

Deuteronomy 9 - Thursday, July 21st, 2011

(1) "Hear, O Israel: You *are* to cross over the Jordan today, and go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than yourself, cities great and fortified up to heaven, (2) a people great and tall, the descendants of the Anakim, whom you know, and *of whom* you heard *it said*, 'Who can stand before the descendants of Anak?'

- Right at the start, the Israelites are apprised of the reality and the enormity of that which lies ahead for them upon entering the Promised-Land.
- It's for this reason that we would be grossly remiss to not take a closer look at something that's woven into the fabric of these first two verses.
- Moses goes over the fine print of the Promised-Land for a number of reasons not the least of which is their realistic expectations of the battles.

- I want to camp here on this truth for just a moment because of how important it is for us as believers to know the fine print of God's promises.
- Often times, the calling of God on my life, will come packaged with battles in my life, and like here with the Israelites, they can seem impossible.
- When we're up against our Anakim, we realize just how impossible the battle is, and I believe it's then that God has us right where He wants us.

- Here's why: when it's impossible for us it forces us to trust in Him. Conversely, if it's possible for us we won't go to the Lord, nor trust in the Lord.
- Not only do life's battles teach us to trust God, they also glorify God in the sense that the battle belongs to Him, and the victory comes from Him.
- There's something else here, and it has to do with Christians becoming disenchanted with God, because of their unrealistic expectations of God.

- We can become culpable for this when we present the Gospel to someone without also disclosing the cost, and that's what's in the fine print.
- If we say to people that all you have to do is repeat a prayer and come to Christ so that all your problems will go away, we're being dishonest.
- Then, when, not if, the battles come, they're blindsided because they weren't expecting it. This may explain why so many of them walk away.

(3) Therefore understand today that the LORD your God *is* He who goes over before you *as* a consuming fire. He will destroy them and bring them down before you; so you shall drive them out and destroy them quickly, as the LORD has said to you. (4) "Do not think in your heart, after the LORD your God has cast them out before you, saying, 'Because of my righteousness the LORD has brought me in to possess this land'; but *it is* because of the wickedness of these nations *that* the LORD is driving them out from before you. (5) *It is* not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart *that* you go in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations *that* the LORD your God drives them out from before you, and that He may fulfill the word which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

- Moses sort of rounds a corner here and tells the Israelites both, "how" He will do it, and "why" He will do it, or better said why He's not doing it.
- First, notice how God will do it; He goes before them. At first glance, this "how" can be easily missed because it's become a Christian "cliché."
- In other words, we know God is for us, and that He goes before us, and we just leave it at that, when there's so much more to it than that.

- When God says he goes before us, it carries with it the idea of Him being ahead of us, whereas if I fight the battle, I'll get ahead of Him, instead.
- When I take spiritual battles into my own carnal hands, I'll end up going before God, instead of waiting for God, Who is for me, to go before me.
- If we ever hope to have a victorious Christian life, then we must let the Lord go before us, and fight the battle instead of us! That's how it's won.

- That's the "how," now here's the "why;" Notice that we're first told "why" it's not, namely, because of the righteousness of the children of Israel.
- The reason why God does this is not because of the Israelites righteousness, the reason He does this because of the other nations wickedness.
- Let me take it a step further and say, that the reason God does it this way, is so that there's no way for us to ever think that it's ever about us.

- There's one more thing I need to point out here before we move on. Here's what I'm thinking; if the truth be known, this is what's best for us.
- Here's why I say that; "if the victories in our lives, came vis-a-vis the righteousness of our lives, then the onus is on me; so too is the pressure.
- A victorious Christian life would then become contingent on my own righteousness, and, since I'm not righteous, neither will I be victorious.

(6) Therefore understand that the LORD your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you *are* a stiff-necked people.

- Not only do they need to understand, it's not because of their righteousness, they also need to understand the extent of their unrighteousness.
- More specifically, they are a stiff-necked people, and if that weren't bad enough, Moses is about to remind them how stiff-necked they were.
- I find it interesting that what follows is a recounting of the Israelite's unrighteousness, and not a recounting of the other nations wickedness.

(7) "Remember! Do not forget how you provoked the LORD your God to wrath in the wilderness. From the day that you departed from the land of Egypt until you came to this place, you have been rebellious against the LORD.

- This brings up a question of why God would remind them to not forget. Is He rubbing their nose in their past sins and failures to condemn them?
- No! One reason for God doing this is so that He can keep us mindful of our weakness, in order that we will depend upon, and trust in Him, only.
- This fits in the context of His warning to them, here-to-fore, and, it's also a reminder of why God doesn't allow us to remember our sins no more.

(8) Also in Horeb you provoked the LORD to wrath, so that the LORD was angry *enough* with you to have destroyed you. (9) When I went up into the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant which the LORD made with you, then I stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights. I neither ate bread nor drank water. (10) Then the LORD delivered to me two tablets of stone written with the finger of God, and on them *were* all the words which the LORD had spoken to you on the mountain from the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly. (11) And it came to pass, at the end of forty days and forty nights, *that* the LORD gave me the two tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant.

- Moses reminds them how, that after 40 days and nights of fasting, he comes down from his mountain top experience, because of God's anger.
- You almost get the sense that Moses, if given the choice, would have wanted to stay on the mountain with the Lord and not have to come down.
- The reason I say that is sometimes we, like Moses, have to leave the mountain-top experience and get down to the business of dealing with life.

"It is no small trial to come down from communion with God to battle with other men's sins. This may fall to our lot this day. The Lord prepares us for it."

Charles Spurgeon

- I want to mention something here as it relates to the two tablets, but I need to hasten to say that I'm dogmatic about this, but I did notice this.
- The two tablets were written on both sides which had the 10 Commandments, the Law, or the Word of God, but it was also the Work of God.
- What's so interesting about this detail is that we have another reference in Revelation to a writing which was also on both sides of a scroll.

Revelation 5:1-5 1 Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne **a scroll with writing on both sides** and sealed with seven seals. 2 And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" 3 But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. 4 I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. 5 Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals." NIV

- Here's the connection; "both the tablets and this scroll, which were written on both sides, speak to, and were fulfilled by Jesus Christ Himself.
- In Jewish history, we have examples of certain kinds of documents which had writing on both sides, then they were sealed with seven seals.
- These documents were actually title deeds to property, and would only have writing on one side, that is unless, it couldn't be paid for in full.

- In the unfortunate event that the owner would have to default on the property payments, he would then be forced to relinquish his title deed.
- Upon this relinquishment, this title deed would now have written on the other side, all the debts that could not be paid, then receive seven seals.
- Then, and this is where it gets fascinating, the property could be redeemed if the debt was paid in full, and if it was within a seven year period.

- Remember, I'm not dogmatic about this, but I am intrigued by this, because the significance of this is profound in the prophetic picture it paints.
- The law, like the scroll, could only be fulfilled by, opened by, paid for in full by, none other than the person of Jesus Christ Who's our Redeemer.
- Perhaps I can say what you may tire of me saying once again; everything in the Old Testament points to the person of Jesus Christ in the New.

(12) "Then the LORD said to me, 'Arise, go down quickly from here, for your people whom you brought out of Egypt have acted corruptly; they have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them; they have made themselves a molded image.'

- At the risk of making light of something so serious and seeing the humor in this, I can't help but see this as God sort of disowning the Israelites.
- Notice how that God tells Moses to "go down quickly" because; "your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt have acted corruptly."
- Why does God say this? I believe it's because not only will our sin distance us from Him, but more importantly He will distance Himself from us.

(13) "Furthermore the LORD spoke to me, saying, 'I have seen this people, and indeed they are a stiff-necked people. (14) Let Me alone, that I may destroy them and blot out their name from under heaven; and I will make of you a nation mightier and greater than they.'

- OK, think about what God says to Moses here, He tells Moses to get out of the way so that He can blot them out and start all over with Moses.
- If God had said this to me, I have to confess that I'd have said; "ok," which is why God would never say this to me, and could say it to Moses.
- I'm of the school that believes God knew what Moses' response would be before He said this to him, which is also why He said this to him.

(15) "So I turned and came down from the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire; and the two tablets of the covenant *were* in my two hands. (16) And I looked, and behold, you had sinned against the LORD your God—had made for yourselves a molded calf! You had turned aside quickly from the way which the LORD had commanded you. (17) Then I took the two tablets and threw them out of my two hands and broke them before your eyes. (18) And I fell down before the LORD, as at the first, forty days and forty nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water, because of all your sin which you committed in doing wickedly in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger. (19) For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure with which the LORD was angry with you, to destroy you. But the LORD listened to me at that time also. (20) And the LORD was very angry with Aaron *and* would have destroyed him; so I prayed for Aaron also at the same time.

- Here, Moses describes what happened when he not only sees their golden calf, but what they all did around the calf, and said about the calf.
- It was for that reason that Moses had become so angry, that he throws the tablets down, and breaks them, because of their unthinkable sin.
- Now, it's been suggested that Moses breaking the tablets was a reflection of, and symbolic of, the breaking of the Law with this golden calf.

"It was a symbolical action testifying his great abhorrence of sin, and his zeal for the Lord of hosts. He felt that tables written with God's finger would be polluted by being brought among such a people."

Charles Spurgeon

(21) Then I took your sin, the calf which you had made, and burned it with fire and crushed it *and* ground *it* very small, until it was as fine as dust; and I threw its dust into the brook that descended from the mountain.

- Exodus 32 has graphic detail of this account. Moses takes the calf burns it grinds it to powder, scatters it on the water, and makes them drink it.
- The question is, why does he do this? One commentator suggests, it was to show them that this god was no god at all if it could be consumed.

- There's a striking contrast here, and it can be easily missed at first; the true God didn't consume them but the false God is consumed by them.
- There's even another contrast as well; Aaron feared man and made a god, Moses feared the true God, making them drink their manmade god.

(22) "Also at Taberah and Massah and Kibroth Hattaavah you provoked the LORD to wrath. (23) Likewise, when the LORD sent you from Kadesh Barnea, saying, 'Go up and possess the land which I have given you,' then you rebelled against the commandment of the LORD your God, and you did not believe Him nor obey His voice. (24) You have been rebellious against the LORD from the day that I knew you. (25) "Thus I prostrated myself before the LORD; forty days and forty nights I kept prostrating myself, because the LORD had said He would destroy you. (26) Therefore I prayed to the LORD, and said: 'O Lord GOD, do not destroy Your people and Your inheritance whom You have redeemed through Your greatness, whom You have brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand. (27) Remember Your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; do not look on the stubbornness of this people, or on their wickedness or their sin, (28) lest the land from which You brought us should say, "Because the LORD was not able to bring them to the land which He promised them, and because He hated them, He has brought them out to kill them in the wilderness." (29) Yet they *are* Your people and Your inheritance, whom You brought out by Your mighty power and by Your outstretched arm.'

- I have to say that for Moses to intercede on behalf of the Israelites while in the midst of their unspeakable sin and wickedness is utterly amazing.
 - Again, I see the humor here, notice that Moses gives them right back to God when he says; "Your people whom You have brought out of Egypt."
 - What's interesting is, not just "that" Moses intercedes, it's "why" Moses intercedes, and "how" Moses intercedes that we need to take note of.

- First, the why; Moses intercedes and even pleads with God to not destroy them because he both knows and he understands the heart of God.
 - In other words, when we don't know, we're sort of forced to go back to what we do know, and we do know it's not God's will that anyone perish.
 - Here, Moses is praying according to the will of God, because he knows it is the nature of God to be merciful, compassionate, loving and kind.

Exodus 34:5-6 5 Now the LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD.6 And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, NKJV

- That's "why" Moses intercedes, and now for the "how" Moses intercedes. At the risk of sounding like I'm preaching a mini three point sermon:
 1. It's Relationship - God, You have a "relationship" with them. They are Your people, whom You brought out of Egypt. Don't end this relationship!
 2. It's Reputation - God, You have a good "reputation" with them, and others. If you kill them and start over, what will that do to your reputation?
 3. It's Remembrance - God, You have a "covenant" with them, remember? You promised that you would multiply their descendants in the land.

- I want to end this chapter by looking at a reference in Hebrews that I believe has profound application to us as believers in the New Covenant.

Hebrews 12:18-24 18 You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; 19 to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, 20 because they could not bear what was commanded: "If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned." 21 The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, "I am trembling with fear." 22 But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, 23 to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, 24 to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. NIV

- The writer of Hebrews compares their Mount Sinai with our Mount Zion and draws some interesting parallels between them then; and us now.

Mount Sinai	Mount Zion
They came to this mountain	We come to a different mountain
Was the Old Covenant	Is the New Covenant
God's Law	God's Grace
Condemnation	Salvation
There was fear and terror	There is love and forgiveness
Was in a dry and desolate desert	Is in the city of the Living God
Was earthly	Is heavenly
Only Moses could come and meet God	An innumerable company comes as a general assembly
There were guilty men in fear	There are just men made perfect
Moses is the mediator	Jesus is the mediator
Ratified by the blood of animals	Ratified by the blood of God's precious Son, Jesus
Excluded people with barriers	Includes people because the barrier has been torn
Meant death	Means life