot will slip;
 For the day of their calamity is near,
 And the impending things are hastening upon them.'*
 36 *"For the LORD will vindicate His people,
 And will have compassion on His servants,
 When He sees that [their] strength is gone,
 And there is none [remaining], bond or free.*
 37 *"And He will say, 'Where are their gods,
 The rock in which they sought refuge?*
 38 *'Who ate the fat of their sacrifices,
 [And] drank the wine of their drink offering?
 Let them rise up and help you,
 Let them be your hiding place!*

If there were no divine intervention, no one would escape. This intervention by God, which causes a reversal, is indicated in verse 27 with the words "had I not". Two motifs lie at the root of this reversal:

1. the Name of God in this world, the testimony thereof among the nations (verse 27; Jos 7:9) and
2. the greatness of God Himself (verse 39).

If God were to destroy His people, their enemies would boast on their own strength, and would consider the LORD unable to protect His people. In their boldness they have no regard for the true condition of God's people, nor for their own condition. Unbelief is always presumptuous and blind.

Unfortunately, this also applies to God's people. They do not understand that they were able to defeat their enemies only by God's power. They lack the insight that a few people have had a great force majeure on the flight

because their Rock has worked that out. The strength of God's people does not lie in self-confidence, but in trust in God (Isa 30:15). By their self-confidence the roles will be reversed (Isa 30:17a).

"For their vine is from the vine of Sodom" (verse 32) seems to refer to Israel's enemies who are ripe for destruction. The measure of their iniquity is full (Gen 15:16). God therefore surrenders them to the sword of Israel, which overcomes them easily. The rock of the enemy are their gods. There is no power in it. The vine indicates its origin. It lies in the sinfulness of Sodom and Gomorrah. The fruit is in accordance with it.

These verses can also refer to Israel itself (Psa 80:8). They are planted like a noble vine, a wholly faithful seed, but through sin they turned into corrupted branches of a strange vine (Jer 2:21). They have taken over and even surpassed the sin and iniquity of Sodom (Jer 23:14; Eze 16:48). God has called them His vineyard, a plant of His delight. He has expected good fruit, but His vineyard has produced stinking fruit (Isa 5:1-7).

They will drink the fruit of it and die. How this happens, God keeps hidden in Himself. He forgets nothing of all the sins that are committed (Psa 90:8), whether they are the sins of the nations or those of His own, unrepentant people. He keeps a register that will be opened at the time appointed by Him (Rev 20:12).

Because God does not judge directly, people continue to sin (Ecc 8:11). But His vengeance will come, both over the enemies of His people (Isa 59:18) and over His own apostate people (Heb 10:30). The slipping of the foot is the picture of a starting fall or crash (Psa 38:17; 94:18).

At the same time as doing justice to His people He will take care of His servants (verse 36), who are the faithful among His faithless people as a whole. These faithful suffer double: from the enmity of the peoples around them and from their godless peers.

Once again He points out the end of all the wicked. There is no power left in them. Mockingly God calls them to turn to their rock, their idols, for salvation and protection (verse 37-38): "Go and cry out to the gods which you have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your distress" (Jdg 10:14). With this way of speaking, the LORD wants to convince His people

of the futility of idols and the folly of idolatry, and to bring them to the recognition that He alone is the true God (verse 39).

Deu 32:39-43 | The LORD Delivers His People

39 *'See now that I, I am He,
And there is no god besides Me;
It is I who put to death and give life.
I have wounded and it is I who heal,
And there is no one who can deliver from My hand.*
40 *'Indeed, I lift up My hand to heaven,
And say, as I live forever,
41 If I sharpen My flashing sword,
And My hand takes hold on justice,
I will render vengeance on My adversaries,
And I will repay those who hate Me.*
42 *'I will make My arrows drunk with blood,
And My sword will devour flesh,
With the blood of the slain and the captives,
From the long-haired leaders of the enemy.'*
43 *"Rejoice, O nations, [with] His people;
For He will avenge the blood of His servants,
And will render vengeance on His adversaries,
And will atone for His land [and] His people."*

In the song, the moment has now come when God presents Himself to His people in His glory and power. The contrast with the previous verses is enormous. Here we see that God is the Eternal One, the Being One, without origin, always present at every conceivable time in eternity. He is also the Only One at all, besides Him no one is God, with Him no one can be compared (Isa 43:10b-11).

Just as He cannot be equaled in His Person, so is He in His deeds. He acts in complete freedom, without being accountable to anyone (Isa 45:7; Lam 3:37-38). By the way, who would be so audacious to call Him to account (Rom 9:20)? With undisputed authority He disposes of all His creatures. But He never does it at will. His actions always have a perfectly just basis and are aimed at blessing. He puts to death, but He gives life to everyone

who acknowledges His judgment. So shall it be with the people (1Sam 2:6; Isa 26:19 Hos 5:15; 6:1-2). He who believes, “has passed out of death into life” (Jn 5:24).

He swears by Himself that He will judge all His adversaries, all who go on to resist Him (Psa 7:13-14). This judgment will be terrible, sparing nothing and nobody. The blood will flow in large quantities (Rev 14:20). The long-haired leaders speak of leaders with a hair dress that expresses a fullness of strength and overconfidence in the enemy (cf. Psa 68:21). Their overconfidence will not last in God’s judgment. God is merciful and patient, but there comes a moment when to be patient any longer would be to compromise His righteousness. There is an end to His forbearance. That is when man has proven to have a hardened and unrepentant heart (Rom 2:5).

After the execution of the judgment, the nations are called to rejoice with His people. His people are delivered. The enemies have been defeated. The time of peace has come. The people can dwell in peace and enjoy all the promised blessings. Peace is great and endless. The Messiah rules. This means blessing not only for Israel, but also for the nations. Therefore Paul cites verse 43a in the letter to the Romans (Rom 15:1). He shows that God has already spoken in the Old Testament about mercy for the nations.

This mercy is not something new, something that has only been revealed in the New Testament. It is not about the church. In the Old Testament the church is indeed something hidden. What is at stake here is to make it clear that God’s heart in the Old Testament also goes out to the nations outside of Israel. To prove this, Paul quotes, among other things, this verse from the song of Moses, in which the nations are called to rejoice with God’s people.

The great peace in which Israel enters and in which the nations may share is the result of the atonement that God has brought about. Atonement is only possible through satisfaction. God’s holy demands regarding sin and sins are satisfied through Christ on the cross. He has reconciled sinners guilty of death to God by pouring His blood. The land and the creation, on which there is blood guilt (Num 35:33), will be atoned on the basis of the same work (Col 1:19-20).

For sinners there is only reconciliation if they repent from their evil way with faith and confession of their evil deeds, their sins. For Israel, this will happen under the action of God's Spirit, through which they will see on Him, "whom they have pierced" (Zec 12:10). About atonement of land and people we read in Daniel 9 (Dan 9:24-27).

Deu 32:44-47 | This Word Is Your Life

44 Then Moses came and spoke all the words of this song in the hearing of the people, he, with Joshua the son of Nun. 45 When Moses had finished speaking all these words to all Israel, 46 he said to them, "Take to your heart all the words with which I am warning you today, which you shall command your sons to observe carefully, [even] all the words of this law. 47 For it is not an idle word for you; indeed it is your life. And by this word you will prolong your days in the land, which you are about to cross the Jordan to possess."

These verses form a transition between the reign of God in the song and the plans of God in the blessing for each tribe we hear about in the next chapter. The content of the song is the restoration of lost blessings. After singing the song, Moses urges the people to take everything to heart. They must also command their sons to observe carefully all the words of this law.

The Word of God is not an idle or an empty Word. It has life in it and gives life to who hears it. Whoever possesses this life lives continuously by taking in God's Word. Listening to God's Word is vital. Not only because otherwise death awaits. It is their life in two senses. Taking it to heart is both the life for their soul and the true content of their lives. To live this life is the real life that can be enjoyed for a long time in the land where there is abundance of blessing.

Deu 32:48-52 | The LORD Points Moses to His End

48 The LORD spoke to Moses that very same day, saying, 49 "Go up to this mountain of the Abarim, Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab opposite Jericho, and look at the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the sons of Israel for a possession. 50 Then die on the mountain where you ascend, and be gathered to your people, as Aaron your brother died on Mount Hor and was gath-

ered to his people, 51 because you broke faith with Me in the midst of the sons of Israel at the waters of Meribah-kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin, because you did not treat Me as holy in the midst of the sons of Israel. 52 For you shall see the land at a distance, but you shall not go there, into the land which I am giving the sons of Israel."

After Moses has spoken the song and applied it to the conscience of the hearers, his task as leader of the people is over. He may climb the Nebo on the same day to see from that mountain the land he so desires, but may not enter because of an act of unfaithfulness (Num 27:12-14). To alleviate his pain about this, God in His grace grants His faithful servant this view.

God is a God of pity. He also soothes the death of Moses by reminding him of the death of his brother Aaron. Moses was present when he died (Num 20:28). It must have been a dignified farewell that impressed him.

The death of loved ones who look forward to being with the Lord is an encouragement to all who are about to leave the earth in this way. Then we look not on whom and what we leave behind, but to Him whom we will meet. In view of this meeting, Paul says that we can comfort each other when a loved one falls asleep: "Therefore comfort one another with these words" (1Thes 4:18).

Moses is in his life an illustration of what will happen to the people. He has not sanctified God and does not enter the land. The principles he held out to the people also apply to him, and to an even greater extent because of his responsible position.

Deuteronomy 33

Introduction

After almost two thousand years of Christianity, it is amazing that God still shows so many of the blessings, like here to Israel. He does so at the end of this book in which failure is so emphatically described in the last chapters. The last words of Moses, the man of God, are words of blessing. Thus he says farewell to them, with words that resonate to this day.

There is a comparison with the blessing which Jacob pronounces over his sons in Genesis 49 (Gen 49:1-28). Jacob speaks about the history of Israel as it will develop through the ages. That description of history is a description of the failure of the people in their faithfulness to God. That corresponds to the song of Moses in the previous chapter. But in this chapter Moses gives no history and does not speak of failure. He describes the condition of the tribes in the time of the realm of peace.

Moses does not only express good wishes. He talks about the blessing of God for a restored people. This chapter shows all the tribes in possession of the promise, the blessing of the land. In every son (tribe) is seen something of God's purpose for His people as it will find its fulfillment in the realm of peace. The whole people, every tribe, is needed to see this purpose in its fullness.

It has already been said, but it is good to repeat it and bearing that in mind that we can explain a part of the Bible in three ways. This also applies to the blessing of Moses:

1. The first explanation is the literal one. For what Moses says of the tribes, it means that each of the tribes will have its own inheritance at the end of the book of Joshua.
2. The second explanation is the prophetic one. This means that the blessing that Moses pronounces here will find its full fulfillment in the millennial realm of peace, under the reign of the Messiah.

3. The third explanation is the spiritual one. Then it is about the application for us, what we can learn from this for our life in faith.

Deu 33:1-5 | The LORD Comes to His People

*1 Now this is the blessing with which Moses the man of God blessed the sons of Israel before his death. 2 He said,
"The LORD came from Sinai,
And dawned on them from Seir;
He shone forth from Mount Paran,
And He came from the midst of ten thousand holy ones;
At His right hand there was flashing lightning for them.
3 "Indeed, He loves the people;
All Your holy ones are in Your hand,
And they followed in Your steps;
[Everyone] receives of Your words.
4 "Moses charged us with a law,
A possession for the assembly of Jacob.
5 "And He was king in Jeshurun,
When the heads of the people were gathered,
The tribes of Israel together.*

Moses is called three times "the man of God" (verse 1; Jos 14:6; Ps 90:1). A man of God is one who, in a time of decline, as an individual acknowledges God's rights and shows them in his life. Such a person has an insight into the current situation of God's people and bears witness against it in order to bring the people back to God's way. Such a person also has an eye for God's ultimate goal with His people and that is to bless them. Therefore, before climbing the Nebo, this man of God can say farewell to his beloved people by blessing each tribe. What a farewell!

With beautiful imagery, borrowed from the dawn and the increasing glare of the sun, the majesty of God is described in a sublime way (Jdg 5:4-5; Ps 68:7-8; Heb 3:3-4). God appears as the Divine light from Sinai and casts His rays upon all the surroundings, leading Israel's journey to Canaan. In this description of the appearance of God, God is represented as coming from the south.

Moses begins with an impressive description of God's appearance to His people. "Sinai" is the beginning of the journey and "Seir" indicates the end (Deu 1:2). The journey itself is skipped. Only "Mount Paran" is mentioned, the area where they set up their camp after they left Sinai and have not yet failed. All failures are skipped.

The "ten thousand holy ones" refer to the people of God Himself. God is seen here among them. There is talk of the law as "flashing lightning". Giving the law on the Sinai has been accompanied by thunder and lightning (Exo 19:16-18; Deu 1:4).

The LORD "loves the peoples". The "peoples" are the tribes of Israel. God's hand is over them. "They followed in Your steps" also can be rendered as "lie down at Your feet". At His feet they listen to Him (cf. Lk 10:39). The law, the Word of God, is the inheritance of the people (Psa 119:111a). God has given them that blessing through Moses. The land cannot be possessed and enjoyed if there is no love for what God has said.

Moses is called king of his people here. He is a type of the true King, the Lord Jesus, Who exercises His authority in love. Therefore it can be said of the believers of the church that they have been transferred "to the kingdom of His beloved Son" (Col 1:13). The Son is the Lord Jesus as the Object of the Father's love. As such, He now exercises authority over the lives of those who have accepted Him as their Savior and Lord.

Deu 33:6 | Reuben

6 *"May Reuben live and not die,
Nor his men be few."*

The first three sons over whom Moses pronounces his blessing are of Leah. Simeon is missing. That may be because his inheritance belongs to that of Judah. Reuben, the eldest son, is called the first. Moses wishes him life, while he has behaved unworthy of life. It is a blessing when all that is Israel by nature is wiped out, while there will be a remnant, "a few", that has life.

If there is a remnant, it is inextricably linked to God's grace. The whole should have been judged, but God saves a few, a rest in His grace. A remnant, a few, it is not something impressive. For God that is the proper

starting point to start something new in which the life He gives can grow and blossom.

Deu 33:7 | Judah

*7 And this regarding Judah; so he said,
"Hear, O LORD, the voice of Judah,
And bring him to his people.
With his hands he contended for them,
And may You be a help against his adversaries."*

Judah's blessing indicates the first characteristics of life saved in Reuben. Judah means 'one who praises God'. Judah's voice speaks to God to praise Him for the life He gave. Judah also raises his voice to call upon God when there are adversaries. And God hears (2Chr 13:14-15).

That Judah is a praying tribe means that it is a fighting tribe. In doing so, he knew himself dependent on the help of God. The question to God to bring him to his people looks at the outcome of the battle: Judah will overcome and that victory will be for the benefit of all the people.

Deu 33:8-11 | Levi

*8 Of Levi he said,
"[Let] Your Thummim and Your Urim [belong] to Your godly man,
Whom You proved at Massah,
With whom You contended at the waters of Meribah;
9 Who said of his father and his mother,
'I did not consider them';
And he did not acknowledge his brothers,
Nor did he regard his own sons,
For they observed Your word,
And kept Your covenant.
10 "They shall teach Your ordinances to Jacob,
And Your law to Israel.
They shall put incense before You,
And whole burnt offerings on Your altar.
11 "O LORD, bless his substance,*

*And accept the work of his hands;
Shatter the loins of those who rise up against him,
And those who hate him, so that they will not rise [again]."*

In the blessing that Moses pronounces of Levi, we are reminded of a priestly people, a people who know God's will and can teach God's people about it. The Thummim and Urim speak of this. These are the two stones that the high priest wears in the breastpiece and through which he consults the will of God (Exo 28:30).

Levi is prepared for this task. Here it is said that God put him to the test at Massah and Meribah. Exodus 17 states that Israel has put God to the test (Exo 17:7). There is no water. That is God's test to see how the people react. The people blame God for His actions and even doubt His presence among them.

As part of the people Levi got there to know himself. These tests are a training for Levi to receive light from God. If later the people again become unfaithful as a whole, Levi remains faithful. They have killed the unfaithful by order of Moses (Exo 32:26-29). In exercising their judgment, they have made no distinction between those who are and those who are not family members (Mt 10:37; Lk 14:26).

This is a further education to be a suitable teacher of the people. A person is only suitable to teach God's Word if that Word has absolute authority over and for himself. As a reward for his faithfulness Levi has been given the honorable commission to teach God's law to the people (2Chr 17:8-9; Mal 2:4-7).

Someone so formed in the practice of living among God's people, may go into the sanctuary. Through the education they have received themselves, and also pass on, they are able and also desiring to bring incense and burnt offerings. In the realm of peace, nothing will be able to put an end to this service.

Incense is a picture of the glories of Christ that are pleasing to God. We may tell God all that we have discovered of the glories in Christ. Incense also refers to the prayer of the believers (Rev 5:8b; Psa 141:2), to which Christ adds the glory of His Person through which those prayers are pleasing to God (Rev 8:3-4).

Moses proclaims God's blessing for such a people of priests and Levites. What they do can count on God's full consent and acceptance. Moses also asks the LORD to protect Levi from their enemies by shattering the loins of those who stand up against them to attack them. The loins symbolize power and strength (Psa 69:23; Job 40:2; Pro 31:17). All who want to do wrong to Levi will not prosper.

Deu 33:12 | Benjamin

*12 Of Benjamin he said,
"May the beloved of the LORD dwell in security by Him,
Who shields him all the day,
And he dwells between His shoulders."*

Benjamin is one of the two sons of Rachel. After the offeror Levi comes Benjamin as "the beloved of the LORD". An offeror knows himself accepted by God in the offering. That is why he dwells in security by Him (Psa 91:1). Jerusalem is situated on Mount Moria in the inheritance of Benjamin (Jos 18:28). Because of this Benjamin lives near the temple and enjoys its protection (Psa 125:2). He dwells between God's shoulders, which gives the picture that God carries him (cf. Deu 1:29).

Like Benjamin the whole people are "the beloved of the LORD". Thus the blessings of each individual tribe apply to the people as a whole. We are also personally and collectively in Christ and belong to "God's household" (Eph 2:19).

Deu 33:13-17 | Joseph

*13 Of Joseph he said,
"Blessed of the LORD [be] his land,
With the choice things of heaven, with the dew,
And from the deep lying beneath,
14 And with the choice yield of the sun,
And with the choice produce of the months.
15 "And with the best things of the ancient mountains,
And with the choice things of the everlasting hills,
16 And with the choice things of the earth and its fullness,*

*And the favor of Him who dwelt in the bush.
 Let it come to the head of Joseph,
 And to the crown of the head of the one distinguished among his brothers.
 17 "As the firstborn of his ox, majesty is his,
 And his horns are the horns of the wild ox;
 With them he will push the peoples,
 All at once, [to] the ends of the earth.
 And those are the ten thousands of Ephraim,
 And those are the thousands of Manasseh."*

In Joseph, that is Ephraim and Manasseh, we see what great, unchanging and advancing blessings are attached to our position, which in Benjamin is determined on the basis of the offering. The blessing is all-encompassing. The blessing is not to be encompassed by us because the source of that blessing, God Himself, cannot be encompassed.

"The choice things of heaven" is the rain, which is necessary to enjoy fruit. To obtain fruit, God also gives the "dew" and the choice things "from the deep lying beneath". He has provided an abundance of opportunities to moisturize the land so that it can produce rich fruit (Psa 65:11). The best results come from "the sun" and "the month" or "the moon" that God has given. The sun with its soothing warmth stimulates the growth process. The moon does its job by giving a period of cooling and invigoration that creates dew.

The excellent fruits are located on the heights, "the ancient mountains", which looks at the past, and "the everlasting hills", which looks at the future. For us, that means that our blessings are in heaven forever and we will enjoy them forever. Mountains and hills are symbols of stability, they indicate what is immutable.

Rich blessings are also present in the plains, on "the earth". What we may enjoy in heaven in all eternity, we may already now enjoy in fullness on earth. To enjoy the fruit, a cycle of sowing, growing and harvesting is necessary. This requires effort, sowing and harvesting, while we still depend on God for the result, for God must give the growth (1Cor 3:6-7).

In all these enjoyments we may know as a special blessing on us "the favor of Him who dwelt in the bush". More than all the gifts is He from Whom

the gifts come. And who is He? It is He Who was present with His people in the time of slavery and oppression. By this oppression God did not want to kill His people, but wanted to teach them to call to Him. We see this in the picture of the thorn bush that does not burn and in which the LORD is present (Exo 3:2a).

The Lord Jesus also refers to the thorn bush when He answers the Sadducees to their question about the resurrection (Lk 20:37-38). He connects with this Him Who by Moses is called “the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob” (Lk 20:37). In this way the thorn bush is connected with the promises to the fathers and to the resurrection. In quoting that scene, the Lord Jesus shows a beautiful connection between suffering on earth and glory afterwards in the resurrection. There God finds His pleasure in fulfilling His purposes by this way of suffering and on the other side of death.

God fulfils His promises to Joseph, the “one distinguished [or “chosen” or “separated”] among his brothers”. Election means separation. God has separated His people, which is set apart among all nations, to be for Him His people, a people dedicated to Him. That is His election which is based on pure grace and love on His part. God has also done this with us, members of the church, whom He has chosen in Christ (Eph 1:4). He was able to do this because He anointed His Christ above His companions (Psa 45:7; Heb 1:9).

In his two sons Ephraim and Manasseh Joseph receives a double part, the part of the firstborn. The ox and the wild ox that Moses mentions speak of strength, which strengthens the thought of firstborn.

Deu 33:18-19 | Zebulun and Issachar

*18 Of Zebulun he said,
“Rejoice, Zebulun, in your going forth,
And, Issachar, in your tents.
19 “They will call peoples [to] the mountain;
There they will offer righteous sacrifices;
For they will draw out the abundance of the seas,
And the hidden treasures of the sand.”*

Zebulun and Issachar are called together. Both are sons of Lea and their inheritances lie next to each other. Each of these tribes has its own occupation. They are called upon to do their work with joy. Zebulun is the traveler, the businessman. Issachar is the man who does his work at home. In the realm of peace they invite the peoples to participate in the blessings of the land. "The abundance of the seas" can refer to the sea of the nations. "The mountain" is the mountain where the temple will stand. Moses speaks here as a prophet (cf. Exo 15:17).

God determines for each one the area of his activities (2Cor 11:13,16b). There is a common goal in these different activities. We may invite others to come and share in the blessings. A people who have been given the blessings also becomes an evangelizing people, who attract others to those blessings. Some may go to other nations for this, others may stay at home to tell their neighbors.

The purpose of this invitation is to offer sacrifices in accordance with God's desires. They are "righteous sacrifices", that is, they are offered according to God's statutes, but also in the right mind (Psa 51:17). When people come to repentance, it is to become worshipers (offerors) of the Father (Jn 4:23). But God also wants it to happen in the right way and in the right mind: in spirit and in truth (Jn 4:24).

To be able to do so, "they will draw out the abundance of the seas and the hidden treasures of the sand" on the shore of the sea (cf. Isa 60:5; 66:11-12). 'The abundance of the seas' can also refer to the experiences with the Lord. The sea is a picture of the trials of life. In these trials, the believer often makes a treasure of discoveries on Who the Lord Jesus is to him.

The sand on the shore of the sea can be applied to the countless company of the believers. All these blessings are covered and hidden to be exhumed by us. To discover them, we will have to make an effort. The result is that everything gives us an ever-greater view of the glory of the Lord Jesus.

Deu 33:20-21 | Gad

*20 Of Gad he said,
"Blessed is the one who enlarges Gad;
He lies down as a lion,*

*And tears the arm, also the crown of the head.
21 "Then he provided the first [part] for himself,
For there the ruler's portion was reserved;
And he came [with] the leaders of the people;
He executed the justice of the LORD,
And His ordinances with Israel."*

In Gad we see the element of battle. Before Moses pronounces his blessing upon him, he first praises the LORD, "the one who enlarges Gad". Gad is one of the tribes that remained in wilderness side of the Jordan. But here Moses does not think of the unwillingness to take possession of an inheritance in the land. Gad has been entering into the land to take possession of it for others. Here God approaches this positively.

Gad has acted as a captain, "a lion" (cf. 1Chr 12:8). Because of this he got room from the LORD to live there. Room, freedom of movement, is a great good for the believer. Beware of false brethren who want to bring believers back under the law and thereby deprive them of their freedom (Gal 2:4)!

"The first [part]" here is linked to "the rulers portion", which refers to rule, to reign. Gad has joined the leaders of the people to fulfil his promise to go along to conquer the land of Canaan (Jos 1:12-18; 4:12). He will have excelled in this, for Moses gives him a prominent place among the people of the two and a half tribe.

Conquering the land means that the judgment of God is exercised on its inhabitants. In doing so, Gad has exercised the righteousness of God. Of the two and a half tribe, Gad will also be by far the most important in terms of number. Reuben will be few in number (verse 6), as will Manasseh of which only half of the tribe will live in the wilderness side of the Jordan.

The time of reign has not yet come for the believers (1Cor 4:8). But there may be matters in the church where justice has to be done. This does not require intelligent believers, but spiritually minded believers characterized by simplicity and wisdom (1Cor 6:4-5). They may act with spiritual authority. It is a great grace of God if such men are present in a local church. Let us thank God for them and not make life difficult for them, but be obedient and submissive to them (Heb 13:17).

Deu 33:22 | Dan

*22 Of Dan he said,
 "Dan is a lion's whelp,
 That leaps forth from Bashan."*

The name Dan means 'judge'. Like Gad, he is compared to a lion. All that is said of him is that he leaps forth. This seems to point to the sudden appearance of the Lord Jesus in the judgment of those who persistently oppose Him. This clears the way to the full blessing.

Deu 33:23 | Naphtali

*23 Of Naphtali he said,
 "O Naphtali, satisfied with favor,
 And full of the blessing of the LORD,
 Take possession of the sea and the south."*

Naphtali, like Asher, gets a rich part. In Naphtali we see someone who is completely satisfied because of the rich blessing of the LORD. In Naphtali lies Capernaum, where the Lord Jesus lived (Mt 9:1; Mk 2:1). His presence is the greatest conceivable blessing. It means an exaltation to heaven (Mt 11:23).

In Naphtali we see someone who is full of Christ and rests in it. This is where the Holy Spirit wants to lead every believer to: to be satisfied with Christ and without having any other desire. That does not mean that we will have learned all and that there is nothing left to take possession of. Hence the encouragement to take possession of the west (the sea) and the south.

Deu 33:24-25 | Asher

*24 Of Asher he said,
 "More blessed than sons is Asher;
 May he be favored by his brothers,
 And may he dip his foot in oil.
 25 "Your locks will be iron and bronze,
 And according to your days, so will your leisurely walk be."*

Moses wishes Asher five blessings:

1. The first blessing is that he is more blessed than sons or will be blessed with sons. Here we see the sonship. Sons are there for God, and they are heirs. For us this blessing means that we are aware that we are there for God's joy and that God has given us an inheritance to our joy.

2. The second blessing is that his brothers will favor him. As sons we are not only pleasant to God, but also to our brothers and sisters. Believers are sons of God and brothers of each other. We are a family, and to living and dwelling together in that consciousness the Lord attaches His blessing (Psa 133:1-3).

3. The third blessing, "dip his foot in oil", refers to his walk. It is a blessing when the walk is characterized by the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:16,25), of which the oil is the well-known picture. Sonship goes together with the Spirit of sonship (Gal 4:6).

4. A walk in the Spirit can only be in the way of separation. The fourth blessing speaks of this. "Iron and bronze" are the "locks" with which doors are closed to keep evil outside the door. The blessings can only be enjoyed without mixing with worldly principles. Separation is not negative. True separation is separation to God and makes strong as iron and shiny as bronze.

5. If there is true separation, the blessing will be enjoyed all days of our life to come. That is the fifth blessing. Separation ensures that no power is wasted on sinful things, which in turn means that the blessing is not enjoyed.

Asher is the only tribe of the ten who are not connected to the house of David, which is mentioned in the New Testament (Lk 2:36-38). In that section there is talk of Anna, who belongs to the tribe Asher. What is said of her makes it clear that she is a real Asherite.

Deu 33:26-29 | Who Is Like Israel?

26 *"There is none like the God of Jeshurun,
Who rides the heavens to your help,
And through the skies in His majesty.*

27 *"The eternal God is a dwelling place,
And underneath are the everlasting arms;
And He drove out the enemy from before you,
And said, 'Destroy!'"*

28 *"So Israel dwells in security,
The fountain of Jacob secluded,
In a land of grain and new wine;
His heavens also drop down dew.*

29 *"Blessed are you, O Israel;
Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD,
Who is the shield of your help
And the sword of your majesty!
So your enemies will cringe before you,
And you will tread upon their high places."*

The end of this blessing corresponds to the beginning. In the beginning Moses spoke of the glorious fact of the establishment of the kingship of the LORD as the firm foundation of the salvation of His people. He concludes with the reference to the LORD as the eternal protection and refuge and with praising Israel blessed that can rely on such a God.

The very last words written by Moses describe the incomparable God and His incomparable people. No one is like God (verse 26), and verse 29 says that no one is like His people. The God of Israel and the Israel of God belong together completely.

Riding the heavens and through the skies is a picture of the unlimited omnipotence with which God from heaven rules the world and is the Helper of His people. He is the eternal God, in contrast to all idols that have their origin somewhere in time and have thus recently come into being. This God is a dwelling place, which means that God offers His own everything that the security of a dwelling place can offer. A home is not only a refuge in case of the storms of life, but also speaks of the peaceful, carefree enjoyment of peace and fellowship.

He Who thrones above in heaven is at the same time the God Who is with His people on earth and holds them in His arms and carries them. Eternal arms are arms that will never lack strength. It indicates unlimited and in-

vincible power, by which His people will be safe forever. In addition, there is no trace of the enemy. He has driven them out and destroyed them.

In the midst of all nations, Israel will “dwell in safety alone” (verse 28, Darby Translation; Num 23:9). The people will not be incorporated into any other people. As the object of God’s special promises, it will receive all that has been promised and will be a distributor of blessings among all the blessings to all the peoples of the earth.

Israel is also Jacob. Jacob is the name of the man who had to learn that he needs God in everything. The people had to learn that too. Their eye is focused on the blessing of the land. When they are in possession of the blessing, their eye will be focused on it. They will abide undisturbed in the land of blessing upon which the blessing of the LORD descends.

There are no people like Israel. There is no salvation like the salvation that is given to Israel, for the LORD has saved that people. And the LORD has not only saved Israel from Egypt, he has also saved it from countless difficulties. He is also Israel’s help. That help is a shield, a protection against anything that can harm that people. He helps by His sword, that is His Word. By His Word He has exalted this people to a high place.

No enemy can start anything against such a people. Although the enemies are not convinced in their conscience of sins and that they deserve judgment, they will be so wise to submit to this people. They shall, though in hypocrisy, honor this people, this people which is exalted by the LORD above all nations.

Deuteronomy 34

Introduction

This chapter informs us about the last course, the last views, the death and the burial of Moses. We read about Israel's mourning over him and the time of it, about his successor Joshua and about the incomparable character of Moses.

Moses' life consists of three periods of forty years:

1. Forty years at the court of Pharaoh.
2. Forty years in the wilderness with the sheep of Jethro in the school of God.
3. Forty years in the wilderness with the people of God.

Then comes the moment when he will return to dust, according to his own words in Psalm 90: "You turn man back into dust and say, "Return, O children of men" (Psa 90:3). God Himself arranges His burial.

Deu 34:1-4 | The LORD Shows Moses All the Land

1 Now Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho. And the LORD showed him all the land, Gilead as far as Dan, 2 and all Naphtali and the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah as far as the western sea, 3 and the Negev and the plain in the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, as far as Zoar. 4 Then the LORD said to him, "This is the land which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your descendants'; I have let you see [it] with your eyes, but you shall not go over there."

After Moses has blessed the people, he climbs Mount Nebo according to the command of God (Deu 32:49). The people will certainly have looked to him as long as possible. Without any help Moses goes up to the top of the mountain. He is not at the end of his strength; he is not tired of life. Yet he rests in the LORD's decision that his task is over. There is no fear for death in him. He climbs the mountain not to die, but to be with God.

On the mountain the LORD shows him, as He had promised, the promised land in all its vastness. Moses has seen the people in possession of the land. The land is named after the names of the tribes, as each will own their own inheritance. He has an eye that sees beyond what natural eyes see. The LORD has shown it to him in a supernatural way in one moment.

Moses has not only seen the land, but also the ultimate blessing of the people. God's reign is that he will not go there; God's grace is that he has seen it as no other has seen it. He has seen it in all its parts under God's guidance.

Moses is found seven times on a mountain:

1. as intercessor (Exo 17:8-16);
2. when he receives the law and a description of the tabernacle (Exo 24:12-18);
3. to plead for the people after their sin with the golden calf (Exo 32:30-32);
4. to receive the second stone tablets (Exo 34:4);
5. on Mount Hor, to transfer the priesthood from Aaron to Eleazar (Num 20:23-28);
6. on Mount Nebo, where he sees the land (Deu 34:1);
7. on the mountain of glorification, together with Elijah, with the Lord Jesus (Mt 17:1-8).

He has described the whole history of the failure of God's people. Here on the mountain he sees the people according to God's thoughts. The apostle John also has seen it in the same way. In Revelation 2-3, John describes the failure of the church, and finally the apostacy, in Revelation 17-18. But then he may see the church on the mountain according to God's thoughts (Rev 21:9-10). Moses sees the earthly side of the kingdom; John sees the heavenly side of it, the heavenly people of God.

Deu 34:5-8 | Moses Dies and Is Buried

5 So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD. 6 And He buried him in the valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor; but no man knows his burial place to this day. 7

Although Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died, his eye was not dim, nor his vigor abated. 8 So the sons of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days; then the days of weeping [and] mourning for Moses came to an end.

Moses did not die because he was old and exhausted. Moses' eye is not dim. He still sees as sharp as in his youth. That is in contrast to Isaac (Gen 27:1) and Jacob (Gen 48:10). The LORD takes the life of Moses. The LORD Himself has taken care of his burial (not: cremation). No one knows the burial place of Moses. The devil knows it. He disputed and argued over the body of Moses with the archangel Michael (Jude 1:9), possibly to make known to the people where he is buried and thereby to lead the people to idolatry.

The mourning period of thirty days because of Moses' death is as long as that of his brother Aaron (Num 20:29).

Deu 34:9 | Joshua Takes the Place of Moses

9 Now Joshua the son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him; and the sons of Israel listened to him and did as the LORD had commanded Moses.

After the report of the death and burial Moses and weeping about his death, the book is not yet finished. Joshua is the successor of Moses as the leader of the people, not as a prophet, but as leader in the battle of the people to take possession of the promised land.

Deu 34:10-12 | Moses, the Prophet Without Equal

10 Since that time no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, 11 for all the signs and wonders which the LORD sent him to perform in the land of Egypt against Pharaoh, all his servants, and all his land, 12 and for all the mighty power and for all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.

This last chapter was not written by Moses. Joshua will have been used for this. Under the guidance of God's Spirit, Joshua depicts the life of Moses in just a few sentences in these last verses. Perhaps there is no one of the people who was aware as much as Joshua, what an extraordinary man

Moses has been. Joshua has experienced Moses from very close by and for a very long time.

In these last words about Moses his failure is not mentioned. The place of Moses has been completely unique among the people of God. His fellowship with God has also been unique (verse 10; Exo 33:11a; Num 12:8a). His service to us is great because of his presentation of the blessings of the land and the place the LORD has chosen to make his Name dwell.

Moses has been faithful in all God's house (Heb 3:1-6). He is a picture of the Lord Jesus, the perfect faithful One, not only *in* the house of God, but as Son *over* the house. Moses wrote about Him (Jn 5:46). Therefore the Lord Jesus far exceeds this excellent man of God.

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