

## **Conquering the Land (1400 – 1100 BCE)**

### ***Renewal of the Covenant***

**Readings: *Deuteronomy 26:16-19; 27:1-26; 28:1-68; 19:1-29; 30:1-20***

### ***Reflections:***

- If this section doesn't make a person thankful for Jesus nothing will. It portrays in the starkest, most dramatic fashion the very heart of law, blessing and curse, favor and punishment. And God spells this out in exacting detail. For example, “There the Lord will give you an anxious mind, eyes weary with longing, and a despairing heart. You will live in constant suspense, filled with dread both night and day, never sure of your life.” Talk about putting the fear of God into their hearts. And it didn't work. It is like Israel had to experience the most intense version of this fear-based legalistic approach to spirituality so as to answer for all time that it doesn't work.
- It is fascinating that even here in the summary God makes this statement about the future: “The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendents so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul and live.” Here at the end of the law the new covenant that will come through Jesus is prophesied. As we will see, the circumcised heart is a new heart. “For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.” (Ezekiel 3:24-27)
- Here is another key passage: “Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. It is not up in heaven.... No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it....See I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction....Now choose life...love the Lord your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the Lord is your life....” (Deut. 30:11-20) This is fascinating because in one sense the law is humanly doable, and yet because of our unchanged hearts it is not sustainable. It is like the best people can keep law most times but it is ultimately not sustainable. God placed his word in their mouths by commanding

them to memorize it and say it over and over again. In this way, through memorization and repetition it was put in their hearts. Yet, to know what is right does not mean a person will do what is right. We see in Christ that God through his Spirit poured into our hearts his love and power so that we are now enabled to live a loving, truth-based life. God completes all that we need to live the essence of the Law, a completely loving life towards God and others. Through Jesus and the work of the Spirit God embeds in our hearts truth (the ability to know God's mind), love (the ability to experience God's heart) and power (the ability to live in God's strength).

- The "Cursed is the man" section at the end contains a very clear progression. It highlights the key sins that people were being challenged to reject. Notice what they are: Idolatry, dishonoring parents, stealing land, misleading the blind and helpless, withholding justice from the alien, orphan or widow, having sex with one of your father's wives, father's daughter from one of his wives, or an animal (yikes!), having sex with your mother-in-law, secret murder, accepting a bribe to kill someone. This list gets very weird. We see within this list a progression that starts from a spiritual rejection of God, a rejection of his authorities and the hardening of their hearts to the vulnerable all the way down to the most deplorable sinful actions. In this list we may see Moses speaking out to Israel the slippery slope of rejecting God. The consequences of rejecting God could not be any clearer and yet as we know, none of this will work to keep Israel from diving down this slope head first.