



PT Butler

Bible Study Notebooks

Study of Deuteronomy

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DEUTERONOMY 1:1—2:37

Introduction

“Remember” is the **key word of the book of Deuteronomy**. “Remember” means God expects his people to **think** (not just feel) and come to right conclusions. Every true prophet of Israel was commissioned to bring the nation to repentance on the basis of “remembering” God’s judgments and redemptions in the past. Practically every physical aspect of the Jewish religion was to make them remember through some memorial or another. Belshazzar, a pagan king of Babylon, was judged by God because he did not remember and act according to his father’s (Nebuchadnezzar’s) experience with Jehovah (Dan. 5). Christians are told they should remember what happened to Israel (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:1-13). Christianity is based on what has happened in the past, to give power for the present, and promise for the future.

History is a fundamental part of God’s revelation to mankind (e.g. “The things that have been made”) Rom. 1:18ff. Part of the divine guidance the Holy Spirit of Christ would furnish to the apostles would be to “call to their remembrance” all that Jesus said and did (Jn. 14:26). Men and women ignore the facts of history and refuse to remember them at the risk of their eternal souls (2 Pet. 3:3-7). This is exactly why former liberals, modernists, and present-day “post-modernists” scoff at Christians—they do not believe in the concept of revelation from God, therefore, they have no respect for the past. History means almost nothing to the liberal, modernist and post-modernist—he is interested only in the now and the future. These modern-day humanists say, “There is no need to remember anything—simply decide each action or issue on the basis of how you feel at any moment.” BUT GOD SAYS, “REMEMBER...REPEAT WHAT YOU REMEMBER SO OTHERS WILL ALSO REMEMBER!!!”

Forty years after their first encampment in the wilderness of Paran at Kadesh-barnea (Num. 13:25), they have arrived a second time at Kadesh. Moses is saying, “**REMEMBER!**” From Mt. Sinai (Horeb) to Kadesh-barnea is, at the most, some 200 miles. Traveling at the rate of about 18 miles per day (which is normal for walking), they could have traversed that in 11 days. **But it had taken the Israelites 40 YEARS of wandering around in the barren deserts to get there!** Moses wants to remind this huge mass of murmuring, griping, rebellious people that they had brought this 40 years of trudging along, being beset with many trials and tribulations, upon themselves. They could have simply and easily entered into the Promised Land of Canaan had they exercised a strong faith in God’s promises that he would go before them and assist them in the conquest of the land. They lacked faith, courage and confidence the first time they came to Kadesh-barnea. When the spies came back after “spying out the land” they brought to the people “an evil report” saying, “The land...devours its inhabitants; and all the people that we saw in it are men of great stature...and we

seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them.” At that, “all the congregation raised a loud cry; and the people wept that night...and all the people of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron” saying, “would that we had died in the land of Egypt...or this wilderness...Why does the Lord bring us into this land, to fall by the sword...would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?” (Num. 13:30—14:3). So, God had to **discipline** them to strengthen their faith!

We, like them, are **disciplined** by God because of our lack of faith, courage and confidence (Jn. 15:1-11; Heb. 12:1-29; Rev. 3:19). There is far less excuse for us than for them! We have the advantages of God’s evidence which they had **plus** all the **evidences of the NT that God keeps his promises**. In fact, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is God’s **oath** to “show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose” (Heb. 6:13-20; 2 Cor. 1:20-21; 5:14-21, *et. al.*). Our God is a faithful and wise, as well as a gracious and patient, Teacher he will not permit us to pass indifferently over our lessons. Sometimes we suppose we have mastered one of his lessons for us and we disregard it, forgetting it, to move on to other things. But our wise Teacher knows better. He sees the need of deeper “ploughing” and “breaking up of the fallow ground” (Jer. 4:3 Hosea 10:12; Matt. 13:23; Mk. 4:20; Lk. 8:15). Our God will not have us as mere theorists or dilettantes, trifling in the trivial. He will keep us, if need be, year after year at our lessons until we learn them.

Moses as God’s faithful (Heb. 3:1-19; 11:23-28) had communicated **exactly** what God had given him to communicate. Moses did not give the “congregation” his own theories, whims, or speculations (Deut. 1:3). God and lead the people. **Moses, because he was finding the administrative job of “judging” in all matters of the “congregation” AND in order to squelch any suspicions of partiality, asked the tribes to “choose” wise, understanding and experienced men according to your tribes and I will appoint them as your heads.**” (See Num. 11; Ex. 18; Deut. 1). **AFTER** Moses had **delegated much of the “judging” to 70 “wise” tribal heads** there were those of the “congregation” who rebelled against Moses because he spoke **as God’s authority** (i.e., Korah, Dathan and Abiram (Nu. 16:1-50). Actually, they were jealous of him because he had been chosen by God as the *singular* “prophet” to speak for Korah, Dathan and Abiram used the lame accusation for their rebellion of “authoritarianism” *inferring* that Moses would be **partial** in his “judgments” and leadership (Num. 16). NOW, Moses is exhorting the “congregation” to **REMEMBER** what had happened to the rebels who slandered him for “partiality.” and is urging Israel’s “judges” to be **IMPARTIAL** in their judgments. Any leader among God’s people who stands strictly on the authority of God’s Holy Word runs the risk of such jealous rebellion in his “congregation.” (See also Deut. 16:18:20; 24:17). Impartiality is a characteristic of God (Deut. 10:17; 2 Pet. 2:4; Acts 10:28,34,35). To have respect of persons in judgment is not good (Prov. 24:23; 1 Tim. 5:21; Ex. 23:1-3; Lev. 19:15-18). God judges us individually and impartially (Ro. 2:5-11; 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Pet. 1:17; Jn. 5:22; Acts 10:40-42; 17:31). **Partiality and preference is condemned everywhere in the Word of God** (Prov. 29:25; 21:29; Jas. 2:1-7).

As Moses said (Deut. 1:32), “Yet in **spite** of this word you did not believe the Lord your God.” The Hebrew words are, *uvadavar hazzeh* and would be literally translated, “Yet in this **word**” you did not believe the Lord your God. The RSV has supplied the words “spite of.” **Unbelief, mistrust, disloyalty** toward the **word of God** was their problem all along, time after time in the wilderness (see Heb. 3:1-19). **Precisely, “the word of hearing did not profit them, because it was not united by faith with them that heard** (Heb. 4:2). These Israelites **heard** the word of God, they even **saw** miracles to validate that what they heard was from God, but they refused to **trust (i.e., believe)** what they saw and heard and trusted and did what they “felt” like doing. **God warned them, “...remember all the commandments of the Lord, to do them, NOT TO FOLLOW AFTER YOUR OWN HEART AND YOUR OWN EYES, WHICH YOU ARE INCLINED TO GO AFTER WANTONLY” (Num. 15:39).** But they did it anyway! It is significant that the “roll-call-of-the-faithful” in Hebrews ch. 11 has no illustration from Israel during this period! The reason is that God was not well-pleased with most of them for they were over-thrown in the wilderness (1 Cor. 10:5). Will Christians ever learn from this? Will Christians see the lesson in these things? Will Christians ever recognize that “whatsoever things were written afore time were written for our learning”? (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:6-13). Too often we are like the person described in Prov. 29:19, “A servant will not be corrected by *words*; for though he understand, he will not give heed.” If this be true with Christians, all that is left is to be chastened with God’s “rod” in hopes that they will give heed. **BUT, IS NOT GOD’S ABUNDANTLY VALIDATED WORD ENOUGH?**

Face it! Moses was excluded from the Promised Land in punishment for his sin of rebellion and unbelief in response to the striving and murmuring of Israel (Num. 20:1-13). Aaron was excluded for the same reason (Num. 20:12). **(a) Moses said the wrong thing**, “Hear now, you rebels, shall **we** bring forth water for you out of this rock?” (Num. 20:10). God had said, “Speak to the *rock*.” Moses spoke to the *people*. God held him responsible for not obeying exactly what he was told to do. When Moses spoke, it was with a question mark—“**Shall**”—a question was not involved in God’s *command*. When Moses spoke, he focused the “glory” upon himself and Aaron—“**Shall we**”—God shares his glory only with those who deem themselves unworthy of it! **(b) Moses did the wrong thing**, in addition to speaking to it *in the name of God* as he was supposed to do, he *smote* it *twice*! (Num. 20:11). At Rephidim, at the foot of Mt. Horeb, Moses was *commanded* to *smite* the rock (Ex. 17:6), but never is he instructed to strike it twice. Moses must have **assumed** God would want him to do the same here—**BUT IT IS WRONG TO ASSUME GOD’S WILL TO BE OTHER THAN WHAT HE HAS REVEALED!** Why would Moses and Aaron, God’s great chosen leaders, disobey God? *They let their circumstances overcome their faith!* They surrendered to the temptation of anger and pride! From a purely *human* viewpoint we would probably excuse Moses. Surely God would not keep this great man from the promised land just for losing his temper this one time! **BUT THAT IS HUMAN REASONING—NOT GOD’S!** **God despises sin, and his ways are not our ways!** Remember these “humanly excusable” sinners? Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; Uzzah; Nadab and Abihu; Ananias and Saphira; Peter? **God despises sin, hates disobedience to his commands, and abhors the faithless heart!** “Moses, the man of meekest heart, lost Canaan by self-will—to show where grace has done its part, how sin defiles us still.” (1 Jn. 1:10). Mere

confession of guilt does not relieve anyone of responsibility to obey God! Emotional remorse at suffering the penalty for disobedience does not constitute repentance. Repentance can come when there may be **no show of emotion!** Repentance is obeying!

After their rebellion in the wilderness Israel came to the lands surrounding the Promised Land (Edom, Moab and Ammon—today we call these nations Arabs). Instead of simply marching forward into the Land and letting God take care of their enemies, as he promised, they cringed in fear at the report of the majority of the “spies.” Having lost the opportunity in their **FIRST** approach by distrusting God’s word (and the word of Caleb and Joshua), **they then tried to seize the Promised Land against God’s will.** They marched up the mountain pass, in spite of the warning of Moses that their attempt would not prosper. The Amalekites and Canaanites, coming down upon them with the Amorites of the mountain, defeated them with great slaughter and chased them as far as Hormah, and even to Mt. Seir (Nu. 14:40-45; Det. 1:41-44). The entrance to the Promised Land through the lands of the Edomites, Moabites and Ammonites was hopelessly barred and their sad state is described by Moses in Deut. 1:45-46. **After 40 years wandering in the wilderness, they came to this territory AGAIN!** Moses (in Deut. 2:1-25) is wanting them to **remember** that God providentially extend grace to Israel and led them through these lands which they earlier considered impassable toward. God took them right **through** Edom with no hindrances the second time. He delivered them through the other lands by conquest. **There are THREE lessons in this text that need repeating and relearning by God’s people all the time:** **(a)** God does things in his own good time (Deut. 2:1-6). Israel was not at first permitted to go through these lands but after the discipline in the wilderness, God took them through. Humans need most of all to learn to **wait upon the Lord.** God often withholds his blessings, not because he delights in tormenting his creatures, but to give us time to acquire the maturity to profit by, and enjoy, what he has to give; **(b)** even in times for maturing, God sees that we “lack nothing” needful (Deut. 2:7-8). The Israelites had manna and quail, a pillar of fire by night and a cloud by day, the healing serpent on the staff, and many victories over their enemies during the 40 years in the wilderness. God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think (Eph. 3:20); **(c)** God gave Israel victory over her enemies to such extent that “all peoples under the whole heaven feared and trembled” when the report of Israel was heard (Deut. 2:9-25). They did not need to fear rumors of “giants” in the land. God took care of these Rephaim, Zamzummim, Anakim and Avvim, by other non-covenant nations. God still rules his world today **for the building of his kingdom (the church)** and still “slays beasts and dragons” (e.g., please read or remember the entire books of Daniel and Revelation as to how God used pagan empires to discipline his people and then destroyed the impenitent pagans as enemies—all in his own good time). Christians are promised that with a living faith they may “move” these “mountains” of hindrance to their building the kingdom. Nothing can stop God’s kingdom except a lack of faith by God’s people! God took out of the way of his plan for redeeming mankind such “mountains” as the emperors and empires of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome. God took down the “Holy Roman Empire,” German Fascism, Russian Communism, and he can take down any “mountain” that stands in his way!

Israel was hearing Moses words (Deut. 2:26-37) about the king of Sihon as they stood on the very property formerly ruled by Sihon (Deut. 4:44-49). King Sihon's attempt to oppose Israel's passage through his kingdom ended in complete defeat (Num. 21:21-31). **Moses wants Israel to REMEMBER this astounding divine intervention on their behalf!** God hardened King Sihon's heart in the same way he hardened Pharaoh's heart—HE CONTINUED TO GIVE BOTH OF THEM EVIDENCE, ALLOWING THEM TO MAKE THEIR OWN CHOICES AS TO WHETHER THEY WOULD BE "SOFT" AND REPENT OR BE "HARD" AND IMPENITENT! **If God cannot get honor in a person's life by repentance, he will get honor by eventual destruction (Rom. 9:17-21).** God does not "harden" anyone's heart by some "irresistible damnation by the Holy Spirit." The Holy Spirit may be "resisted" (Acts 5:1-4; 7:1; Rom. 2:4; 8:5-17; 1 Thess. 4:8; 2 Tim. 3:8; Heb. 2:1-4; 10:29) or "obeyed" (Acts 5:32; Rom. 8:16). Hearts are "hardened" by mistrusting God and his word but rather trusting in the **deceitfulness** of sin (Heb. 3:12-14). God allows humans to harden their hearts when they "refuse to love the truth and so be saved—God sends a strong delusion to they may believe what is false...all those who do not believe the truth but take pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2:9-12; see also Rom. 1:18-32). **When human beings are adamantly opposed to the obvious truths of God, and deliberately exchange the truth of God for a lie, and refuse to have the knowledge of God—GOD GIVES THEM UP TO THEIR CHOICES!** It's a terribly frightening thought—but it is true! King Sihon had plenty of evidence that Almighty God was with Israel and that he should do Israel's bidding, but he **exchanged all that truth for the lie of his own reasoning.** HE WAS DESTROYED!

ISRAEL MUST REMEMBER THIS!

Once again, human beings have no right to question God's orders. Even if God orders people to "destroy men, women and children and leave none remaining" (Deut. 2:34) **he** must be obeyed. Moses said Israel had done this—HE WANTED THEM TO REMEMBER THE **SERIOUSNESS** OF GOD BY THE **SEVERITY** OF GOD! Remember this, God commanded Abraham to take his only son of promise up on Mt. Moriah and slay him (Isaac) as a burnt offering. Isaac, by human standards, had not sinned one-millionth as much as these heathen Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites had! **Abraham is one of the brightest "stars" in the "hall of fame of faith" (Heb. 11) because he was, by faith, willing to do what God had commanded him—in spite of all the rationalizations and "feelings" he must have had to oppose God's commandment!** AFTER ALL, THIS IS WHAT THE CROSS OF CHRIST IS ALL ABOUT —THE **SERIOUSNESS** OF GOD AGAINST SIN SHOWN BY THE **SEVERITY** OF GOD BY PUNISHING SIN IN HIS ABSOLUTELY RIGHTEOUS AND INNOCENT SON, JESUS CHRIST (see 2 Cor. 5:14-21). God wanted the Israelites to comprehend, by visual, participatory, physical punishment against these depraved, idolatrous, human-sacrificing, licentious, arrogant heathen, **JUST HOW HEINOUS SIN IS AGAINST ALMIGHTY GOD.** "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are

without excuse; for although they knew God they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever! Amen.” Rom. 1:18-25. LET CHRISTIANS, ALONG WITH MOSES AND THE ISRAELITES, **REMEMBER!**

DEUTERONOMY 3:1—4:49

Og was the “king” of Bashan. Bashan is essentially what we would today call the western lands of modern Syria—it bordered in Moses’ time, south on the Yarmuk wadi and west, on the Sea of Galilee, and north to Mt. Hermon (we’re not exactly certain how far east it bordered). It was directly east of the Sea of Galilee. In the Hebrew language, “**Og**” means, “a cake” (Israel’s occupation of his land was “a piece of cake” because God gave Israel divine aid). These “highlands” used especially for pasture, were soon to be occupied by the half tribe of Manasseh (one of Joseph’s sons). *This was as far north as Israel went on the east side of the Jordan River.* The melting snows of Mt. Hermon (also called Sirion and Senir) are the chief source of the Jordan River as it flows first into the Sea of Galilee. **The “giant” tribe** of the “Rephaim” formerly occupied that territory. King **Og** was so large that his “custom made” bedstead was 9 X 4 cubits. If the “cubit” was 18 inches his bed was about 14 ft. by 6 ft. In 1977, *The People’s Almanac*, published a book entitled, *The Book of Lists* in which, on pages 307-390, are listed 15 “modern-day” giants such as: John van Albert, a Dutch man 9 ft. 5 in. tall, 1920; Machnow, 1905, a Russian giant 9 ft. 3 in. tall; and, American, Robert Pershing Wadlow (1919-1940), born in Alton, IL, who was 8 ft. 11.1 in. tall (almost 9 ft. tall). So, you see, it is not an impossibility to have the Bible speak of King Og being so large that he needed a bed 14 X 6 ft. Moses is exhorting Israel to remember that she had gone to battle against “giants” and prevailed. But foremost Israel must remember that it was the “greatness of Jehovah God” which gave them victory (Deut. 3:23ff). “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (See Rom. 8:31-39). Nebuchadnezzar learned “the hard way” that Jehovah’s “dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation; all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing and he does according to his will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him ‘What doest thou?’” (See Dan. 4:34-35). There are no circumstances, temptations, trials, persons, or groups of persons large enough, powerful enough, rich enough, or smart enough to thwart the redemptive purpose of God in our lives if we trust and obey him! WE HAVE HISTORICAL PROOF OF IT!!!

Moses ordered the tribes east of the Jordan River to go over and help the tribes west of the Jordan (½ of Manasseh, Gad, Reuben) because these three tribes had decided they weren’t going to go over “east” and settle (Num. 32:1-16). Moses told the other tribes, “...if they (Manasseh, Gad and Reuben) will not pass over with you armed, they shall have possessions among you in the land of Canaan.” (Num. 32:30). Deut. 3:18 says that Moses “commanded” them at that time as to how the possession of the land should be. IT EVIDENTLY WAS THE LORD’S WILL THAT THESE THREE TRIBES OCCUPY LANDS EAST OF THE JORDAN. They were probably to occupy this territory to serve as a “buffer zone” against the nomadic warriors in the Arabian desert to their east (now Iraq, Iran, etc.). When the other tribes heard Moses’ ultimatum (that those 3 tribes would be settling west of the Jordan if they received no help in conquering the lands east of the Jordan) they were only too happy to help. Besides, Moses indicated to do otherwise would be rebellion against God as blatant as that of

their “fathers” who fell in the wilderness from disobedience (Num. 32:6-15). **Again, Moses warned, REMEMBER what happens when you disobey God!**

The **first** admirable quality Moses writes about himself is, he confesses that the greatness and majesty of Almighty God had been **shown** in the mighty works and acts that Jehovah had done before Moses’ eyes and **believed!** He was not at all like those people the apostle Paul describes in Romans 1:18-32, who, having **clearly seen and perceived** God’s invisible nature, eternal power and deity in the things that have been made, exchanged the glory of God for images and refused to have God in their knowledge! **Second**, Moses admits that God had been angry with him and would not hearken to him about going across the Jordan into the Promised Land—that God had told him to speak no more of the matter—and Moses had not done so! Moses acquiesced to the revealed will of God! **Third**, Moses said, “So we remained in the valley opposite Beth-peor.” (3:29). Moses not only did not go on talking about God’s order to stay out of the Promised Land, he **obeyed God—he stayed back on the east side of the Jordan opposite Beth-peor.** “Beth-peor” was in Ammon, just ten miles north-east of the Dead Sea near Mt. Pisgah where Moses would lie down and die!

To take away or add to God’s word is to try to alter God! God **is** his word and his word **is** God (see Gen. 1:1; John 1:1-5; 1:14-18; 1 Jn. 1:1-4; Rev. 19:13; Jn. 17:17). We have a human saying somewhat similar, “A man is only as good as his word.” WE ARE OUR WORD! God’s admonition against adding to or subtracting from his revealed word, the Bible, is absolutely, unequivocally, plain (see Deut. 12:32; Prov. 30:5-6; Rev. 22:18-19). We know what happened to people who tried, by action or verbalization, to add or subtract from God’s word. There is a long list, including some we would call “saints” (e.g., Moses, Korah, Nadab & Abihu, Achan, Uzzah, David, a long list of kings of Israel and Judah, Judas, Peter—we could go on forever). Any sin is essentially either adding to or subtracting from God’s word! Trying with an honest heart and mind to **interpret** (i.e., understand) what God *means* in his revelation of human language to mankind is not **necessarily** adding or subtracting. Neither is the use of certain human traditions. It all depends on **what** the “interpretation” and the “tradition” **IS—and WHY** they are being used! Some religious “authorities” and “denominations” have, and still are, using heremeneutically-faulty interpretations, and using human traditions, to **usurp** the plain, unequivocal, categorical, explicit commandments of God (i.e., to do otherwise than God has plainly commanded in the Bible). THAT is the “adding and subtracting” God solemnly and absolutely prohibits. In trying to **interpret** what God’s word says in human language, and trying to carry it out by using human methods (“traditions”) we **must** apply honest logic and honest and true hermeneutical (i.e., interpretative) rules of thought and communication. If we don’t know what those are, we’d better be finding out!

Yes! Some heathen will respect those who keep God’s commandments! We have documented history in the Bible to prove it. We have the example of Lot being made a judge in Sodom and Gomorrah; Abimelech the Canaanite king with Abraham (Gen. 21:22ff); Laban with Jacob; Esau with Jacob; Solomon and Sheba; Daniel and the Babylonian steward (Dan. 1:8-16); Daniel and King Nebuchadnezzar; Daniel and King Darius; Paul & the magistrates (Acts 16:35-40); Paul & the Roman centurion (Acts

21:31); Paul & King Agrippa (Acts 26:30-32), etc., and you can probably think of many more from the Bible as well as from your own experience. NOT ALL HEATHEN WILL RESPECT THOSE WHO KEEP GOD'S COMMANDMENTS, but some will—and some will even be converted! Today—throughout the world—there is **grudging respect** for The Ten Commandments. Even Ted Koppel, the ABC newscaster on “Night-Line” said, “They are Ten Commandments, not ten suggestions.” Most of the countries of the “free world” have their laws and constitutions based on Biblical teachings—whether they admit it or not! **God deliberately put Israel in the midst of the heathendom of that time (the “Middle-East”) to be a witness of his sovereignty, glory, majesty and truth (see Ezek. 5:5; Lam. 1:1; Ezek. 16:14) but Israel forfeited that responsibility and privilege, and became more idolatrous than the heathen around her!** When she did that the “nations” surrounding her were contemptuous and hostile toward her and eventually took her into exile (with God's permission and help)! Jesus had very little good to say about the Pharisees who were hypocrites (Matt. 23; Lk. 11). WE CHRISTIANS, PRIVILEGED TO HAVE AND RESPONSIBLE FOR, THE TRUTHS OF THE “RESTORATION MOVEMENT” ARE PLACED BY GOD IN A WORLD OF IGNORANCE, HALF-TRUTHS AND DELIBERATE FALSEHOODS ABOUT NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANITY! **Let us remember to “keep the New Testament and do it, for that will be our wisdom and understanding in the sight of the peoples...”**

God would not want man to try to represent him by an image because the glory and majesty of God is incomprehensible to the human eye and mind. **The nearest anyone ever came to “seeing” God was to see Jesus Christ (the “Word” or God-incarnate) in a human body!** But what they “saw” with their eyes in Jesus Christ was still a **human body**. And what registered on the **mind** of those who saw Jesus in a human body was as **near** to “seeing” God as can be understood this side of eternity! GOD'S ESSENCE AND BEING AND NATURE IS SO FAR BEYOND WHAT HUMAN EXPERIENCE IS THAT TO TRY TO MAKE AN “IMAGE” (STATUE, PICTURE, OR LIKENESS) OF HIM BECOMES RIDICULOUS AND BLASPHEMOUS! When Jesus was “transfigured” (i.e., metamorphosed) back into the heavenly glory (Matt. 17; Mk. 9; Lk. 9) the disciples “fell on their faces and were filled with awe” (Matt. 17:5). Peter would later write about it (2 Pet. 1:16-21) but all he could say was he saw God's “majesty and glory” and heard God's voice! John the apostle wrote, “No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known” (Jn. 1:18). God told Moses, “You cannot see my face; for man shall not see me and live” (Ex. 33:20). Isaiah saw the Lord, high and lifted up, but considered himself “undone” for having done so (Isa. 6:1ff). The **highest** “image” man can make to represent God is a **human image** and that is absurd and blasphemous for how can the Creator be equated with the creation? God calls all such “image” making the “futile, senseless, dark-minded” work of “fools” who “exchange the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles” (Rom. 1:221-23). And human beings tend to **become** like the “image” they worship (see Hosea 9:10). THAT IS ONE MAJOR REASON GOD DOESN'T WANT HUMANS TO MAKE “IMAGES” OF HIM! I suppose it may be alright for artists to paint pictures of what they think Jesus Christ looked like, but **who really knows what Jesus looked like?** I, personally, have no need for an artists conception of what he thinks Jesus looked like—and I see no advantage to any believer for such pictures, while there may be numerous

disadvantages! Genetically, we might speculate that Jesus would have had the features inherited from Mary and her lineal ancestry. But the “seed” conceived in her womb was planted there by the Holy Spirit of God, so we can **never** be quite certain as to what Jesus looked like! He certainly was “Jewish” enough in his “looks” that there is no record in the Gospels that he looked different than any other Jew in Israel 4 B.C. to A.D. 26. God’s “likeness” was **veiled** in the human body of Jesus Christ. In every “vision” of God in OT and NT all human language is capable of stating is that what was seen was “like a son of man” (Dan. 7:13; Rev. 1:13).

(a) Some in Israel heard the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire and still lived (4:33); (b) God took strong and powerful nations for Israel by trials, signs, wonders and war by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm (4:34); (c) Some in Israel heard the voice of God speaking out of the heavens (4:35-36); (d) God disciplined Israel by miraculous judgements (4:36); (e) God delivered them from Egypt (4:37); (f) God gave them the land of Canaan which they occupied (4:38). **These are at least 5 ways in which God showed his greatness to Israel!** YES! God still shows his greatness to the church today in the same ways! Perhaps not in *visible, empirical* “signs and wonders” but he speaks to the church through his mighty word; he “takes strong nations” as he protects his church throughout the world; he disciplines the church through trials and tribulations; he delivers the church from the spiritual bondage of the devil’s lies; and he takes the members of his church through death to the Promised Land of heaven (Rev. 14:13). God shows his greatness constantly—even in this world of ours “through the things that have been made” (Rom. 1:18-21). He shows his majesty and power in the storms that man cannot control; he shows his power in the birth of a child; he shows his love through the loving actions of Christians all over the world; he shows his loveliness in the beauties of creation; he shows his judgment upon the world through the law of entropy (i.e., the universe is running down, Rom. 8:18-23); he shows his providential care in the deliverance of Christians from tribulation in many places; he shows his faithfulness in the faithfulness of Christians to love and obey him in spite of tribulation and trial.

There were 6 cities, 3 on each side of the Jordan, set apart by Moses and Joshua as places of asylum for those who had accidentally committed manslaughter. They were called in the Hebrew language, *oreem miklot*, i.e., “cities of refuge.” Those E. of the Jordan were Bezer in Reuben, Ramoth-Gilead in Gad, and Golan in Manasseh (Deut. 4:43-43). Those W. of the Jordan were Hebron in Judah, Shechem in Ephraim, and Kedesh in Naphtali (Josh. 20:7-8). To aid the killer in escaping the pursuit of the avenger of blood, provision was made that the principal roads leading to these cities should always be kept open. No part of Palestine was more than 30 miles away from a city of refuge—a distance that could easily be covered in one day. In Semitic lands, if a man were slain it was regarded as the duty of his nearest relative to avenge him (see Gen. 4:23-24). Only in that way, the heathen believed, could justice be satisfied. (We’re seeing this played out between modern Israelis and Arabs today!). In heathen lands, in the days of ancient Israel, almost no distinction was made between intentional and unintentional killing. Many a man was therefore killed in revenge for what was an accident. Cities of refuge were provided to protect a man until his case could be properly adjudicated. The right of asylum was only for those who had taken life

unintentionally. **Wilful murderers were put to death at once!** (See Gen. 9:6; Lev. 24:17; Ex. 21:12-14; 1 Kings 2:28-33; Eccl. 8:11; Matt. 5:21-22; Acts 25:11; Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Tim. 1:8-11; 1 Pet. 2:13-17). The regulations concerning these cities of refuge are found in Numbers 35; Deuteronomy 19:1-13; and Joshua 20. If a manslayer reached a city of refuge before the avenger of blood could slay him, he was given asylum until a fair trial could be held. The trial took place where the accused had lived. If proved innocent of wilful murder, he was brought back to the city of refuge. There he had to stay until the death of the high priest. After that he was free to return to his own home. But if during that period he passed beyond the limits of the city of refuge, the avenger of blood could slay him without blame. The Tabernacle and, later, the Temple at Jerusalem could also be used as a place of refuge. GOD SHOWED MERCY AND A LOVE FOR JUSTICE IN THESE CITIES OF REFUGE! The modern laws of the United States and many other countries are much more lenient than God's laws of the OT (much to the detriment of society today!)—see *What The Bible Says About Civil Government*, by Paul T. Butler, pub. College Press, 1990.

DEUTERONOMY 5:1—6:25

The very word “covenant” (*berith* in Hebrew language) insinuates the concept of requirements, commandments, stipulations, provisions, conditions! *Berith* means literally, “to cut, choose, select.” The ancient custom was to cut the throat of an animal and make a meal at which two parties who had made a “pact” or “given their oath” would participate in celebration of binding their word to one another in accordance with the stipulations or conditions involved! The normal use of *covenant* required mutual promise or mutual commitment. Numerous words in the OT associated with *berith*, such as “enter into, to be in, transgress, break, institute, make or do, keep, establish, maintain or continue” explicitly require that a “covenant” have “ordinances, provisions, conditions” to obey, keep, be faithful to, or enter-into! In the OT God promised Israel his special grace and providential protection **on the condition that Israel promise to keep his commandments—to which Israel & God both agreed!** BUT ISRAEL LATER DEFAULTED AND TRANSGRESSED (BROKE) EVERY CONDITION, PROVISION, COMMANDMENT OF THE COVENANT TO WHICH THEY HAD AGREED! The New Covenant God made with all mankind has Christ’s death, burial and resurrection as its **seal** (2 Cor. 1:20-21; Heb. 6:13-20; 10:1-18, etc.). The New Covenant also has “terms, conditions, provisions” which require certain actions (confession of faith in Christ, repentance, immersion in water, i.e., “baptism” and spiritual growth) in order to be a “member of the New covenant.” All the OT law and prophets were fulfilled in Christ’s vicarious death and resurrection. The “laws” or “commandments” of Christ (1 Cor. 9:21; Gal. 2:3) are summed up in one totally binding, obligating, motivating word—**LOVE** (2 Cor. 5:14-21; Jn. 13:34; Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 6:2). Christians are **not bound in covenant** relationship to ANY of the Mosaic law—including the Ten Commandments (see the books of Galatians and Hebrews). Does this mean we are free to kill, swear, make idols, etc.? NO, A THOUSAND TIMES NO. The Christian covenant requirements are **even higher** than anything in the OT law. For example, the New Testament scriptures forbid not only murder, but the source of murder—hatred!

The Ten Commandments **are raised to a higher, more spiritual, love-motivated plane in the New Testament**—but there are all there in the New Testament: (a) “No other gods before me” (see 1 Cor. 8:4,6); (b) no grave image (see Rom. 1:21-23; 1 Cor. 10:7,14; Col. 3:5; 1 Jn. 5:21); (c) not take the name of God in vain (see Matt. 5:34,37; 12:36; Jas. 5:12); (d) observe the Sabbath (see Heb. 4:1-13 where the entire Christian life is a “Sabbath”); (e) honor thy father and mother (see Eph. 6:2; 1 Tim. 5:4); (f) thou shalt not kill (see Matt. 5:22; 1 Jn. 3:15); (g) do not commit adultery (see Matt. 5:28; Gal. 5:19; 2 Pet. 2:13-14); (h) do not steal (see 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Eph. 4:28; 1 Thess. 4:9-12; 2 Thess. 3:8-12); (i) do not bear false witness (see Eph. 4:25; Col. 3:9; Rev. 21:8); (j) do not covet (see Col. 3:5; 1 Tim. 6:8). The Christian covenant has commandments—that is clear from statements of Christ such as are found in John 13:34; 14:23; 15:10,12, and in John’s epistles (e.g. 1 Jn. 3:23-24; 4:21; 5:2-3). In fact, as John writes, “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments”! (1 Jn. 5:3). **LOVE IS NOT SELF-DEFINING. God defines what he means by “love” in his commandments in both the OT and NT!**

God allowed Moses to be the “mediator” (i.e., “moderator,” “go-between,” “intercessor”) BECAUSE THE ISRAELITES WERE **AFRAID** TO APPROACH GOD IN ALL THE “GLORY AND GREATNESS” HE HAD MANIFESTED IN THE FIRE AND THUNDER ON MOUNT SINAI (Deut. 5:22-24). What they had witnessed at the giving of the law **scared them to death—THEY WERE AFRAID THEY WOULD DIE FROM ANY MORE SUCH EXPERIENCES!** And their fear was altogether appropriate! Almighty God is **awesome, fearful, absolutely holy, just, righteous, wrathful** in his manifestations when sinful human beings are “naked before him” (Isa. 6:1ff; Matt. 17; Lk. 5:8-9; Acts 9:1-9; Heb. 4:13; 10:26-31; Rev. 1:17). Human beings were frightened even by angels (Dan. 9:2-17; Rev. 19:9-10, etc.). **Without Christ as MEDIATOR for human beings they must one day stand before God and account for all the sin and wickedness they have done—that is a “fearful” prospect, for no human being will ever be able to justify his sin before an Absolute God!** No amount of “goodness” a human being accomplishes can ever over-balance the sin he/she has done. **GOD DEMANDS ABSOLUTE SINLESSNESS TO BE JUSTIFIED BEFORE HIM! Jesus Christ, the perfect human (the absolutely sinless human being) atoned for human sin and stands ready to become the MEDIATOR between sinful man and Absolute God to all who will come into covenant relationship with him! (See the book of Hebrews)!**

The Hebrew word *shomar* is translated “be careful” and literally means, “keep watch, be on guard, beware.” It is a pro-active word. Moses meant to say to the Israelites, “You must be constantly **alert, watchful, on guard** that you are doing the commandments of Jehovah which I have revealed to you.” **There can be no relaxation on knowing, remembering, understanding, comprehending and DOING the commandments of God!** “BE THOU FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH, AND I WILL GIVE YOU THE CROWN OF LIFE” (Rev. 2:10). Peter wrote to Christians, “Be sober, be **watchful**. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, know that the same experience of suffering is required of your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, establish, and strengthen you.” (1 Pet. 5:8-11). When Jesus was facing his imminent death, resurrection and ascension back to heaven, he **repeatedly** warned his disciples to **watch** (see Matt. chs. 24,25,26; Mk. 13,14; Lk. 12,21). Christians should repeatedly read Heb. 2:1-4, “Therefore we must pay the **closer attention to what we have heard**, lest we drift away from it...” Christians cannot take a *laissez-faire* (i.e., “let alone”) attitude toward the word of God! God will not tolerate an indifferent attitude toward his commandments!

Deuteronomy 6:4-5 is called by modern Jews, *The Shema*. They are supposed to recite it by memory every morning upon rising and every night before retiring for sleep. *Shema* in Hebrew is “Hear!” It is also often translated in the OT “Obey.” The ***Shema*** states unequivocally that the motive God wanted for the obedience of the Israelite was LOVE. Bruce Oberst has said in his commentary, *Deuteronomy*, pub. College Press, 1968, “It (Deut. 6:4-5, the *Shema*) show how, even in the Old Testament, God desired that his laws be kept out of a heart of love for him. Surely he cannot expect less in the New Covenant...If there is just one God over heaven and earth,

WHAT THEN? If he is the creator of the world, the maker and sustainer of all, what then? If ‘there is none else besides,’ and the whole universe sings out his glory what should we do? WE SHOULD LOVE HIM WITH ALL THE HEART, AND WITH ALL THE SOUL AND WITH ALL THE MIGHT (Deut. 4:29; 6:5; 10:12; 30:5-6). If this was part and parcel of the Mosaic law, how much *more* should love prompt our service under *Christ*?” In Leviticus 19:18 God commanded the Israelite, “thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” The Lord Jesus Christ stated that all the “law and the prophets” were to be hung on these **two** commandments. **In other words, all of God’s law and everything the prophets said (any writer of the OT including Moses and David) is essentially summed up in these TWO commandments—LOVE GOD AND MANKIND! THE ABSOLUTE, DIVINE, PERFECT LOVE JESUS DID IN HIS INCARNATION FULFILLED EVERY JOT AND TITTLE OF THE LAW AND PROPHETS! When we love like Jesus did (lose our lives for his sake) we also fulfill the law of God!**

The Jews of Jesus’ day (especially the Pharisees) had taken Deut. 6:6-9 **literally!** They made little boxes and put inside these tiny boxes the *Shema* and literally “bound” the boxes (called “phylacteries”) on their left forearm, on the middle of their forehead, and in little receptacles on their doorposts. The boxes were put on their left forearms so that every time they bent their left arm toward their body to eat or gesture the *Shema* would be “upon their heart.” **God didn’t mean the Jews should do this literally. MOSES WAS USING METAPHORICAL LANGUAGE! GOD WANTED THE JEWS TO “BIND” HIS COMMANDMENTS ON THEIR “SPIRITUAL” NATURE—DOWN IN THEIR MIND AND HEART!** The Pharisees tried to outdo one another in the size of phylacteries they wore out in public to show-off their “righteousness.” (Matt. 23:5). What God wanted of the Israelite was that his word should be **continually** before them **guarding the thresholds of their heart, mind and family.** IF GOD WANTED SUCH DILIGENT AND CONSTANT INVOLVEMENT OF THE ISRAELITE IN HIS COMMANDMENTS, WHAT DOES HE EXPECT OF THE CHRISTIAN? **And where will such involvement be most likely to take root and flourish?—IN THE HOME!** The most impressionable learning to which any human being is exposed takes place in the first 10 years of life! **Thus, parents who teach their children the Word of God are the first, best, and most significant teachers of the human race! Parents who forfeit this privilege and responsibility will fall into the hands of an angry God at the final judgment!** This great responsibility MUST NOT be left solely to the public school or even to the church (congregation). IT IS FUNDAMENTALLY A PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY (see Prov. 22:6; Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21). But with TV, instant mobility in automobiles, intense pressure for secular “homework” from the public schools, proliferation in modern times of “entertainment” (movies, arcade games, etc.), JUST HOW MUCH TIME IS SPENT, EVEN IN “CHRISTIAN” HOMES TEACHING AND LEARNING GOD’S WORD? I dare say **very little, if any at all!**

Israel ultimately did exactly opposite from the exhortation of Moses, “...take heed lest you forget the Lord, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage” (Deut. 6:12). AND ALL BECAUSE THEY COULD NOT “HANDLE” PROSPERITY! Moses was even more explicit in Deut. 8:1-20. There he warns Israel to “Beware lest you say in your heart, My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.” (Deut. 8:17). One has only to read the OT prophets to find the

documentation that Israel allowed her affluence to lead her into idolatry, self-righteousness and arrogance—and to forget Jehovah God and his commandments! Everyone on this earth has in a figurative and literal sense “inherited cities which they did not build, cisterns they did not hew out, houses full of all good things which they did not build or fill, vineyards and olive groves which they neither planted nor cultivated—JUST HARVESTED!” There is no room for any human being to say, “My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.” **Without the providence of Almighty God, no human being would have anything!** The magnetic-pull of affluence or the expectation of affluence has drawn many a soul into hell! (See Lk. 12:13-31; 16:19-31). It is as difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God as it is for a camel to go through the eye of a sewing needle (Matt. 19:22; Mk. 10:24-25; Lk. 18:24-25). James 2:1-17; 4:1-10; and 5:1-6 are outspoken about the dangers of riches. So is Paul to Timothy (1 Tim. 6:6-19). “We brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world; but if we have food and clothing, with these we shall be content.” HOW MANY MODERN CHRISTIANS ARE ABLE TO ABIDE BY THAT??????

God decides what is “good”—absolutely and forever. God has revealed all that human beings need to know about what is “good” and what is “evil.” “The secret things belong to the Lord our God; but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law” (Deut. 29:29). In giving mankind the Old Testament and New Testament scriptures, God has left **nothing unsaid, unrevealed, untaught, un-commanded** that is needful for human beings to do all his will (word). When God created the world, he told Adam and Eve what was “good” and what was “evil” (or forbidden). They disobeyed! God told Israel, in his OT law and prophets, where the “good” was (see Jer. 6:16-19 versus Jer. 17:9-10). Human beings dare not even trust their own “hearts” (see Num. 15:39) to distinguish between “good” and “evil.” Human beings cannot even “discern their own hearts” as they should be discerned (see Heb. 4:4:12). HUMAN BEINGS MUST TRUST TOTALLY, COMPLETELY, FINALLY, CONSTANTLY IN THE REVEALED WORD OF GOD FOR GUIDANCE IN EVERY “THOUGHT AND IMAGINATION” (see 2 Cor. 10:3-5). God told the Israelites to trust commandments to **be for their good** (Deut. 6:24) about occupying the land of Canaan and in their attitude about what had been given to them. BUT THEY DIDN’T—THEY TRUSTED THEIR OWN OPINIONS, THOUGHTS, FEELINGS AND BECAME WORSE THAN THEIR HEATHEN NEIGHBORS AROUND THEM IN IDOLATRY AND DEPRAVITY.

“Righteousness” means “to be right”! No one knows what is “right”! God alone knows, and has revealed what is “right” in the Bible! God’s revealed word to us is grace! Keeping God’s word means we are within the parameters of his grace where the “right” is! Since no human being (except one) has ever kept the law (word) of God completely and perfectly, no one is “righteous” (see Rom. 3:1-20). THERE IS ONE, JESUS CHRIST, WHO HAS KEPT THE LAW OF GOD PERFECTLY. He is willing to impute his righteousness to us if we believe him, and keep his all-encompassing commandment to love him and our fellow man! (Rom. 3:21-26). No human can be “righteous” outside of covenant relationship with Jesus Christ. When we confess our belief in him, change our minds about sinning, submit to being buried and raised again in water (baptism), WE PUT ON THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST. When we “are

convinced that one has died for all, and therefore all have died” and let the love of Christ control us, we are given his righteousness (2 Cor. 5:14-21). **We may anticipate standing before God at the final judgment and being pronounced “right” by Almighty God, because we have accepted Christ’s righteousness in place of our unrighteousness! WHAT A BLESSED THOUGHT!**

DEUTERONOMY 7:1—8:20

These Israelites had lived in Egypt for 400 years (over 10 generations) **in the midst of idolatry!** One would think they had seen enough of it that they didn't need to be reminded or exhorted to leave it alone! They would have had "first-hand" experience of the consequences of idolatry and unbelief—SLAVERY, CRUELTY, DEPRAVITY! **But God was SERIOUS about "doing the Israelites GOOD" (see Deut. 6:24-25), so he ordered the Israelites to "utterly destroy" the idolatrous nations of Canaan, make no covenant with them, and show no mercy to them, "for they would turn away your sons from following me."** God expected the Israelites to show their **gratitude** to him for giving the land of promise by **destroying all wickedness** from the land. The land of Canaan was to be purged of every vestige of idolatry which was an abomination to God and disastrous to the faith of human beings! Does it shock you that God would demand such drastic action as the destruction of entire tribes of people? God knows when people have gone beyond his mercy. God is showing how zealous he is to protect his covenant people from that which would destroy them! The New Covenant scriptures make some very "shocking" statements about Christians staying away from heathenism. Jesus said, "If your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away...if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell." (Matt. 5:27-30). He also said, "Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few" (Matt. 7:13-14; see also Lk. 13:24-39). Jesus told the rich young ruler to sell all he had and give it to the poor and follow him if he would have eternal life (Matt. 19:21). Jesus said, "So therefore, whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple." (Lk. 14:33). God prohibited the Israelites from inter-marrying with these wicked people. The Israelites should have been thankful enough to keep themselves from **any** association that would endanger their faithfulness to God. **The same is true of any Christian.** Christians are not to "unequally yoke" themselves with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14-18); they are not to associate or even eat with a brother who is immoral, greedy, an idolater, reviler, drunkard or robber (1 Cor. 5:11); Christians are to avoid those who create dissensions and difficulties in opposition to the gospel (Rom. 16:17); Christians are to have nothing to do with anyone who refuses to obey apostolic doctrine (2 Thess. 3:14-15).

God didn't choose Israel and deliver them from Egypt because they were so great in number or prestige (they were slaves in Egypt). **God chose Israel because of divine grace and love and because of the faithfulness (relative faithfulness) of their forefathers (the patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob).** PRIMARILY, GOD DELIVERED ISRAEL IN ORDER TO REMAIN FAITHFUL TO HIS WORD (PROMISES TO THE PATRIARCHS)! **God is jealous of his own reputation!** GOD ACTS PRIMARILY FOR THE SAKE OF HIS NAME (see Ezek. 20:9,14,22,44). Is God an ego-maniac? Does God have an identity problem? NO! The absolute faithfulness of God's name (i.e., God's word) must be maintained at all costs! **"Let God be true though**

every man be false” (Rom. 3:4). IF GOD IS NOT FAITHFUL, IF THE NAME OF GOD IS NOT KEPT INVIOLEATE, IF GOD DOES NOT KEEP HIS PROMISES, ALL THE WORLD IS LOST! This is how a true and faithful servant of God prays—“for thy own sake, O Lord, cause thy face to shine....we do not present our supplications before thee on the ground of our righteousness, but on the ground of thy great mercy...give heed and act; delay not, for thy own sake, O my God, because thy city and thy people are called by thy name.” (Dan. 9:17-19). **God chooses the lowly and humble in order that he may get the glory—and those who are not humble, he humbles!** God delivered that mass of disorganized slaves from Egypt (called Israelites) and through faithful leaders formed them into a nation that prospered beyond imagination. A powerful motive for keeping God’s commandments is to **REMEMBER** our lowly origins before God called us into his blessed kingdom (see 1 Cor. 1:26-31; 6:9-11). The Israelites needed to **remember** the promises he made to their forefathers, their lowly estate in Egyptian bondage, God’s merciful and miraculous deliverance, and then **keep his commandments!**

God’s promises of physical prosperity and abundance here for Israel did not preclude the possibility of *some* poverty and *some* sickness. Otherwise provisions for the poor and sick would not have been given in the Law of Moses. **His promises of material and physical blessings were CONDITIONED upon keeping his commandments!** Generally speaking, the Israelites could expect material blessings when they obeyed God’s law! But many later Jews carried God’s promise too far and constructed a theology that said if you were rich then you were especially righteous, and if you were poor you were undoubtedly a secret sinner (i.e., Job, the rich young ruler, etc.). Material affluence and prosperity were never promised unconditionally or absolutely. There were many righteous people in both the OT and NT who were downright poor (i.e., the “widow’s two mites” Mk. 12:41-44; Lk. 21:1-4). Physical and material blessings in return for keeping God’s commandments are usually the “natural” results of being in harmony with the rest of God’s creation. Proper diet, proper work (exercise), proper treatment of other people, proper rest will all “naturally” (according to the laws of the Creator) result in long life, food, clothing, respect, harmony, and prosperity. All this is promised in the New Testament as well (Matt. 6:1-34; Eph. 6:2, 1 Thess. 4:10-12; 2 Thess. 3:6-15; 1 Tim. 4:8, etc.). **BUT TRAINING OURSELVES IN GODLINESS IS OF VALUE IN EVERY WAY!**

God expected Israel to **remember** what he had done for their forefathers. Israel must be grateful to God and believe he is in her midst to take care of her against her enemies in the way **he** chooses to do so. They are not to take it upon themselves, leaving God out of the equation, and devising a human plan by which to deal with their enemies. **IT WOULDN’T WORK!** They must do exactly as God has said—even if it means killing and destroying all the peoples which the Lord would give into their hands (men, women, children, livestock, temples, idols, etc., etc.). **Christians must read the history of God’s dealing with the world in the New Testament and in the history of Christianity and believe God will take care of their enemies as he chooses to do so!** YES! Christians have enemies (a) false teaching and unbelief (2 Cor. 10:3-5); (b) persecutors (Acts & Revelation); (d) worldliness (James 4:1-17). These are exactly the three enemies of the church (A.D. 100-500) predicted and portrayed in apocalyptic,

symbolic language of the book of Revelation (the beast, the false prophet, and the harlot). IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN SO! THE DEVIL HAS SEDUCED UNBELIEVERS INTO BEING “BEASTS, FALSE PROPHETS, AND HARLOTS” TO TRY TO SEDUCE THE CHURCH IN BOTH OT AND NT TIMES! If Israel was to express her gratitude to God for delivering her from Egypt, she must take his word for it that they should NOT COVET what appears to be their enemy’s power and riches. Whatever their enemies had would have done Israel no good! Christians today must never covet the fame, popularity, comfort, ease, affluence, luxury, indulgence, influence or political power of the world! IT WILL DO THEM NO GOOD, AND IT WILL DO THE CHURCH NO GOOD!

God led the Israelites through a 40-year wilderness trek to test them to see if they would keep his commandments. In this “wilderness” they faced difficulties, obstacles, privations, and wars. All this was to teach them that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord! ALL THIS WAS NECESSARY **DISCIPLINE** FOR THEM WHEN THEY SHOULD ENTER INTO THE “PROMISED LAND” THAT WOULD BE THE **OPPOSITE** KIND OF TEST! In the “Promised Land” they would prosper and have peace. There would be no severe privations or wars **IF they would keep God’s word—for in keeping God’s word they would “live” the kind of life God promised them. IF they DID NOT KEEP HIS WORD, however, they would be “cursed” with the “curses” enumerated in Deut. 18 & 28.** No matter how blessed and affluent they might become in the Promised Land that “affluence” would not sustain them—**ONLY THE KEEPING OF GOD’S COMMANDMENTS WOULD ALLOW GOD TO SUSTAIN THEM AS HE PROMISED!** Part of a “Father’s” disciplining of his son (Israel) is to reward the son for keeping the father’s commandments. God tested Israel this way, to see if she would keep his commandments even in a land of affluence and peacefulness. The tragic fact is, Israel didn’t keep God’s commandments after God providentially gave them a land of “milk and honey” and of “peace.” Israel, by choosing idolatry, soon degenerated into a nation of violence, depravity, and civil war—eventually dividing the nation into two nations! In addition, God sent upon them the curses he promised (drought, famine, invasion by foreigners, floods, earthquakes, locust plagues, sicknesses, etc. etc.). **Any one who wishes to become a disciple of Jesus Christ (a Christian) may inexorably expect Christ to discipline him/her!** There is no way for a Christian to avoid being disciplined (See Heb. 12:1-17)! GOD “REPROVES” AND “CHASTENS” THOSE HE LOVES (Rev. 3:19). Christians are told to “count it all joy when they meet various trials, for they should know that the testing of their faith produces steadfastness” (see Jas. 1:2-2; Rom. 5:3-4). Spiritual “character” cannot be had without trials and tests! **SO, COUNT ON IT!** It may be poverty, it may be affluence; it may be a lifetime of physical suffering, it may be a lifetime of good health! **Whatever your circumstances, God is testing you to see if you will keep his commandments!**

Any one who has the audacity to brag that they can **always** see good as the end of humiliation is not bragging, he’s lying! IT TAKES A STRONG, GROUNDED, CONSTANT TRUST IN THE WORD OF GOD TO “ALWAYS” SEE GOOD AS THE END OF HUMILIATION! It goes against sinful human nature to call humiliation “good”! **Few people ever enjoy being humiliated!** Israel was humbled by her testing in the wilderness, but she didn’t enjoy it, nor did she hardly ever see any good in it (with the

exception of a few of the very faithful like Moses). *Israel murmured, complained, threatened to return to Egypt, and generally distrusted God when he humiliated them in the wilderness!* Moses warned them as they were preparing to enter the Promised Land, “Take heed lest you forget the Lord your God...and when your herds and flocks multiply, and your silver and gold is multiplied, **then your heart be lifted up**, and you forget the Lord your God, who brought you out...” God **humiliated** (Deut. 8:2-3) Israel in the wilderness **“to do her good in the end”** (Deut. 8:16). BUT ISRAEL COULDN’T WAIT FOR THE END! SHE COULD SEE NO “GOOD” TO COME FROM HER “TESTING” IN THE WILDERNESS, BECAUSE SHE DID NOT TRUST WHAT GOD SAID (“PROMISED”)! Israel would need to **remember constantly** God’s commandments and do them when she got into the Promised Land in order to keep from becoming arrogant, proud, self-sufficient, and indifferent toward God! **Yes! Constant contact with the Word of God is imperative for the Christian today whether he/she lives in poverty or affluence, suffering or health!** Prayer and sacrificial benevolence from a Christian are also essential in maintaining the proper humility toward God and one’s fellow man—BUT NOTHING IS AS IMPORTANT AS CONSTANT READING AND DOING OF GOD’S COMMANDMENTS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT!

YES! There really are people who believe they have gotten their wealth by the power and might of their own hand alone! The Bible is full of illustrations to this point—Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon (see Dan. 4:28-34); his son Belshazzar (Dan. 5:17-28); King Herod who considered himself a “god” (Acts 12:20-23); the Foolish Farmer (Luke 12:13-21). History since Biblical times is replete with people who have believed that all the riches they have and all the power they have is theirs by right of having attained it all on their own. I recently finished reading a biography of J. Paul Getty, once the richest man in the world, who believed that his riches came exclusively from his own doing. Adolph Hitler believed his political power was all his own doing (in spite of the fact that Daniel says God is the one who puts kings on their thrones and takes them off, Dan. 2:20-23). I’m sure there are “oodles” of American tycoons and politicians who think the same way! Why do they believe this way? SIMPLY, BECAUSE THEY DO NOT BELIEVE THE BIBLE! There’s no way to be humble as God wants humans to be humble, without believing the word of God! **Any “humility” apart from belief in the Bible as the divinely revealed word of God, is false humility!** The Pharisees were good at “false humility” as they made sorrowful faces when they fasted (Matt. 5:16-18). The only kind of humility acceptable to God is the same kind of humility the Son of God assumed when he came to earth as a servant (see Phil. 2:1-11).

When God insists that human beings **obey him**, he is **not** trying to stifle human freedom and human identity. Quite the contrary! As Moses has repeated in this text, God’s desire for us to obey him is his divine desire “for our good always.” GOD KNOWS BEST! GOD KNOWS GOOD! He knows it omnisciently!!!! He has proved through history from the Garden of Eden until now that he knows what is best for the human race. One only has to read God’s word and compare it with history to see that all human beings who obey his word live the best kind of lives on earth—and will some day inherit the life of eternal joy confirmed by Jesus Christ and his resurrection. Only by covenant relationship to Christ (obedience to God’s word) can the human being find

atonement and forgiveness for sin; only then can a human being be freed from guilt and fear of judgment. Only by obeying God can the human being find freedom from the psychological prison of greed, envy, lust, and hatred. Only by obeying God can the human being find freedom from doubt and moral confusion! YOU SEE, WHEN GOD INSISTS THAT WE OBEY HIM, **HE REALLY WANTS TO FREE US FROM THE BONDAGE INTO WHICH SATAN HAS SNARED US IN SIN** (Heb. 2:14-15, etc.).

DEUTERONOMY 9:1—10:22

Israel is **solemnly warned** that when they see the Canaanites being dispossessed of their land and Israel being taken in by God to possess it, they are *not* to say in their heart, “It is because of my righteousness that the Lord has brought me in to possess this land.” (Deut. 9:4). Moses warns them **3 times** about this (9:4,5, & 6). Evidently God wanted them to **remember this!** God *avored* (gave grace to) Israel **because** (a) of the inordinate, inexcusable wickedness of the Canaanites; and **because** (b) God must confirm the oaths which he made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. **GOD KEEPS HIS WORD. If God swears an oath, he will keep it and no human being or nation of human beings can stay his hand** (Dan. 4:34-35). God has sworn numerous oaths (i.e., to bless and to curse). Whether human beings gain or lose, are blessed or cursed, depends on the choices human beings make! God, through Moses, told the Israelites to put complete trust in him to deal with their so-called invincible enemies. Only a thoroughly stubborn person would not surrender his will to a God who had demonstrated so thoroughly in the past that he **KEEPS HIS WORD!** The **greatest oath** ever sworn by God, was, as far as human kind is concerned, his **last revealed oath until the end of time** THE **GREATEST OATH** EVER SWORN BY GOD WAS JESUS CHRIST, HIS INCARNATE LIFE, HIS VICARIOUS DEATH ON CALVARY, AND HIS RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD (compare 2 Cor. 1:20-21 with Acts 13:32-41 and Heb. 5:5-10; Heb. 6:13-20). Jesus was God’s final, complete, absolute oath to the world that he “so loved the word that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him might be saved.” **Nobody and no thing can ever stop that oath from being fulfilled!**

2. **God favours those who trust him that he will supply righteousness for faith and love toward him!** GOD GIVES THOSE WHO WANT IT, ACCESS INTO HIS GRACE THROUGH FAITH (Rom. 5:1-2). **GOD’S PROMISE TO SAVE THOSE WHO BELIEVE WAS CONFIRMED SOME 2000 YEARS AGO, IN TIME, AT A PLACE, IN HISTORY, THROUGH JESUS CHRIST!** His promise to save is not because of anyone’s **own** righteousness, but by grace through faith in the vicarious death of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:14-21). God is *not* partial to human beings because of who they are, where they are born, what they may attain by their own doing (Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11, etc.). Of course, God shows “partiality” toward his church as she struggles through this vale of tears! The book of Revelation indicates that God delivers his church from the “beast, the false prophet and the harlot” (all cohorts of the great dragon, the devil), but God nourishes and disciplines his church “in the wilderness” (Rev. 13:14) just as he did the OT church called Israel. It was in the “wilderness” that God “nourished, disciplined, and trained” his people for their eventual deliverance into the Promised Land. He does the same with the church of Christ today! But as far as **who** shall be redeemed, **who** shall be saved, God is not partial to any race, nationality or tongue—any one in the world who comes into New Covenant relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ (obeying Christ’s covenant terms) may be saved!

While Moses was receiving the revealed word of God, the Ten Commandments,

on Mt. Sinai, the Israelites were making for themselves a “molten image” (i.e., a golden calf)—an idol—and were acting corruptly (bowing down to the golden calf, worshiping it, and behaving in a most ungodly way). **How could the Israelites be so indifferent to what Moses was doing and so irreverent toward the God who had just delivered them from Egypt?** Three times after Moses received the **first** revelation of the Law, the Israelites cried with great emotion, “All the words which the Lord has spoken we will do (see Ex. 24:1-8). Moses was absent for 40 days on the top of Mt. Sinai. They had no one among them at the bottom of Mt. Sinai with the spiritual fortitude of Moses—they were leaderless as far as faithful spirituality was concerned. Aaron had no spiritual-spine! The Israelites permitted all kinds of doubts and mistrusts to enter in their minds (see Ex. 32:1-10). Where had Moses gone? Had he deserted them? Why aren’t we moving on toward the Promised Land? What are we supposed to be doing? So, the Israelites cried out with great emotion to Aaron to give them other gods. They had to have an “emotional high” constantly or they were depressed. They “quickly” turned aside (Ex. 32:8). They were a “stiff-necked” (i.e., stubborn, rebellious) people (Ex. 32:9). We might ask of the 21st century “Israel” (the church of Christ), How can those who have assumed to wear the name Christian engage in unfaithfulness and ungodliness. Where are all those tens of thousands in America who claim to be “Christian” every Lord’s Day when congregations meet to worship God and Christ? Asleep in bed! At the lake fishing! On the golf course, golfing! Working (when it isn’t really a necessity)—and a hundred other places. Why do we see those who claim to be Christians engaging in cheating, lying, stealing, being sexually promiscuous, hating, envying, coveting—ALL WHEN THEY HAVE THE BIBLE, THE WORD OF GOD, (SOMEWHERE) IN THEIR HOMES? **Because too many who claim to be “believers in Christ” really “follow after their own heart” (see Num. 15:39-40) instead of “remembering to do the commandments” of the Lord!** Too many, even Christians, let their emotions (i.e., “feelings”) be their guide rather than God’s commandments as revealed in the Bible!

Moses intercession here, just as in other times (Ex. 32:25—33:3; Num. 14:13ff) was **not** on the basis of Israel’s righteousness but because (a) of God’s promises to the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; (b) the reputation (i.e., “name”) of God among the heathen; (c) the effort which God had already invested in Israel’s redemption from Egypt (see Deut. 9:28-21; 9:25-29); and (d) because, given the opportunity to repent, many of them did. **ABOVE ALL ELSE, GOD’S REPUTATION (“NAME”) MUST BE KNOWN AS A MERCIFUL SOVEREIGN WHO FORGIVES AND EXTENDS GRACE TO HIS PEOPLE!** **Mercy** was quite unknown as a characteristic of the false “gods” of the heathen—even when those “gods” were human rulers like Nebuchadnezzar and Darius (see the book of Daniel). **DIVINE LOVE** was what caused God to refrain from destroying the Israelites. Certainly, Moses’ prayer of intercession played a part in God’s extension of his love. If not a single Israelite had cared about their sin, God would have destroyed them all! But God didn’t need Moses’ prayer to remind him of his “reputation” and his character of love and mercifulness. God did not spare Israel because Moses was totally righteous. Remember—Moses is not to be allowed to enter the Promised Land because he sinned! **God does not need our prayers to MOVE *him* to action. WE NEED TO PRAY TO GOD IN A DEPENDENT, HUMBLE, PENITENT, BEGGING ATTITUDE.** God knows that better than we do! So, while God is ready and willing to bless us, deliver us and save us, **we** have to be willing (and express that willingness) to

receive what God has already decided to give us if we want it! But, since God has created us with the awesome power of choice, we have to make that choice and make it known before God can act, one way or another! Moses' prayer of intercession evidently was expressing the "choices" of a majority of the Israelites whom God eventually spared!

Moses was careful to pray that God would spare those Israelites who were repenting in order to uphold God's reputation among the heathen Egyptians (9:22-29). This would prove to some Egyptians that all Moses proclaimed about the God of Israel to them, and their king Pharaoh, earlier was true! God's mercy toward sinning and repenting Israel might turn some of the Egyptians to repent and worship the God of Israel. IN FACT, IT DID! Later, when the Jews had to flee their land in the days of the exiles of Assyria and Babylon, some Jews escaped to Egypt and formed what would later grow into a huge colony of Jews at Alexandria Egypt. Most of the Egyptians would welcome the migrant Jews, some would be converted to the God of Israel. While Isaiah's prophecy (Isa. 19:16-25) has its **ultimate** fulfillment in the first coming of the Messiah (Jesus Christ) and the apostolic evangelization of Egypt, its initial fulfillment took place when a literal "temple" to Jehovah was built there in Heliopolis, Egypt (ca. 149 B.C.), the Old Testament was translated into Greek there about 200 B.C. (called the Septuagint). **Israel would need penitent Egyptians to survive. Egypt would later provide a "safe house" for the Messiah (Matt. 2:13-23) and Mary and Joseph, away from the murderous Herod!** (See Hosea 11:1 for the prophecy that Egypt would shelter the Son of God).

The texts say Moses broke the first tables of stone (the Ten Commandments) because he was "hot with anger at seeing the people's sin" (Ex. 32:19; Deut. 9:16-17). **The people had turned to idolatry and broke the very first commandment God had given Moses, so Moses broke the tables of stone to vividly symbolize what they had done!** Moses made the second tables of stone (see also Ex. 34:1ff) because the Lord told him to do so! IN BOTH CASES, IT WAS THE LORD WHO REVEALED THE COMMANDMENTS TO BE WRITTEN UPON THE STONE TABLES EVEN THOUGH, IN BOTH CASES, GOD USED MOSES AS HIS INSTRUMENT TO DO THE WRITING! **God will be merciful (Ex. 33:17-23; 34:6)—God will not be silent—he will not leave Israel without a written revelation of his will and his character even if Moses in his "hot anger" destroyed the first tables of stone!** God decided he would not constantly communicate with Israel through divine verbalizing from heaven every day. He would give them a revelation that could be written down in human language to which they could refer constantly (it was on tables of stone to symbolize that God's word endures forever (see Psa. 19:7-14; 33:6-9; **119:89-92**; Isa. 40:6-8; Matt. 24:35; 1 Pet. 1:22-25). The second tables of stone were put into the "ark of the covenant" along with a pot of manna and Aaron's rod that budded (see Ex. 16:31-35; 37:1-9; Num. 17:1-11; Heb. 9:4-5).

Deuteronomy 9:19 and Exodus 32:11-14 says the Lord heard Moses' prayer and "repented (changed his mind) about the evil which he thought to do" to **all** Israel. God was going to destroy them totally! But some of them repented (changed their minds) and God decided to spare those penitents. **BUT GOD DID NOT SPARE THEM**

ALL (see Ex. 32:25-29)—3000 who were still continuing in their wickedness died that day! God grants answers to prayer **according to his will** (1 Jn. 5:14) **to those who are acting in accordance with his will** (John 14:12-17; 1 Jn. 3:21-22). God answers human prayers of the believing and faithful on the grounds of **his** great mercy and **for his own sake** (Dan. 9:18-19). When we pray or say anything, we must remember to say, “If the Lord wills, we shall live and we shall do this or that” (James 4:13-17). We can’t “wear God down” by many prayers or long prayers or eloquent prayers. We can’t change God’s will by prayer. **We can certainly change our will and choice by prayer—but not God’s! GOD DOES NOT CHANGE NOR DOES HE REPENT AS IF HE HAD MADE A MISTAKE** (Num. 23:19; Mal. 3:6; James 1:17). God does not change his mind or his will—he may change his actions in accordance with his will when humans change their minds and actions in accordance with his revealed will. But the word (and will) of the Lord is “firmly fixed in the heavens” Psa. 119:80-92; Isa. 40:8. Who could worship a God who changed his mind at the whim of a human prayer? Not !!

Obviously the statements in Deut. 10:6-9 did not happen at the same time as the giving of the law, because Aaron had only recently died in the 5th month of their 40th year out of Egypt. So what we have here is a *parenthetical* statement concerning Aaron and the tribe of Levi to emphasize Aaron’s succession by Eleazer his son which is detailed in Num. 20:22-29 and 33:31-39. This statement in Deut. 10:6-9 is apparently made to suggest Aaron and his successor in connection with the covenant and the ark (10:5) which was borne along on the journeys by the tribe of Levi. God gave the tribe of Levi to intercede between the rebellious people and himself. Aaron and his descendants were given a great privilege and a great responsibility. God wants it mentioned time after time so the people and the tribe of Levi will **remember!** But they didn’t! The priesthood became the most corrupt and wicked segment of Israelite society during the days of the prophets! They became, in effect, the Israelite *mafiosi* (e.g. Hosea 5:1; Joel 1:13; 2:17; Zeph. 1:4; 3:4; 6:9 Micah 3:11; Mal. 1:6ff, etc.). Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel focus much of their condemnation upon the corrupt priesthood in their times. **Great privilege from the throne of God is always accompanied with great responsibility (see Lk. 12:48; 16:10-13).**

Physical circumcision was **never** strictly for hygienic purposes—and we know that is true from modern medical science as well as from the Bible. It was **primarily** a “mark” a “sign” of **difference** between the Jewish males and all other males of the world (of that time). There was an era in modern medical practice where male circumcision among Gentiles was thought to be the best hygiene, but it is no longer thought to be so. In Abraham’s day, circumcision was **unique** among all the peoples of the earth. God command for male circumcision was first and exclusive to Abraham and his descendants (Gen. 17). It had not been commanded to Adam or Noah or others before Abraham. **Circumcision of the “heart” (Deut. 10:16) means to show some SIGN of GODLY UNIQUENESS AMONG ALL THE HEATHEN SURROUNDING YOU!** If Israel had “feared the Lord their God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord their God with all their heart and with all their soul, and kept the commandments and statutes of the Lord which he commanded them that day for their good” (Deut. 10:12-13) **THEY WOULD HAVE “CIRCUMCISED THEIR HEARTS!”** If Israel had turned (repented) away from their “stubbornness” and surrendered to the Lord’s revealed will

they would have “circumcised their hearts.” AND THE SAME IS TRUE OF GENTILES (YOU AND ME). **God has never blessed Jews just because they were Jews by genetic descent.** NOT EVEN IN THE OLD TESTAMENT ERA! “For he is *not* a real Jew who is one outwardly, nor is true circumcision something external and physical. He *is* a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart, spiritual and not literal” and it has always been so (Jer. 4:4; Deut. 30:6; Rom. 2:28-29; 1 Cor. 7:19; Gal. 5:6; 2 Cor. 5:17). The true “Israel of God” today is the church of Christ (Gal. 6:15-16)—it is a spiritual “nation” (Eph. 2:11-22). God never intended ultimately anything special for the Jews just because they were Jews. All the promises God made to Israel were to be fulfilled in “seed-singular” (i.e., Jesus Christ) (Gal. 3:16-17)—**and**, of course, to all those who come into covenant relationship with God through faith in the vicarious atonement of Christ (Jew and Gentile, in “one body”).

Israel “sojourned” in Egypt. Israel spent 400 years as “guests” or “squatters” in Egypt. Yes, they were enslaved toward the end of their experience there, but for the most part they **prospered in Egypt.** GOD SAW TO THAT! **Remembering their “sojourning” days in Egypt should make them have a heart filled with gratitude and willingness to obey whatever the Lord told them and wherever he led them through his chosen leaders (i.e., Moses, et.al.).** The Lord “executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. Love the sojourner, therefore; for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.” (Deut. 10:18-19). But they didn’t remember! THEY WERE UNGRATEFUL, MERCILESS TOWARD SOJOURNERS OF ALL RACES, AND EXPLOITATIVE OF WIDOWS AND FATHERLESS! Read the OT prophets! **Ingratitude is the mother of all sins.** That civilization of which Paul wrote in Romans 1:18-32 became so utterly depraved **because**, “although they knew God they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images...” (Rom. 1:21-22). Christians must learn in whatever state they find themselves to be not only “content” (Phil. 4:12-13) but to “give thanks in all circumstances” (1 Thess. 5:18; Eph. 5:20). **Gratitude to God—the greatest of all virtues!** Christians, of all people, should **remember** what they were before they came in faith to Christ and he received them (1 Cor. 1:26-31; Rom. 15:1-13; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Eph. 2:11-16).

DEUTERONOMY 11:1—13:18

The Lord pointed to two incidents of divine discipline to motivate the Israelites to **remember to obey the Lord's commands** (a) his “signs and deeds which he did in Egypt to pharaoh the king of Egypt 11:2-4; (b) and what “he did to Israel in the wilderness”, 11:5-6. **Their eyes had seen all the great work of the Lord which he did (11:7)**. What God had done in this great exodus was not myth and fable like the Babylonian, Persian and Greek “religions”—it was factual, seen by eyewitnesses! The Lord does not “discipline” his people with mere words! He acts! Israel was to **learn and obey** from these “signs” and “deeds”—not just be in awe of them or impressed by them. Christians have “signs” and “deeds” of God which were seen by eyewitnesses! They **even now** have “signs” and “deeds” of God by which to learn and obey (a) everything material is cursed and doomed by God to die (Gen. 3:14-19; the flood, 1 Pet. 3:18-22; 2 Pet. 3:5-7; Rom. 1:18-21; 8:18-23, etc.); (b) that while this world exists, God will give fruitful seasons (Acts 14:16-17; Rom. 2:4); (c) through afflictions and sufferings (Rom. 8:18-23; 2 Cor. 1:3-11; Heb. 10: 32-39; 12:1-29); **(d) but most importantly, through the historical deeds of Jesus Christ and his apostles, recorded in Biblical history** (1 Cor. 15:1-58; 1 Jn. 1:1-4, etc.). God has preserved the church of Christ and the Bible against *all* the evil power man has been able to exercise. God has spread his gospel to the far reaches of humankind in spite of all the evil power man has been able to exercise. God has humbled his church. God has allowed it to be free to choose truth or falsehood. **In all this, God has disciplined his church in preparation for heaven!** WE ARE EYEWITNESSES TO SOME OF IT AND MAY READ ABOUT THE REST OF IT FROM EYEWITNESSES WHO HAVE PRECEDED US!

Another method by which God “disciplines” his people is through his “commandments.” God reveals numerous bits of data and principles by simply stating them through “messengers” chosen by him (i.e., Moses, the prophets, Jesus Christ and the apostles). God gives **sufficient evidence** that he is speaking through these “prophets” and human beings had better pay attention to what they have said and written 2 Pet. 1:16-21; 1 Jn. 1:1-4; 4:1-6; 2 Tim. 3:16-17! **God disciplines (teaches, instructs, chastens, reproves, exhorts) through his word!** GOD IS FAITHFUL TO KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS! God’s Holy Spirit molds all human beings who are willing into what he wants them to be (i.e., images of his Son, Jesus Christ, Rom. 9:29; 2 Cor. 3:18) through the agency of his revealed (and now written in human language) word! In the **fear of God (which is the beginning of wisdom)** the Bible “persuades men” (2 Cor. 5:11; Jude 23; 2 Cor. 7:1; 1 Pet. 1:13-17; Eph. 5:21; Rev. 14:7; Lk. 12:4-7; Heb. 4:1; 5:7; 10:26-27). God no longer displays supernatural works through human beings (the “age of miracles” is over, 1 Cor. 13:8-13). He does display his wrath and majesty and creative authority in “nature” but God now disciplines through his word all who are willing to give heed to it! All who will **not** be disciplined (taught, transformed) by it are going to hell just as surely as those Israelites in the wilderness who rejected his commandments never saw the Promised Land!

God never intended that the Israelites literally, physically, bind commandments

on their arms, foreheads and doorposts! We have dealt with this word from God earlier in Deut. 6:4-9 (see notes there). **The point in God's instruction to "bind them on hand, forehead, and doorposts" is THAT THE ISRAELITE WAS TO KEEP GOD'S COMMANDMENTS CONSTANTLY IN HIS CONSCIOUSNESS!!!** The Israelite was **never** to accept anything as true, make any decision, do anything that was not in accord with God's commandments! What Moses is saying here is symbolism. The Jews did in later times, and do now in modern times, make phylacteries (i.e., the little boxes some Orthodox Jews wear on their arms and foreheads) and mezuzas (i.e., the little things they put on their door facings today into which they have inserted copies of Deut. 6:4, the ***Shema***). **BUT THAT DID, AND DOES NOT, KEEP JEWS FROM BREAKING GOD'S COMMANDMENTS. And Jews did, and still do, break the greatest commandment of all—surrender to the Messiah, Jesus Christ!** Putting the *Shema* into phylacteries and mezuzas and wearing them literally is not what God meant. The symbolism is that God meant they should let his commandments be "written on their hearts and minds"—let his commandments "take every thought captive unto obedience" (2 Cor. 10:3-5). God wants his commandments in both OT and NT to be "written on hearts" (2 Cor. 3:1-18). The word of God was to guard the "thresh-hold" of their life which was their mental and moral consciousness! It does no good to post copies of the Ten Commandments in courthouses and schoolrooms unless people let these commandments take over their minds and hearts and do them! **The symbolism is that everything (every thought, idea, observation) must be filtered through the word of God before it is allowed to enter the mind and heart!** THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD (EITHER OLD COVENANT OR NEW COVENANT) ARE THE "ARBITERS" (see Col. 3:15-17, i.e., "rulers") OR "UMPIRES" WHICH ARE TO MAKE THE FINAL DECISION AS TO WHAT IS "SAFE" OR "OUT" FOR THE BELIEVER'S CONSUMPTION! Not even the believer's own heart and mind is to make the final decision as to what it receives! (Num. 15:39; Jer. 17:9-10; 2 Cor. 5:14, etc.).

God does, indeed, act toward his creation in only two ways—BLESSINGS AND CURSES! **There's no "in between" with God.** We are either for him or against him (Matt. 12:30; Rom. 8:5-8; James 4:4). Therefore, God is either for us or against us! The choice as to whether we receive blessings or curses from God is ours! ***God is always for us until we are against him!*** When we choose to be hostile toward him and at enmity against him, he has no choice but to let us be ***anathema*** ("cursed") (see 1 Cor. 16:22; Gal. 1:8-9, etc.). Most people agree that in the Old Testament God administered discipline through blessings and curses, but not so apparent to some that Jesus did the same thing in the New Testament (and still does, of course, because he does not change—Heb. 13:8). Jesus acted with mercy toward some who displayed faith by healing them, forgiving them, resurrecting some from the dead, eating with sinners, etc. But Jesus "cursed" the Pharisees and Sadducees (e.g., Matt. 23; Jn. 8). Jesus even destroyed fig trees, and swine to show that he "cursed" those who did not produce "fruit" for the Creator! Moses issued the classic ultimatum in Exodus 32:26, "Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, 'Who is on the Lord's side? Let him come unto me.' And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him." Immediately afterward, Moses ordered the sons of Levi to slay about 3000 Israelites who did not make the right choice! Moses will say later, in Deut. 30:19, "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death,

blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.” The same invitation to **choose** either **blessing or curse** is the final word of God to the world in Revelation 22:10-21!

God strictly prohibits human beings from “doing what is right in their own eyes” (Deut. 12:8; Num. 15:39) **because humans are not omniscient! HUMAN BEINGS ARE FALLIBLE—THEY DON’T KNOW EVERYTHING—THEY MAKE MISTAKES!** “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt; who can understand it?” Jer. 17:9 (see also Eccl. 8:11; 9:3; Matt. 23:25; Mk. 7:21; Heb. 3:12; 2 Pet. 2:14). Even the best of human beings (Paul the apostle) agrees with God that the human heart is unable to be perfectly righteous (see Rom. 7:7-25) by itself! God does not want human beings to suffer the consequences of “doing right in their own eyes.” One has only to read the book of Judges (see Judges 17:6) to understand that humans left to “do what is right in their own eyes” inexorably make a mess of things and society becomes “hell on earth.” God wants human beings to believe him, trust him, and obey his word so they may have joy (Jn. 15:1-11, etc.) instead of the mess they make of life when they do what they think is right! **GOD’S WORD ALONE IS RIGHT!** God’s word alone must “rule” the believer’s thoughts and actions. The believer is not his own—he has been bought with a price—he is therefore to glorify God in his life (1 Cor. 6:18-20).

Moses, speaking for God, told the Israelites *emphatically* they were to perform certain acts of worship in only one particular place (the place the Lord himself would choose for them). Legitimate worship could only take place at the spot designated by the Lord. The phrase “the place which the Lord will choose” is used 6 times in Deuteronomy ch. 12 (plus eleven additional times in the book). At that sanctuary **all** tithes, gifts, and sacrifices were to be presented. Once the land had been subdued God would choose the place for “a dwelling for his name.” The phrase, “to put his name there” appears in the book 3 times, and the similar “to make his name dwell there” is used 6 times. In non-Biblical literature of that time equivalent expressions were used as an affirmation of ownership, in erecting victory monuments, and inscribed on foundation stones of sanctuaries. God’s *rationale* for decreeing there was to be only one place for worship is not just one sanctuary versus many sanctuaries, but rather pure worship versus false worship, “between their gods” (12:2) and “your God (12:4); between “their name” (12:2-3) and “the place” which the Lord will choose. The Israelites were to “tear down” every one of the multitudinous “altars” to false gods all over the land of Canaan and establish **one, singular, place where Jehovah was to be worshiped**. Israelite worship was to be completely **different** than the pagan worship of idols. Requiring worship of all Israel in one particular place would also promote the **unity** of God’s people and it would continually establish **Jehovah’s sovereignty** over Israel. The primary thing Jeroboam I (933-911 B.C.) did to divide the nation of Israel after his rebellion against Solomon and Rehoboam was to build a *different* sanctuary and introduce *calf-worship* to the 10 northern tribes (see 1 Kings chs. 11-14). Thus 10 of the 12 tribes of Israel became apostates! They actually fought one another and killed one another in civil wars!

Moses prohibited the Israelites from “eating the blood” of any of their slain animals. God’s purpose in this was (a) to emphasize the sacredness of vicarious

atonement; (b) to reinforce the sacredness of life in general; (c) to make the Israelites *different* than the heathen; (d) perhaps for hygienic reasons. Abstinence from “eating blood” is also an apostolic commandment in the New Covenant scriptures (Acts 15:19-20) because “eating blood” is apparently a perpetual practice of heathenism! Moses also prohibited the Israelites from “inquiring about” the gods of the heathen nations (12:30). This sounds like censorship—it sounds like there are things God wants to keep us from knowing! Is that right? Yes! It is divine discipline. It began when humankind was pristine and without sin in the Garden of Eden when God prohibited Adam and Eve from “eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil” (Gen. 2:16-17). God prohibits Christians from certain kinds of “knowledge” (see Matt. 24:36; Acts 1:6-7; 1 Cor. 8:1-13; 2 Cor. 10:3-5; Eph. 5:3-14; 1 Tim. 4:7; 6:20; Titus 1:11-14; 3:9-10; 2 Pet. 2:1-22; 1 Jn. 4:1-6, etc.).

Moses, speaking for God, told the Israelites they should ***execute capital punishment (i.e., kill) any family member who even tried to entice another to secretly follow false gods and false teaching!*** Such a seductive and idolatrous family member was to be exposed, not listened to, not pitied, nor spare from death. The one who exposed the idolatrous seducer was to be the first to take part in his execution (by stoning)! Moses told the Israelites they should be diligent to search out any and all reports of false teachers leading the Israelites astray from God’s commandments and both those leading those led astray should be executed! **IS FALSE TEACHING THAT SERIOUS? IS SENDING PEOPLE TO HELL BY FALSE TEACHING THAT SERIOUS? INDEED IT IS!!!** In the New Testament order we cannot, of course, execute false teachers. But Christian individuals and congregations are explicitly commanded to ***excommunicate*** (i.e., “have nothing to do with”) false teachers (see Matt. 7:13-27; Rom. 16:17-20; Gal. 5:10; 2 Thess. 3:1-15; 1 Tim. 6:20; Titus 1:9-16; 3:9-10; 2 Pet. Chs. 2-3; 1 Jn. 4:1-6; 2 Jn. 7-11, etc.). Anyone who teaches what is contrary to the Bible is a false teacher. Anyone who listens to a false teacher does so at the peril of one’s eternal soul going to hell! Jesus once said that if our eye should cause us to sin it would be better that we pluck out our eye than go to hell; and if our hand causes us to sin it would be better to cut it off than to go to hell! **FALSE DOCTRINE WHICH LEADS TO REBELLION, APOSTASY AND SIN AGAINST GOD IS THAT SERIOUS! Let every person who proposes to teach the word of God to others be sure (by diligent study, rightly dividing the word of truth 2 Tim. 2:15-19) that it is the unadulterated word of God he/she is teaching! IN O.T. TIMES, THOSE WHO DELIBERATELY TAUGHT OTHER THAN GOD’S COMMANDMENTS WERE SLAIN! IT’S THAT SERIOUS!!!**

DEUTERONOMY 14:1—16:17

The heathen peoples surrounding the Israelites shaved their heads, threw dust on their heads, and lacerated their flesh with knives when they mourned their dead (Deut. 14:1-2). God commanded the Israelites that they should not only **abstain** from idolatry, but they were also to avoid all heathen practices and **appearances** connected with idolatry. It was a heathen practice to lacerate the flesh as a method of calling upon their gods (see Lev. 19:28; and 1 Kings 18:28). The heathen were very violent and even obscene and immoral in their displays of grief over their dead; they tore out their hair, cut their faces and arms, pounded their chests and engaged in sexual orgies to their pagan gods in connection with funerals. God insist his people be holy and consecrated to him in the presence of the death of a believer. Even the Israelites had a *hope* in the resurrection (see John 11:24; Acts 23:6; Heb. 6:2; 11:35, etc.). The Christian, today, is to approach physical death quite differently than the unbeliever! (a) Christians do not grieve as if they had no hope (1 Thess. 4:13ff); (b) Christians have a spiritual place to “stand” firm in the face of death (1 Cor. 15:1-57); (c) Christians know that because of Christ’s resurrection and their own, none of their labors in this life are in vain (1 Cor. 15:58); (d) Christians do not go to excessive expenses or demonstrations at funerals—they “let the dead bury the dead” while they concentrate on following Jesus; (e) Christians use physical death as an opportunity for gospel service—preaching and helping the bereaved (1 Cor. 15:58; 1 Thess. 4:13—5:28). **IN THE FACE OF DEATH, CHRISTIANS ARE “DIFFERENT” THAN THE REST OF THE WORLD!**

God declared (by divine fiat) Deut. 14:3-21 that some foods were “**unclean**” for the Israelites (e.g., camels, rabbits, rock badger, swine, all fish that had no scales or fins, eagles, vultures, osprey, buzzards, kites, ravens, ostriches night-hawks, sea gull, hawk, owls, water hens, pelican, carrion vulture and cormorant, stork, heron, hoopoe and bat and all winged insects). Israelites were not to eat anything that died of itself nor a kid boiled in its mother’s milk! There were other restrictions about eating (e.g. in regard to what they brought to the Tabernacle to be sacrificed) placed upon the Israelites. **It was not that these “unclean” foods were hygienically dangerous for an Israelite’s health!** God just arbitrarily chose certain foods which he declared “unclean” for spiritual disciplinary purposes! In doing so, God was determined to (a) illustrate his divine sovereignty and humankind’s need for **divine revelation**; (b) to set the Israelites **apart** from the heathen; (c) to create in the Israelite psyche a **tender conscience** and awareness of their sinfulness. Christians are told that in the New Covenant “everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving; for then it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer” (Gen. 1:29-31; 1 Cor. 10:26; 1 Tim. 4:1-5). God has created everything for a purpose and anyone who trusts God to reveal what that purpose is may use whatever God created for its proper purpose! **However** —there are certain foods, or all foods under certain circumstances, which a Christian would not be permitted to eat: (a) those foods which are physically harmful or enslaving; (b) those foods which would be a stumbling block to others; (c) those foods by which the Christian would violate his own conscience; (d) those foods which others would force upon the Christian as a matter of

legalistic traditions of men (see Romans 14:1-23; 1 Cor. chapters 8-9-10; Col. 2:20-23).

A “tithe” (14:22-27) is 10%. God, through Moses, told the Israelites they were to set aside ten per cent (10%) of their annual income to be offered in celebration to the Lord. **That’s 10% of everything they could consider “income.”** For an Israelite who “netted” an equivalent of today’s \$30,000 per year, that would mean about \$60 per week to set aside for the Lord’s work. Actually, when one considers all the multitude of sacrifices on special days such as feasts, fasts, and “free-will offerings” required of the Israelite would be setting aside nearly 30% per annum of the yearly income! While there were some stipulations about the “price” of certain offerings for certain times (e.g., pigeons or doves rather than bulls and goats), **all Israelites, rich and poor, were expected by God to set aside at least 1/10th of everything they produced every year!** THERE WERE NO EXCEPTIONS—UNLESS AN ISRAELITE HAD PROFITED ZERO FOR THE YEAR! The principle for Christian stewardship is 100%. That does not mean the Christian has to “give” 100% of one’s earnings to the Lord. The Christian has obligations to himself and his family for food, shelter, clothing, education, etc., etc. But Christian stewards does mean that the Christian considers 100% of his/her income as belonging to the Lord and to be used as a faithful steward—not being extravagant, not wasting, not hoarding it! It does mean that the Christian steward will consider 100% of what he “has” as that which is to be used to glorify God and spread the gospel to the world! THERE IS NO SET AMOUNT WHICH THE CHRISTIAN IS TO “GIVE” TO THE WORK OF THE LORD (see 2 Cor. chs. 8-9). Just as the Israelite’s “tithe” was to support the work of the Lord’s “house” and support those who “ministered” (14:27), so the Christian “gives” to the “church” to support the work of gospel proclamation and those who “minister” the gospel as their primary vocation in life (see Matt. 10:1ff; 2 Cor. 9:1ff; Gal. 6:6).

Yes! Christian congregations **should exceed** the Mosaic law (Deut. 14:28—15:18) in assisting the poor! See Matt. 5:20; 5:43-48! As long human capacities, characters, and temperaments are, by birth, widely divergent, there will always be widely different levels of financial successfulness. In other words, there will always be some rich and some poor in worldly acquisition. Jesus quoted the O.T. when he said, “The poor you always have with you...” (Deut. 15:11; Matt. 26:11; Jn. 12:8). No law or government program can ever change that! A leveling of such circumstances could only be brought about by a leveling of personal characteristics! Moses’ instructions here, therefore, were not intended to produce a “socialism” or “communism” in the Israelite economy. He did **not** demand that the rich *cancel* the debts of the poor—only that they *remit* the debt for a period of time. Every 7th year **all** Israelites were to “let the land rest.” Not even the rich could make money that year! Since there might be a tendency for human beings (unable to earn in the 7th year) to turn cruelly and oppressively upon the poor man who owned him a debt Moses, by God’s decree, enacted this law of the Sabbatical Year (see also Ex. 23:9-13; Lev. 25:2-7). God is **not** saying there must be a “taking from the rich and giving to the poor until all are equal”—that can never be in this world! **God *is* saying, however, that the rich must not oppress the poor, nor make the poor any poorer by a rich man’s greed!** The rich must, in fact, take every opportunity to give aid and help to the poor. The Israelite was to “open wide his hand to his brother”—the poor and needy. If that be the case with the Israelite, HOW MUCH

HIGHER IS THE STANDARD FOR HELPING THE POOR FOR THE CHRISTIAN? Read 1 Jn. 3:17; James 2:5-9; 5:1-4; Matt. 25:31-46; 1 Tim. 6:17-19; Gal. 6:10). Disciples of Jesus will be judged according to how they helped the poor (Matt. 25:31-46). Christians are hypocrites if they neglect the poor (1 Jn. 3:17). Christians are not practicing pure religion if they neglect the poor (James 1:27). Christians as ***individuals*** and as ***congregations*** should help the poor *when the poor are willing to work* (see Proverbs about sloth and laziness, and see 1 Thess. 4:10-12 & 2 Thess. 3:1-15). Of course, if people are ***unable*** to work, and poor, they should be helped as well!

No! Poverty could not be eliminated if **all** people followed the law of Moses. God told the Israelites, “there will be no poor among you...**IF ONLY YOU WILL OBEY THE VOICE OF THE LORD YOUR GOD, BEING CAREFUL TO DO ALL THIS COMMANDMENT WHICH I COMMAND YOU THIS DAY.**” Deut. 15:4. ***However, the Israelites (or any other person, Gentile or Jew) has ever obeyed the “commandments” of the O.T. law!!!*** ALL HUMAN BEINGS SIN—EVEN THE FIRST HUMAN BEINGS SINNED! **God knew there would be always “poor” (Deut. 15:11; Mk. 17:7) to whom those who had enough should help (2 Cor. 9:8-13).** Clearly, history teaches that so long as there are unconverted, ungodly people in the world, there will be “poor” people. Those who, by the providence of God, become rich and powerful have a tendency to oppress and exploit those who are poor and powerless. History also teaches that human philosophies and ideologies from capitalism, socialism, communism, fascism, and monarchism will never solve the problem of poverty in the world! Karl Marx’s famous philosophy of communism, “From each according to his ability to each according to his need” **never worked!** That is because there are always sinful human beings ready to take advantage of the weak and poor whether they live in a capitalistic society or a communistic society or any other kind of human society (except the kingdom of God). There should be no members of the kingdom of God who suffer privation because of poverty—the church should never let any of its members starve, be homeless, or want for sufficient clothing. On the other hand, Christians should learn to be content with food, shelter and clothing (1 Tim.6:6-10; Phil. 4:10-13).

In Egypt, when God judged Pharaoh and the Egyptians for their wicked enslavement of the Israelites, the last “plague” he brought upon Egypt was the death of Egyptian “first-born” sons and animals. **God spared (i.e., redeemed) the first-born of the Israelite (Ex. 13:2ff).** **THUS, GOD HAD A CLAIM UPON THEIR LIVES (Num. 3:11-50)!** The “first-born” of the Israelites belonged to God by right of redemption. Therefore, from that time onward, every “first-born” of the Israelites (sons and animals) was to be **consecrated** to the Lord. First-born sons could be redeemed (i.e., they did not have to be given as slain sacrifices). Firstborn of unclean animals (represented by the donkey) had to be redeemed with a lamb or destroyed. **But all first-born “clean” animals were to be sacrificed to the Lord!** (Num. 18:8-20). The law of sacrificing the “first-born” was also designed to provoke questions from younger Israelites and elicit answers about their redemption from Egypt from their elders (Ex. 13:14-16). **THE IDEA WAS THAT THE “VERY BEST” AND “FIRST” OF A BELIEVER’S “POSSESSIONS” SHOULD BE CONSECRATED AND SANCTIFIED UNTO GOD AS A GIFT OF GRATITUDE FOR REDEMPTION.** **The same principle holds true for the Christian today!** Let’s “give of our best to the Master!” We are not our own, we have been bought

with a price, we are therefore to glorify God in our mortal bodies with the best and first we have (1 Cor. 6:19-20; 2 Cor. 8:1—9:15).

There were **four major** things every Israelite was make sure to do at the annual feasts (i.e., Passover, Tabernacles (“Booths”), and Unleavened Bread, etc.) were: **(a) eat the bread of affliction** (i.e., eat unleavened food and cleanse their houses of all leaven); **(b) observe the feast at the place which the Lord chose** (i.e., at the Tabernacle and later the Temple); **(c) rejoice before the Lord God** (by giving a free-will offering and remembering they were slaves in Egypt); **(d) not appear before the Lord empty handed—every Israelite was to give as he was able**. God gave the Israelites not only things to remember at feast times with “affliction” but also things of “joy.” It is much the same in Christian worship. We meet around the Lord’s table, study from the Word of God, and give our offerings remembering the times of “affliction” (especially the “afflictions” of the Lord Jesus Christ who suffered God’s punishment for our sins), and we remember the hurt our sins have caused our Father; but we also remember the “joyous” good news of Christ’s resurrection for our justification and sanctification. **And Christians had better make sure they are worshiping according to the Lord’s choosing!**

Consecration or holiness is the acknowledgment that the redeemed person belongs to God by the grace of God. This, in turn, causes the redeemed person to practice works of faith and goodness to his fellow man—for in so practicing, he is doing goodness toward God! THE WHOLE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS THE FULFILLMENT OF THE ISRAELITE PASSOVER (see 1 Cor. 5:6-8). Passover feast was to be observed in a joyous celebration of faith in God’s redemption from Egyptian bondage—that redemption from their sins would necessitate a vicarious atonement which God alone could provide. **In other words, the Israelites were to consecrate themselves by believing in the gracious promises of God in the law.** It is the the grace of God and our **faith** in his **promises** of our “once-for-all” atonement by the vicarious death of Christ that supplies the **power** for Christians to be **consecrated** to the Lord in the New Covenant (see 2 Cor. 7:1; Heb. 10:11-25; 12:1-29; 13:1-21; 2 Pet. 1:3-4).

There are clearly spiritual principles in all these three chapters of Deuteronomy (14-15-16) which may be found and applied in the New Covenant Scriptures (the New Testament). Holiness, Benevolence, Giving the Best to the Lord’s work, Remembering, Rejoicing, and Consecration.

DEUTERONOMY 16:18—18:22

Justice is not an innate virtue of the human heart—it has to be LEARNED from the word of God. Deut. 16:19-20 needs to be emphasized for the Christian today —i.e., “You shall not pervert justice; you shall not show partiality; and you shall not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of the righteous. Justice, and only justice, you shall follow, that you may live and inherit the land which the Lord your God gives you.” The Hebrew word for “justice” is *tsedokoh*. In Hebrew *tsedokoh* is also the word for “righteousness.” Both are from the root word, *tsadeq*, which means, “to be in the right, to be correct, to be equitable, to do what is right and fair.” The Greek word *diakaios* in the Septuagint and the Greek New Testament for “justly” and “righteously” is the same. The English dictionary defines the English word “justice” as, “the establishment or determination of rights according to the rules of law or equity; the quality of being just, impartial; the principle of just dealing or right action; conformity to truth, fact, or reason; correctness.” HONESTY, FAIRNESS, JUSTNESS, INTEGRITY, LOYALTY, are equally important with doctrinal orthodoxy (i.e., absence of idolatry). May God give Christians the power through his precious word in our hearts to so live the law of love and faith that they may infiltrate our godless society which has lost its way WITH JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS! **The only way a judge or government official (or individual) may be certain he/she is acting justly is to search the word of God (the Bible) for what is “right, equitable, fair, honest, truthful, factual and reasonable” and make their “decisions” according to what God’s word says!** (See Deut. 17:14-20). THAT IS WHY MOSES KEEPS TELLING THE ISRAELITES IN DEUTERONOMY, “SO YOU SHALL KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS OF THE LORD YOUR GOD, BY WALKING IN HIS WAYS AND BY FEARING HIM” (Deut. 8:6, etc.). **God wants his ideal society (Israel in the OT and the church in the NT) built upon JUSTICE!—i.e., what is right, fair, honest, truthful!!!** No believer can be righteous if he/she is not just!

Worshiping an “idol” is worshiping any **other god**. The very first of the Ten Commandments is, “You shall have no other gods before me.” To violate this first commandment might be technically classified as blasphemy. The Pharisees accused Jesus of blasphemy because he called himself “God.” The second of the Ten Commandments is: “You shall not make for yourself a grave image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them....” **DISOBEDIENCE TO THIS COMMANDMENT IS DEFINITELY “IDOLATRY”!** **In other words, to place in sovereignty anyone or anything other than the God of the Scriptures is IDOLATRY!** In the NT Paul classifies “covetousness” as “idolatry” Col. 3:5 because “covetousness” is the worship (giving sovereignty to) of Mammon (money). Jesus said a person cannot serve God and mammon (“mammon” is the Aramaic word for “riches”) (Matt. 6:24; Lk. 16:13). One does not merely have to carve out for oneself a statue with a face on it of a cow, fish, or human, and bow down before it to become an idolater. One can become an idolater by worshiping oneself, or some “invisible” god other than Jehovah, or worship some **idea** (e.g., humanism, evolutionism, communism,

Americanism). Anything or anyone to whom a human being gives mental, moral and spiritual allegiance, **other than the God of the Bible, is an idol!**

Priests were **theoretically** qualified to make difficult judgments because: (a) they were *supposed* to be **holy** men thoroughly dedicated to knowing and doing God's revealed will; (b) they had the *Urim and Thummim* through which they could appeal to God directly for a **divine revelation** in any case they had no written word about; (c) priests were **expected** to be impartial, just, fair and righteous toward **every** Israelite since they were supported by everyone; (d) in any **theocracy**, the priests are the "heads of state" and this would be especially true in the only "theocracy" God ever ordained—the nation of Israel. It was not until 400 years later (ca. 1000 B.C.) that God "gave Israel" the "king (Saul) like the nations" for which she cried. The Israelite priesthood, however, became corrupt (beginning with the sons of Eli and the sons of Samuel) so God made Israel's government into a **monarchy** under Saul, David, Solomon, *et.al.* In the times of the divided kingdom (ca. 950 B.C.) the priesthood became **thoroughly corrupt** so God had to **communicate to and minister to his "Chosen people" through the PROPHETS!** THE ISRAELITE PRIESTHOOD COMPLETELY DEFAULTED ON IT'S GOD-ORDAINED MINISTRY. Priests became so depraved the Israelites could not trust them to tell them the true word of God, nor could they be trusted to make righteous judgments. They took bribes, they cheated, they lied, they exploited, and they became idolatrous. The priesthood of Jesus' day was not much better! They were the main instigators of the crucifixion of Christ!

As mentioned in answer #3, in the "theocracy" the priests (and "elders or judges") were *de facto* "rulers" of the nation of Israel. They ruled in the worship and they ruled in the civil affairs of the nation. To disobey the priests' judgments would be to practice anarchy (i.e., no-rule). Priests were expected to be impartial and just in their judgments because they were **obliged** to no one but God! The people did not elect them (they inherited their office); the priests were not to engage in business ventures therefore they should not be involved in any "conflict of interests." They had access to the wisdom of Almighty God—they should be engrossed in studying God's revealed law when they were not serving in the Tabernacle so they could be expected, if they were godly and righteous, to be making their decisions on the authority of God. Moses writes, "you shall do according to what they (the Levitical priests) declare to you...and you shall be careful to do according to all that they direct you; according to the instructions which they give you, and according to the decision which they pronounce to you, you shall do; you shall not turn aside from the verdict which they declare to you, either to the right hand or to the left. The man who acts presumptuously, **by not obeying the priest** who stands to minister there before the Lord your God, or the judge, **that man shall die**; so you shall purge the evil from Israel. And all the people shall hear, and fear, and not act presumptuously again." (Deut. 17:10-13). GOD STANDS FOR ORDER AND HE ORDAINS CIVIL GOVERNMENT FOR THAT PURPOSE! Anyone who presumes to disobey government officials who make godly laws (and do not make ungodly laws) must suffer the consequences of rebellion against civil order (see Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17). To disobey civil rulers, unless they have ordered you to disobey God, is **evil!** The same principle is true in the kingdom of God (the church) today in connection with obedience to the scripturally appointed leaders of the body of

Christ (i.e., elders, evangelists, deacons, Acts 20:28-32; Eph. 4:11; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; 5:17-22; Titus 1:5-16; Heb. 13:7; 13:17, etc.).

In the church, of course, we do not execute people for disobedience to the elders and evangelists, but we must “deliver them to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that their spirits may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Cor. 5:5,13). **All law belongs to God. He is the author of order (see Isa. 45:18-19; 1 Cor. 14:33,40).** Human beings have had millenniums to bring forth some system apart from God to create order, civility and peace in the world and they have not done so—NOR SHALL THEY EVER DO SO! **GOD’S WORD IS THE HIGHEST COURT OF APPEAL IN THE DETERMINATION OF WHAT IS RIGHT (ESPECIALLY FOR THE COVENANT COMMUNITY).** However, it is Biblical, it is just, it is right, it is good to administer the death penalty for capital crimes in the civil (unbelieving) world today! I have written at least one chapter on this issue in my book, *What The Bible Says About Civil Government* (pp. 141-213), 1990, pub. College Press, Joplin, MO. There are at least 6 reasons civil government must punish criminals (a) to carry out government’s God-ordained mission (Rom. 13:1; 1 Pet. 2:14); (b) to vindicate the sovereignty and character of God (Gen. 9:6-9; Rom. 1:18ff; Heb. 13:17); (c) to deter others from committing crimes (Lev. 26:1ff; Deut. 13:11; 17:13; 21:21; Eccl. 8:2-11; 10:4; Isa. 20:5ff; 26:9-10; Jer. 27:1ff; Amos chs. 3-4; Micah 1-3; Zeph. 1:12-18; Prov. 13:23-24; 19:18-19; 21:11; 23:13-14; 29:15; Matt. 18:15-20; Lk. 23:40; Jn. 19:10; Acts 4:13-22; 5:7-11; 5:50-52; 16:27; 16:35-39; 19:35;41; 27:42; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 6:9-11; 2 Cor. 2:5-11; Gal. 2:11-14; 2 Thess. 3:6-15; Titus 3:10-11; Heb. 12:3-11; (d) to physically restrain criminals and crime (Gen. 39:20ff; Lev. 18:29; 20:3; 24:12; 25:28; Num. 15:30-32; 15:34; 35:25; Deut. 13:5; 17:7; 19:12,19; 21:21; 22:21; 24:7); (e) to prevent private vengeance (Num. 35:25-28; e.g., Judges chs. 18-21; Deut. 24:16; Ezek. 18:1ff; 33:7ff; 2 Sam. 13:20ff); (f) to hopefully rehabilitate the criminal (Ex. 22:1,4; Lev. 6:4,5; 24:21; Prov. 13:24; 22:15; 23:13; 1 Cor. 5:1-5, etc.).

There are numerous precautions set forth in the Bible to be practiced by civil authorities in punishment of criminals (we cannot list all the scripture references here—see my book *WTBSACG*: (a) punish without pity; (b) do not delay justice; (c) guard against partiality in administering justice; (d) guard the concept of presumption of innocence; (e) preserve the process of trial by peers; (f) sustain the principle that the penalty must fit the crime; (g) guard proper judicial rules for evidence. ALL THESE ARE IN THE BIBLE! AREN’T YOU GLAD OUR AMERICAN FOREFATHERS TOOK MOST OF THEIR “WISDOM” FOR CONSTITUTING THESE UNITED STATES FROM THE BIBLE! **THEY DID, YOU KNOW!** Capital punishment for capital crime was instituted the moment God re-started human civilization after the Flood in Noah’s day! (Gen. 9:5-6). God ordained that “by the hand of man” capital punishment should be carried out. He did this because of the deeply seated practice of personal blood-letting (i.e., vigilante justice) in the human race prior to the flood (see Gen. 4:15; 6:5-12). SO CAPITAL PUNISHMENT IS NOT JUST A LAW FOR ISRAELITES—IT IS ORDAINED BY GOD FROM THE RE-INSTITUTION OF THE HUMAN RACE. There are 16 crimes in the O.T. for which capital punishment was the penalty. We cannot here, due to limitations of space and time, make a lengthy discussion of capital punishment. Suffice it to say, capital punishment for capital crimes (e.g. murder,

treason, sedition, terrorism, war, etc.) is to be accepted as a principle by which Christians are to live in this present world in relation to civil order (see Lk. 23:4-41; Acts 25:11; Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17).

God predicted that the Israelites would some day wish for a king (Deut. 17:14) because **God knows all things—he knows history from beginning to end, all at the same time!** WITH GOD, ALL “TIME” IS “NOW”! God knew that the human psyche, in rebellion against him, is incapable of maintaining a civil society without some civil authority to restrain those determined to destroy order (i.e., criminals)! God also knew that human beings, not surrendered to divine revelation as their authority, would need to be coerced, forced, scared into behaving so that civil order could be maintained. In a “theocracy” the word of God is the ultimate religious and civil (or social) authority. Every citizen of a “theocracy” willingly submits to the word of God. BUT GOD HAS INSTITUTED ONLY TWO THEOCRACIES IN HISTORY—ISRAEL (UNDER THE LAW OF MOSES) AND THE CHURCH (UNDER THE NEW COVENANT SCRIPTURES)!

God knew Israel and the heathen would harden their hearts against the divine law and “despise” it (Lev. 25:15; 2 Kings 18:12; 22:11-17; 2 Chron. 7:19-20; Psa. 89:30-32; Prov 1:7; 23:9; Isa. 9:15-16; 28:15; 30:12; Jer. 6:16-19; 8:9; 9:12-16 23:17; Ezek. 17:16-19; Amos 2:4 Mal. 1:6, etc.). **God knows that the evil, unregenerated mind and heart of man, even in the “last days” (i.e., the Christian dispensation) will be “hostile toward, at enmity with, and at war with” the will of God!** Thus God has ordained “rulers and authorities” (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17) to control unregenerated, unbelieving, anarchists, by **“the sword” (i.e., by force, by coercion)!** Please read my book, *What The Bible Says About Civil Government*, chapters 1 and 2 on the **origin** of civil government and the **purpose** of civil government. **Paul wrote to Timothy, “Now we know that the law is good, if any one uses it lawfully, understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient....” (1 Tim. 1:8-11).** In other words, Christians should not have to be forced or coerced to behave with civil order—they are “the just”—the “law” (or coercion and force) is “laid down for the lawless and disobedient.” THE ONLY WAY CIVIL ORDER CAN BE MAINTAINED IN A WORLD THAT IS MOSTLY UNREGENERATE (UNBELIEVING) IS BY FORCE (CIVIL GOVERNMENT). If the whole world, without exception, was completely converted to Christ, there would be no need for force or civil government—the world would be “constrained” by the law of love (Rom. 13:8-10; 2 cor. 5:14-21; etc.).

Clearly and unequivocally, God says the **SOURCE** of knowledge and wisdom for ruling his covenant people (for the king) is God’s “book” with God’s statutes in it (Deut. 17:14-20). This is not debatable! It is not ambiguous! It leaves no room for human leaders to depart in any fact, precedent, principle or statement of God in his divine revelation to man in human language (i.e., the Bible). Civil government did not originate in the thinking of the human mind—nor does it “evolve” through the processes of human reason—COVENANT GOVERNMENT, **AND** CIVIL GOVERNMENT, ORIGINATED IN THE MIND OF GOD AND IT IS TO BE SUSTAINED BY THE COMMANDMENTS, PRECEDENTS AND PRINCIPLES OF THE UNCHANGING REVELATION OF GOD (THE BIBLE)! **God decrees that his revelation (whether in nature, in human conscience, or in written form) is to be the SOURCE for ALL rulers of mankind (believing and unbelieving)!** God expects heathen rulers, as well

as believing rulers, to rule under his auspices (Dan. 2:20-23) and according to his principles of justice, righteousness, fairness, and goodness (see Isa. 10:5ff; 13:3ff; 44:24-28; Jer. 27:1-15; Dan. 4:34-37; 5:17-28; 6:25-28; Amos 1:9-15; Obadiah 11-14; Jonah 3:6-10; the whole book of Esther. Jesus implied certain purpose for civil governments (a) “exercise authority” (Matt. 20:25-28); (b) make war upon recalcitrants (Matt. 22:1-7; Lk. 14:31-33); (c) judge in matters of civil, temporal disputes (Lk. 12:13-15); (d) punish civil disorder (Lk. 13:1-2). But the most significant statement is that of the apostle Paul in 1 Tim. 1:8-10. He is saying that all law begins with God, whether reasoned out and legislated by human conscience and ingenuity or revealed directly by the Spirit of God in the Bible. All “good” laws are ultimately “religious” and have their source in the Omniscient Lawgiver, Almighty God. We believe Paul’s use of the word “law” in 1 Tim. 1:8 is, therefore, generic. All laws of God are “good” if anyone uses them “lawfully.” We know, of course that “good laws” can be perverted, abused and misused to accomplish “bad” ends. The “law” has to be used “lawfully.” In other words, ALL LAWS OF MANKIND, MUST BE ADMINISTERED THROUGH THE DIVINE PERSPECTIVE REVEALED IN THE BIBLE! The highest of all law is that which is revealed in the Bible! Rulers, both believing and unbelieving, have found that to be true whether they wanted it to be or not! (e.g., Pharaoh, Saul, David, Solomon, Ahab, Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius, Haman, etc., etc., etc.). God does not change— THIS TEXT IN DEUTERONOMY 17:14-20 APPLIES TO HUMAN RULERS IN BOTH THE COVENANT KINGDOM AND THE CIVIL KINGDOM TODAY! **It can be verified in many N.T. passages (e.g. Acts 24:25; Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17, and the entire book of Revelation).**

God did not give the Levites an “inheritance” of **land** (Israel was primarily an agrarian {farming, husbandry} economy) because the Levites (priesthood) would be supported financially (food, shelter, etc.) by the sacrifices and offerings the non-Levite Israelites would bring to the Tabernacle (later the Temple). That was to be the “inheritance” of the Levites. God did not want the Levites to be connected in any way with the “business” of the people so they could be impartial judges and civil rulers! He also wanted the people to support the Levites so the people would have the sense of contributing to the service of God through their sacrifices and offerings which supported the priesthood! The principle (not the exact precepts) is true **today** for “rulers” (or leaders) in both God’s kingdoms—religious and civil (there are 3 realms of human government, all under the ultimate sovereignty of God—home, church and civil). “Leaders” and/or “rulers” are to be supported financially by those who profit from their services (see Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Cor. 9:1-18; Gal. 6:6). They are privileged by God to support the church and pay taxes to civil governments in order to “have partnership” (i.e., share) in the “fruit which increases to their credit” (Phil. 4:15-17). “Rulers” should be supported by those they “rule” so that, while they are disconnected from the “business” of their constituents, they are accountable and responsible to those who support them!

The word (Deut. 18:15) “prophet” in Hebrew is *nabi* pronounced *novee*. It means, “an announcer, a teacher, an instructor” and often the Hebrew “prophet” predicted the future in order to “teach and instruct.” The Septuagint (the Hebrew language translated into Greek) translates *nabi* into the Greek *propheten* in Deut. 18:15.

The Greek word *propheten* means the same as the Hebrew word *nabi*. The word in both Biblical languages means **primarily** “one who speaks forth.” It does not necessarily have to mean “predict the future.” Thus, to “prophesy” is to “preach.” Ancient patriarchs (before the days of the prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah) were called “prophets” when they delivered God’s message to others (see Gen. 20:7; Ex. 7:1; Num. 12:6; Deut. 13:1-5; 34:10; Judg. 6:8; 1 Sam. 3:20; 9:9; 22:5; 2 Sam. 7:2; 12:25; 24:11, etc.). Moses is here (Deut. 18:14) called a prophet; David was called a prophet. In later times of Israel there was a group of “prophets” called “the sons of the prophets” or the “school of the prophets” (2 Kings 2:3-15; 4:1-38; 5:22; 6:1). This was evidently a group of holy men who “went to school” to learn how to “prophesy.” Since one does not “learn” how to predict the future, we see that the word “prophet” means, generically, “to preach.” **A “PROPHET” IN ISRAEL WAS ANYONE (MALE OR FEMALE) WHO “PREACHED” THE WORD OF GOD (WHETHER THAT WORD CAME TO THEM DIRECTLY BY VISION-REVELATION OR THROUGH THE WRITTEN LAW OF MOSES)! In later times in Israel, the priesthood became so corrupt and idolatrous and bereft of the law, God raised up the prophets (Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos, Hosea, Daniel, etc., etc.) as divine spokesmen in place of the priesthood! In fact, two godly men with “priestly” lineage (Jeremiah & Ezekiel) were know more as prophets than as priests! **The “prophet like Moses” is none other than the Messiah, Jesus Christ!** (see Matt. 17:15; 21:10-11; Jn. 1:19-25; 5:45-47; 6:14; 7:40; 12:48; Acts 3:19-23; 7:37; Heb. 12:24-25).**

It was an abomination for God’s people of the O.T. to tolerate those who attempted to know more of the future than God had revealed through is ordained spokes-persons (Aaron, Moses, *et.al.*). The sin of witch-craft and soothsaying (i.e., attempting to fore-tell the future by human beings whom God had not authorized) was punishable by death! **IT WAS A SERIOUS SIN TO PRACTICE AS, AND LISTEN TO, A “FALSE PROPHET.”** God gave Israel, through Moses, (Deut. 18:21-22) a very simple **test** by which they might know a **true** prophet from a false prophet. “When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word which the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously, you need not be afraid of him.” **AND ISRAEL WOULD NEED TO REMEMBER THIS FOR IN THEIR FUTURE THERE WOULD BE MANY FALSE PROPHETS.** Numerous O.T. prophets severely condemned false prophets (e.g., Isa. 41:21-29; 44:6-28; Jer. 23:1—26:24; 13:1—15:8). **God has spoken plainly in the New Covenant Scriptures (N.T.) that “it is not for us to know the times or seasons which God has set within his own authority” (Acts 1:7). “Sorcery” and “soothsaying” are unequivocally condemned in the N.T. (Acts 13:6-8; 8:9,11;16:16; Rev. 21:8,15). AND SO ARE “FALSE PROPHETS” AND FALSE PROPHECYING! (Matt. 7:15-20; 24:11-24; Mk. 13:22; Lk. 6:26; 1 Tim. 6:20; 2 Cor. 11:13; 2 Pet. 2:1-22; Rev. 16:13; 19:20; 20:10).** The scripture references to “false teachers” and “false teaching” are too numerous to list here. I have a list of 78 separate scripture references as to what the Christian is to do about “false teaching/teachers.” In the New Testament we are told we shall know “false prophets/teachers” (a) by their deeds (Matt. 7:15-20; 2 Pet. 2:1-22); (b) by what their teaching produces in others (2 Pet. 2:1-22; Jude 3-23; Rev. 2:1—3:22); (c) by what they teach as compared with what the Bible says (1 Tim. 4:1-5; 2 Tim. 3:1-9; 4:1-5; Titus 1:5-16; 3:8-11; 2 Pet. 2:1-22; 1 Jn. 4:1-6; 2 Jn. 7-11, etc., etc.).

A “prophet” (read, preacher, elder, Bible teacher) has no authority of his own! **The word of God** —proclaimed correctly using valid rules of hermeneutics (i.e., rules of interpreting human language, grammar, context, historical circumstances, parallel passages, ancillary documents, etc.), exegesis and communication— **is the ultimate authority!** **Any preacher, elder, or Bible teacher who presumptuously assumes authority on his/her own, disregarding what the Bible says, is a “false prophet.”** **CHRISTIAN INDIVIDUALS ARE PRIVILEGED AND OBLIGATED TO KNOW WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS SO THEY MAY “EXAMINE THE SCRIPTURES DAILY TO SEE IF THESE THINGS ARE SO” (Acts 17:11).** Christian leaders (preachers, elders, Bible teachers) must “do their best to present themselves to God as approved, a workman who has no need to be ashamed, *rightly handling the word of truth*” (2 Tim. 2:15). JESUS WARNED HIS DISCIPLES TO “BEWARE” OF FALSE PROPHETS—THAT IS, BE ON GUARD, BE ALERT, BE COGNIZANT OF WHAT YOU ARE BEING TAUGHT—COMPARE IT WITH THE BIBLE!

DEUTERONOMY 19:1—20:20

See also Deut. 4:41-43 and Num. 35:6,14; Josh. 20:7ff; 21:13; 27:32,38). **Six cities of “refuge,”** three on each side of the Jordan, set apart by Moses and Joshua as places of asylum for those who had accidentally committed manslaughter. Those **east** of the Jordan were Bezer in Reuben, Ramoth-Gilead in Gad, and Golan in Manasseh (Deut. 4:43-43); those **west** of the Jordan were Hebron in Judah, Shechem in Ephraim, and Kedesh in Naphtali (Josh. 20:7,8). Locate them on the map and you will see that no part of Palestine was more than 30 miles away from a city of refuge—a distance that could easily be covered in one day. To aid the person guilty of killing someone in escaping the pursuit of “the avenger of blood,” provision was made that the principle roads leading to these cities should *always be kept open*.

In heathen Semitic lands, before the Law of Moses, if a man were slain it was regarded as the duty of his nearest relative to avenge him (this is what Abraham did to the kidnapers of Lot and his family, see Gen. 14). Only in that way could justice be satisfied. God sanctioned what Abraham did to the “kings of the East” because Abraham’s actions were just and right and non-aggressive. Almost no distinction was made between intentional and unintentional killing until the Law of Moses. Many a man was therefore killed in revenge for what was an accident. Cities of refuge were provided by God to protect a man until his case could be properly adjudged. The right of asylum was only for those who had taken a life unintentionally. **Do you realize the Law of Moses makes no provision for incarceration (prison or jail) as a means of punishing crime!** Thus there were no “jails” in which a prisoner could be locked up and guarded and protected from “vigilante justice” except the “cities of refuge.” IN THE LAW OF MOSES THERE ARE ONLY THREE FORMS OF PUNISHMENT FOR CRIMES—EXECUTION, RETALIATION (CORPOREAL PUNISHMENT “AN EYE FOR AN EYE”) AND RESTITUTION (PAYING BACK WHAT WAS STOLEN, LOST, ETC, OR INDENTURED SERVITUDE). Man, without the revealed law of God in his heart, is not “by nature” merciful! The **unregenerated** man’s first impulse when being “struck” is to strike back (see Matt. 5:38-42; Lk. 6:27-30; Rom. 12:14-21). Only the Christian, “constrained by the love of Christ:” (2 Cor. 5:14) has the power to keep from retaliating “an eye for an eye.” There’s nothing wrong with “an eye for an eye” in **civil justice**—for those who must be coerced into good behavior by law and force! Retribution-in-kind is pure **justice**. “Justice” means “to make it come out even.” But “justice” must be administered by civil government authorities (Rom. 13:1-7), not by individuals! THAT’S WHERE “CITIES OF REFUGE” CAME INTO PRACTICE FOR GOD’S FIRST COVENANT PEOPLE, ISRAEL!

Justice, when it **rehabilitates** the criminal, is **merciful**. THAT WAS WHAT THE OLD TESTAMENT LAW WAS ALL ABOUT—BRINGING THE ISRAELITE TO REPENTANCE (“REHABILITATION”) THROUGH THE LOVE OF THE ISRAELITE FOR THE LAW OF GOD. If they could not be rehabilitated (brought to repentance) by their love for God’s law—then the **force of the law was applied**. Christian punishment called for by the apostle Paul in 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 2 Thess. 3:6-15; 1 Tim. 1:20, and by the

apostle John in 3 Jn. 9-10; and in the letters to the 7 churches in Revelation, are all focused on bringing the sinners to **repentance** (i.e., “rehabilitation”). Paul and John expect those who were severely “disciplined” to “learn” their wicked ways and repent, and thus be restored to the fellowship of the saved! **THAT IS MERCIFUL!** Parents, public officials, and educational officials would do well to heed these principles from the word of God, that justice focused on and administered with repentance and rehabilitation as the end is MERCIFUL! One has only to read through the book of Proverbs to see that Solomon learned this lesson well!

Deut. 19:13 is not the only place where it is said the law of God was to be administered “**without pity**” (see Deut. 7:16; 13:8; 19:13; 19:21; 25:12). **What it means is that those who were “judges” (officials) and were charged with administering God’s law were to administer it WITH IMPARTIALITY!** Partiality in judgment is strictly forbidden in God’s people (Lev. 19:15; Deut. 1:17; Job. 13:10; Prov. 24:23; Mal. 2:9; 1 Tim. 5:21; James 2:4; 3:17). God did extend his “pity” for some sins even in the OT through vicarious atonement of animal sacrifices (“the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it for you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement, by reason of the life” Lev. 17:11). But when it came to the necessity of human judges (i.e., Israelite priests) punishing (especially capital punishment for murderers, idol worshipers, false prophets, disobedient and abusive children, and adulterers), they were to do so without taking pity on the incorrigible and intractable sinners! **JUDGES WERE PROHIBITED FROM TAKING INTO ACCOUNT A CRIMINAL’S SOCIAL STATUS, HIS WEALTH, OR HIS PLEADING!** Justice was to be meted out in the same measure, with the same speed, to every criminal—rich or poor, powerful or powerless, famous or infamous, relative or non-relative. Judges had no “discriminatory” powers—they were to mete out exactly what the law of Moses enjoined no matter who the offender was or what he/she had! The Hebrew word for “pity” is *chous*, meaning, “to spare.” The Hebrew word for “partial” is *noso poneem*, “countenancing.” or literally “taking into account the face of” a person. God not only provides for justice in the sanctity of human life, he also demands justice in the sanctity of another’s property. Nothing that concerns man’s welfare is beneath God’s care! Paul told Christians that thieves, robbers and the greedy would not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:10). Even slaves, who were forced to work for no wages, were forbidden to defraud their masters by maintaining it was “their due.” God is emphatic about being careful about someone else’s property (Lk. 16:10-12; Eph. 6:5-9; Col. 3:22-25; 1 Thess. 4:9-12; 2 Thess. 3:6-15).

God apparently knows that the “heart is deceitful above all things and desperately corrupt” (Jer. 17:9)—and that the human being’s tendency is most often to lie, slander, and falsely accuse his fellow man. So God demands that every accusation against any person must be established by two or three witnesses (see Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; Matt. 18:16; 2 Cor. 13:1; 1 Tim. 5:19; Heb. 10:28). The New Covenant Scriptures severely condemn lying, slander and false accusations (Matt. 5:33-37; 1 Cor. 6:1-11; James 4:11-12; 5:12; Eph. 4:25-32). Bearing false witness is such a serious crime God demanded drastic punishment. The perjurer is treated as one who has committed the actual crime against his victim as he falsely accuses his victim of perpetrating. Without the **sanctity of truth from witnesses** there could be no courts of

law, no justice, no punishment of criminals, NO SOCIAL ORDER! To break an oath was regarded as perjury as well as using falsehood under oath (Lev. 19:12; Ezek. 16:59). **PERJURY, UNDER OATH, IS ONE OF THE MOST SERIOUS CRIMES AGAINST SOCIAL ORDER AND DESERVES SEVERE PUNISHMENT (PERHAPS EVEN CAPITAL PUNISHMENT)!**

God instructed his Old Covenant people to leave the “fainthearted” behind lest they cause the ones willing to fight the enemy to become weak too! **The Old Covenant people had to fight physical wars, literal battles, killing people, destroying their temples and idols, and taking some prisoners.** Some might be “fainthearted” when it came to hurting people and destroying things! THAT’S WHAT ARMIES ARE FOR, HOWEVER! God demanded courage (Deut. 20:1-11) of the Old Covenant people when they had to fight their enemies. He encouraged them by reminding them that he delivered them from Egypt by drowning Pharaoh and his armies! Some were excused from battle, but all not excused were to fight with courage and faith in the Lord’s help against their enemies. **COURAGE IS A REQUISITE FOR BECOMING A CHRISTIAN DISCIPLE!** (Matt. 10:24-33; Lk. 12:2-9; Jn. 14:1,27; 16:33; Acts 28:15; 1 Pet. 3:14). See also Phi. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:7; Heb. 13:6; 1 Jn. 4:18, etc. Of course, Christians do not fight a physical war (2 Cor. 10:3-5; Eh. 6:10-20) but the **spiritual, psychological, mental, philosophical STRUGGLE of the Christian against the world is called “warfare” in the N.T. and Christians are to wage their “spiritual” war with courage, boldness, faith and mental acuteness!** CHRISTIANS ARE NOT TO LIE DOWN AND LET THE “ENEMY” (THE DEVIL AND HIS COHORTS) RUN OVER THEM SPIRITUALLY, MENTALLY, OR EMOTIONALLY! CHRISTIANS ARE TO FIGHT BACK! WITH WORDS, WITH COURAGE! Remember, we are supposed to “**Always** be **prepared** to make a **defense** to any one who calls us to account for the hope that is in us, with gentleness and reverence...” (1 Pet. 3:15).

God mercifully allowed the Israelites to **spare** any city and its inhabitants in cities “very far from” the land of Canaan (i.e., Palestine) **IF** such “very far off” cities opened their gates **peacefully** to the Israelites (Deut. 20:10-11). If any of the “very far off” cities made war against the Israelites they were to besiege it, kill all the adult males, and take the women and children as servants to serve them (Deut. 20:12-15). **HOWEVER, the cities of the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites and Perizzites were to be utterly destroyed and nothing in them (including men, women, children, cattle, etc.) saved alive (Deut. 20:16-18).** Jehovah-God stands for peace when humans stand for peace (see Rom. 12:14—13:7; 15:1-5; Eph. 4:1-16; Heb. 12:14). **BUT WHEN HUMANS MAKE WAR ON GOD OR HIS PEOPLE, GOD MAKES WAR ON THE WARLIKE** (see the book of Revelation). *But how can a merciful God order the Israelites to “save nothing alive” in the cities of the Hittites, et.al.?* **By wiping out these perverted, depraved, animalistic, peoples such as the Hittites, GOD WAS BEING MERCIFUL TO ISRAEL.** God’s explanation for such socio-cide is “that they (i.e., the Hittites, et.al.) may not teach you to do according to all their abominable practices which they have done in the service of their gods, and so to sin against the Lord your God.” (Deut. 20:18). **GOD WANTS HIS COVENANT PEOPLE TO KNOW THERE CAN BE NO PEACE BETWEEN HIS FAITHFUL ONES AND WICKED UNBELIEF AND IDOLATRY!** (2 Cor. 6:14-14; Rev. 18:1-24).

AFTER READING THESE CHAPTERS, MAKE YOUR OWN CONCLUSIONS— IS GOD **SERIOUS** ABOUT THE ASSOCIATIONS HIS COVENANT PEOPLE KEEP? WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE THOUGHT ABOUT THE QUESTION HAD YOU BEEN AN ISRAELITE WHEN MOSES SPOKE THESE WORDS FROM DEUTERONOMY? DO YOU THINK GOD HAS “SOFTENED” HIS POSITION ON THIS QUESTION IN THE NEW COVENANT?

DEUTERONOMY 21:1—22:29

God desires that his covenant people be shocked, shamed, (Deut. 19:10) and eager to **atone for any victim of murder!** So, he gave Moses explicit and extensive rituals to perform when a victim of murder was found and the culprit not known (Deut. 21:1-9). God wants his people to be **indignant that any human life could be secretly struck down**. They must NOT be indifferent to such wickedness as murder (or abortion)! Why are people **indifferent** to victims of the human race throughout the world today in nations where genocide, mass murders, constant wars, abortions, secret murders, occur? Is the human race getting **desensitized** to the **violent** loss of human life from seeing so much real and fictitious violence on TV and in the movies? I THINK SO! There seems to be a wide-spread lack of a sense of justice among those in positions of power and rule today! Whole societies (including the U.S.) are being brutalized from constant exposure to injustices and exploitations where no recriminations or punishments are meted out for those perpetrating the injustices! Another factor in the **indifference** to the violent taking of life is GREED! In a covenant society where God is claimed as Sovereign, LIFE MUST BE RESPECTED! God held the nearest village or city responsible to respect life when a victim was discovered whose murderer could not be determined. The church of Jesus Christ, today, must do all in its power to see that any victim's attacker is brought to justice! The church must do what it can physically for victims of violence. The church must get involved in community and national efforts to reduce victimization of mankind! GOD IS INTENSELY FOCUSED ON THIS MATTER!

God does not want his covenant people to be **cruel to victims of war** (Deut. 21:10-14). In pagan societies, male prisoners of war were slaughtered, and women and children raped or made slaves. One only need remember recent history and what the Germans, Japanese and Russian soldiers did to conquered peoples in WWII (and in some isolated cases Allied soldiers). In a God-ordered covenant society, male POWs could be made servants, and women were to be either married or set free. God also made this law in condescension to (not endorsement of) the weaknesses of Israelite males (who might lust after the "beautiful" conquered women) as well as for the protection and honor of womanhood. Israelites soldiers might be tempted to treat conquered females like heathen soldiers treated them—raping them, and murdering them. This law does not apply to Canaanite cities where they were to "save nothing alive" (20:16), but to distant cities where the males were either killed or taken as slaves, and the women and children taken as "booty" (20:10-15). All wars depopulate the male citizenry and leave many women as widows and children as orphans. GOD WANTED TO PROVIDE MERCY TO THOSE WHO MADE WAR AGAINST ISRAEL. **But no alliances or marriages whatsoever were to be made with Canaanite women.** The church must be **sensitive** to these issues today, praying, verbalizing protests, and doing all it can to help the tragic victims of war!

In the first place, God would not want a man to have two wives and create division and alienation in the home between the children! Polygamy is not quite as bad

as divorce or “one-parent” family. But God never approved of polygamy—he only condescended to it because of the hardness of the hearts of human beings who had not the power and would not live up to his high ideals of one man for one woman for life (Matt. 19:3-9). **The warning here emphatically proves what evil will result from a divided home!** SO GOD MADE PROVISION TO RECTIFY THE POSSIBILITY OF THE FIRST-BORN FROM BEING ABUSED OF HIS RIGHT. Today, in our world of the 21st century, child-abuse is epidemic! **Children are abused of their security (through divorce, and abandonment of one parent or another); children are abused of the early direction (guidance) in life (through lack of discipline and nurturing); children are abused of their spiritual birthright (through parents who are indifferent toward God and the church and the Bible).** CHRIST AND HIS APOSTLES OFFER WAYS FOR BELIEVERS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT TO KEEP FROM ABUSING CHILDREN OF THEIR RIGHTS! WHAT MAY THE CHURCH DO? The church must convert its adult members, first, so they may “become as little children.” The church must aim for evangelism in its ministry to the children who attend. The church must fear the dire warning of Christ and the apostles about causing one of God’s “little ones” to stumble! It would be better to have a huge mill-stone tied around one’s neck and be cast into the deepest sea than to abuse one of God’s little ones!

THE FAMILY IS THE MOST CRUCIAL SOCIAL UNIT IN ANY CIVILIZATION! It must be kept sacrosanct! It cannot be allowed to degenerate into anarchy where there is no order, no discipline, no nurturing! God’s law is opposed to a family unit where the children are permitted to “give the orders” or where they are old enough to physically and verbally abuse their parents. Such a “flip-flopped” home is destructive of all social law and order! Such an anarchistic home produces criminals! **The Bible is unequivocal! God wants parents to deal with their children to the best of their abilities. Parents must “chasten” their children properly which will usually cause their children to respond with love and respect!** Should gluttonness, drunken, rebellious, violent children were to be stoned to death for abusing their parents, what measures do you think the Christian community should take to buttress the extremely crucial position of the family unit today? One has only to read the Bible to see what happens to the rest of society as a result of dysfunctional families (the sons of Eli, the sons of Samuel, the sons of David, Nebuchadnezzar *et. al.*). The church must emphatically teach its adult parents that they must not “provoke their children to wrath.” (Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21). It must teach parents they are responsible for providing not only for the physical needs of all their children, but also their moral and spiritual growth. The church must support its members who are parents in all Biblical attempts to correct their children. And if the children of a church member are recalcitrant and incorrigible, the elders of the church must take the issue into hand and deal with it! **GOD IS SERIOUS ABOUT THIS MATTER AND THE CHURCH CAN DO NO LESS THAN THE LAW OF MOSES!** (See Ex. 21:15,17; Lev. 20:9; Prov. 30:17).

If a person has committed a crime punishable by death and the person is put to death, and the person is hanged on a tree, the body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but it should be buried that same day, for a hanged person is **accursed by God; the people should not defile the whole land by making heroes out of criminals!** (Deut. 21:22-23; see Lev. 18:24-28; Num. 35:34). God never glorifies or

sensationalizes crimes and criminals, and he does not what his covenant people to do so, either! According to the law of God criminals are publicly executed and publicly displayed as a symbol of their being cursed. Such stigma attended criminality. God decreed their bodies should be buried before the day was over when they died. GOD DID NOT WANT THEM TO BECOME SYMBOLS OF HEROICS OR PITY! God wanted his covenant people to put all vestiges of criminality away from observation so the people would not mentally dwell upon the crime or the criminal! There were no “tell-all books” to be written to glorify the crime or the criminal as in our society today! There would be no long, drawn-out TV “news” repetitious glorifying or exploiting of the crime and the criminal as in our society today! Is ministering to criminals in prison, in the 21st century, prohibited by God? NO! Jesus and his apostles taught that criminals should, first, be restrained by civil government authorities and punished according to the law (which, it is assumed will be in accord with the principles of the Bible). But Jesus also taught that we should “visit” (i.e., minister to) prisoners (Matt. 25:34-46). Christians in the 1st century “had compassion on the prisoners” (Heb. 10:34). Christians should certainly do all in their power to evangelize and convert criminals and prisoners to the Lord Jesus Christ. But that does not mean impenitent or penitent criminals should be “coddled.” **The law is for the lawless (1 Tim. 1:8-10).**

Not only is the family and social order sacrosanct—SO IS PRIVATE PROPERTY! The Israelite was to care about his neighbor’s property as he did his own! Here in Deuteronomy 2:1-4, God demands of the Israelites that they take immediate action to prevent a neighbor from losing any of his property that might be jeopardized. When there are no private property rights made inviolable, there is either a dictatorship or anarchy! A **free** social order is founded on the God-ordained sanctity of the family and property rights! There was no such thing as “finders keepers, losers weepers” in Israel! Proprietorship was mandated by Almighty God when he created humankind (Gen. 1:28-29). Property rights are more than rights to things. In essence, property is an extension of the person who has acquired it for in acquiring it he has “spent” part of his life (time, energy, expertise, etc.). Thus to take a person’s “property” is to take that person’s life. That is why the founding fathers of the United States were so jealous of their right to hold **private property** without governmental or other interference! Please read the chapter on “Private Ownership of Property” in my book, *What The Bible Says About Civil Government*, 1990, pub. College Press, pp. 301-338. **No one has a right to someone else’s property, even if that property has been temporarily “lost” by its owner. Anyone finding another’s property is obligated by the law of God to return it if at all possible.** THE CHRISTIAN IS OBLIGATED, FIRST, TO FOLLOW THE “GOLDEN RULE” (Matt. 7:12) IN RESPECT TO ANOTHER’S PROPERTY. Further, the Christian is to “please his neighbor for his good, to edify him” (Rom. 15:2); and to “seek his neighbor’s good” (Phil. 2:3-4; 1 Cor. 10:24). The O.T. law demanded that should a person accidentally destroy, lose or mutilate the property of another he was to make recompense in kind! CAN ANY CHRISTIAN DO LESS? Yes! God makes provisions for every sparrow and lily of the field and he notices every sparrow that falls! (Matt. 6:25-34). Even the hairs on our head are numbered by God! Human beings are privileged to **use** every thing God has created in this universe for the “good” of mankind and the glorifying of God (Gen. 1:28-29; 2:15). There is no commandment of God in all the Bible that human beings are obligated to **preserve** (i.e., “conserve”) any of

creation (as if human beings could do so anyway!). THERE ARE ADMONITIONS AND WARNINGS AGAINST WASTEFULNESS, MISUSE AND ABUSE OF GOD'S CREATION **BUT NO COMMANDMENTS THAT WE MUST PRESERVE** ANY OF IT! The Bible clearly states that the "creation has been subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of **him** (i.e., God) who subjected it in hope" and that it has been put in "bondage to decay" (Rom. 8:18-23). All of God's creation has been pronounced "doomed" by him and is in the process of "decay" (the 2nd law of thermodynamics, a.k.a. the law of entropy) substantiates the Biblical statement. **MAN COULD NOT "PRESERVE" IT EVEN IF HE WISHED!** Creation is for man's use to glorify God. Some day (and no one knows when) God is going to destroy this present creation and the "elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up" (2 Pet. 3:10). **Man is not going to ever have the capacity to "destroy" the earth! THE ENVIRONMENTAL "WACKOS" ARE BARKING UP THE WRONG TREE WHEN THEY ACCUSE HUMANS OF "DESTROYING" THE UNIVERSE.** THEIR ARGUMENT IS WITH GOD WHO IS ACTUALLY "DECAYING" IT NOW AND WILL DO IT ULTIMATELY AND FINALLY DESTROY IT IN THE FUTURE! **All that God requires of human beings in relation to "things" (i.e., creation) is that they use it to glorify his name and that they not misuse it!**

God probably put the prohibition against "cross-dressing" (i.e., woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man and a man shall not wear anything that pertains to a woman, Deut. 22:5) TO PROHIBIT EXPLOITATION AND ABUSES OF THE GENDER ORDER HE CREATED (see 1 Cor. 11:1-16). It is never right to overthrow God's order for society. To usurp God's hierarchy of sexual order eventuates in the disruption all moral distinctions of right and wrong. We see it happening in our 21st century every day! It was the heathen of those ancient times (and today, for that matter) who made a mockery of God's gender-order and shamed manhood and womanhood by "cross-dressing." The practice was associated with all kinds of lewd, depraved homosexual intercourse in heathen societies contemporary with the Israelites (see Deut. 23:17-18). God does not want the "animal kingdom" victimized by abusive actions (22:6-7). Man is a steward of creation. Creation is intended to be a resource for humanity, so humanity must "take care" of it and not waste it—**thus the "mothers" of all species should be protected.** Creation should not be "idolized" (Rom. 1:23) to the point of worship (like "mother-earth" etc.). Christians know their responsibilities—it is sinful, unregenerate human beings that misuse, abuse, and exploit God's creation for their own "glory" and indulgence.

Remember this! God warns home-owners against victimizing people through indifference about building and upkeep of houses! (Deut. 22:8). All possible safety precautions must be built into human constructions, and the builder is responsible for any damages or injuries to those frequenting the structure! Are there principles in the New Testament that would apply to such details? Yes! Indolence, laziness (2 Thess. 3:6-25), negligence and carelessness are sins (Lk. 16:1-3; 19:11-27) in the N.T. The New Covenant Scriptures tell us we should give every task our very best, even if we are hired servants or slaves (Eph. 6:5-8; Col. 3:2-25). And, of course, the "Golden Rule" (Matt. 7:12) always applies in ownership of property.

Bruce Oberst states concerning Deut. 22:9-12 in his commentary, *Deuteronomy*, College Press, 1968, p. 261, “Note the basic concept of separation which runs throughout these verses. The fact that two kinds of seed might grow quite well together, or that one could plow together quite well with an ox and an ass (I doubt that), or that linen (originating from flax) and wool might make a durable, warm, and nice-looking garment when combined, was nothing to the point! God had said they were not to be mixed! His word was to be respected and honored. As a separated people, they were to live separated lives (1 Kings 8:53). Such laws as this would also distinguish and identify them as God’s own people, different from all others.” **GOD WANTS HIS PEOPLE (BOTH O.T. AND N.T.) TO BE DIFFERENT THAN THOSE AROUND THEM! HE WANTS THEM TO BE HOLY BECAUSE IN BEING HOLY LIFE IS A BLESSED EXPERIENCE (See 2 Cor. 6:14—7:1). God’s people are also to keep ever present before their minds that they have the commandments of God in repository to know, love, and obey.** So God told the Israelites to make a “fringe” (or “tassels”) on the four corners of their cloaks to **remind** them to keep the commandments of God (see Num. 15:37-41). Sad to say, today, even some members of Christ’s church victimize themselves by indulging in the “ways” of the heathen world about them. Little do they know that by doing so they degrade themselves in the eyes of the world; they make themselves vulnerable to all kinds of falsehood and exploitation by wicked people; and they are literally asking for God’s judgment by doing so!

GOD IS ANGRY WHEN WOMEN AND VICTIMIZED AND DEPRIVED OF THEIR HUMAN RIGHTS (Deut. 22:13-29)! Whipping was a punishment for any man who slandered or bore false witness against a woman (Deut. 22:13-19). The death (by stoning) penalty was imposed on any **woman** who abused her womanhood by fornication or adultery (Deut. 22:20-21). The death penalty was imposed on any **man** who abused a woman by fornication or adultery (22:22). The death penalty was imposed for consenting (betrothed) fornicators and for rape of a betrothed virgin (Deut. 22:23-27). “Shot-gun” wedding was imposed for the penalty of fornicating with a virgin who was not betrothed (Deut. 22:28-29). **God becomes angry when womanhood is debased by promiscuous sexual intercourse!** **GOD DESPISES MEN WHO THINK OF WOMEN ONLY AS “SEX-OBJECTS” TO BE EXPLOITED, ASSAULTED, RAPED AND ABUSED!** God does not approve of “casual sex” or “living together unmarried”! A man and woman who wish to have sexual intercourse with one another are to be married—permanently! There is no doubt that men abuse the sexuality of women. Some do so with seduction, and some do so violently! Some men even abuse women by being verbally oppressive and slanderous! But **women** also abuse their own sexuality by prostituting (i.e., selling) their bodies or reputations for money; some by insisting they can fill man’s place in society; some by refusing to insist they should be an equal partner in a marriage. The Christian of the 21st century must take a verbal, political, “preaching-from-the-Bible” (and physically-restraining) position on this matter! Christians dare not be silent! The apostles were not (e.g. 1 Cor. 7:1-40; Eph. 5:21-33; Col. 3:18-19; 1 Thess. 4:1-8; 1 Tim. 5:9-16; Titus 2:1-6; Heb. 13:4; 1 Pet. 3:1-12)! Why do you think our modern society has taken such a loose and anti-Biblical stand in this matter of the exploitation of womanhood?

DEUTERONOMY 23:1—24:22

Those who were born by Jews in heathen cohabitation or disfigured by Jews through heathen practices (i.e., illegitimate children and castrated eunuchs) were not permitted to be members of the covenant nation. This was done to teach the Israelites clearly and unequivocally of the **purity and perfection** the Lord desired of his people. It was also to shield them against the contaminating influence to which they would be exposed should they allow such practices to become common in their midst. God has the same high standards of **purity and perfection** for membership in his **New Covenant people**. Those who practice sexual immorality, fraud, slander, greed, contentiousness, drunkenness, robbery, laziness, idolatry, cannot be members of the church of Jesus Christ (see 1 Cor. 5:11-13; 6:9-11; Gal. 5:19-21; 2 Thess. 3:14-15; Titus 3:10, etc., etc.). ARE YOU BEGINNING TO SEE NOW, THAT JESUS CAME NOT TO DESTROY THE LAW OF MOSES, **BUT TO FILL IT UP FULL?** God is not pleased with those who mutilate the human body, whether it be done by coercion of someone else or by the person on his own body! Do you wonder about all the modern faddishness (sometimes downright stupid) of piercing the ears, nose, tongue, navel, and other places with rings and other jewelry? Do you wonder about being tattooed? Do you wonder about “sex-change”? Accidental mutilation of the human body God will undoubtedly excuse—but deliberate mutilation of the body????

Ammonites and Moabites were excluded from membership in the covenant nation because they were depraved, polytheistic, idolatrous, and ungodly. They were the people who hired a prophet (Baalum) to try to curse Israel (Num. Chs. 22-25). They sacrificed children to their gods (Molech, *et. al.*) by burning them alive, or burying them alive. God did not teach Israel to hate individuals as such. God **did** teach Israel to hate the sinful ways of people—even the sinful practices of their own Israelite brethren were to be **abhorred!** Ruth, a converted Moabite woman, married Boaz and she became an ancestress of David and of Jesus Christ. David sent his family to Moab for protection against the jealous king Saul (1 Sam. Ch. 22). God expresses his own love for the Moabites in Isaiah chapters 15-16 and predicts that some day (in the Messianic time of Christ) some of them would come to the Lord in faith and penitence. It is evident that in Deut. 23:3-8 God is not advocating the Israelites to be spiteful and vengeful against anyone since he gives instructions that the Israelites should “not abhor an Edomite....nor an Egyptian.” But to protect the Israelites against the depraved unbelief of the Ammonites and Moabites, **GOD WANTS HIS PEOPLE TO BE SEPARATED FROM THEM AND THEIR PRACTICES!** **There are clear statements in the New Testament which tell us that unbelievers are not to be considered covenant citizens (John 3:18,36; 8:24; Rom. 16:17; 1 Jn. 2:18-19; 4:1-6; 2 Jn. 9-10).**

God wanted the Israelites to **remember** that CIVILITY is a part of godliness (Det. 23:9-14). Military men (including both officers and enlisted men) often engage in sexual immoralities and other indecencies in war-time which are tolerated by people because of the exigencies of the times and circumstances, when such actions committed by civilians and in other times would be considered atrocious crimes. **BUT**

GOD DOESN'T TOLERATE SUCH ACTIONS—AT ANY TIME! Some of the things declared “unclean” (Deut. 23:9-11) appear to be things over which a person would have no moral control. Yet God has the right to demand total cleanliness of his creatures—and this is precisely what the Law was for; to awaken human beings to the fact that they are sinners and are thus totally alienated from a Perfectly Holy God! Many things which seem “natural and right.” in this earthly life, are yet unsuitable for the immediate presence of the Holy God. Human beings need to be shown the *infinite* distance between themselves and their Creator! There are some things, while not sinful in this life, which will apparently be dispensed with in the next life in order to bring believers closer to the *infinite* nature of their Creator: (a) marriage (Matt. 22:29-33); (b) sustenance through the physical stomach (1 Cor. 6:12-20); (c) our present physical bodies in their entirety (1 Cor. 15:35-50).

True faith toward Almighty God **cannot** be expressed in **dirty** or unhealthy and unsanitary actions or attitudes toward the physical circumstances of human existence in the present! (Deut. 23:10-14; see also Lev. 15:1-31). Ignorance of God's truth produces immorality—which in turn expresses itself in physical **impurity** and **filthiness**. The Law of Moses here is not simply hygienic— it has to do with immoral ignorance of the nature of God! There is a physical side to our religion, connected inseparably to the spiritual and moral, which should find expression in the godly practice of **cleanliness!** We must believe thoroughly in the Christian duty of denouncing dirt! People cannot be slovenly, dirty, and unsanitary and please God! In our modern society, millions of unbelievers are **dirty, foul, unsanitary and ungodly** in (a) sexual impurity, as if it is only a physical function; (b) in communal “back-to-nature” filthiness of some environmental “wackos” (e.g., the famous Dr. Albert Schweitzer of Africa would not allow people to kill insects in his operating room); (c) in the cults which do not allow doctors or medicines to be administered to those who are ill. While the old adage, “Cleanliness is next to godliness” is not precisely in the Bible, the principle is there in this text and others.

There are six specific laws in this text (Deut. 23:15-25): (a) the fugitive law; (b) the manumission or emancipation law; (c) the law against homosexuality; (d) the law against usury; (e) the law against breaking vows; (f) and the law against stealing a neighbor's crops. **All these laws demand righteous, godly ethics in the everyday affairs of making a living and in interpersonal relationships with one's neighbor!** The laws about fugitive servants and emancipation of indentured servants (i.e., “slaves”) proves conclusively that God condones no such thing as one man owning another man as property! **SLAVERY IS NOT CONDONED IN THE BIBLE!** If even an ox or an ass had strayed from its owner, anyone finding the beast was commanded to restore it to its owner as his property. But if a man's servant had fled away, everyone was forbidden to turn him back to his “master”—demonstrating graphically that men were not to be considered property. If a servant decided to walk away from his “master's” employ, the master has lost nothing of property which must be restored. The law against kidnapping is of the same principle as this (see Deut. 24:7). Not only did the servant have the right to be free (not owned as property), he also had the civil right to find another place of employment. He was to be allowed to choose where he wished to settle down, and he was to be allowed an opportunity to earn his living there. **The Old Testament**

strictly FORBIDS the practice of homosexual behavior (i.e., “sodomy”) (Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Deut. 23:17-18; 1 Kings 14:24; 15:12; 22:46; 2 Kings 23:7; Job. 36:14; Hosea 4:14). Homosexual behavior is also **forbidden in the New Testament**. It is declared to be “unlawful” and profane (1 Tim. 8:11). The N.T. is not imprecise or ambiguous about condemning homosexual behavior. The apostle Paul used the Greek word *arsenokoitais* in 1 Tim. 1:10 and it is translated in the KJV as “them that defile themselves with mankind.” It is translated “perverts” in the NIV and “sodomites” in the RSV. The RSV is the best translation because the Greek word *arsenokoitais* literally means, “male-coitus” (i.e., homosexual behavior). God intervened in history to obliterate societies practicing this perversion (Gen. Chs. 18-19; 2 Pet. 2:6; Jude 7). Homosexual behavior universalized proves it is perverse, destructive, unreasonable, genocidal, and criminal (see also Rom. 1:26-32; 1 Cor. 6:9-11). In the O.T. homosexual behavior was penalized by death! God did not even want money that had been earned by harlotry or sodomy (Deut. 23:18) paid into the Israelite Tabernacle treasury for a vow or sacrifice—because both practices were an “abomination” (Hebrew word is *touaivoh*, meaning, “abhorrence”) before God! In other words, God can’t stand these practices! The law against *usury* (charging interest on money loaned to an Israelite brother). Lending money by one Israelite to another for “interest” was not totally forbidden (see Ex. 22:25; Lev. 25:35-37). But **usury** was forbidden. Two Hebrew words are translated “usury”—*neshekh* and *noshakh*, both of which mean literally, “bite, take a bite out of, devour”). **Usury** is to lend money demanding exorbitant, unreasonable, “devouring” rates of interest. Today we call usurers, “loan-sharks.” The law against “slackness in paying off vows” demands that God’s people must act with civility, morality and compassion in the business of money and property transactions! God warned his people that when they made “vows” (contracts, debts, promissory notes) to “pay back” what they had borrowed, **THEY HAD BETTER NOT BE SLACK IN PAYING WHAT THEY VOWED BECAUSE THEY HAD ESSENTIALLY VOWED TO GOD!** *Clearly, we could use a lot more emphasis and enforcement of this law in our debt-ridden, bankruptcy-taking society of the 21st century!!!* the law against “putting a sickle to your neighbor’s standing grain” was divine law protecting the sanctity of private property. **THE ANCIENT ISRAELITE COMMUNITIES WERE NOT SOCIALISTIC, COMMUNISTIC.** They were capitalistic, private enterprise societies, proprietorship communities! Of course, they were commanded to go to the aid of any brother Israelite who needed financial or other support. **BUT THEY WERE NOT COMMANDED TO “DISTRIBUTE THE WEALTH” OR “EQUALIZE EVERYONE’S STANDARD OF LIVING.”**

In the N.T. God’s people are exhorted to “bear one another’s burdens” **and so fulfill the law of Christ** (Jn. 13:34; Rom. 15:1-3; Gal. 6:2). In the New Testament “community” (i.e., in the brotherhood or fellowship of the church) God’s people are guided by several principles in the matter of business transactions, ownership of property, making of money, etc. (a) look out for the protection of other people’s (and civic) property (Phil. 2:3-4); (b) never exploit people as if they were means to ends (esp. employees and employers) (Eph. 6:5-9; Col. 3:22—4:6); (c) prompt local and national leaders to enforce laws against discrimination, pornography, crime, etc; (d) remember, God’s word is always to take priority over all alleged human “rights”; (e) no human has a right to do what would harm another human; (f) no human has a right to overthrow civil government by violence for any reason—non-violent protest and self-defense against

aggression is Biblically sanctioned; (g) every believer has an obligation to **not** engage in a harmful vocation or “occupation”; (h) believers must not take advantage of those in need by usury; (i) every believer must use part of his possessions to feed others, but no person has a right to take more than he needs. There is only one way to love God and keep God’s commandments and that is to actively, actually, literally love human beings (1 Jn. 4:19—5:3). And this is especially true of Christians giving love to fellow Christians (see Deut. 10:19; Matt. 22:39; Jn. 13:35; 15:12; Rom. 12:9; 1 Thess. 3:12; Heb. 13:1-2; 1 Pet. 1:22).

God demands loving, civil, humane treatment of women. God has never condoned the idea that women are chattel (i.e., property) to be used, abused and cast aside by men! **God is not condoning divorce in this text (Deut. 24:1-4)! GOD HATES DIVORCE** (Malachi 2:16; Matt. 5:31-32; 19:1-12). But because of the “hardness” of human hearts (both men and women), God issued the commandment about a “written bill of divorcement” to protect the civil rights of women. In ancient Israelite times, a divorced woman was not often remarried—she was left to find a living the best way she could. Divorce was a terrible **stigma** to be borne by women in ancient times. In heathen societies whether she was guilty or not, she was usually spoken of as an “unfaithful” woman, or, at best, unfit to be a wife. God provided, in his covenant people, a compassionate condescension to the “hardness” of human hearts that made it impossible for a husband and wife to live together—a bill of divorcement (a testimony in writing as to the cause of divorce) which would **clear an innocent woman of any stigma of unfaithfulness**. DO PEOPLE STILL HAVE “HARD” HEARTS IN THE 21ST CENTURY! Of course! Do even “Christians” sometimes make a failure of marriage? Yes! What then is to be done? It is our opinion that when there is sexual infidelity, physical abuse, physical dereliction (from any cause, drugs, drunkenness, just plain old laziness) then it would be better for the “wounded party” to end that marriage and seek another that would fulfill God’s plan for marriage. While it is true that God hates divorce, it is also true that **God stands for marriage** as opposed to “burning with lust” or by illicit (illegal) cohabitation (i.e., “just living together”)—see comments in our commentary, *First Corinthians*, pub. College Press, notes on 1 Cor. ch. 7. Once two people are divorced, and either or both remarry, there is no Biblical sanction to adjudge that either of them is “living in adultery” simply because they have remarried! Divorce, for whatever reason, is a sin! But that does not mean both parties to the divorce cannot repent and change their minds about marriage and be remarried and forgiven by God. What divorcees do after a divorce is between them and God. If a Christian suffers a divorce and testifies and displays the right attitude of repentance and faith in God’s word about marriage, the church has no right to forbid their remarriage! And if they show repentance they should be considered a member of God’s flock the same as any penitent thief, fornicator, greedy, glutton, carouser, or other sinner would! Marriage is for this world only. **AND GOD WANTS HUMAN BEINGS TO BE OFFICIALLY UNITED IN MARRIAGE FOR THE SIMPLE REASON OF RESPONSIBILITY AND COHESION OF THE MOST BASIC SOCIAL UNIT ON EARTH—THE HOME! It is the Bible that teaches the sanctity and protection of the female gender—not humanism, secularism, polytheism or atheism or “other world religions.”** God intended that a woman’s security be established by prohibiting the “state” from taking away her husband for warfare during the first year of their marriage. No one was, due to **any**

circumstances, take away the Israelite woman's millstones. These millstones represent her domain—her place as “queen of the home.” God demands **no** intrusion into woman's domain—not war, not finances. Nothing must stand in the way of woman's right to be secure—and her security, as God sees it, is in being a homemaker! This is not only in the interests of women—it is in the interests of the whole society! When a society takes its young womanhood away from home-making, there is something wrong with that society! **GOD'S WISDOM IN THIS MATTER IS NEVER OUTDATED!** The N.T. church has an obligation to see that this is emphasized and instituted in its congregations! (See 1 Tim. 2:8-15; 5:9-16; Titus 2:3-5; 1 Pet. 3:1-6, and Proverbs 31).

After a brief reference to leprosy (Deut. 24:8-9) connecting it to divine judgment upon sin, Moses gives the law of God about mercy and compassion in business dealings between Israelites (Deut. 24:10-18). In business matters no Israelite was to **take advantage** of another Israelite for profit's sake! The poor were not simply to be helped by giving them “hand-outs” so that they became indentured, enslaved, miserable beggars. They were to be helped by being given opportunities to supply their own needs through laboring for them—EVEN GLEANING IS BETTER THAN BEGGING! Every man has the civil right to earn the respect of his society by working for his living. (See Acts 18:3; 1 Cor. 9:1-18; 1 Thess. 4:9-12; 2 Thess. 3:6-15; Titus 2:1-10; 1 Pet. 4:15). Every debtor should be afforded opportunity (and perhaps even forced by law—God's law above all) to work to pay off his debt rather than forced by the society to become a mendicant, a “welfare-junkie.” **Justice must be sacrosanct.** What is fair, right and honest must be demanded impartially. Justice is the foundation of human society. God has mandated justice as an **inalienable** right (just like “life, liberty, and proprietorship”) for every human being on the face of the earth! No other human, or group of humans (neighbors, nation or world), has any right to deny any human being impartial justice! **God has ordained it—no man dare take it away!** **JUSTICE IS DENIED OR PERVERTED AT THE RISK OF BEING FOUND FIGHTING AGAINST GOD!** **All business matters must submit to JUSTICE, fairness, impartiality.** **NO BUSINESS IS APPROVED OF BY GOD THAT TAKES ADVANTAGE OF PEOPLE WHO ARE AT DISADVANTAGE!** The church has an obligation to help its members be employed, to inculcate these principles in the teaching of the church and to try to influence these principles in civil government, and to give help only to those willing to work for it! There is simply too much partiality, coddling of the corrupt and lazy, and too much government interference in private lives today and the church is obligated to speak up and speak out on such issues!

God **commanded** the Israelites to be kind and helpful to “sojourners” (foreigners, those passing through) (Deut. 24:19-22) **in order to cause themselves to remember that they were SLAVES (sojourners, temporary residents) in the land of Egypt and thus be grateful, gracious, and kind in imitation of their own Heavenly Father!** Our love for others is **BECAUSE God first loved us (1 Jn. 4:19–5:3)**. If we claim to be “children of God” then we must **imitate** God in justice, mercy, kindness, love, forgiveness, helpfulness (see Eph. 4:25—5:2). If we claim to be disciples of Jesus we must **imitate** the Father whom Jesus manifested (see Matt. 5:43-48). We must remember that we are only “pilgrims” (Heb. 11:13-16; 11:39-40) (i.e., sojourners),

temporary residents, passing through this world, and that God has **redeemed us** from the bondage of sin. Therefore, we must “let brotherly love continue, not neglecting to show hospitality to strangers, remembering those in prison, as though in prison with them; and those who are ill-treated; let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled; keeping our lives free from the love of money and be content with what we have” (Heb. 13:1-6). THIS IS NOT OUR HOME, WE’RE JUST PASSING THROUGH ON THE WAY TO HEAVEN! **But most importantly, we have been freed from the bondage of sin so that we may inherit heaven**

DEUTERONOMY 25:1—26:19

Criminals in the Old Covenant were to be punished *in proportion to their offense, no more, no less*. Limiting the number of strokes of the lash (whip) was to insure justice would be done in an impartial manner. All guilty of an offense deserving lashing (being beaten) would receive the same number. Officials doing the punishing were warned to be careful not to exceed the limit. The Hebrew rabbinic writings (i.e., *Kalah*) said that if a miscount occurred the one being beaten could consider the official doing the whipping “despicable.” The original law of Moses apparently stipulated the punishment was to be administered with a rod (Ex. 21:20; Prov. 10:13; 19:29; 26:3). By law punishment with stripes was restricted to 40 at one beating. What God is legislating here is the **law of honesty on the part of the officials in his covenant people**. Scourging replaced the rod in later Jewish history (Matt. 10:17; 23:34). The whip with which these stripes were given (in the apostle Paul’s day) consisted of three separate cords, with each stroke being counted as three stripes, beyond which they never went. The one convicted of the offense would actually receive 13 strokes with the 3-corded lash which would make 39—hence the expression “forty stripes save one.” 14 strokes would have been 42 stripes! **Public whipping** as punishment for crime continued in most countries, even in colonial and Revolutionary War days in America, until the mid 19th century. It is practiced even today in some Islamic and 3rd-world countries. It was administered in the 1990s in Singapore to a young man who had vandalized an automobile! IT MIGHT BE A VIABLE PUNISHMENT FOR CERTAIN NON-VIOLENT CRIMINALS EVEN IN THE “CIVILIZED” U.S. TODAY—one benefit to such punishment today would be to keep down the population of our non-violent offenders in our jails and penitentiaries, and relieve the U.S. taxpayer of some of the huge expenses for housing non-violent criminals! Public whipping is no more demeaning than what a violator of the law endures when being incarcerated in today’s penal system! “Chain-gangs” and “boot-camps” have been found to produce less recidivism than incarceration in modern penal methods! Those are certainly “demeaning.” What about the church? Could it ever be **too severe** in disciplining one of its members? YES! (See 2 Cor. 2:5-11; 2 Thess. 3:14-15). Too much severity in punishment, even in the church, could result in the disciplined one turning away from Christ—other church members might be offended and lost to the flock—the secular world would rationalize mocking God’s church.

God cares for even the lowly animal creatures and demands that human owners care for those animals which labor for human beings. The ox is **worthy** of its feed and care because it works! Do not forget that God created the home you live in, the car you drive, the tools with which you earn your living, and even the clothing you wear, just as surely as he created the ox! How, then, does this “law” apply to the Christian and his “material oxen”? It means we should take care of our tools and machines. It means we should take care of “creation” (trees, water, soil, animals, etc.). It means Christians should teach others to do the same! **But more importantly**, if God makes it **his law** that even those non-human things which work for us should be **worthy** of payment of wages commensurate with their work—HOW MUCH MORE IS IT GOD’S LAW THAT HUMANS WHO WORK FOR OTHER HUMANS SHOULD BE **WORTHY** OF

PROPER WAGES?! Wages paid for work done should never be considered a condescension or paid grudgingly—but **honest and gladly**, because in so doing we obeying the will of Almighty God! How much do you think a preacher’s “hire” is worth? (see 1 Cor. 9:1-14; 1 Tim. 5:17-18; Gal. 6:6)—should a preacher be paid for studying long hours in order to better expound the word of God? To find what the highest priority of the work of an evangelist is, study 1 and 2 Timothy! It is my opinion that a preacher should be paid commensurate with his college training (just as secular workers are) and the hours and the size of the institution to which he ministers. There should be elders and members invited to take a week and follow the preacher around to find out much “work” he does in ministering to the congregation. There should be more Bible teaching on the Biblical priorities God desires of “evangelists” (i.e., preachers).

The Levirate Law (Marriage) was an ancient custom sanctioned by practice (Gen. 38:8ff) and by law (Deut. 25:5-10) and does not contradict Leviticus 18:16; 20:21 where the participants are all alive. The Levirate Law says that a deceased Israelite’s brother or nearest male relative was required to marry his brother’s widow and raise up seed in his brother’s name. To repudiate this obligation meant public infamy. Ruth’s marriage to Boaz recognized this law (Ruth 4:1-17). It also underlies the argument of the Sadducees in Matt. 22:23-33. The Levirate Law was necessary for that particular culture and for the hardness of men’s hearts. Ancient Israelites were dependent for their living almost exclusively on an agricultural economy. Each was given a portion of land (“heritage”) and it was to be passed on to descendants within the immediate family. When an Israelite farmer died and his wife was left a widow without a son to receive the “heritage” this widow would often be thrown off her farm and one of her brothers-in-law would take over the property. God decreed the Levirate Law to protect widows and to teach men **honest and decency**. Would Christians act dishonestly toward widows and others when it becomes a matter of “inheritances,” property, making a living, etc.? **INDEED THEY WOULD, AND SOMETIMES DO!** How is a Christian **supposed to act in these matters?** See Lk. 12:13-34; 15:1-32; Acts. 2:43-47; 5:1-11; 1 Cor. 6:1-11; 1 Tim. 5:3-16, Heb. 13:1-6; James 1:27 etc.). Christians must not be greedy and covetous; they must share with widows and orphans and all the less fortunate. Christians must even allow *himself/herself* to be defrauded before dragging a fellow Christian into court. But it would not be legal, or advisable, in our modern culture to practice the Levirate Law.

Most commentators think Deut. 25:11-12 is a continuation of the “spirit” of the sanctity of procreation legislated in the Levirate Law. Some say the text is to prohibit a woman’s retaliation upon a brother-in-law who will not obey the Levirate Law. She must **not resort to indecency, or acts of violence that might mutilate the brother-in-law and prohibit him from siring more children**. She is neither to seduce him or harm him lest her hand be cut off. This law says that a woman may not grab the private parts of a man even in the defense of her husband. She might injure the man and thus deprive him of the right of procreation. Such a woman was to have her hand cut off. This is the only case of punishment by mutilation in the Law. It underscores the tremendous reverence the ancients had for the organs of procreation. The perpetual principle here is that the end does not justify the means. Would the merciful Jesus be this serious about Christians seducing or harming people with one’s hands? (see Matt.

5:30). To what lengths would some people go to get “heritages” or property? Some will cheat, lie and even kill over “inheritances.” Some will sell their souls by other immoral compromises to obtain their “heritage.” And some, with hatred and grudges, will sever personal, familial relationships for the rest of their lives. **SOME PEOPLE WILL USE ANY MEANS TO JUSTIFY THE END THEY SEEK!**

Israelites were not to have two weights, one for buying and one for selling. Heavier weights would acquire more than one paid for when buying, a lighter weight would provide less to the customer of the time of sale. Such practices were **abominable** to the Lord. God’s will is firmly set **against cheating and being dishonest in business dealings**. This was one of the most prevalent sins of the Hebrew people in the days of the O.T. prophets—false balances! Modern business firms, large and small, cheat the buying-public with false advertising, false pricing, shoddy workmanship in materials, and do so deliberately. Their motto is ***caveat emptor***, “let the buyer beware.” **But God’s motto is, *caveat venditor*, “let the seller beware.”** Would a Christian, making his living in retail or wholesale business, be able to sell under the attitude and practice, “Let the buyer beware”? What if when we all get to heaven, some saints operate grocery stores or appliance stores—who will have to beware there? Christians must live here like they expect to live in heaven. The seller will beware in heaven! But then, so those who labor to manufacture or produce what is retailed! Why is dishonesty an **abomination** to the Lord? It is interesting that the Greek word *kalos*, or “good,” is translated either “honest” or “honorable.” The Latin word *honestus* is from *honor* which also means “honorable.” The dishonest person is a dishonoring person—dishonoring his Creator and himself (see Lk. 8:15; Acts 6:3; Rom. 12:17; 13:13; 2 Cor. 8:21; 17:7 (“right”); Phil. 4:8; 1 Thess. 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:2; Heb. 13:18; 1 Pet. 2:12). **GOD’S LAW SAYS CHEATING IS DISHONORABLE!** People are tempted most often to be dishonest in money matters (taxes, sales, benevolence); about their sins (either bragging about them or not confessing them at all); about their accomplishments.

The Israelite was required to bring his offering and confess (swear) that he had come into the land which the Lord swore to give to his people. He was to recite from memory the past history of his people. In other words, the Israelite worshiper was to honestly acknowledge that God had kept his word and that the worshiper received what he had by the grace of God. **TO CONFESS ANYTHING ELSE WOULD BE A LIE!** Even Christians, today, must be careful that they are not guilty of lying about what they have. Christians must constantly acknowledge that everything they “possess” is not really deserved—but is theirs by the grace of God—that includes material things, spiritual things. The Israelites were required to bring the “first fruit”—why did God want first fruits? **TO TEACH HUMAN BEINGS TO REMEMBER THAT EVERYTHING THEY HAVE BELONGS TO GOD THE CREATOR AND BENEFACTOR** (see Malachi 1:6-14; 3:8-12). Remember what Jesus taught about dishonest stewards! **HUMAN BEINGS MUST LEARN THAT GOD IS THEIR FIRST PRIORITY!** God wants to give believers the opportunity to be honest and honorable when he demands the “first fruits”—he takes away the temptation to be dishonest and dishonorable. God wants to bless believers with a clear conscience by demanding they give him first priority! Abraham was called “father of the faithful” and “friend of God” because he gave the Lord from the “**top** of the

pile” (Gen. 14:20; Heb. 7:4).

The “needy” to be helped were the Levites (ministers) of the Lord’s house who had no other way to provide their living. They were to be given sufficient means, not just to “get by”, but to be “filled.” This was also to be done for the sojourner, the widows and the orphans. God wanted the Israelites to be **so thoroughly honest** about taking care of the “needy” that they would be able to **stand before the Lord and honestly say** they have not saved for *themselves* any of that portion which has been required for the “needy.” **Only** when this is the **truth** in one’s life could one pray properly for God’s blessing! Christians should do no less than the Israelites! Christians should choose needy orphans, widows, or “ministers” in God’s house, and minister to them continuously. Christians should support mission works which are doing this. Christians should help the lonely to be not lonely—help the unemployed to find work. It may be that a major hindrance to our righteous and fervent pray for God’s blessing is a guilty conscience about being honest with God about our helpfulness to the “needy”—a hardened, uncaring attitude. This would mean we have a wrong motive for praying to God!—a selfish motive!

One **does** God’s commandments **with ALL one’s heart and soul** by deciding there shall be **no reservations in the doing of God’s commandments!** One will not try to rationalize away, excuse oneself from, put off doing, or do God’s commandments partially! When one knows one of God’s commandments, one will sacrifice anything, any feeling, any personal preference, any circumstance **to do exactly and precisely what God has clearly commanded!** One will put all one’s resources, all one’s energies, one’s talents, one’s possessions **totally** into doing what one knows as God’s commandment! **THERE IS ONLY ONE COMMANDMENT FOR THE NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIAN—LOVE** (Matt. 22:34-40; John 13:34; Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:14; Jas. 2:8). **But love is not self-defining! Love is not humanly defined! Love is defined in God’s commandments (1 Jn. 5:2-3).** The motive and power for any human to love as God commands is in the vicarious death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. “For the love of Christ **controls** us because we are convinced that one has died for all, therefore all have died. And he died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.” (2 Cor. 5:14-15). The way to do God’s commandments with all the heart and soul is to allow **self** to be **crucified** (Rom. 6:1-11; Gal. 2:20-21; Col. 3:5-17, etc.).

DEUTERONOMY 27:1—28:68

The Israelites **never completely carried out God's commandments!** They certainly had his commandments before their eyes enough. Moses here (Deut. 27:1-8) told the Israelites to write all the words of God's law upon the plaster of the sacrificial altar where they were to come to worship. And Joshua did exactly that (see Josh. 8:30-35). There, upon the altar, the written word of God could be seen and known by God's people every time they brought an offering to the house of God (Tabernacle). The writer of Chronicles (2 Chron. 30:1-12; 36:15) declares that the Jews paid no attention to the law of the Lord. Jeremiah the prophet repeatedly condemned his people for not listening to the word of God proclaimed by the prophets (Jer. 7:13; 7:21-26; 25:1-7; see Ezek. 5:5-6). Isaiah represents the people of his day as *forbidding* the prophets to proclaim the word of the Lord (Isa. 30:8-18; see Amos 2:12). Amos was threatened with his life for continuing to preach the law of God (Amos 7:10-16). Stephen, the early Christian martyr (Acts 7:51-53), formerly a Jew himself, as he was about to be stoned to death, testified that the Jews had never kept God's commandments, even though they had been repeated to them time after time. **And, for the most part, the Jews never obeyed the preaching of Jesus Christ or his apostles!** While thousands of Jews became Christians, there were millions more who did not. **AND MODERN JEWS CERTAINLY DO NOT KEEP THE LAW OF MOSES (NOR THE WORD OF THE MESSIAH AND HIS APOSTLES)!** God told the Israelites to construct the altar for worship from "pure" (Hebrew word is *shalom*, literally, "whole, uncut, unadulterated") stones. Whatever belongs to God is to be holy, whole, pure, unadulterated. If God requires this of the altar upon which his law was written, how much more is he jealous about the purity and wholeness of his Word in the hearts of Christians? Are there ways in which the **written word of God** could be made **more** preeminent in Christian worship today? YES! There must be more of the text of God's Word (the Bible) read from the pulpit in today's congregation. There could be more "responsive readings" of the Bible in worship services. Young people in the church (and adults as well) should institute ways and means by which they could **memorize** more of the Scriptures! Clearly, in the preaching and teaching of the Word in church services (and at home) more care must be taken to practice correct hermeneutics in the study of God's word.

Moses was stressing the Israelite's **commitment** to Jehovah-God in **covenant relationship** (Deut. 27:9-19). They had, of their own free will, chosen Jehovah as their God and Lord (Deut. 26:16-19)! Now they must understand the **seriousness** of their choice. It will demand **full commitment**. Moses said, "This day...." (using "day" metaphorically to mean, "at this time") because they had finally arrived at their "home land" and were about to become a "nation" just as God had promised their ancient forefather, Abraham, some 600 years earlier (Gen. 14:12-16; 17:1-8) and reiterated to Isaac and Jacob. Hebrews were circumcised beginning with Abraham and all during the time of their "sojourning" in Canaan and Egypt and the wilderness. They were pilgrims for hundreds of years. God was putting them to the test. Only when they finally exhibited that they had fully committed themselves to his commandments, and the consequences of disobedience, did God say, "This day you have become the people of

the Lord your God"! Do new "babes in Christ" (new Christians—or long-time ones for that matter) really understand the **seriousness of their commitment to Christ?** Commitment to Christ involves loving Christ more than houses and lands, more than mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters. It involves a renunciation of all that we have (Lk. 14:33). It involves taking up our "cross" (dying daily to self) and following wherever Jesus leads (Lk. 14:26-27). It involves being controlled by the love of Christ until we see everything from his viewpoint (2 Cor. 5:14-21). It involves the humility sufficient to "count others better than ourselves" (Phil. 2:3). It involves "looking not only to our own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Phil. 2:4). It involves loving our enemies and praying for their good! We could go on and on. **BUT IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE LEADERSHIP OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST TO SEE THAT EACH MEMBER UNDERSTAND THE SERIOUSNESS OF COMMITMENT TO CHRIST!** That can only be done through plain, repeated, Biblical teaching!

Moses made a dramatic and graphic repetition of the curses and blessings of the Law—one that the Israelites could hear and see. Moses also said this was to be repeated when the people moved into the promised land. And it was (Josh. 8:30-35). An Israelite would, if he seriously said "Amen" to the last curse (27:26), have to admit that he must **trust** in the **grace** of God for his salvation! By saying "Amen" to the last curse, he pronounces God's curse upon himself, and **no Israelite ever confirmed the Law in his own life perfectly!** In this way the Israelite was taught to put all his hope in the promised **Redeemer** (the Suffering Servant of Jehovah, (Isa. 53: Gal. 3:6-29) to become a curse **for** him! "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:21; see Heb. 13:12). Today's Christians need no less repetition than the Israelites of God's commandments and the consequences that go with disobedience. Sin is so seductive and mind-occupying. The world outside the church is committing fornication with the devil (1 Jn. 5:19 "lieth" is from the Greek word *keitai*, from which we get the English word "coitus"). The flesh **wars** against the Spirit in us (Gal. 5:16; Rom. 7:7-25; 8:5-8; Jas. 4:1-17; 2 Pet. 2:11).

Five times in 14 verses, God uses the word "if" to precede a promise of blessing. In the 1980s, a teacher at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary was relieved of teaching duties because he said the Bible does not teach "once saved always saved." In other words, he believes the Bible teaches salvation is conditioned on keeping Christ's commandments. **God's blessings are conditional!** They are conditioned upon human beings exercising their own free will to choose whether they will believe and obey God's commandments or not! Yes! It is an awesome idea that God created human beings with the sovereign power of choice (sovereign even over the wishes of God)—**BUT THAT IS WHAT HE DID—ELSE THE BIBLE WOULD BE A FARCE AND A HOAX, FOR IT DEMANDS BELIEF AND CHOICE FROM HUMAN BEINGS! THE ENTIRE BOOK OF HEBREWS IN THE N.T. DEMANDS THAT HUMAN BEINGS MAKE A WILLING CHOICE TO KEEP CHRIST'S COMMANDMENTS!** So, too, do all the Gospels, the book of Acts, all the Epistles, and the book of Revelation. In other words, one cannot read the New Testament without understanding from plain language that God had given man the awesome power to choose his own destiny—Heaven or Hell! The Lord's purpose in giving his promises on condition is to induce

loyalty in human believers. This is to make believers holy (28:9-10) because it is in the believer's spiritual growth in holiness that he takes on the nature of God for himself, which is the highest blessing to which a human being could aspire. In being loyal to Christ's will we take on Christ's nature (see John 6:35-63; Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18; 2 Pet. 1:3-5).

God threatened the Israelites with many physical hurts if they forsook him for other gods, and he also promised spiritual and psychological penalties for apostasy (Deut. 28:20,28). God promised extraordinary afflictions, and lasting, upon the Israelites for disloyalty to him because he had blessed them above all the nations of the earth by calling them especially to be his "covenant" people. **BUT GOD ALSO GAVE THEM UNDENIABLE REASON TO SERVE HIM WITH JOYFULNESS AND GLADNESS OF HEART. The reason being, "the abundance of all things."** (Deut. 28:47). They were ushered into (by the providence of God) a "land flowing with milk and honey." It was a land that could produce **abundance** for a farming, sheep-herding people! God gave them protection (during the "monarchy"—Saul, David, and Solomon) from the enemies surrounding them. In fact, God allowed them to conquer and exploit lands and peoples not in the original promises made to the Patriarchs and Moses. The Lord allowed them to build a lavishly-beautiful Temple where they could come and revel in "feast days" and worship in splendor. **But they were not satisfied—they desired "a king like the nations."** God even gave them that "wish." **But when Solomon died, the kingdom divided, fell into religious apostasy, moral and fiscal decline, civil war, and soon, into exile at the hands of ruthless enemies (Assyria and Babylon).** Paul writes to Christians in Rom. 12:1-2, "I **appeal** to you therefore, brethren, **BY** the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your *spiritual* (actually, *logical*, for the Greek word in the text translated "spiritual" is *logikon* and should be translated, "reasonable") service." **FOR THE CHRISTIAN IT IS ABSOLUTELY REASONABLE THAT BECAUSE OF THE MERCIES OF GOD, HE SHOULD PRESENT HIMSELF TOTALLY TO GOD AS A "LIVING" SACRIFICE!**

Does it startle you to read in Deut. 28:63 that the Lord will "take delight in bringing ruin" and destruction upon the disloyal? (See also Psa. 2:4; Prov. 1:26; Rev. 18:20). **God must satisfy himself in the matter of punishment for disobedience, else he will not be true to himself and therefore not God.** INDEED! GOD DID BRING THESE TERRIBLE CURSES UPON THE ISRAELITES—**IN PRECISE AND EXACT FULFILLMENT, NOT ONCE, BUT MANY TIMES!** The book of Leviticus also warns (Lev. 26:27-29) of the terrible calamities (even cannibalism) that would come to the Jews should they reject God's word (especially about the Messiah). There are at least three times the Jews were so desperate for food from enemy siege and attack that they practiced cannibalism (see 2 Kings 6:29; Jeremiah 19:9 and Josephus, *Wars*, Book VI:3:4). Read the O.T. prophets to learn of the horrendous things that happened to the Jews during their exiles under the Assyrians and Babylonians! Read Josephus, *Wars*, Books V and VI to learn of the appalling atrocities that befell them during the siege of Jerusalem (and the rest of Palestine) by the Romans A.D. 66-70. See my commentary on the *Gospel of Luke*, College Press, 1981, pp. 484-485 for a list of these atrocities. God brought upon the Jews "a nation...from afar, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flies..." (Rome's national symbol was the eagle). Jews killed fellow Jews by

the tens of thousands during the siege of the city of Jerusalem. Children pulled the very morsels of food out of the mouths of their aged parents, and parents did the same to children. Jewish factions within the city fought one another and slew one another in the act of worshiping at the Temple. The Jews themselves were responsible for more death and destruction in the city of Jerusalem than the Romans—just as Daniel predicted in **Dan. 9:26** that it would be “the people of the prince who is to come” (i.e., Messiah) would destroy the city. One method of Jews torturing Jews was to drive wooden spikes up their “private parts” and this for no reason at all except they wished to express some anger. Some ate from public sewers; some ate cattle and pigeon dung, wood, leather shields, hay clothing and things even scavenger animals would not eat. As referenced above, Josephus tells of the incident of a woman roasting her infant son and eating his flesh to stay alive. After the woman did this “the whole city was full of this horrid action immediately.” The Romans, upon capturing the entire city, slew every living person they with whom they came into contact—“they obstructed the very streets with their dead bodies, and made the whole city run down with blood, to such a degree that the fire of many houses was quenched with these men’s blood.” The Romans crucified Jews at the rate of 500 per day—so many they ran out of wood with which to make crosses. Josephus records that 1,100,000 perished and 97,000 were taken captive at the Roman destruction of Jerusalem. Josephus concludes, “...thus the city was thoroughly laid even with the ground...” Only three towers and little part of one wall was left by Titus to “memorialize” his victory over the Jews. Would God ever bring such calamities and atrocities upon the church? God is going to ultimately **save** the true church. **But before he does, she is going to be tested!** The book of Revelation documents how, in the past, God **tested** the “churches of Asia Minor” by the animalistic (i.e., “beast”) Roman empire A.D. 100-450. We believe the Roman empire of A.D. 100-450 also serves in God’s New Testament as **a warning-symbol** to the church in every century since as to how the church will be **tested**—not on the *universal* scale which took place throughout the “civilized” world of the Roman empire, but in more specific methods in various countries of the globe. While in America the church (presently) does not face political (i.e., “beastly”) persecution as the whole Roman empire did, American churches may be undergoing the **test** of the “harlot” (i.e., carnal, licentious, worldly affluence); in the Middle East, China and Sudan, the church is being attacked by “the beast.” Jesus clearly promised most of the 7 churches of Asia Minor that they would suffer his wrath if they did not **repent** of the wickedness within them (re-read Rev. chs. 2-3!).

God provided (past tense) the cure for all these “**curses**” through the Messiah. God has never promised eternal physical life in this body, on this earth! So we are all going to die physically, one way or another. “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (heaven) (1 Cor. 15:50). Anyone who goes to heaven for all eternity will have to be “changed” from this perishable nature.” But even in the O.T. God promised his “Suffering Servant” would be “wounded for our transgressions...bruised for our iniquities; upon him would be the chastisement that makes us whole, and with his stripes we are healed” (Isa. 53:4-5). Those OT people who **believed and kept God’s commandments in faith (not perfectly, of course)** would have the Messiah (God’s Anointed) as their cure for the “curse” upon sin. This Messiah would “finish the transgression, put an end to sin, and atone for iniquity, bring in everlasting

righteousness, seal both vision and prophet, and anoint a most holy place” (Dan. 9:24). Jesus did it! (2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:10-14). PRAISE GOD—READ THE BOOK OF HEBREWS FOR DOCUMENTATION THAT GOD’S “CURSE” UPON SINFUL HUMANITY IS TAKEN AWAY IN THOSE WHO BELIEVE AND OBEY JESUS CHRIST!

DEUTERONOMY 29:1—30:20

Moses makes the statement (Deut. 29:4), "...but to this day the Lord has not given you a mind to understand, or eyes to see, or ears to hear." DOES THAT MEAN THE PEOPLE ARE **INNOCENT** OF NOT KNOWING GOD'S LAW **BECAUSE** THE "LORD" DID NOT "**GIVE**" THEM A MIND TO UNDERSTAND? Hardly! Earlier in the text (29:2-3) Moses said they "seen all that the Lord did before your eyes in the land of Egypt....which your eyes saw, the signs, and those great wonders." These Israelites (Deut. 9:7,24) had a rebellious, hard-headed attitude from the day Moses "met" them until the day they were ready to go into the Promised Land. Such refractory people are incapable of perceiving what they don't want to perceive! Moses spoke God's law to them in their own language! He did not use a foreign tongue, nor did he use words outside of human experience! **THEY COULD HAVE UNDERSTOOD HAD THEY WANTED TO DO SO!** These Israelites were like so many of the Jews in Jesus' day who would not give heed to his teaching **because it was the truth (John 3:19-21; 8:45)**. These Israelites were like the 3 soils in the "Parable of the Sower" (Matt. 13; Mk. 4; Lk. 8) that rejected the "seed" which is the Word of God. **Their progeny continued to be rebellious and hard-headed into the time of the O.T. prophets (see Ezek. 2:1—3:27).**

Moses reminded them that God had provided plenty of **evidence** and **motive** for Israel to turn to him for understanding—they refused! God reminded them that because of their rebellion, they were not "plugged in" to divine help that could have been theirs in understanding his will for them (see also Isa. 29:9-12; 30:8-14; Matt. 11:25-26; Rom. 11:7-10; 2 Cor. 3:14, etc.). Moses related all the **miracles** and **providence** of God shown to their eyes and ears in the 40 years in the wilderness. Divine wisdom is hidden from those who think they are too smart to be told (have revealed) anything by God, even if divine wisdom is all around them or staring them in the face in the person of Jesus Christ (Matt. 11:25-30; Rom. 1:18-23). A human being must be "child-like" (teachable) if they are to learn God's revealed wisdom! **THERE IS NO LACK OF EVIDENCE OR MOTIVE ON THE PART OF GOD, EITHER IN O.T. TIMES OR N.T. TIMES—ANY HUMAN BEING WHO KNOWS HUMAN LANGUAGE CAN KNOW THE REVEALED WILL OF GOD!** Moses reminded these Israelites of the fact that all the blessings she had received in her "wilderness wanderings" were to guide her in understanding who God was so that she would cherish God's revealed Word and prosper in all she did. Christians receive blessings through the providential grace of God, even though they have to "wander" in the "wilderness" of this world's sin and trial —**IF THEY KEEP ON BECOMING "CHILD-LIKE" AND TEACHABLE FROM GOD'S WORD.** They will have divine wisdom about where they came from (their origin), why they are here (their purpose), and where they are ultimately going (their eternal destiny). They will have divine wisdom about all human relationships. Their comforts, their crises, their critiques of their every-day circumstances will be saturated with divine understanding if they evaluate them by the standard of the Word of God.

God expected every Israelite to know the Lord's covenant with her: (a)

“You...all of you” (b) “heads of your tribes”; (c) “your elders”; (d) “your officers”; (e) “all the men of Israel”; (f) “your little ones”; (g) “your wives”; (h) “and the sojourner who is in your camp”; (i) “him who is not here with us this day” (i.e., your posterity). Adults and children, men and women, officials and non-officials—ALL WERE TO KNOW, AND DO, THE LORD’S COVENANT! **There were no exceptions!** Furthermore, Israel was obligated by God to be *evangelistic*—at least within the context of the Old Covenant people. Everyone in the Israelite nation was to be **educated and taught the covenant will of God**. Ignorance of God’s will was unacceptable, even among children and sojourners! If that be the case with Israel and the law—HOW SERIOUS ARE WE TO BE ABOUT **EDUCATING** THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE CHURCH WITH THE **NEW COVENANT REVEALED WILL OF GOD IN THE NEW COVENANT SCRIPTURES????? EXTREMELY, URGENTLY, DOGGEDLY, DETERMINEDLY, EXPERTLY, SERIOUS!!!!** Jesus and the apostles emphasized Biblical education throughout the New Testament (just a few references here, Matt. 28:18-20; John 8:31; 14:23; 15:10; Acts 17:11; 26:19-29; Rom. 12:1-8; 1 Cor. 2:1—3:23; 1 Cor. 15:1-58; 2 Cor. 3:18; 5:11-21; Eph. 1:9-10; 3:7-10; 4:11-16; Col. 1:24-29; 1 Thess. 2:9-13; 5:12-22; 2 Thess. 2:13-5; all of 1 & 2 Timothy; all of Titus; Heb. 5:11-14; 1 Pet. 1:13-25; 2 Pet. 1:3-21; 1 Jn. 2:24; 3:24; 4:1-6; 5:1-3, *et.al.*). God made it clear that he would accept no ignorance of the **basis** upon which he made his covenant promises—that basis was the MESSIANIC PROMISE (what he had sworn to the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob). That means God expected Israel to understand their covenant relationship was by **faith** in the **grace** of God—not in their own self-righteousness. **THEY HAD NO EXCUSE WHEN JESUS CAME PREACHING EXACTLY WHAT MOSES TEACHES HERE IN DEUTERONOMY!** Just like the Jews, many in Christ’s church today are ignorant of the **basis** of Christ’s New Covenant promises because they allow “making provision for the flesh” (Rom. 13:14), “philosophy and vain deceit” (Col. 2:5ff; Eph. 4:14), and “fear” (Phil. 1:28-28) to keep them from **knowing the basis upon which Christ’s New Covenant is received and enjoyed!**

God will accept no plea (especially from Israel) that a multitude of false gods and false religions should excuse ignorance of the true God! God reminded Israel (Deut. 29:16-28) that they had dwelt in Egypt and wandered among other heathen nations enough to know that other gods and other religions were false and **detestable**. He warned Israel that they would not be excused should they turn to these gods and claim ignorance. They should know the difference! **ALL THE DIVINE CURSES OF THE LAW WOULD SETTLE UPON ANY ISRAELITE WHO TURNED TO FALSE GODS (Deut. 29:20). Furthermore, the Lord would blot out the apostate’s name from under heaven (29:20).** The whole land would suffer the wrath of God as well as the apostate. The land would be destroyed in much the same way as Sodom and Gomorrah were! The desolation of an apostate land would provide future generations and foreigners with evidence of God’s wrath that would astound and amaze them! Christians today live in a world where they are surrounded (even in America) by a **multitude of false gods and false religions**. **BUT GOD WILL NOT EXCUSE IGNORANCE OF HIS EXISTENCE AND DEITY BECAUSE OF THIS!** False gods and religions have had sufficient time to prove themselves impotent (Rom. 1:18-32; Acts 17, *et.al.*) God has demonstrated his omnipotence in creation, in history, in prophecy, in Jesus Christ, in his New Covenant Scriptures (the N.T.), in human conscience (Rom.

2:14). God has “put eternity into the heart of mankind” (Eccl. 3:11). Human beings do not have to be immoral and depraved to be **detestable**—they just have to follow false gods and false religions. **Disbelief is the most “evil” thing a human being can do (Heb. 3:12)**. The New Testament document the fulfillment of God’s warnings to the Israelite nation here (see Matt. 23:37-39; 24:1-35; Rom. chs. 9,10,11; 1 Thess. 2:16).

Yes! There are facts and ideas which God does not want human beings to know! THE BIBLE SAYS SO—RIGHT HERE IN Deut. 29:29. This verse may be a warning to the Israelites not to follow heathen religions which always seem to want major in delving into the “secret” things which God chooses not to reveal. In doing so, they would disregard the things God has “revealed” and **does** want human beings to know and do. Whatever its contextual connection, it certainly has application now as well as then! Jesus even thanked God that he had “hidden...things from the wise and understanding” (Matt. 11:26). Jesus also told his apostles at one point in their discipleship that there were things he could not then tell them because they were “unable at that point to bear them.” (Jn. 16:12). GOD REVEALS HIMSELF ACCORDING TO **HIS** DETERMINATION (Heb. 2:1-4). Paul, the apostle, was “caught up into the third heaven and heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter” (2 Cor. 12:4). There are numerous questions human beings would like to know that God apparently decided we did not need to know—e.g., (a) where, why and how did sin (or Satan) originate; (b) how can God be three persons in one—“the Trinity”; (c) the time of the end of the world; and many others! God had undeniably revealed to the Israelites all they needed to trust him and obey him. But that did not seem to satisfy them. In the days of the prophets they tried to discard what God had revealed and discover the “secrets” by communicating with the dead or engaging in the “mystery cults” of the heathen. GOD HAS REVEALED TO HUMANITY THROUGH HIS OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY AND THROUGH HIS SON, JESUS CHRIST, AND THROUGH THE NEW TESTAMENT HISTORY **ALL THAT IS NEEDED FOR REDEMPTION, SALVATION AND SANCTIFICATION**. God’s revelation through Jesus Christ and the writers of the New Testament Scriptures should be sufficient and satisfactory for all people in the world today because: (a) it is based on facts not theories; (b) it has been proven to produce goodness, both physically and socially; (c) it is the only psychologically-curing ideology existing. God said that his revelation would be sufficient for all succeeding generations of mankind in order that they might do his will. IT IS NOW UP TO THE CHURCH TO ACT IN ORDER TO PERPETUATE THE REVELATION OF GOD AS AN ALL SUFFICIENT RULE OF FAITH AND PRACTICE. **She must train each new generation and convince and commit them to this proposition; she must not cut off the Scriptural moorings of the church; she must believe this proposition NOW!**

Deut. 30:11-14 means that although the Israelites had been exiles in a foreign land under the oppression of hostile rulers that was **no excuse** for ignorance of as much of his Will and Word as he had revealed to them (Deut. 30:1-14). God held them responsible for believing and trusting in the promises and commandments he had given to their “fathers” (Deut. 30:5) Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as well as the promises and commandments he had given them “that day” (i.e., from the time Moses had become their “leader” and received the law on Mt. Sinai). The Lord made it clear that what he

required of the Israelites (“this commandment”) was “not too hard” nor was it “far off.” He told Israel the “word” (commandment) was “in their mouth and in their heart, so that they **could** do it” (see Rom. 10:5-13; 1 Jn. 5:3; Matt. 11:28-30). Rom. 10:5-13 means the same as Deut. 30:11-14! **GOD’S WORD IN THE NEW COVENANT SCRIPTURES IS EVEN MORE ABUNDANTLY AVAILABLE TO THE WHOLE WORLD TODAY! God’s word is “not too hard nor far off.” ALL PEOPLE HAVE TO DO IS GET A COPY OF HIS WORD IN THEIR LANGUAGE AND READ IT, BELIEVE IT AND DO IT!** Of course, there are still a few languages and/or dialects into which the Scriptures have not been translated, but much fewer than just 100 years ago! With the multitude of missions now engaged in translation, the multitude of missionaries willing to sacrifice everything to translate, the mass communication media available, etc., etc., the word of the living God is being made available to billions of people! **THERE CERTAINLY IS NO EXCUSE FOR ANY ENGLISH, GERMAN, FRENCH, SPANISH, SCANDINAVIAN, JAPANESE, KOREAN, CHINESE, RUSSIAN, ITALIAN, SLOVAKIAN, ARABIC AND JEWISH SPEAKING PEOPLES FOR NOT KNOWING THE WORD OF THE LORD AND DOING IT!**

Heaven and earth bears witness (i.e., gives evidence) against human ignorance of the existence of God and the wrath of God upon sin through: (a) the design and orderliness of creation (Psa. 119:89-91; Rom. 1:18-23); (b) human beings suffering the due penalty of their sins (Rom. 1:27); (c) seasons of blessings (Acts 14:16-18); (d) the “futility and decay” of creation (Rom. 8:20-23); (e) the human conscience (Rom. 2:12-16) by which those who do not have a written revelation of God’s will do “by nature” what the law requires; (f) the historicity of the Old Testament and New Testament written Scriptures. Pleasing God, even in the Old Testament, was a matter of where the human heart was focused. Remember, God justified Abraham, not because Abraham was sinless, but because Abraham believed with his heart (Gen. 15:6). God promised to bless these Israelites on the same basis. There are practical ways that we, in the 21st century, may know our hearts are aimed at loving God (a) where our treasure is (Matt. 6:21); (b) what we think about God (Col. Chs. 2 & 3); (c) how we react to trial and testing (1 Pet. 4:4) and what others think about our life in respect to our profession of the Christian religion!

DEUTERONOMY 31:1—32:52

For a discussion of why Moses was not allowed to enter the land of Canaan **see notes on Deut. 1:37-38; and Deut. 32:46-52**). God puts it very simply in Deut. 32:51, “because you broke faith with me in the midst of the people of Israel at the waters of Meribath-kadesh in the wilderness of Zin; because you did not revere me as holy in the midst of the people of Israel.” Moses prepared the Israelites for his passing away and the absence of his continued leadership. Moses was 120 years old but still physically capable—it wasn’t for physical weakness that his role as leader was over. Moses’ role in God’s plan was completed. A new task called for new leadership. They must be **strong and of good courage** even though he will not be with them to lead them **into** the promised land. He must turn over leadership to Joshua—but actually it is God who is doing the leading all along. **All human leaders fail sometimes. Even Moses failed! Even the apostles failed at times! Every human leader in the church is fallible! No human leader is an absolute necessity for the success or perpetuation of God’s plan for redeeming the world! ONLY THE SON OF GOD WAS AN ABSOLUTE NECESSITY FOR REDEMPTION!** Human leaders come and go but God is always on his throne (Jer. 27:5-7; Dan. 2:20-23)! Human leaders all have flaws and weaknesses. When people seeking God’s will put too much emphasis and dependence on human leaders it may cause: (a) leaders to become arrogant or sometimes paralyzed with inadequacies; (b) those who idolize human leaders to find they are under tyrants and lose their Christian freedom; (c) when the first two ensue, then both leader and those led are lost. **Moses repeats at least four times, “it is the Lord your God who goes with you (Deut. 31:1-8). It is almost as if Moses *knows* they will forget that God is with them!** THE REFUSAL OF GOD TO ALLOW MOSES TO ENTER THE PROMISED LAND WAS A STARTLING, GRAPHIC, DRAMATIC, SOMBER REMINDER THAT JUSTIFICATION BEFORE GOD IS BY GRACE—NOT BY ANY SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS OF ANY HUMAN BEING—EVEN MOSES! The Jews of Jesus’ day did not seem to catch this lesson well (Jn. 5:45-47; 6:32-33; 9:29; Acts 6:11,14; 15:21; 21:20-21; 2 Cor. 3:13-15; Heb. 3:16-19). Why would Christians today forget that God is present in their everyday lives seeking to guide them and save them? (a) because they have an enemy (the devil) who keeps trying to deceive them; (b) because they want to be deceived; (c) because they church is not doing all it could to warn them.

The O.T. records only two times that the law was read to all the people at the Feast of Tabernacles—first by King Josiah (2 Kings 23:1-3 & 2 Chron. 34:30). From the time Joshua read the law to all the people (Josh. 8:34) to the time Josiah read it to all the people at once (2 Chron. 34:30) was some 530 years. Jehoshaphat sent his “princes” among the people, through all the cities of Judah to *teach* them the book of the law (2 Chron. 17:7-9), but that was not at the Feast of Tabernacles. The second time the law in its entirety was read before all the people was in the return from the exile, 100 years after Josiah (Nehemiah 8:13—9:38). From Nehemiah to the destruction of Jerusalem (a period of about 500 years) there is **no** record of its being read at Tabernacles before the entire nation! In all this time the Jews learned a great

deal about foreign religions (foreign theologies) and Jewish traditions—but not the Word of God! The priests kept them ignorant. There was something in the law of God that applied to every resident of the nation of Israel—men, women, children, “sojourners” (foreigners). The Lord intended the **whole law, to be read to everyone, every seven years**. The law of Moses (even if it was the entire first 5 books of the Bible would not take long to read. In the English translation (which requires more written words than the Hebrew language) the Pentateuch is (Genesis through Deuteronomy) is only 225 pages. We wonder why that could not be read every seven years! My English Bible (RSV) has only 1296 pages from Genesis 1:1 through Revelation 22:21. Reading every day for 7 years, I could read through the Bible by just reading ½ page per day! By reading just 3.5 pages per day, I could read through the Bible in one year! How many of us have ever read through the Bible completely? CONFESS! WHAT KEEPS YOU FROM READING THE BIBLE THROUGH IN ONE YEAR? (a) “I’m lazy”; (b) “I spend time being entertained (TV, movies, leisure-time-activities) when I could read the Bible”; (c) I read it every day (almost) but not straight through”; (d) “I don’t think it’s that important”; (d)“I just don’t want to do it!” **READ THE BIBLE, EVERY DAY—YOUR ETERNAL DESTINY IS AT STAKE!**

So, the time came for Moses to relinquish the reins of leadership of a nation. It also came time for him to die—for his physical body to return to the dust from whence it came. He had given up the throne of Egypt to spend 40 years in the wilderness himself to be tested and prepared to lead his people out of Egyptian bondage. He had led a complaining, rebelling, and fleshly-minded people through forty years of wandering in the wildernesses of the Sinai peninsula. Many of his people had died under the judgment of God in the wilderness. Now he is not to be allowed to go into the Promised Land. Furthermore, after Israel settles in Canaan she will soon (for the most part) mock everything Moses has taught them in the Law. So, Moses was a failure? So, Moses should get **discouraged**? **NO! Moses “looked for the reward” (Heb. 11:26)**. Moses was **faithful** (Heb. 3:1-18; 11:23-28) in the face of very discouraging trials (though occasionally sinful, he was penitent) so God took him to heaven (Matt. 17:1-8). Moses promised Israel that God would “not fail or forsake” her—yet in Deut. 31:17 God says he would (in the future) “forsake Israel “hide his face from them...” **And God did forsake Israel BECAUSE ISRAEL FIRST FORSOOK HIM!** Have you ever been disappointed or discouraged with your congregation or preacher because they were “*not successful*”? Why? (a) because you looked at them through human perspective (2 Cor. 5:16; 11:7-12)?; (b) because you did not realize the Bible taught that “success” is simply “faithfulness” and not numbers or eloquence or personality or entertainment?; (c) because you made your judgment without knowing all the facts? Remember this—God will not **force** anyone to belong to him—God keeps trying to call all rebels back to him through discipline until **he** knows it is useless. **GOD WILL NEVER FORSAKE US IF WE DON’T FORSAKE HIM** (Heb. 13:5-6).

The purpose of the “Song of Moses” was to **teach!** God **revealed** the words of the song to Moses—Moses didn’t compose it himself! It was not primarily for worship! It was to **witness** or **proclaim** God’s will against the rebellious, murmuring, slandering Israelites! This “Song of Moses” was a “medium” by which he served the Lord to **teach** Israel she **needed to repent**—the “Song” is saturated with **judgment!** See the “songs”

in the book of Revelation! For Moses (and for modern Christians) the **revealed Word of God** must be the **content** of any medium used to **teach**. Moses called for the Israelites to be assembled that he might “speak these words in their ears” (Deut. 31:28-30). Notice, it does not even say Moses sang the words—the **emphasis** is not on tune or melody or beat, but on the **words—on the message!** There are numerous “songs” (or “choruses”) which Christians sing today (some of them even “old standards in the hymn-books”) which are at best *unscriptural*, and some definitely *in opposition to clear Biblical doctrine*. SO WHAT ARE WE **TEACHING** WHEN WE SING THESE SONGS? AT BEST, WE ARE TEACHING THAT DOCTRINE DOES NOT MATTER!!! Here are some things that may be done to correct that: (a) teach repeatedly in the church what the Bible really says about Christian music; (b) quit singing *unscriptural* songs; (c) learn some **new** hymns out of the **old hymn book**. You ask, “What is the emphasis in the N.T. on music as a Christian medium? (a) Eph. 5:15ff—“**speaking** (teaching) to one another”; (b) 1 Cor. 14:1-32—**understanding** (how may one “understand” when the words can’t be heard for the instrumental noise); (c) Rom. 15:9; Rev. 5:9; 14:3; 15:3—**urging repentance and evangelism and for praise**. See also Psa. 105:2; 119:172, etc.

Here is a list of **characteristics** which I find in the “Song of Moses”: God is (a) a revealer “speaker” of his will; (b) providential; (c) great; (d) perfect; (e) just; (f) faithful; (g) without iniquity; (h) a father; (i) the Creator; (j) fixer of the “bounds of the peoples”; (k) caring; (l) the Leader; (m) jealous; (n) able to be provoked to anger; (o) vengeful against unbelief; (p) ready to vindicate his believing people; (q) compassionate toward his “servants”; (r) totally sovereign over life and death; (s) makes expiation for his people. God **gave (i.e., revealed)** to Moses the words of this “song” to teach God’s divine Creatorship and Sustaining Love. In this “song” emphasis is placed on the Lord’s **sovereign wisdom**—and that man is to accept it as perfect and not give back to God perversity or corruption or unbelief! These are the songs we might sing today about these characteristics of God—“Holy, Holy, Holy”—“O Worship the King”—“How Great Thou Art.” God directed Moses to speak verses of confession of sin in this song (32:15-18). Isaiah’s “song” was one of confession (Isa. 5:1ff); David wrote a number of confession Psalms—the most famous being Psalms 32 and 51. These are some songs we might sing today about this—“Beneath The Cross of Jesus”—“Whiter Than Snow”—“I’ve Wandered Far Away From Home.” Moses was told to speak words in his song of God’s faithfulness to destroy the enemies of his covenant people and vindicate them. The “song” commands God’s people to praise him for destruction of enemies (32:19-41; see also Rev. 18:20). Here are some songs we might sing today about this—“A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”—“Lead On O King Eternal”—“Encamped Along The Hills of Light.”

Moses “**recited**” (i.e., repeated) “all the words of this song in the hearing of the people, he and Joshua the son of Nun.” Moses and Joshua sang a duet (32:44)! Then Moses told the people to “lay to heart all the words which I enjoin upon you this day, that you may command them to your children, that they may be careful to do all the words of this law! **For it is no trifle for you, but it is your life....**” Notice, if a song contains God’s word, it is a **command**, not entertainment! The Hebrew word translated “trifle” (32:47) is *ruq*, (pronounced, “rouck”), and means, “useless, empty, void.” So-called

“Christian” music which focuses on anything other than the Word of God (such as mystical experiences, e.g., “I Came To The Garden Alone”) would clearly fall in the category of “trifling” (i.e., useless, empty, void). **And there are definitely circumstances in the modern church “song-service” when so-called “Christian songs” lose their usefulness and become trifling** (a) when one is unable to hear the lyrics (words)—when the instruments or amplifiers are too loud; (b) when the lyrics (words) are unscriptural; (c) when the music is “performed” (i.e., to direct the focus on the “performer”) rather than delivered. A Christian writer (Wayne Rice) attended a *Christian Artists Music Seminar and Camp* in Estes Park, CO, a few years ago and wrote an article entitled, “Rockin’ Out in the Rockies.” I will quote a few lines from his article: “...it seemed to me that the hidden agenda at Estes Park was that Gospel music is primarily for the professional. That it is something to be performed—to be watched on a stage or to be played on your stereo. During the week there were daytime seminars like, ‘How to Have a Traveling Music Ministry,’ ‘How to Choose P.A. Systems,’ ‘How to Be a Recording Studio Singer,’ ‘Promotion and Media Relations,’ and one on ‘Stage Presence: How to Stand, Smile and React.’ It was clear that the emphasis was on Gospel music as a profession and as a rather lucrative one at that. I guess the question is whether or not the church really needs more professionals on the professional Christian circuit. It was pointed out to me...that professional Christian performers are needed to support a thriving, growing Gospel music industry which, like its secular counterpart, includes dozens of record companies, concert promoters, fan and trade publications, radio stations, and so on. That it is, after all, show business. **Christian show business. It has a nice ring to it, doesn’t it?** We now have Christian celebrities, Christian agents, a Christian ‘top forty’ and most importantly a Christian market. Gospel music promoters proudly boast that Gospel music is now where ‘Country’ music was ten years ago—right on the verge of gaining national and worldwide acceptance. Already many of the top Gospel music acts are booked with regularity into places like Disneyland, Magic Mountain, and Las Vegas. Definite ‘big time.’” Mr. Rice goes on to say, “...I don’t think that Gospel music, or the presentation of the Gospel quite fits into the show business mold. Show business (i.e., the entertainment industry) provides the public with an escape from reality, yet the Gospel does just the opposite. Show business is a world of make-believe—false fronts, make-up men and ‘beautiful people,’ while the Gospel is truth that hopefully does away with false fronts and honors the ordinary, the lowly, the un-beautiful. A show business approach to presenting the gospel non-verbally contradicts the very Gospel being presented.” Finally, Mr. Rice critiqued the content of “Gospel music.” He writes, “the words are the most important thing. Preachers and theologians prepare themselves for years to avoid misrepresenting the Gospel, and it should follow that music which is designed to communicate the Gospel should likewise deserve equal care and consideration before being unleashed on the church. I tried to listen (as much as was humanly possible) to the words of the songs performed at Este Park, and it was evident to me that much of our contemporary Gospel music is being composed by people who know a lot more about music than they do about theology. It is unfortunate that a significant percentage of today’s Gospel music is extremely shallow in content and largely ‘experiential’ (songs about ‘me’ and what has happened to ‘me’)...I’m convinced that a large percentage of Christians who attend Gospel concerts and who buy Gospel

records are people who lack authentic 'experiences' of their own and have become content to live off the experience of their favorite Gospel music performers. They get their experiences from the music."

Here is an interesting thought from the *Pulpit Commentary*: "Active workers and leaders in God's church often lay down their work with a strange feeling of incompleteness. Moses had brought the people thus far, *just to the verge* of the promised land! He would gladly have finished the work. But it was well for Moses to feel how entirely the work was of God and not of man. How many a worker would like to see this or that controversy closed, this or that Church settled, this publication completed, this convert a little more established in the faith?! But no. It is as God wills, and that will is best." Although Moses would not enter Canaan, he would "be gathered to *his* people" when he died. Where were *his* people? (see Matt. 8:10-11; Mark 12:24-27; Luke 16:1-30; 19:9; Rom. 4:1-16; Gal. 3:6-29; Heb. 11:13-16; 11:32-40). Those who **believed** as Moses did (e.g., Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) were in heaven where Moses was to be, along with Elijah and a host of other O.T. believers (see Matt. 17:3). Lessons to be learned from Moses "unfinished" life—(a) we all have to die sometime, "unfinished" on this earth; (b) we will be "gathered to our people" wherever they are if we are faithful and loyal to Christ; (c) God always wants us better than we ever are but graciously accepts us as we are if we want him.

DEUTERONOMY 33:1—34:12

No! This doesn't answer the question, "Where did God come from?" (Or more grammatically correct, "From where did God come?"). That is most often the question of innocent, naive little children—or from self-sophisticated and belligerent atheists. "The fool hath said in his heart, 'There is no God.'" (Psa. 14:1; 53:1). These statements in Deut. 33:1-2 are *anthropomorphisms* (i.e., words describing an invisible entity in humanly visible terms). How else would an invisible, omnipotent, omnipresent God-Person be described for human beings who have never experienced the *Invisible One*? In Deut. 33:27 God is said to be "eternal." In Micah 5:2 God's "going forth have been from...everlasting" (i.e., God is eternal—he has no beginning and end). In 1 Tim. 1:17 God is said to be "immortal, invisible" (i.e., everlasting, eternal). Get your concordance and look up the word "everlasting" and you will find God described as such numerous times in both O.T. and N.T. Abraham called God, "Everlasting" (Gen. 21:33); Isaiah called God "Everlasting" (Isa. 9:6); David called God, "Everlasting" (Psa. 90:1-2). **God doesn't "come from someplace"—GOD IS, ALWAYS HAS BEEN, AND ALWAYS WILL BE—FOREVER! He has proved that in the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ—his Incarnation (see Jn. 1:1-18; 1 Jn. 1:1-4).** What Moses is trying to convey in human language in 33:1-2 is that God was **present** at every step and juncture of Israel's wandering through the wilderness and was, in fact, speaking with them through his "mouthpiece" Moses when Moses commanded them a law (33:3-4). Christians know Christ's **presence** through the "invisible" Holy Spirit of God, dwelling in their hearts through the instrumentality of Christ's commandments in the New Testament Scriptures (see John chs. 14-15-16; Acts 5:32; Rom. 8:9-17; Eph. 3:14-19; 2 Thess. 2:13-17; 1 Pet. 1:22-25; 1 Jn. 2:24-25; 3:24; 4:6; 5:1-3, etc.). **The Holy Spirit of God "comes to" Christians through the Word of Christ (i.e., the New Testament Scriptures).** THERE'S NOTHING MYSTICAL ABOUT IT! IT DOES NOT REQUIRE SOME EXTRA-BIBLICAL EXPERIENCE! **CHRIST PROMISES IT IN THE N.T. AND WE BELIEVE IT, AND IT HAPPENS!**

Moses said that God **blessed and expressed his LOVE for his people (Israel) WHEN HE GAVE THEM "DIRECTION" THROUGH "COMMANDING THEM A LAW" and when they "followed in God's steps"** (Deut. 33:3-4). God **LOVED** Israel when they allowed him to become their "**king** (i.e. sovereign) in Jeshurun" (Jeshurun means, "very righteous" in Hebrew) (Deut. 33:5). The New Testament is equally clear that the **love of God and Christ** are ours when we surrender to his "very sovereign righteousness" and keep Christ's commandments (e.g., Jn. 14:23; 15:9-11; 1 Jn. 4:7-12; 5:1-3, etc.). On the human level, it is axiomatic that a parent extends his/her love toward a child by giving the child "commandments," guidelines, discipline, nurture, instruction, in what is **right** and chastening when **wrong**—along with providing for their sustenance. **SHOULD WE NOT THEN EXPECT GOD TO EXTEND HIS LOVE TOWARD HIS "CHILDREN" BY GIVING THEM COMMANDMENTS, DISCIPLINE, NURTURE, INSTRUCTION IN RIGHTEOUSNESS AND CHASTENING AGAINST UNRIGHTEOUSNESS ALONG WITH PROVIDING FOR THEIR SUSTENANCE???? Truth be known, love cannot be expressed any other way!** Clearly, providing food

and shelter without “commandments” or guidelines cannot be the sum total of what the word LOVE means!

Many of these tribal families (and the heads of these tribes) were guilty of grievous sins in the past. This was especially true of **Reuben** whose **grave offense against God and humanity** canceled, in effect, his birthright (see Gen. 35:22; 49:3-4). While Moses made intercession with God on behalf of Reuben’s tribe and predicted the tribe would not be annihilated, he predicted “his men would be few.” God meant exactly what he directed Moses to predict, as continuous fulfillment of the prophecy proves. In Judges 5:16 the tribe of Reuben is scorned for its failure to join the others against the Canaanites, and except for 1 Chron. 5:3-20 the tribe of Reuben does not again appear in Israel’s history. It is not mentioned in the 9th century B.C historians. By A.D. 1951 no Jew was permitted to enter the territory once allotted to the tribe of Reuben and the territory now belongs to the Arabs (the nation of Jordan). Jesus has instructed all his followers (believers) to “pray for their enemies” (Matt. 5:43-48; see Ex. 23:4-5; Lk. 23:34; Acts 7:60; Rom. 12:14,20; 1 Cor. 4:12). “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” (Matt. 5:9). Before you pass from this life, you should insure that you have (a) evangelized the lost (and your “enemies”) by word and by financial support to other Christian workers who do so; (b) given physical aid to your “enemies”; (c) prayed for your “enemies.”

God gave to the tribe of Levi, “the godly one,” the Thummim and Urim (Thummim means literally, “Perfection” and Urim means literally, “Light”). This indicates the clarity and exclusiveness with which God would communicate his **non-written** will through the tribe of Levi (the priestly tribe). The ancient Israelite priests often acted as God’s spokesmen in matters not enunciated in the written law so they had to seek God’s direction, especially in matters of national importance or national crisis (see Num. 27:18-21; 1 Sam. 28:5-6; Ezra 2:63). The possession of the Urim and Thummim was a great privilege and honor for the priestly tribe. But it also carried with it tremendous responsibility for the Levites to be “godly” and to keep themselves within the love of God. The tribe of Levi was tested by God in the incident at Massah and “Meribah” (see Deut. 6:16; 9:22; Ex. 17:3-7; Num. ch. 20). In these trials, even though Moses and Aaron (both Levites) stumbled, the tribe proved itself faithful and godly, rising up in defense and honor of the Lord and in support of the covenant. In Ex. 32:27-29, when Moses asked, “Who is on the Lord’s side, let him come unto me” all the sons of Levi gather themselves to him. At Moses command they did not hesitate to take up the sword against their own fellow Israelites who, in their wickedness, were flagrantly flaunting their allegiance to the Lord. Their relation to the disobedient Israelites was not a consideration for them as to who should or should not be slain. Their allegiance had been to God, and Moses said, “they have observed thy word.” Bruce Oberst says in his commentary, “The ramifications of the principle endorsed by the Levites are infinite. What comes first, *principle* or personal friendship considerations? The Levites decided quickly and decisively on the side of God—then proceeded to take appropriate action.” Moses pronounced a special blessing on the tribe of Levi because they were willing to “hate” those against the Lord *even when God’s enemies were their own family members!* COULD YOU DO THAT? Would you be able to be loyal to Christ if it required you to choose between him and a family member? **That’s what it costs to be**

a Christian! (See Matt. 10:32-39; Lk. 14:25-33; 18:18-30).

The original Hebrew text of Deut. 33:27 would read literally, “The God who is from the beginning is your dwelling place (or habitation), and underneath are the everlasting arms.” It is interesting that this once sentence in the Hebrew language uses the two major words in the language for “eternal” and “everlasting.” In the first phrase it uses the word *qadeem*, which means “from before, from the beginning, from ancient times,” and in the second phrase it uses the word *olam* (the most often used word), which means, “forever, everlasting, eternal.” Long before Moses and the Israelite nation Jehovah God was called “Everlasting” (Gen. 21:33) and was continually called so in the Old Testament (Psa. 74:12; Isa. 51:9; Micah 5:2; Habakkuk 1:12). Almighty God was said to “ride through the heavens to Israel’s help, and in his majesty through the skies (i.e. “clouds”). The word “clouds” (or “skies”) is was a symbolic word used to describe the coming presence of the Lord for help or for judgment in the Old Testament (and used by John in Revelation 1:7)—it was a typical way to express the divine, sovereign majesty of Almighty God. And “underneath” those “skies” were the “everlasting arms.” Jehovah-God was the only one who could carry Israel protectively in his “eternal arms” as he had done through centuries and in spite of many enemies since her beginning with Noah and Abraham and their descendants! The teaching that Moses always made *preeminent* was the *character* of God. The Bible presupposes that if people are **convinced** of the existence and the faithfulness and the love of God they will seek to do his will, without coercion from God. **Convinced** of the love of Christ in his vicarious death and resurrection, we become new creatures (2 Cor. 5:14-21). The second most important teaching Moses (and the whole Bible) always emphasizes is the **past demonstrations** of Israel’s **salvation** and **protection**. The “everlasting arms” are always underneath those who seek them. I have proved this to my mind and heart through God’s historical revelation. I have shared other’s experiences of God’s everlasting arms through their testimonies and actions. And I have emotionally experienced God’s “everlasting arms” underneath me through heart-breaking and testing circumstances as I trusted in his written word.

Moses was told to go up from the plains of Moab (now the land of Jordan) to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho, there to die. He was not to even try to enter into Canaan-land—the land promised to his people. **Moses didn’t have to go up on the mountain and die!** HE STILL HAD PHYSICAL STRENGTH —“HIS EYE WAS NOT DIM, NOR HIS NATURAL FORCE ABATED.” He could very easily have disregarded the Lord’s command and started for Jericho with the Israelites. He could have thought of all kinds rationalizations for disobedience—the least of which probably would have been that God’s command appears so unreasonable! But Moses obeyed God’s command and died when God told him to do so (so did Aaron, Num. 33:38). (See question #1 in the previous lesson). Moses had completed his role in God’s plan. His life had spanned 3 generations (120 years, Deut. 31:2) and was full and complete. His death closed one era and prepared for a new one. Israel was now ready (by Moses’ leadership) to enter the land, and God raised up new leadership in Joshua for the tasks ahead! The Israelites mourned for Moses for 30 days (an entire month), just as they did for Aaron. This was fitting for his status as a great leader.

God spoke with Moses **face to face** (see Num. 12:1-8). God gave Moses this **unique** relationship because “Moses was faithful in God’s house” (Heb. 3:2-6; 11:23-38). This will always be Moses’ highest honor and distinction. God came closer in fellowship with Moses than with any man since the fall of Adam. Moses’ fellowship with Jehovah was real, personal, intimate and genuine. Except for Jesus Christ, there is no man who has left so deeply the impress of his character upon the whole world as Moses! Communion with God such as Moses had ennobles every human characteristic and strengthens every human power. Yet, the Christian has a greater, more intimate association with God than Moses or Isaiah, or John the Baptist (Matt. 11:11). There are ways Christians may better themselves of the potential for real, personal, intimate and genuine fellowship with God and his Son Jesus Christ: (a) increase one’s knowledge of God and Christ in the mind through the written word of God (Jn. 17:1-26); (b) do more perfectly the will of Christ (Jn. 7:17); (c) be more nearly conformed to the image of God’s Son, Jesus (Rom. 8:29); (d) grow in subjection in “marriage” to Christ (Eph. 5:21-33).

REVIEW WHAT HAS BEEN LEARNED FROM DEUTERONOMY

The Law of God is: (a) an expression of God's character—his holiness; (b) it is the instrument by which God extends his love to believers; (c) it blesses human beings when obeyed; (d) believed, it drives us to trust in God's grace.

The Nature and Character of God: (a) God loves man and graciously extends his providence and reveals his mind to save man; (b) he keeps his word to both friends and enemies; (c) he gives man room to mature through freedom to choose.

Sin: (a) it estranges men from God and their fellow men; (b) it seduces even the best of human beings; (c) it debases the human character; (d) God hates sin and punishes it.

Spiritual Leaders Among Men: (a) they are to be *servants* of God and their fellow men; (b) they are to be respected and followed when they speak God's will; (c) God holds them responsible to teach his revelation.

Tests, Trials, Disciplines: (a) there are to make us better, and more able to be led in righteousness; (b) they come in all circumstances—good and bad; (c) they make us depend on God—they humble us.

Covenant: (a) it is an intimate pledge of faithfulness or communion (sharing); (b) it has conditions which must be met to receive the benefits; (c) to break covenant is to destroy relationships.

Blessings from God: (a) freely given—never earned; (b) they may be perverted or rejected; (c) humility and gratitude is the only way to enjoy them.

Parental Responsibility: (a) to teach self and children the word of God; (b) to correct family members by punishment when necessary; (c) to set example in righteous thinking and behavior.

Methods of Teaching and Learning: (a) reading God's word; (b) communicating God's word in song; (c) through practicing God's rituals and festivals.

Can you add other things learned from Deuteronomy (remember, Deuteronomy means "repeat")

Introduction to Paul T. Butler Th.D

Paul was born in Springfield Missouri and graduated from Conway High School prior to enlistment in the US Navy. He began serious bible study with correspondence courses from San Jose Bible College. He later enrolled in Ozark Bible College and acquired his Bachelor of Theology degree June of 1961. He received a Master of Biblical Literature degree from Ozark in May of 1973. He received a Doctorate of Theology from The Theological University of America in October of 1990.

Paul taught at Ozark Christian College from 1960 to 1997. He also served many years as registrar for the college.

Introduction to the Sound Bible Study project.

The Sound Bible Study project is a cooperative effort of Christian educators and Jordan Media Enterprises LLC to provide the serious examination of the Scriptures for the conscientious student. All the teachers are experienced educators who have spent countless hours in the classroom on both sides of the lectern. The audio recordings and written notes are made available for those who wish to learn God's Word at a collegiate level but have been unable to matriculate. There is no intention to compete with the many faithful Bible schools, but rather to serve along side and strengthen both the student and the teacher for a stronger and more effective Kingdom of God that knows how to properly divide the Word of God.

