

## NOTES AND QUESTIONS FOR STUDY IN THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY

### PART TWO – CHAPTERS 4-7 - HOLDING ON TO YOUR POSSESSIONS

For a people who had survived in the wilderness of Sinai for 40 years on the bare essentials, inheriting the abundance of the land of Canaan was a wonderful dream. Could it be as simple as walking in and claiming it? For us if we have struggled for years since first trusting Christ, claiming all the abundance God has promised sounds a great idea too.(Jn.10:10) Can it be a matter of just trusting Him to live in us? The answer to both questions is a resounding yes!

Before the Israelites left the desert and took the first step into the Promised Land, Moses wanted to review the all important question of how would they hold on to the new land once they had possessed it. We too need to know how enjoying all that the risen Christ can be in our lives should be an ongoing experience not just an exhilarating moment. In these next four chapters, Moses set out the essentials.

First, take the whole of the Word of God as His message to us. Do not add to it and do not subtract. Right back in the book of Genesis, Satan was casting doubt on what God had said.(Gen.3:1-5) At the very end of the Bible, John was given the same warning.(Rev.22:18,19) Some people doubt the historic truth of Genesis 1-11. Others just ignore much of the Bible as irrelevant. They are missing so much because to doubt any part of God's word is to doubt part of Him. On the other hand many have been persuaded that the Bible cannot be understood unless other books are added which inevitably twist what God is saying. The Moabites by adding other ideas changed God in to Baal and so did huge damage to family life.(Num.25:1-9) The Bible is enough and God uses one part of it to explain another.(4:1-4)

Second, look after your own soul first. This is simply a matter of keeping the whole word in your whole life. People will be amazed and start asking questions. This is to be a life long process which will mean that the Truth is passed on to your children and the following generations. We are to be our children's teachers. Teachers at school are just our helpers. Never lose that sense of awe and wonder at who God is and the privilege of knowing Him personally.(4:5-10)

Third, do not lose sight of the Ten Commandments as a summary of God's message. Remember particularly the second commandment about not making earthly likenesses of God. At Sinai the Israelites heard only a voice. They did not see a face. There is a strong temptation to try to fill in this gap which God deliberately left in our minds because He wants to keep adding to our awareness of Him from experience. As soon as we do, we will limit Him.

Fourth, remember that possession was to be a two way process. They were to possess the land God promised, but at the same time they were to allow God to possess them. Paul reminded Timothy how for the Christian trust goes in two directions.(II Tim.1:12-15)

Moses adds a sad personal warning. Even he had not always been prepared to trust God which had led to him missing out on entering the land.(4:11-24)

Fifth, sooner or later, they would forget, try to make an image of God, and so for the moment miss out. Eventually they would learn the hard way, turn back to God, and enjoy His forgiveness. God is jealous and will not stand by if we are unfaithful but He is endlessly compassionate and will never forget or fail us.(Heb.13:5) The Bible story is unique. Never since creation had any god rescued one enslaved people out of another people to become an independent nation.(4:25-40)

The land to the east of the Jordan taken from Sihon and Og was the first fulfillment of the promised land for 2 ½ tribes. Moses began there the practice of providing cities of refuge for those who had killed someone accidentally, who might be executed in anger before the full story was told.(Num.35; Josh.20) Justice needs to be practical.(4:41-49)

In chapter 5 Moses reviewed the Ten Commandments which would in effect be the headings for the teaching which would follow. He reminded the people how when God had first spoken to them in this way they had been fearful yet hungry to learn more. Moses was to continue to meet God and listen to Him so that he could satisfy the people's appetite for the Word. It would be the secret of the whole of their lives on earth.

As they read the Commandments again where were they to begin? With loving the Lord with all their heart, soul, mind and strength! This instruction summarises the first four

commands and leads on the last six which are drawn together later in the instruction to love our neighbour as we love ourselves.(Lev.19:18) Jesus recognized these two instructions as the key to everything else.(Matt.22:37-40) Loving God means His word will be in our lives, conversation, actions and homes.(6:1-9)

We seem to forget His word in good times when because we have everything we do not think we need the Lord, and in bad times when we assume He has forgotten and we start to grumble. Possessing His promises and overcoming our obstacles must be a daily choice.(Phil.4:11-13) Our children will ask questions. Take every opportunity to teach them the secret of life in Christ.(6:10-25)

A whole-hearted faith means that the Lord will have an absolutely unique and uncompromising place in our lives. This begins in the family with the choice of a husband or wife who unashamedly shares our faith in God alone. When we recognize that God chose us because He loved us not because we were better than others, and we let Him make us His people then He will lavish His kindness on us. This will affect our families, our work, our health and our ability to deal with the great challenges of life which seem too big for us but are not too big for Him, as long as we trust Him wholly.(7:1-26)

#### QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. What does Moses show to be the secret of continuing in a consistent enjoyment of Christ, long term? How have you noticed those you know have later struggled after first trusting Christ? Why does this happen? How could Moses' message in this chapter help?(chapter 4)
2. How would you answer someone who says 'I do not need to go to church but I live by the Ten Commandments'? What may they have lacked with which you could help in the way Moses did?(chapter 5)
3. If our children do not seem to be catching on to the importance of the Ten Commandments, where may we have failed them? How do good times and hard times both disturb our relationship with God?(chapter 6)

4. When we consider someone as a partner for life what are the two most important questions to be asking? What damage do we do for the future if we do not face these issues?(chapter 7)