

Do You See God In Deuteronomy?

Deuteronomy 2 and 3, and God's Sovereignty

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I am going to continue to use Deuteronomy as a base for this last of the series of sermons that follow up those I gave at the Feast ["Deuteronomy's Major Themes", "Moses, Servant of God", "Deuteronomy and Idolatry"]. It turns out that there was a sermon I was preparing before the Feast of Tabernacles, but I set it aside because I kind of did not want it, or I felt that I was getting ahead of myself, so I stopped preparing it. You are going to get that one today.

I thought it intriguing that today we are going to use Deuteronomy 4 for at least part of this message. One of the commentaries I used as a resource for the entire series of the Deuteronomy messages titled Chapter 4 of Deuteronomy as, "Seeing Him Who Is Invisible," or in our language, "Do You See God?" We will see, as we proceed here, why they put that title on that chapter.

The biblical record shows Israelites had an incredibly difficult time keeping God in mind. How quickly they forgot things. Psalm 78 says it is almost as if He did not even exist, despite the witness of the manna, the cloud, and the pillar of fire each and every day.

Manna symbolizes the food of God. It is what feeds and strengthens. Jesus—the Word of God—identifies Himself as the true bread, or food of life. The cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night together symbolize God's guiding presence covering the entire day. In the daylight, as well as in the dark, He is the God who is always there.

I sincerely hope our attention span is longer than the Israelites'. For whatever reason, they just could not seem to connect the dots in the right progression to keep Him in mind throughout their journey. A few things we know for sure. They did not seek to be like Him because they really were not truly listening to what Moses said, and faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of the Lord, and what Moses said was the word of the Lord.

Therefore, they did not think about God and His importance to the quality of their daily life, let alone the strong possibility of living life in the Promised Land. So they pretty much lived without faith or hope. The result was that they simply did not know Him, and knowing God, as Jesus said, is eternal life, and that is the highest quality of life that can be lived eternally in joy, peace, and productivity. The result was they lived life not looking for a city whose builder and maker is God, as Abraham did.

In the previous messages I used Deuteronomy 28 as the foundation for my annual first night's "The Handwriting Is On The Wall" message ["The Handwriting is on the Wall (2008)"]. In addition, on the morning of the first day we looked at an overview of Deuteronomy, especially considering its importance to Christian life. We then took a fairly extensive overview of Moses—the man God used to lead Israel through the critical formative years of it as a nation redeemed from slavery. As the Bible reveals, there was no one ever quite like him again. He was uniquely gifted and trained and prepared to occupy a very wide variety of positions.

The sermon following that one covered events showing how extensively idolatry entered into Israel's highly unstable relationship with God. In fact, it was the cause of the instability, and remains to this day as Israel's major sin. I personally believe that sermon was the most important one of the sermons I gave from Deuteronomy this year.

Israel is very much like an unfaithful spouse, and our God is a jealous God. He is a consuming fire, motivated to protecting His relationship with us, and at the same time protecting His name. He will tolerate no rival for our affection, and this combination presents us with a doomed relationship between Israel and God in the Old Covenant. We cannot—we must not—allow idolatry to come between us and God.

The final Feast sermon on the Last Great Day drew upon Deuteronomy 1 and 2, showing Israel's presumptuous rebellion, and God's mercy, justice, and generosity in His dealings involved in Israel's first aborted attempt to enter the Promised Land, and then the successful entrance thirty-eight years later.

There is another very important fact about God shown in these events that I lacked time on the Last Great Day to explore, and I believe we must be constantly aware of this lesson as we live through this stressful time.

My SPS [Specific Purpose Statement] is this: God is not only merciful in not punishing us to the extent we deserve, He is also just when the punishment is given in perfect balance. And at the same time, He is generous in prospering us even as He may be punishing us as He showed in that example with His dealings with Israel. They were punished for thirty-eight years, and yet He prospered them greatly while they were being punished. It shows the generosity that is in Him.

It is something that we need to understand, that just because we may be prospering, it does not necessarily mean that God is not punishing us. Sometimes we really have to think things through in our relationship with Him.

The fourth thing I did not get to go into is that He is also supremely sovereign over His creation, and it is His sovereignty we will cover today as it is shown in these chapters.

As Israel approached the Promised Land the first time, it is well understood by all that there would be a battle. I am talking about the Israelites. They knew there was going to be a battle in order to get into the land. Now as they approached the second time, they approached from a somewhat different location, or direction, but there was still a very high potential for war because there were five nations Israel had to pass through before arriving at the Promised Land. It is in these episodes that God's sovereignty clearly shows in this Deuteronomy narrative.

A sovereign is one who controls, or administers to a nation, or, in this case, an entire creation because it is God who is involved. Sovereignty literally means "supreme power" or "freedom from external control or a controlling influence." It is that word "control" or "controlling" that is so important, and it shows God's sovereignty.

The entire preamble of Deuteronomy demonstrates God's complete control of the events described. Today we will cover a variety of verses in chapter 2, and all of chapter 3.

As Israel approached the Promised Land for the second time, and sees God's hand in all aspect of what unfolds, nobody, brethren, pushes Him around. Everything operates exactly as He dictates to Israel's benefit. Then they in turn do as He says to do. There is a cost, but when the people of God pay that cost in terms of faith, God really opens doors. God shuts doors that are going to be hurtful to the Israelitish people, or as we might say, to the church.

The first land they approached was Edom. Your Bible may say Esau. Same people. Then following them was Moab, and after that Ammon.

Deuteronomy 2:3-7 'You have skirted this mountain long enough; turn northward. And command the people, saying, "You are about to pass through the territory of your brethren, the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir; and they will be afraid of you. Therefore watch yourselves carefully. Do not meddle with them, for I will not give you any of their land, no, not so much as one footstep, because I have given Mount Seir to Esau as a possession. You shall buy food from them with money, that you may eat; and you shall also buy water from them with money, that you may drink. For the LORD your God has blessed you in all the work of your hand. He knows your trudging through this great wilderness. These forty years the LORD your God has been with you; you have lacked nothing.'"

So He makes it very clear. "I have given this land to these people." Here is the Sovereign determining who is going to live where in His creation. You can see, the Israelites having their own will could have very easily used this as an opportunity to make war against the Edomites, but they had the faith to say, "No. We will not make war. We will do exactly as God said."

Now consider this. The approach of two and one-half million people who lived in the surrounding area of these nations for thirty-eight years, and who then suddenly picked themselves up and began moving toward these nations' borders could hardly have gone unnoticed. You know very well those nations knew the Israelites were headed towards them, and they would have been prepared to make war to repulse them. They did not want to give up "their" country.

The Edomites must have been tentative and wary, wondering what was going on, but here is the God who controls all things, so they did not resist. They listened to the appeals regarding the purchase of things by money, and permitted Israel to pass right through.

Maybe you can appreciate this a little bit more if you understand and know that Esau and Jacob were brothers, that they were highly competitive with each other, and the Edomites have always felt cheated by Israel. So therefore, there would have really been an edge on these people—"Let's get it back now! They are just so much fodder for us. We can attack, and all these women and children there, and it will be ours."

God intervened though, and He kept their tempers in check so they did not threaten Israel. Israel did not threaten them, and they marched right through. One thing you will want to keep in mind here is this: The first three nations whose land they went through were not to be part of Israel's inheritance. God said, "I have given this land to Edom."

Deuteronomy 2:8-12 "And when we passed beyond our brethren, the descendants of Esau who dwell in Seir, away from the road of the plain, away from Elath and Ezion Geber, we turned and passed by way of the Wilderness of Moab. Then the Lord said to

me, 'Do not harass Moab, nor contend with them in battle, for I will not give you any of their land as a possession, because I have given Ar to the descendants of Lot as a possession.'" (The Emim had dwelt there in times past, a people as great and numerous and tall as the Anakim. They were also regarded as giants, like the Anakim, but the Moabites call them Emim. The Horites formerly dwelt in Seir, but the descendants of Esau dispossessed them and destroyed them from before them, and dwelt in their place, just as Israel did to the land of their possession which the LORD gave them.)

What God is doing here is reaching back in time to give us a brief overview of other people besides the ones we are directly dealing with—that is, Edom, Moab, and Ammon—and starts talking about the Emim, the Anakim, and the Horites. He reaches back into those times and shows how He dispossessed each one of them from their land and moved the Edomites, and the Moabites, and the Ammonites into the land. In other words, what I am saying is that God had done before what He was now doing with Israel. As you can see, God did not permit the Israelites to fight with any of those three tribes. Not even one.

Again, the Ammonites and the Moabites were blood relations of the Israelites through Abraham. Lot was Abraham's nephew, and the Ammonites and Moabites were children of Lot through his two daughters. There was a blood relationship there, only it was more distant than the relationship with Edom.

Deuteronomy 2:13-15 "'Now rise and cross over the Valley of the Zered.' So we crossed over the Valley of the Zered. [Zered is a river.] And the time we took to come from Kadesh Barnea until we crossed over the Valley of the Zered was thirty-eight years, until all the generation of the men of war was consumed from the midst of the camp, just as the LORD had sworn to them. For indeed the hand of the LORD was against them, to destroy them from the midst of the camp until they were consumed."

Again, you see God was watching the store, person by person, as these people died off throughout the thirty-eight years. It was not like He went off somewhere. It was not like He killed them all at once, but He patiently waited as they died off for thirty-eight years, person by person. He was controlling that as well.

Deuteronomy 2:16-19 "So it was, when all the men of war had finally perished from among the people, that the LORD spoke to me, saying: 'This day you are to cross over at Ar, the boundary of Moab. And when you come near the people of Ammon, do not harass them or meddle with them, for I will not give you any of the land of the people of Ammon as a possession, because I have given it to the descendants of Lot as a possession.'"

See how God declares that? He is deciding who lives where, and He apparently wanted these people to be neighbors of the Israelitish people. Were they going to be a buffer? I do not know. Was He planning that down the road they were going to have to get along better than they had in the past? I do not know. But for whatever His reasons, He determined that He wanted them there, and so they stayed there. He was controlling the tempers, the minds, of all concerned here.

Deuteronomy 2:20-23 (That was also regarded as a land of giants; giants formerly dwelt there. But the Ammonites call them Zamzummim, a people as great and numerous and tall as the Anakim. But the LORD destroyed them before them, and they dispossessed

them and dwelt in their place, just as He had done for the descendants of Esau, who dwelt in Seir, when He destroyed the Horites from before them. They dispossessed them and dwelt in their place, even to this day. And the Avim, who dwelt in villages as far as Gaza—the Caphtorim, who came from Caphtor, destroyed them and dwelt in their place.)

So again we find God covering times past before the Ammonites arrived there. God again determined whom He would place in those lands. So in all three of these circumstances, God's sovereignty is shown by His controlling the circumstances and peoples' minds involving Israel, and there was no war.

But, as they approached the next land—the land of King Sihon, and then after that, Og of Bashan—the formerly dreaded Amorites—the circumstances changed, according to God's will. Og and Sihon were Amorites. Both of these nations made war against the Israelites. Both of these nations were part and parcel of the Promised Land God was giving to Israel. Israel was not going to be able to buy their way through, because this time they were going to arrive at that place where God was going to dispossess the wicked Amorites.

Is there a lesson here for you and me today? There is a big one. It is one that can easily escape us, but it is nonetheless important. One of them is that whatever is part of the Christian's preparation for receiving the inheritance is going to have to be fought for, or striven for in some way. Overcoming these things is required. As you can see, the land of the Ammonites, and the Moabites, and the Edomites was not going to be part of Israel's inheritance. Therefore, there was no going to war. But the land of Og, and the land of Sihon was going to be part of the inheritance, and that, God said, they were going to have to fight for. There is a principle established there.

Is not the New Testament rife with statements and word pictures drawn from war, athletics, and other challenging circumstances involving faith, courage, and discipline? There is very many such things in the New Testament and so we can expect, then, that there will be difficult circumstances that will arise, and if they do, you can understand that this is a required war that must be fought.

Deuteronomy 2:24-25 "Rise, take your journey, and cross over the River Arnon. Look, I have given into your hand Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his land. Begin to possess it, and engage him in battle. This day I will begin to put the dread and fear of you upon the nations under the whole heaven, who shall hear the report of you, and shall tremble and be in anguish because of you.'

Remember, I said earlier about how surely the Edomites, the Ammonites, and the Moabites must have heard, but God calmed them down, and they did not even make a move toward creating war. But God is not going to calm down the Amorites. He is going to require Israel to fight.

Deuteronomy 2:26-37 "And I sent messengers from the Wilderness of Kedemoth to Sihon king of Heshbon, with words of peace, saying, 'Let me pass through your land; I will keep strictly to the road, and I will turn neither to the right nor to the left. You shall sell me food for money, that I may eat, and give me water for money, that I may drink; only let me pass through on foot, just as the descendants of Esau who dwell in Seir and the Moabites who dwell in Ar did for me, until I cross the Jordan to the land which the LORD our God is giving us.' "But Sihon king of Heshbon would not let us pass through, for the LORD your God hardened his spirit and made his heart obstinate, [just like with Pharaoh] that He might deliver him into your hand, as it is this day. "And the LORD said

to me, 'See, I have begun to give Sihon and his land over to you. Begin to possess it, that you may inherit his land.' Then Sihon and all his people came out against us to fight at Jahaz. And the LORD our God delivered him over to us; so we defeated him, his sons, and all his people. We took all his cities at that time, and we utterly destroyed the men, women, and little ones of every city; we left none remaining. We took only the livestock as plunder for ourselves, with the spoil of the cities which we took. From Aroer, which is on the bank of the River Arnon, and from the city that is in the ravine, as far as Gilead, there was not one city too strong for us; the LORD our God delivered all to us. Only you did not go near the land of the people of Ammon—anywhere along the River Jabbok, or to the cities of the mountains, or wherever the LORD our God had forbidden us.

Again, God is showing Him controlling events according to His term, only this time Israel believed Him and went forward in the strength of their faith, and the battle was theirs because God backed them.

Deuteronomy 3:1-11 "Then we turned and went up [Up is north, and probably up in elevation as well] the road to Bashan; and Og king of Bashan came out against us, he and all his people, to battle at Edrei. And the LORD said to me, 'Do not fear him, for I have delivered him and all his people and his land into your hand; you shall do to him as you did to Sihon king of the Amorites, who dwelt at Heshbon.' "So the LORD our God also delivered into our hands Og king of Bashan, with all his people, and we attacked him until he had no survivors remaining. And we took all his cities at that time; there was not a city which we did not take from them: sixty cities, all the region of Argob, the kingdom of Og in Bashan. All these cities were fortified with high walls, gates, and bars, besides a great many rural towns. And we utterly destroyed them, as we did to Sihon king of Heshbon, utterly destroying the men, women, and children of every city. But all the livestock and the spoil of the cities we took as booty for ourselves. "And at that time we took the land from the hand of the two kings of the Amorites who were on this side of the Jordan, from the River Arnon to Mount Hermon (the Sidonians call Hermon Sirion, and the Amorites call it Senir), all the cities of the plain, all Gilead, and all Bashan, as far as Salcah and Edrei, cities of the kingdom of Og in Bashan. "For only Og king of Bashan remained of the remnant of the giants. Indeed his bedstead was an iron bedstead. (Is it not in Rabbah of the people of Ammon?) Nine cubits is its length and four cubits its width, according to the standard cubit.

And so as things went against Sihon with Israel, the same occurred in the battle against Og of Bashan.

I am going to go back over two verses, because I want to spend a little bit of time on Deuteronomy 2:34 and Deuteronomy 3:6.

Deuteronomy 2:34 We took all his cities at that time, and we utterly destroyed the men, women, and little ones of every city; we left none remaining.

Deuteronomy 3:6 And we utterly destroyed them, as we did to Sihon king of Heshbon, utterly destroying the men, women, and children of every city.

What was accomplished there is very difficult for many to understand, and God is taken to task because to many people, it seems to be exceedingly cruel, and He is accused of cruelty rather than they being able to perceive His sovereign justice. It is good to get a handle on this because it seems

that the first task that is going to confront us upon entering the Kingdom of God is something very similar in that we are going to be led into battle under Jesus Christ, and the same thing in principle is going to be required of us. I will show you at least one reference to it in Revelation 19, verses 13 and 14.

Revelation 19:13-14 He [Christ] was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.

The "clean and white" and the "fine linen" is a reference to that which occurred just a few verses earlier when His Bride is described as being clothed the same way.

Zechariah 14 mentions the same circumstance.

Zechariah 14:6 Thus the LORD my God will come, and all the saints with You.

In Joel 3 a similar circumstance takes place.

Joel 3:31 And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

These verses give you a good understanding of who the armies in heaven consist of, and it looks that the most accurate description would be a mixture of angels and God's resurrected saints when you put the references all together. It is not one or the other. It appears to be both. There is also a verse in Matthew 24 about Christ coming with all His holy angels.

Matthew 24:31 And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

What is going to be done by us in that war is going to be horrific to an extent that makes what happened here in Deuteronomy 2 and 3 almost look like a tea party by comparison.

We have already see in this preamble that God is merciful, just, generous, and sovereign, that He is very aware of the needs, not just of Israel, but of other nations as well, and He appropriates to them the land necessary for their continued livelihood.

God never contradicts His character. He never changes, and He makes it clear elsewhere, especially in the Psalms, that He hates war. David disqualifies himself as a Temple builder because he was a man of war, and that building was not going to be built by someone like that who had that characteristic within him. It was going to be built by a man of peace, and that man of peace was Solomon.

What we are looking at in Israel's invasion of Canaan is an isolated incident. It never happened again, and it will not happen again until Christ returns. There were a couple of isolated incidents where they were to kill everybody in town, except somebody—for instance Jericho. God said to kill everybody except Rahab and her family. But this was total destruction. Everybody was killed. There was nobody worth sparing under Sihon and Og. So we are looking here at an isolated incident.

I hope you can see the parallel of Israel being used as God's agent executing His vengeance against perhaps the most evil nations ever to walk the face of the earth until the time of Christ's return. Please understand that there is no provision in the Bible for any nation, let alone Israel, to make holy wars of extermination. This was a one-time event, and we will see one of the reasons—maybe two of them—why God permitted it this one time.

Go back now to Genesis 18. Abraham is appealing to God to be merciful, and he says here:

Genesis 18:25 Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

Basically Abraham was saying, "Surely there is somebody there that is righteous." Well there was. There was Lot. So God did spare them, but wiped everybody else out.

You see a little bit more of the mind of God. He will not do this kind of thing where there might be some righteous people involved right there, and He will provide a way of escape for those people. The Judge of all the earth will do right. He is very merciful in His judgment.

What we are looking at here in Deuteronomy 2 and 3 is a judicial process with God using the Israelites as the executioner.

We find in Leviticus 18:24-30, with slightly different wording, that God is warning the Israelites that the same thing could happen to them.

Leviticus 18:24-29 'Do not defile yourselves with any of these things; for by all these the nations are defiled, which I am casting out before you. [Just like He did with Bashan, with Og, and with Sihon.] For the land is defiled; therefore I visit the punishment of its iniquity upon it, and the land vomits out its inhabitants. [In this case Israel was the one executing the vomiting on the Amorites.] You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations, either any of your own nation or any stranger who dwells among you (for all these abominations the men of the land have done, who were before you, and thus the land is defiled), lest the land vomit you out also when you defile it, as it vomited out the nations that were before you. For whoever commits any of these abominations, the persons who commit them shall be cut off from among their people.

Do you see it there? Any who do this shall be cut off. What we saw there under Og and Sihon, there was not one righteous person. Everybody was guilty of what God said here, and so the warning to Israel is:

Leviticus 18:30 'Therefore you shall keep My ordinance, so that you do not commit any of these abominable customs which were committed before you, and that you do not defile yourselves by them: I am the LORD your God.'

Israel is responsible to be holy. In Leviticus, which was written before Deuteronomy, Israel had already been warned. "Do not do what these people are doing." They did not know it then, but they were going to be required to execute God's vengeance against the Amorites.

There is another aspect to this. Doing this to the Amorites was a theological necessity. It was a protective measure to guard the Israelites against the evil spiritual beliefs and practices of the Canaanites, included with the Amorites. I have to assume this (and I think it is correct on the basis of what God did to them), that the entire nation was apparently outright blatantly "in-your-face" saturated with demonism. So these people paid an awesome price.

God is not only revealing His sovereignty before our eyes in the pages of this book, He is, for our benefit, revealing the seriousness of sin.

Now here is the lesson for us. "The wages of sin is death." That is common knowledge to every one of us, but how deep is our emotional attachment to that fact? Do we really consider sin wicked? That is a little harder to come by, because we have grown up in an environment that does not consider sin, at least any longer, anything really serious. Well, God is showing us, that to Him, it is serious, and this is how He is doing it.

Let me add to "the wages of sin is death," He is showing us that sin is devastating in its result. It is not just bad, but it is devastating. So, to imagine its effect pictured in something so vivid as every single person in every city—men, women, children, the young, the old, the healthy, the handsome and beautiful, the deformed and ugly, the infirm and strong, whether rich or poor, little children all the way down to infants newly born—slaughtered by bloody swords in God's hope that it may have a stunning effect on our mind turned in an exceedingly sharper focus of fear of what it ultimately produces as its leaven spreads out in a community.

God paints a bloody, vivid picture to anybody who could imagine all these categories of society—a community—being wiped out; including little infants that we might think are as pure as the driven snow. It is not that those little infants were guilty of sin, but to teach us that even the innocent get caught in peoples' sins—in its effects.

God is also vividly helping us to understand at least some tiny measure of His sovereignty over everyday life. One day these people existed, and the next day they were gone, because God executed them, using the Israelites. When those people come up in the second resurrection they are going to learn from this very quickly the lesson of what sin does. God is hoping that we get the point, and because of it take another step toward a sharper realization of the opportunity that we do not deserve, but have been freely given by Him. So we have the liberty to make choices others do not in turning away.

The next section we are going to go through will cover focusing on our responsibility to love, worship, and submit not only to God, but also to each other. This section also emphasizes God's love, not only for individuals, but also for the entire group collectively. In the book here, the entire group was Israel, but I hope you will get the picture and insert into it the church.

We are going to begin in Deuteronomy 3, right after they defeated Sihon, and Og of Bashan.

Deuteronomy 3:12-20 "And this land [Bashan], which we possessed at that time, from Aroer, which is by the River Arnon, and half the mountains of Gilead and its cities, I gave to the Reubenites and the Gadites. The rest of Gilead, and all Bashan, the kingdom of Og, I gave to half the tribe of Manasseh. (All the region of Argob, with all Bashan, was called the land of the giants. Jair the son of Manasseh took all the region of Argob, as far as the border of the Geshurites and the Maachathites, and called Bashan after his

own name, Havoth Jair, to this day.) "Also I gave Gilead to Machir. And to the Reubenites and the Gadites I gave from Gilead as far as the River Arnon, the middle of the river as the border, as far as the River Jabbok, the border of the people of Ammon; the plain also, with the Jordan as the border, from Chinnereth [the Sea of Galilee] as far as the east side of the Sea of the Arabah (the Salt Sea), below the slopes of Pisgah. "Then I commanded you at that time, saying: 'The LORD your God has given you this land to possess. All you men of valor shall cross over armed before your brethren, the children of Israel. But your wives, your little ones, and your livestock (I know that you have much livestock) shall stay in your cities which I have given you, until the LORD has given rest to your brethren as to you, and they also possess the land which the LORD your God is giving them beyond the Jordan. Then each of you may return to his possession which I have given you.'

I believe that all of you who are maybe of the age of 30, 35 or 40 at least, have been witnessed to or perhaps even participated in family squabbles over an inheritance left by a deceased father or mother. In those things, somebody almost invariably feels cheated.

Now the Israelites had already known a great deal of internecine rivalry during the wilderness journey. Probably the best known of those is in Numbers 16—the account of the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram against Moses, charging him and Aaron with taking on too much to themselves, and those men (Korah, Dathan, and Abiram) wanted their cut of the pie, so to speak, to be larger. That episode shows man's self-centered carnality. What is done in this context of Deuteronomy 3 reveals God's wisdom and love.

The first portion of the land has been conquered and possessed, and very quickly God put it into Moses' mind to allot the land to the tribe of Reuben, the tribe of Gad, and to one-half the tribe of Manasseh, and then, fleshing out that allotment with further instruction as to what they were expected—indeed commanded—to do with the land and themselves at that time. It was not just handed over to them. They had to do something with it. The instructions were simple.

The men of valor of those tribes—those above twenty years of age—were not allowed to take up residence on it—not even really one day permanently, if I can put it that way—until all the tribes had their portions allotted to them and could occupy those portions. Their wives and children—those twenty and under of those three tribes—Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh—must remain behind and settle the land.

Now very likely, when it says in verse 19, "you have much cattle," He is referring specifically to these three tribes, and they were to leave their cattle in the area to be tended by the women and children of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh until the land had rest.

How does this show God's love? He just cut off any arguing right before it even got started. First, it gave those in other tribes hope and incentive to possess their own portion of land as they began to see the Reubenites', the Gadites', and the half tribe of Manasseh's dreams being fulfilled. They were literally being settled in the Promised Land. It was not just a dream now. It was really happening, and that would be encouraging for them to go on.

Second, it gave the fighting men of those three tribes assurance that their wealth and family would be safe, and therefore they could fight uninhibited by that concern.

Third, it very importantly promoted a stronger unity within Israel, seeing that the men of valor of those two and the one-half tribes were required to fight the war with the others who had not yet secured their land. There was no "every man for himself" proposition permitted here. Each Israelite belonged to the whole, and was responsible to the whole. There was no getting out of that responsibility. So even though the land was theirs, they could not go live on it until the war was over. There is a great spiritual lesson for us in this.

I Peter 2:3-5 If indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious. Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God thorough Jesus Christ.

Basically, what he is saying there is that Peter portrays the church as one building. Each member is not a stone strewn about, but Peter describes us as being joined together as a solid whole with each stone as a part of the whole. You see how men of valor would certainly be a part of that. They had to fight the rest of the war with the rest of the tribes, and their wives and their children had to know that daddy was gone until the war was over.

Ephesians 4:14-16 That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

Again, God expects unity, and the Israelites are an example of how, at this time, they gave themselves over to this.

I Corinthians 12:4-6 There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.

I Corinthians 12:12 For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.

I Corinthians 12:18 But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.

God specifically adds each member to the body, and it then becomes that individual member's responsibility to voluntarily use whatever gifts have been given for the benefit of the entire body by contributing to its versatility, strength, and unity, and not blowing it apart by self-serving independent attitudes and conduct.

It is interesting where this next series of verses is positioned. It is just before the Passover instructions.

I Corinthians 10:15-17 I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion [meaning the fellowship, or the sharing] of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break [meaning the Passover

bread], is it not the communion [the sharing] of the body of Christ? [The whole body shares in this.] For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.

There are an awful lot of people who are out there floating around, and I hope they are hunting a home, and I hope they find a home they can fellowship with, because it will be for their own good if they do so, and that they begin contributing to the unity of the entire body of Christ.

It is interesting again to reflect on Israel's history. All twelve tribes got along well with one another until the war was over. It was not until shortly after the war and they began settling into the land that was allotted to them that tribal disputes began to arise again. Unity was slowly beginning to evaporate because of their self-interest.

During this period of time of ours, there are things that are required of us for the benefit of the entire body. We have to do this as part of the body. It is part of the war that we are fighting. Our fighting is not against physical things. Our fighting is against a spiritual enemy—Satan and his demons. Paul makes this very clear. It is they who are trying to hold on to what they think is their possession of their land, which is the entire earth, and like the Canaanites, they are going to go down fighting because they feel it is their right, and they believe that, and that we are the interlopers who are coming along. They know God has willed it, has predestinated it, that it is going to be ours. We are going to share possession of the earth with Jesus Christ. Like I said at the beginning, there are some things we must make war against, and that is Satan.

We can add to the body's strength, add to the body's unity by doing some things that God actually requires of us. We may not think it is all that hard, but it is something that we have to push ourselves to do.

Turn to Hebrews 13. You might recall that Peter said that it is our responsibility to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God.

Hebrews 13:14-16 For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come [like Abraham]. Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

Thanksgiving, praise in prayer, and doing good are spiritual battles that rage on, and the opportunity to do these things may come every single day. They are good spiritual sacrifices. I remind you of Romans 12 which says we are not to be conformed to this world, but we are to become living sacrifices, and that this is well-pleasing in God's eyes.

Romans 12:1-2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

We are fighting a battle as we go along. We are fighting for possession of this land, and this kind of thing—offering spiritual sacrifices—adds to the strength of us individually as well as to the body.

Turn back to Deuteronomy 3 again. I think we will close right here and not go into chapter 4 for lack of time.

Deuteronomy 3:21-28 "And I commanded Joshua at that time, saying, 'Your eyes have seen all that the LORD your God has done to these two kings; so will the LORD do to all the kingdoms through which you pass. You must not fear them, for the LORD your God Himself fights for you.' "Then I pleaded with the LORD at that time, saying: 'O Lord GOD, You have begun to show Your servant Your greatness and Your mighty hand, for what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do anything like Your works and Your mighty deeds? I pray, let me cross over and see the good land beyond the Jordan, those pleasant mountains, and Lebanon.' "But the LORD was angry with me on your account, and would not listen to me. So the LORD said to me: 'Enough of that! Speak no more to Me of this matter. Go up to the top of Pisgah, and lift your eyes toward the west, the north, the south, and the east; behold it with your eyes, for you shall not cross over this Jordan. But command Joshua, and encourage him and strengthen him; for he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit the land which you will see.'

It is interesting that this preamble began with Moses in the public eye, and it begins to be drawn to a close with Moses privately in the presence of God. Moses often sought God on behalf of the people, but here he is seeking God in his own behalf. He appeals again to enter the land, and it is this time his request is firmly rejected.

We can be sure that at any time we ask God for something, regardless of what it is, that we are not the only one involved in that request. No one is an island unto himself, complete and entire. Everybody's life touches on others' and God's answer must consider those others as well. And thus God, who never makes mistakes, must consider how His answer will impact on others.

Hebrews 4:13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

We might think, "What harm would come, what harm would be done, to this old man [Moses] if he would be allowed to be blessed with entering into and walking upon the land—the goal of the major portion of his life?"

But God saw beyond just giving Moses the pleasure of what would have been only a passing physical blessing. We must understand, that even with the purest of motives, the things we seek are not necessarily wise and right when the overall picture is known, as God sees it. To Moses himself, it might have been a very wonderful experience of life for him to walk in the land of his dream. However, let us remember, that for us it must be a guiding principle that we seek the Kingdom of God, and nothing short of it is life's greatest prize. For example, our goal can never be the place of safety.

Would it have been good for Joshua for Moses to be granted his heart's desire? Well, God's answer reveals God's mind. It was Moses' calling to lead the people across the wilderness. It was Joshua's calling to first secure, and then settle the land, and thus God created a very definite break in the administration of the two by saying, "No."

Twice, right in the introduction, when Moses requested to be allowed to go into the land, Joshua is immediately brought into our mind, right within the same context, and mentioned as being the one who would lead Israel into the land. In Joshua 1:2 it says, "Moses My servant is dead. Now get ready to go across the Jordan."

Do you see it? One ministry begins, and another ended—just like that. There was no clash, no competition between the two.

I heard Herbert Armstrong say in my presence a couple of different times that he would like to lead the church into the Kingdom of God. The very fact that there was no one of significant stature to lead the church following HWA's death should have been a strong indication to us that there was going to be a long period of time before Christ's return following that death, and that God was going to take the church in a different direction than we imagined.

We have had some very serious testing to endure to prove our loyalty to God and to His way first. We were nowhere near ready under Herbert Armstrong. Our level of understanding was basic, and our loyalty to the truth badly needed testing. I personally believe that a leader will not be supplied until the Two Witnesses appear.

Moses would have been an interference to Joshua's work. Consider this also. Was it right for the people that Moses be taken away? Yes. God did them a great favor in doing so. First of all it was a warning. It should have told them that regardless of the greatness of a man's gifts, skills, and accomplishments, that in judgment there is no respect of persons with God. Sin is not to be trifled with. Moses' sin was not deliberate, but it still was a serious breach of faith.

Second, Moses was immensely popular. Deuteronomy 34:10-12 in *The Living Bible* says this:

Deuteronomy 34:10-12 (*The Living Bible*) There has never been another prophet like Moses, for the Lord talked to him face to face, and at God's command he performed amazing miracles which have never been equaled. He did great and terrifying wonders before Pharaoh and his entire court in Egypt and before the people of Israel in the wilderness.

By taking him out of the way, God, in all probability, prevented Moses' veneration by the people, and then by hiding Moses' grave, God prevented the veneration of his tomb, thus preventing it from becoming a national shrine, and God thus removed a strong temptation for idolatry.

Brethren, it is my hope that this series of sermons has helped you take at least a large step in understanding, and that this in turn will increase your trust in God and in His word and in His purpose being worked out in our lives.