

---

**Day 48 – February 17**

---

## **Establishment of a Nation (1525 – 1400 BCE)**

### ***The Lawgiver Urges Obedience***

**Readings: *Deuteronomy 9:1-11:32***

#### ***Reflections:***

- The description of the problems facing the Israelites matches many of the problems facing us: tall, strong, walls that reach up to the sky. But God is bigger!
- God’s decision to judge the people of Canaan was based on their wickedness. So the reason for annihilation is rooted in God's wrath on these nations, not on Israel's righteousness or mission. If these nations were not so wicked, would God have spared them? Even Rahab, a prostitute is saved. Without doubt the evil these nations were perpetrating was great. We know from history they practiced child and human sacrifice as well as the abuse of women through religious prostitution.
- Definitely Moses’ humility in fasting and interceding for the people reveals why God listened to him. Again, he offers us a good example of someone abandoned to the purposes of God.
- The example of the Levites is again a great reminder for Christ-followers today. Those who serve as Priests of God have no land as their inheritance, only the Lord himself as their inheritance. As Jesus said in John 18:36, “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my disciples would fight to prevent my arrest.... But now my kingdom is of another place.”
- Here is a key summary call from God to the people: “Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer.” Even at this early phase of Moses giving the Law, the primary need was a complete heart change. When Paul writes to Christians, they are still obsessing about circumcision of the flesh (see Galatians 6:13-15). They still did not get what God has always wanted: hearts that are submitted and humbled before him.
- Also, another key statement by Moses is “(God) defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing. And you are to love those who are aliens, for you yourselves were aliens in Egypt.” God's heart is not for the proud, powerful, self-sufficient, and the self-satisfied. It is for the vulnerable and needy. The true sign of whether individuals have truly experienced their own weakness, brokenness, and need is how they treat the poor and needy. If you know what it is like to be really weak and needy, you will be kind to them even as God has been merciful to you. This key principle here at the

beginning of Israel's experience as a nation was supposed to shape their identity as a people, they were to continually remember how much mercy they have received so that in turn they will actively demonstrate mercy to all those they encounter, even the outsiders to their community.

- At this point in the story of Israel, obedience to God results in blessing. When Jesus appears, he fulfills all obedience and so faith in Jesus and in his righteousness now opens the way for us to receive God's spiritual blessings for our lives (see Ephesians 1:3). Now we may wonder why God was so focused on external blessings for Israel and then shifts to spiritual blessings. Again, in the unfolding story of Israel, we see God interact with people the way we want God to treat us. We assume that if he would just bless us materially, those rewards would be enough motivation to the right thing. What we see with Israel is that no amount of external blessing or punishments will create lasting change. The issue is not the amount of external motivation we experience but rather the degree to which our hearts are changed by being fully surrendered and secure in God's love.
- Lasting change will only happen when God's words, the essence of what he is speaking now are to be written on their hearts and minds. Again, God's goal is for all of his heart to be internalized into our hearts. How we create daily reminders and carefully teach our children are an important part but what is proven in time is that only through God's Spirit can God's truth and love truly be written on and etched into our hearts.
- The Law brings either blessing or curse. As we will see with Israel, the problem is that no one can actually live up to the Law therefore it can only bring curse (bad news). In Christ a new way is opened up that is not based on law but on faith or a trust. Therefore we can receive God's full blessing through faith in Christ. In Jesus there is no more curse, only blessing. This is why it is called Good News!