

Touchstones of God's Economy

Deuteronomy

The book of Deuteronomy, the fifth and final book of the Pentateuch, concludes the writing of Moses in the Old Testament. In this book Moses reviews the past—from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, through the slavery of God's people in Egypt, the giving of the law at Mount Horeb, and their journey in the wilderness, to the defeat of the kings Sihon and Og on the east side of the Jordan—and he looks forward to the future, to the people's possession of the land of Canaan (1:8; 10:22; 5:6; 34:11-12; 1:6; 4:10; 5:2; 1:9—3:29). Hence, this conclusion is all-inclusive. Forty years had passed from the time when the law was first given to the children of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai. Since then, with the exception of Caleb and Joshua, the generation to whom the law had been spoken all died out. A new generation now stood before Moses. Therefore, God burdened Moses to respeak the law to this generation after their long period of wandering. It was a renewed training given to them in order to prepare them to enter into the land that He had promised to their forefathers and to inherit it as their possession. Hence, the content of this book is a rehearsal of the law, given with fresh force and impact and interwoven with advice and warnings from the aged Moses as a loving and concerned father.

In the divine revelation of the Scriptures, the subject of Deuteronomy is as follows: "Christ is the Instructor and Leader of the people of God that they may be able to enter into the heavenly territory and participate in His riches."¹ Moses is a type of Christ as God's Prophet, God's Spokesman: "A Prophet will Jehovah your God raise up for you from your midst, from among your brothers, like me" (18:15; cf. v. 18; Matt. 21:11; John 3:31-34; Acts 3:22; 7:37). The contents of Deuteronomy are the words of Moses (1:1), yet, at the same time, they are the words of God, proceeding out of the mouth of Jehovah (8:3). This is because Moses was a person who was soaked and saturated with the thought of God; he was one who had spoken for God for forty years, from the age of eighty to one hundred twenty. He was constituted with the speaking God Himself, and the words that he spoke were the words of God (cf. 1 Cor. 7:25, 40). Thus,

in Deuteronomy we see Moses typifying Christ, speaking the words of God, instructing the people of God in the commandments, statutes, and ordinances of God's law, and leading them in their conquering, living, and worship so that they might enter into and possess the land of Canaan as their inheritance (8:3, 11; 7:6; 1:4; 10:12-22; 12:1-32).

Canaan—Our Inheritance

The land of Canaan typifies the inheritance of the believers in Christ in the New Testament (Acts 20:32; 26:18; Eph. 1:14; 1 Pet. 1:4). Although this inheritance is heavenly in nature and guarded in the heavens for us, it is not heaven itself, nor is it any "mansion" in heaven—a place of unending rest and pleasure. Such erroneous understandings are annulled by the description of Canaan in Deuteronomy. Canaan was a land inhabited by seven nations more numerous and mightier than the people of Israel (7:1). After entering into Canaan, the children of Israel had to battle against these nations, defeat them, and utterly destroy them, not making any covenant with them or showing them any favor (20:1; 7:2). Whether or not Israel would succeed in dispossessing these nations was dependent upon their cooperation with Jehovah, who was fighting for them; it was quite possible that they would be seduced into the worship of the gods of these nations and intermarry with them. Moses warned the people that should this happen, they would be judged by God and carried away from the land into captivity (29:25-28). Furthermore, the commandments, statutes, and ordinances given by Moses in Deuteronomy were all requirements to be fulfilled in Canaan—requirements that would determine whether God's people would be blessed in the land or cursed and carried away from it (5:33; 11:21; 16:20; 30:17-18).

The land of Canaan was chosen by God as the place where He would bestow blessings on His people. In type, these blessings were physical, but in fulfillment, they are spiritual (Eph. 1:3-14). Ephesians 1:3 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed

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us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ.” Therefore, Canaan does not typify a physical realm but, rather, a spiritual one, in which God bestows spiritual blessings in Christ. Moreover, after entering the land, the children of Israel still needed to be circumcised, signifying that they still needed to experience the cross of Christ in order to deal with their flesh (Josh. 5:2-9; Col. 2:11-12). The New Testament reveals that the application of the cross of Christ to our flesh is by the Spirit and day by day (Rom. 8:13; Gal. 5:24). Thus, it is evident that Canaan typifies neither heaven nor a heavenly mansion but another stage of our Christian life. Following the stages of salvation in Egypt and journeying through the wilderness, we must enter the stage of Canaan, for which Christ as our real Moses prepares us and into which He as our real Joshua is leading us (John 16:4, 12-15; Heb. 2:10; 3:14; 4:8).

According to the divine revelation of the Scriptures, the land of Canaan signifies the heavenly “territory” in which we participate in the unsearchable riches of the all-inclusive Christ (Eph. 3:8; Col. 1:12). A territory is a geographic area belonging to, or under the jurisdiction of, a governmental authority; in ancient times it referred to a city and its surrounding lands. The cities of the Canaanites and their lands were all jurisdictions that God intended His people to destroy so that He could establish His government there: “When Jehovah your God brings you into the land which you are about to enter to possess, and clears away many nations from before you—the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, the Jebusites, seven nations more numerous and mightier than you” (Deut. 7:1). The various pagan tribes that occupied the land signify different aspects of a believer’s natural life. The pagan tribes’ gods, that is, their idols with demons behind them, represent the spiritual forces of evil (12:2-3; 1 Cor. 10:20; Eph. 6:12). They signify that behind our natural life are the forces of evil, which utilize, manipulate, and direct aspects of our natural life in order to frustrate us from taking possession of the all-inclusive Christ and enjoying His riches. According to Israel’s subsequent history, the pagan tribes in the land were the source of Israel’s sin against God (Josh. 23:13; Judg. 2:3; 6:25-29; 8:27; Psa. 106:34-36). This indicates that our natural life is the source of our sins. In the sight of God, those who live according to the natural life are sinning continually, whether they do good or evil. We must hate our natural life, because it frustrates us from possessing and enjoying Christ (Luke 14:26). As we grow in Christ, we must be willing to drive it out. Hence, Canaan, on the negative side, typifies the aerial aspect of Satan’s kingdom of darkness, with its principalities, powers, and spiritual forces of evil in the heavenlies. With this view we should not only pray but also fight, although, in fact, it is not we who fight but God, who goes with us and fights for us (Phil. 4:6; 1 Tim. 1:18; Eph. 6:10-20; 2 Cor. 10:4-5; Deut. 1:30; 3:22; 20:4). On the one hand, it is our duty to fight; on the other hand, we cannot

fulfill this duty in ourselves but only by faith in the Lord, that is, by the Lord Himself as our life and life supply (v. 10; 21:10).

On the positive side, Deuteronomy reveals that Canaan is a land of riches, which typifies the all-inclusive Christ with His unsearchable riches (Eph. 3:8). The apostle Paul declares concerning Christ: “Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you for a share of the allotted portion of the saints in the light”; Paul also says that we should “walk in Him, having been rooted and being built up in Him” (Col. 1:12; 2:6-7). In Deuteronomy we see a land that is both rich and all-inclusive in at least ten aspects.

The Good Land—Its Riches

First, Canaan is a good land: “Jehovah your God is bringing you to a good land” (8:7; cf. 1:25, 35; 3:25; 4:21-22; 6:18; 8:10; 9:6; 11:17). Goodness is a characteristic of Jehovah, referring not just to His blessing but even more to the bountiful riches of His being expressed in the plenitude of the land (Jer. 31:12; Hosea 3:5). Goodness is related to God the Father; only God is good, and the fruit borne by the New Testament believers as children of light is first in all the goodness of God the Father (Matt. 19:17; Eph. 5:9).

Second, the land flows with milk and honey: “Therefore hear, O Israel, and be certain to do it, that it may go well with you and that you may be greatly increased, in a land flowing with milk and honey, even as Jehovah, the God of your fathers, promised you” (Deut. 6:3; cf. 11:9; 26:9, 15; 31:20). Milk and honey are both products of the combination of two kinds of life—the animal life and the vegetable life. Milk is produced by cattle that feed on grass, and honey is the product of bees and the nectar of flowers. They signify the riches of Christ, which come from the two aspects of His life—His redeeming life, typified by the animal life, and His generating life, typified by the vegetable life (John 1:29; 12:24).

Third, the land is a land that Jehovah cares for and blesses: “It is a land which Jehovah your God cares for; always the eyes of Jehovah your God are upon it, from the beginning of the year even to the end of the year” (Deut. 11:12). Moses told the people of Israel that if they kept the commandments, statutes, and ordinances of Jehovah, “He will love you and bless you and multiply you; He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your new wine and your fresh oil, the offspring of your cattle and the young of your flock, on the land which He swore to your fathers to give you” (7:13; cf. 15:4; 28:8; 30:5, 16). Just as God brought His people into the land of Canaan to bless them, God has brought us into Christ to bless us (1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 1:3). It is in Christ that we receive and enjoy God’s blessing. The unique commandment that God gives to the world is to believe in His Son, receiving

Him (Rom. 1:5). In fact, Christ Himself is the commandment of God. We need to receive Him, keep Him, and be right with Him. If we do this, we will be right with God, and He will love us and bless us (John 14:21, 23).

Fourth, the good land is a land of rain: “I will give rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the late rain, so that you may gather your grain and your new wine and your fresh oil” (Deut. 11:14; cf. v. 11; 28:12; 33:28). Rain in the Scriptures signifies the Spirit of God sent by Him from the heavens to water His people (Gen. 2:5). In the book of Joel, the early and late rains signify the outpouring of the Spirit on God’s people (2:28, 23; cf. Zech. 12:10; Acts 2:17-21).

Fifth, the land is a land of water: “Jehovah your God is bringing you to a good land, a land of waterbrooks, of springs and of fountains, flowing forth in valleys and in mountains” (Deut. 8:7). The waterbrooks, springs, and fountains signify Christ as the flowing Spirit, and the valleys and mountains signify the different environments in which we may experience Christ as the flowing Spirit (John 4:14; 7:37-39; Rev. 22:1; 2 Cor. 6:8-10).

Sixth, the land is a land of grain, new wine, and fresh oil (Deut. 11:14; 33:28). In the land the people will eat bread without scarcity, signifying Christ as the bread of life (8:9; John 6:35, 48-51). The new wine typifies Christ as the new life, full of vigor, stirring up people to excitement to enjoy Him as the Bridegroom (Matt. 9:17, 15). The fresh oil typifies the Holy Spirit, by whom we walk to honor God and whom we minister to honor man (Heb. 1:9; Isa. 61:1; Luke 4:18; Gal. 5:16, 25; 2 Cor. 3:6, 8; Judg. 9:9). Seventh, it is a land of produce, of figs and pomegranates (Deut. 8:8). Figs signify the sweetness and satisfaction of Christ as the life supply, and pomegranates signify the fullness, the abundance and beauty, and the expression of the riches of Christ as life (Judg. 9:11; Exo. 28:33-34; 1 Kings 7:18-20; S.S. 4:3, 13). Eighth, it is a land “whose stones are iron, and from whose mountains you can mine copper” (Deut. 8:9). Stones signify Christ as the material for building God’s dwelling place, and iron and copper are for making weapons, typifying our spiritual warfare against God’s enemy (Isa. 28:16; Zech. 4:7; 1 Pet. 2:4; Eph. 6:10-20). The three foregoing aspects strongly indicate the need to labor on Christ. Without labor, in cooperation with God’s blessing, none of these riches would be enjoyed by God’s people.

Ninth, the land is one in which God’s people may live long and be victorious:

That your days may be multiplied, as well as the days of your children, upon the land which Jehovah swore to your fathers to give them, as long as the days of heaven are above the earth...No man will be able to stand against you; Jehovah your God will put the dread and fear of you upon all the land on which you tread, as He has spoken to you. (Deut. 11:21, 25)

To live as long as the days of heaven are above the earth may indicate participation in the blessing of the eternal life in the coming kingdom (Matt. 18:8-9; 19:17). To be victorious is to overcome in order to live a normal Christian life: “In all these things we more than conquer through Him who loved us” (Rom. 8:37). Because of God’s unchanging love for us and the fact that Christ has accomplished everything on our behalf, neither tribulation nor persecution nor any environmental difficulty and hardship can suppress us; rather, in all these things we more than overcome and conquer through Him who loved us (v. 35-36).

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Finally, the land is a land where there are always needy ones: “The needy will not cease being in the land; therefore I am commanding you, saying, You must open your hand to your brother, to the poor one with you and to the needy one with you in your land” (Deut. 15:11). God

charged the children of Israel to every three years offer a tithe in addition to their regular tithes in order to care for the Levites and the needy ones among them (14:28-29; 26:12-15). This shows that God takes care of all His people, who are His expression. In like manner, Christ takes care of every member of His Body. Moreover, if for the sake of God we take care of the needy ones in the church, God will surely bless our labor and our undertakings (v. 15; 2 Cor. 9:6). This blessing will be a return to us from God. Apparently, we are giving; actually, we are receiving. Nevertheless, to give is much more blessed than to receive (Acts 20:35).

Participation in the Land—the Requirements

Israel’s participation in the riches of the land and their remaining in the land were dependent on their keeping the commandments, statutes, and ordinances of the law, which comprise the major portion of Moses’ speaking in Deuteronomy. Verses 8 and 9 of chapter 11 say,

Therefore you shall keep the whole commandment which I am commanding you today so that you may be strong and that you may go in and possess the land into which you are crossing over to possess, and so that you may extend your

days upon the ground which Jehovah swore to your fathers, to give to them and to their seed, a land flowing with milk and honey.

The statutes and judgments presented in this book show how considerate, detailed, loving, tender, kind, merciful, gracious, sympathetic, humane, righteous, just, and fair God is. As those who have God's life, we, the believers in Christ, should learn of God to be the same as He is: "Be therefore imitators of God, as beloved children" (Eph. 5:1). We should walk before God and with God, according to what He is: "Now, O Israel, what does Jehovah your God ask of you except that you fear Jehovah your God so that you would walk in all His ways and love Him and serve Jehovah your God with all your heart and with all your soul" (Deut. 10:12). God's ways are actually what God is. Whatever God is, is a way to us. Hence, to take what God is as our way in everything is to walk in all His ways, and this is to live God. The God who is our way is Christ (John 14:6). To take Christ as our way is to live Him, and to live Him is to express Him, to manifest Him, and even to magnify Him (Phil. 1:20-21). When we take God as our life, His life with His nature becomes the way on which we walk (Rev. 22:1).

In Deuteronomy God is revealed not only as the loving and faithful God, the God of blessing, but also as the righteous God, who in His judgments is severe. In chapter 28 there are both the blessings that will overtake the people of Israel if they are diligent to listen to Jehovah and do His commandments and the curses if they are not. Nevertheless, history shows that even the curses that befell the children of Israel carried out God's governmental dealings in relation to them; through these curses God was eventually able to accomplish His economy with them. In this He proves that He is the very God who would not change His will forever. In His governmental dealing with His people, God is wise, loving, sympathetic, patient, purposeful, and successful. God's severe chastisement of the children of Israel does not mean that He has given them up (Rom. 11:1-5, 11-12, 23-32). On the contrary, God is chastening them for their perfecting. The principle continues with the New Testament believers:

"Whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives"...God deals with you as with sons. For what son is there whom the father does not discipline?...Now no discipline at the present time seems to be a matter of joy, but of grief; but afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been exercised by it. (Heb. 12:6-7, 11)

Deuteronomy also reveals that the righteous government of God is matched by His grace and mercy. In chapter 27 Moses commanded the people, when they crossed the Jordan into the good land, to erect large stones, coat them with plaster, and write on them all the words of the law (vv. 2-3). Next to the stones they were to build an altar to

offer burnt offerings and peace offerings, eating and rejoicing there before Jehovah (vv. 5-7). The scene presented here is very meaningful. Being fallen in nature, the children of Israel certainly would not measure up to keeping God's commandments, statutes, and ordinances. Thus, they would come under all the curses listed in this book. However, right beside the stones on which the law was inscribed was the altar, signifying the cross of Christ. Here the people could take Christ in type as their burnt offering to God for His satisfaction and as their peace offering to God for their enjoyment with God in the divine fellowship. Verse 26 says, "Cursed is he who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them." All of God's people have come under the curse of the law by not fulfilling its requirements (Gal. 3:10). But on the cross Christ redeemed us out of the curse of the law, having become a curse on our behalf: "He who is hanged [on a tree] is accursed of God" (Deut. 21:23, cf. v. 22; Gal. 3:13). At the cross, we are now under grace and no longer under the law (Rom. 6:14). As those who are under grace, we can satisfy God, and we too are satisfied through Christ, our Redeemer and Substitute, through whom we have peace with God (Eph. 2:14; Rom. 5:1). The law is over, and the cross stands forever. This is the reason that the altar was prepared before the curses were declared.

The law written on the stone monuments was actually a portrait of God Himself. Thus, the monuments signify that Christ as the embodiment of God was standing before the people to make requirements of them according to what God is. The offerings also signify Christ. As sacrifices burned on the altar for God's satisfaction, they signify that Christ is the One who satisfies all of God's requirements. Therefore, the requiring God Himself came in incarnation to be the One who fulfilled all His requirements by being our Redeemer and Substitute. This wonderful scene shows that it is by the requiring God, the cross of Christ, and Christ Himself as the offerings, not by our endeavoring in ourselves, that we enter into Christ, our good land, and receive all the blessings that God would give us in Christ.

The Commandments, Statutes, and Judgments— God's Word

How then shall God's people fulfill the requirements to enter the heavenly territory of Christ as our good land and participate in His riches? In Deuteronomy we see that the key is the word of God. The law, the commandments, the statutes, and the ordinances are all God's word. Eventually, Moses told the people,

For this commandment which I am commanding you today, it is not too difficult for you, nor is it distant. It is not in heaven that you should say, Who will ascend to heaven for us and bring it to us to make us hear it and do it? Nor is it across the sea that you should say, Who will go across the sea for us and bring it to us to make us hear it and do it? But *the*

word is very near to you, even in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it. (Deut. 30:11-14, emphasis added)

Moreover, quoting this passage in Romans 10:6-7, the apostle Paul applies this word to Christ: “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ that is, to bring Christ down; or ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’ that is, to bring Christ up from the dead.” Paul identifies the commandment, which is the word of God, with Christ, who is the Word (John 1:1; Rev. 19:13).

Furthermore, in Deuteronomy 8:3, Moses spoke of the word in this way: “He humbled you and let you go hungry and fed you the manna, which you had never known nor your fathers had ever known, so that He might make you know that man lives not by bread alone, but that man lives by everything that proceeds out from the mouth of Jehovah.” In Matthew 4:4, where the Lord Jesus quoted this portion to the devil, *everything* is replaced by *every word*, referring to the law, the commandments, the statutes, and the ordinances as words that proceed out of the mouth of God. God’s words are God’s breathing: “All Scripture is God-breathed” (2 Tim. 3:16). All the words in this book, therefore, are God’s breathing, and as we have seen, they all refer to Christ, who is the totality of God’s word to be the life and life supply of God’s people (John 1:14; 6:57, 63; Heb. 1:2).

God wants us to fulfill His righteous requirements for the accomplishing of His divine economy; however, He does not want us to do this in ourselves. Rather, He wants us to live, work, and have our being in Christ, by Christ, with Christ, through Christ, and in oneness with Christ (Gal. 2:20). God’s desire is that we put ourselves aside, forget ourselves, and fulfill His economy by the Spirit, that is, by the realization of the Son, who is the embodiment of the Father (John 14:17-18, 9-10). The Scriptures, as the breathing, the exhaling, of God, are the embodiment of Christ as the life-giving Spirit (6:63; Eph. 6:17). By inhaling the word of the Scriptures, we receive the Spirit, enjoy the riches of Christ, and are enabled to fulfill God’s requirements (vv. 17-18; Gal. 3:5).

Moreover, Deuteronomy shares with us practical secrets of how to take in God’s word. First, we need to believe God’s word, not murmur or rebel against any of His words, and not add to or take away from His word (1:32, 27, 26, 43; 4:2; 12:32). Second, we need to call on the name of the Lord. In Deuteronomy 4:7 Moses said, “What great nation is there

that has a god so near to it as Jehovah our God is whenever we call upon Him?” In this verse it is Jehovah our God who is “so near”; in 30:14 it is the word that is “very near.” Hence, the top way to receive the word of God, His breathing, is to call on the name of the Lord (Rom. 10:8-10, 12-13). Third, we need these words to be on our hearts; fourth, we need to repeat them; fifth, we must speak about them; sixth, we must bind them on our hand (our doings) and have them as frontlets between our eyes (our seeing); seventh, we must write them out (Deut. 6:6-9; 11:18-20; Col. 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:8; 1 John 2:16); eighth, we must love Jehovah (Deut. 6:5); ninth, we must listen to the word, keep the word, and do the word (7:12); and tenth, we must be spiritually hungry (8:3; Matt. 4:2; 5:3, 6).

Canaan—God’s Purpose and Goal

God’s intention in bringing His people into the good land was not just for them to receive His blessings but that they would cooperate with Him so that His purpose would be fulfilled. For this reason, Moses not only rehearsed the law to them but also instructed them regarding their worship of God. First, he charged them:

You shall completely destroy all the places where the nations whom you will dispossess have

served their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every flourishing tree. And you shall tear down their altars and crush their pillars; and their Asherahs you shall burn with fire, and the idols of their gods you shall cut down; and you shall destroy their name from that place. (Deut. 12:2-3)

The children of Israel were not to worship God in the same way that the nations worshipped their gods, and every name other than Jehovah’s was to be destroyed. Then Moses charged them: “But to the place which Jehovah your God will choose out of all your tribes to put His name, to His habitation, shall you seek, and there shall you go” (v. 5). The children of Israel were not allowed their own choice as to the place where they would worship God. They were to worship God in the place of His choosing. This unique place, as Jerusalem was later designated, was for the keeping of the oneness among God’s people, thus avoiding division caused by man’s preference (2 Chron. 6:5-6; 1 Kings 12:26-33; John 4:20). It was to this place that the people were to bring their offerings and tithes in order to worship and enjoy before Jehovah. Moses warned them:

You may not eat within your gates the tithe of your grain

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of God’s people.*

or of your new wine or of your fresh oil, nor the firstborn of your herd or of your flock, or any of your vows which you vow or of your freewill offerings or of the heave offering of your hand; but you shall eat them before Jehovah your God in the place which Jehovah your God will choose. (Deut. 12:17-18)

The children of Israel could enjoy the rich produce of the good land in two ways. The common, private way was to enjoy it as a common portion at any time, in any place, and with anyone (v. 15). The special, corporate way was to enjoy the top portion, the firstfruits and the firstlings, with all the Israelites at the appointed feasts and in the unique place chosen by God. Likewise, the enjoyment of Christ by the New Testament believers is of two aspects—the common, private aspect of enjoying Christ at any time and at any place, and the special, corporate aspect of enjoying the top portion of Christ in the meetings of the proper church life on the unique ground of oneness, the place chosen by God.

After the children of Israel entered the good land and dispossessed the seven tribes, they fulfilled God's charge spoken through Moses, bringing the top portion of the land to God's chosen place for the worship of God. By enjoying the riches of the land, the children of Israel were able to build up the temple to be God's habitation on earth and the city of Jerusalem to establish God's kingdom on

earth. Therefore, Deuteronomy ultimately shows that God's goal in His economy is not merely to redeem His people and save them from the world, typified by Egypt, but to bring them into Christ, typified by the good land, that they may possess Him and enjoy His unsearchable riches. Likewise, by enjoying the unsearchable riches of Christ, the believers in Christ are built up to be Christ's Body, the church, which is Christ's fullness, His expression, and which is also the habitation of God and the kingdom of God (Eph. 3:8; 1:22-23; 2:21-22; 1 Tim. 3:15; Matt. 16:18-19; Rom. 14:17). Eventually, God's habitation and God's kingdom will consummate in the New Jerusalem in eternity for the fulfillment of God's eternal economy (Rev. 21:1-3, 22; 22:1, 3).

by Jim Batten

Note

¹This article draws extensively on Witness Lee's subject, outline, and footnotes of Deuteronomy in the *Recovery Version of the Bible*.

Work Cited

Lee, Witness. *Outlines and Footnotes. Recovery Version of the Bible*, Living Stream Ministry, 2003.

Our Rebellious Nature Foreshadowed in Deuteronomy

Moses...knew that after his death the children of Israel would utterly spoil themselves and turn away from the way that he had commanded them (31:29a). As a result, evil would come upon them in the latter days, for they would do what was evil in the sight of Jehovah so as to anger Him by their undertakings (v. 29b).

As Moses was about to depart, his heart was set on the children of Israel, but he was not at peace. Knowing that Israel would rebel against God, Moses repeated his charge again and again. He seemed to be saying to the people, "I do not have peace regarding you, and I do not have any trust in you. You rebelled many times while I was alive, and I am concerned that after I leave, you will rebel even more." Eventually, what Moses felt regarding the children of Israel became the fact, for, not too long afterward, they rebelled once again. Therefore, Moses, the elderly father, was right in his concern.

We should not think that Moses' concern was excessive. He knew that the children of Israel were rebellious in nature, that the element of rebellion was part of their very being. Because they had a rebellious nature, they would eventually rebel even more against God. No matter how much teaching the people received through Moses, the judges, and the priests, they still went after other gods and worshipped idols. They went so far as to set up idols in the temple. It seems that the children of Israel became more pagan than the pagans. Despite the fact that they received so much training, they remained the same and continued to rebel.

We need to remember that what is portrayed regarding Israel is a picture of us today. This picture shows us what we are. Since we are the same in nature as the children of Israel, their exposure is also our exposure...We should not have any trust in ourselves, because we have a rebellious nature, a rebellious being. We are a constitution of rebellion. Therefore, we surely need the Lord's mercy and grace.

From *Life-study of Deuteronomy* by Witness Lee, pp. 196-197