

NOTES AND QUESTIONS FOR STUDY IN THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY

PART SEVEN – CHAPTERS 25-30 – POSSESSING OR DISPOSSESSED?

Moses had almost finished his very varied and comprehensive list of the practical daily issues of life. God's standards were clear and the consequences of ignoring them were tough. There will be no escaping the judgement of God if we ignore His plan. At the same time His provision for mercy and forgiveness was amazing. The implications of the cross of Christ are wonderful.

There are two further chapters of instructions for the Israelites which cover a variety of topics moving between condemnation for sin and compassion for the needy. The Law provided for corporal punishment in which a man could be sentenced to forty lashes. In practice, in case someone miscounted the number was reduced to 39. Paul received this punishment five times.(II Cor.11:24) Then in complete contrast there was to be concern for the ox while threshing who was to be allowed to eat as he worked. Paul suggests this also applies to Christian workers who are to be provided for as they minister.(I Cor.9:9) A dead man's widow was to be taken as a wife by his brother to raise children to keep his name remembered by future generations. The Sadducees used this story to ridicule the idea of life after death.(Matt.22:23-28) Ruth was offered first to her nearest relative and then to Boaz to fulfill this instruction.(Ruth 4) The outcome three generations later was King David. Seizing a man attacking your husband by his genitals was a serious offence. Unfair weights used in a transaction were totally unacceptable to God. Amalek's attack on the people of Israel in the wilderness in Exodus 17 was to be punished. King Saul was ordered, in I Samuel 15, many years later to carry out this punishment. The judgement of God seems harsh to us because we do not adequately accept the horror of sin.(chapter 25)

Two different sets of instructions are recorded about how they would give to God. There was to be an offering when they first entered Canaan of the very beginning of all the harvest they were to enjoy as they possessed their new possession. No percentage was stated. It would be from the heart. They were to say thank you for all the Lord had done for them. Their gift was to be passed on to the Levite who ministered them and the outsiders, the non-Israelites who had been drawn to God and lived among them. The second instruction was to repeat this giving every third year. This time it was to be a tithe, one tenth, of all they produced. It was to be used to feed not only the Levite and the stranger but the needy among the Israelites. Giving to those who are struggling would be an expression of their gratitude to God for all they had received from Him. Jesus would describe the lengths religious people might go to seem to be pleasing God while denying help to their needy parents.(Mark 7:9:13) The chapter concludes with a simple summary of the Law. It was about loving God with all their

heart and soul, celebrating how they were possessing all God had given by letting their whole lives belong to Him.(chapter 26)

In the next two chapters, Moses passed on the instructions God had given him about the choice they would daily face when they came into the Promised Land ready to possess their possessions. First the Law was to be written not just in the secret place where only the high priest could read it. It was to be inscribed in large letters in stone in a very public place for all to read. In the same location they were to build an altar for burnt offerings which reminded them how on the cross of Christ all their sin would be removed. Secondly it was for the peace offering which taught them how the cross could keep the peace between them. Next they were to divide into two groups with six tribes in each group standing on two opposing mountains representing the two choices. In the same way at the final judgement, God will divide people into the sheep and the goats.(Matt.25:31-46)

The Levites were to define the choice as to be cursed or to be blessed. The twelve curses were simply examples of the issues at stake. The first was about idolatry, always the key issue. Who is our God? The second was about honouring parents because godly living starts in the family. Three were about injustice. Four concerned abnormal sexual behaviour. One was about unprovoked violence. One related to playing tricks on the disabled. The final question was whether they would take the whole of God's word seriously.(chapter 27)