

## Deuteronomy Chapters 7-8 – John Karmelich

1. My title for this lesson is the two words, "Promises and Warnings", as in what are the differences of trusting God versus disobeying Him. To explain, let's recall the key verse from the last lesson. It was the "Shema" which is what religious Jews recite twice a day, or "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one". As I explained in the last lesson, the word "one" is a compound one, like two things being joined together to become one thing. My point here is that God (the plural "one") is saying in these two chapters, "Here's the good news if you agree to love Me as I desire that You love Me and here's the bad news if we decide to turn from Me." In other words we get blessed in this life if we obey God and we're cursed in this life if we don't. I don't want to scare you away from this lesson, but I want all of us to realize what we're getting ourselves into when we commit our lives to serving Jesus, both good and bad.
  - a) As always, let me state that the issue is not salvation, but being a good witness for Jesus. We don't get more saved by being good people. However, God is not telling us, "OK now you're saved because you believe in Jesus, now go do what you want until it's time to die and you see Me in heaven". We're saved for a purpose: That purpose is to use our lives to live as God desires so we can be a witness for Him. The promises in this lesson tell us how we're blessed if we're willing to live as He desires and the warnings against turning from Him and what are those consequences.
2. Let me explain these two chapters another way: Think of them as a pair of homilies (sermons) on how God wants us to live. Chapters 9-10 are also "homilies", but those two go together and it is better to read 7-8 as a pair and 9-10 as a separate pair. Since none of us are Jewish people living over 3,000 years ago, about to enter the land of Israel for the first time, it is essential to read them in context. There are aspects of these promises and warnings that were literal to them living in that era. There are also ways to read these verses that are universal to apply to everyone who is trusting in Jesus for the payment of our sins and want to use our lives to honor Him. If this text was just for them, then to state the obvious, it wouldn't be part of the bible for us to study.
3. OK, now that we get the idea these chapters tell us why we should serve God, what the specifics?
  - a) The first part of the chapter tells those Israelites to literally wipe out everyone living in the land of Israel and to literally destroy all the things they make to honor their gods. It also tells them not to marry any of them, as that would violate the first part the order to kill all of them mercilessly. First let me deal with the cruelty issue. God didn't tell the Israelites to kill everybody they ever encountered. This was a specific judgment on a specific group of people. It's God saying to those living in Israel, you're living in a spot I (God) promised to give to these Israelites and since I (God) created this world, I get to decide who can live where and further, you're lifestyle is so corrupt in how you live at that time, (as I've stated in the past, they sacrificed their own children to their gods) the most merciful thing I can do is wipe you out completely as you're beyond help at this point.
  - b) OK too bad for them, I suppose. This happened over 3,000 years ago. Why should I care about any of this? The point for us is that God doesn't want us to compromise with sin in any way shape or form. This is God telling us that He knows what's the best thing for our lives and since He's now in charge of our lives, He has every right to tell us what we can and cannot compromise with in order to please Him. For example, this group who lived in the Promised Land, committing some pretty vulgar things in order to please their gods and sacrificed their children to show their loyalty to them. This is God's way of saying to us that all life is sacred and I'm not going to require you to sacrifice anyone's life to prove your loyalty to Me. However, to compromise with what I (God) desire for you (us) to do, is deadly both in terms of our eternal salvation and how we live here and now as we use our lives for God's purpose.

- c) Next we have a blessing that says in effect, "God loves us just because He does". We were not pick by God because we're something special or outnumber those who are doomed to die because they don't want to serve God. Consider our own salvation: We were picked, just because we we're picked. Don't ask God why, just accept it. How does one know if God has chosen us? Easy, accept Jesus complete payment for one's sins past, present and future, and then you know for sure one is saved. The reason most people won't do that is simply that they think they can prove their worth to God or refuse to accept His existence.
  - d) Next comes the really good news, the blessings of this lesson. This includes having plenty of food, drink, the avoidance of diseases that were common among the unbelievers in that world at that time, and increase in numbers. Let me discuss the Jewish nation first. If one considers all the attempts in history to destroy them completely, consider the fact that the Jewish population of Israel today is about 6 million, and there are about 8.3 million Jewish people in the United States. Considering that there were about 2-3 million at the time of Moses' speech (see my first lesson on Numbers so verify that figure), my point is despite all they have been through as a nation, God has blessed them and increased their size to where they're far more in number today than they were at that time.
  - e) The point for us as Christians is that we'll flourish too despite persecution that believers have suffered throughout the last 2,000 years. Jesus started with 11 believers and some others who believed at that time. Today there are millions or billions who truly believe Jesus died for every sin they ever have or will commit. My point is despite persecution, the growth of the church has flourished. As to the more specific blessings of good stuff to have while serving God, I'll discuss that in this lesson. Let's just say the "good outweighs the bad" once one realizes all we get by obeying God in the first place.
  - f) Next Moses tackles into the question of how do we Israelites conquer a larger group with better weapons? The same way we as Christians have the power to overcome whatever sin issues we deal with in our lives, by His power. The secret of living the Christian life is by relying upon His power to do so in the first place. Moses then goes on to say that we'll be tempted by what those "gods" offer, but the only way to find true joy in this life, is by being obedient to what God demands of us and that's the key point of this section.
  - g) Finally we get the warning of "be careful to keep on obeying God when life is going well". The problem of God blessing our lives is that's when it's too easy to get our focus off Him to enjoy how we are blessed. Think of it this way, when do we pray the hardest, when life is going well or badly? That's why we get this warning about the danger of success.
  - h) Of course there's a lot more to say on the specific's of the blessings and curses of these two chapters, but that's why I write a verse by verse commentary. So to understand how God does want to bless our lives and avoid the dangers of turning from Him, let's see what it is God is teaching us through these "homilies" given by Moses:
4. Chapter 7, Verse 1: When the LORD your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you many nations – the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, seven nations larger and stronger than you – <sup>2</sup>and when the LORD your God has delivered them over to you and you have defeated them, then you must destroy them totally. Make no treaty with them, and show them no mercy.
- a) Let me set the scene: Moses is giving a speech to a large group of Israelites that are about to enter the land of Israel in order to conquer it. Deuteronomy is essentially a big speech saying, "Here's how you're going to live once you are in that land." It is not a book about salvation, but about how God wants us to live as those who are chosen to be His people. In the last chapter the focus was on the most important thing to know: It is to love God as much as we can and do what we can to keep our focus upon Him. This chapter opens in effect with the statement that while loving God that much, go conquer seven nations that live in the land of Israel. The most important thing to notice here is that God wanted the Israelites to have no mercy upon these groups and kill every last one of them!

- b) Let's start with who are these people? History records that they are all separate nations that existed at one time. You can find mentions of all these groups elsewhere in the bible and archeology has verified their existence. To put this in God's terms, He promised this land four hundred years ago as an unconditional promise to Abraham's descendants, so from God's perspective, these people are unwelcome "squatters" (a real estate term used to describe someone living somewhere illegally) in that land. God is essentially saying to the Israelites, because they're living where I want you to live, go completely destroy these nations and have no mercy upon them. Kill them completely. My job is to try to explain why all of this is necessary.
- c) First, I want to explain that one of my motto's as a bible teacher comes from these groups. I was taught as a bible teacher, "Who cares about the Amorites, Hittites and Perizzites? I have bills to pay and my kids are sick". That motto reminds me regularly that the reason one studies the bible is not to learn history, but to apply it to our lives today. Since these groups are mentioned here I wanted to get that motto out of my system. Ok, let's go:
- i) First, realize that the Israelites were not to kill everybody they ever met. God does not tell the Israelites today to kill anyone or everyone who doesn't convert to their religion. This was a specific punishment on a specific group of people. As I said, the reason God did this is these people were "squatters" on the land He promised to give to the Israelites.
  - ii) As I've also stated in past lessons, this is a group "beyond hope". They regularly sacrifice their children to their gods as well other pretty disgusting things. God's judgment here is like shooting a horse to put it out of its misery. So why kill, say babies of this group that don't know better? My guess is so they don't grow up to study the ways of their families and have that be a negative influence upon God's chosen people who were promised this land.
  - iii) More importantly, this conquering is God's way of saying to us, "Don't mess with sin, it's more deadly than we realize, and the best thing we can do is wipe it out so it's not an influence upon our lives. Let me try to think of an extreme example: If one has a battle with a deadly drug, one gets medical help and realize that God is willing to help us defeat what is bad for our health. When we are tempted by our weaknesses, we need to remember that in the spiritual sense, Jesus is all we need, and wants to guide us to overcome whatever we battle. On a practical level, I've learned that when temptations come, if I can get my focus off of myself, and onto doing something for someone else, it helps in those moments when I'm tempted to do something I know God doesn't approve of.
- d) OK, enough of that, back to the text. Notice that God says these nations are stronger than the Israelites were. Notice there is no "battle plan" in this text. God says the Israelites will win the battle, not because they're bigger, stronger, or better equipped than they are, but only because God wants them to win, they will win. Notice God is describing this as if it were a "done deal". Coming back to our own battles we face in life, God is saying that we have a force battling for us greater than anything any enemy can do, the God who created all things wants to lead us to that victory.
- i) The "enemy" for you and me is about conquering our fears. It's about overcoming issues in our life that keep us from trusting God with every aspect of our lives. It's about using His power to overcome whatever sin issues we battle. It is to realize He wants to guide our lives to make a difference for Him. Ok, sounds good, how do we do that practically? Great question. First, it involves daily reading of God's word so we know how's the best way to live our lives. It's about realizing what is His will for our lives based on what we enjoy doing and how we can use the skills that God has given us for His glory. It's about facing whatever obstacles we have to face and realize God wants to guide us to overcome our fears of life itself.

- ii) Finally, just as the Israelites were to show no mercy to the groups that God wants them to conquer, so God wants us to show "no mercy" to the sin issues of life that we face. Be it some sort of addiction, or yelling issues, or cheating issues, the point is God is greater than whatever it is we battle, and He and He alone wants to give us the power to overcome those problems. Yes I believe in getting medical help if that is what it takes. The point is we don't have to fear whatever it is in life that is separating us from living how God wants us to live (think the 10 Commandments) as He promises us to lead us to victory. By the way, God never promises the battle won't be messy or take time. He just promises us victory over whatever issue we have to face in life.
  - iii) OK, suppose we are facing cancer or some other life threatening issue. God never promises us perfect health or a long life. What God says is "Your time is my time so use it wisely as life is short". Of course I believe in getting medical help. I'm just saying that while one is dealing with such serious issues, don't waste the valuable time God has given us, and realize we can use our time as a witness to others even if we go through something as horrible as that can be.
5. Verse 3: Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, <sup>4</sup>for they will turn your children away from following me to serve other gods, and the LORD's anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy you. <sup>5</sup>This is what you are to do to them: Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones, cut down their Asherah poles and burn their idols in the fire.
- a) These three verses are an epilogue to the first two that essentially say, "no exceptions" to the concept of completely wiping out the people living there, "the squatters" at this time. If one is tempted to marry one of these people or allow our children to marry them, then one is violating the command to wipe them out completely. Verse 5 says that not only are the Israelites to kill every last one of them, but they are also to destroy their altars made to their false gods and burn those symbols to their gods.
  - b) The sad part is to realize how the Israelites failed to do that in their history. If one reads the book of Judges, 1st and 2nd Samuel and "Kings", there are references to these Asherah poles and altars as the Israelites failed to follow God's orders here. So why did God have to spell this out here? Why did Israel disobey? It's like asking, why is sin tempting? It is "because it is", as sinful acts initially make us feel good or "feel numb to our pain", but in the end it always demands more to bring us that same sense of satisfaction. That's why God constantly tells us through the bible that He is all we need in order to have a sense of satisfaction about life and that all sinful things sooner or later, will kill us.
  - c) For those of you interested in the "literal", an Asherah pole is a tree carved out as to turn someone on sexually. Think of it as an ancient pornographic image. The people living in Israel at that time believed their gods had to be turned on sexually in order for them to go benefit their lives. That's why the ancient false gods from the Babylonian system through the Greek and Roman gods often involved sexual acts. Those acts appeal to our nature to want sexual activity "without consequences" and at the same time, appeal to their gods to bless their lives to do whatever feels good to do at any time.
  - d) So is God against "doing whatever we want that feels good"? Of course not. God created us with sexual desires so that we would reproduce. The reason God lays out a bunch of laws to obey throughout the bible is He's effectively saying, "I'm not doing this My sake, but because this is the best way for you to live out the time you have. If you want to have a life full of blessings and not curses, do what I command not to earn our salvation, but it is the best way to live out one's life. All of that leads back to these verses. God is saying to us here, "Don't compromise with what can do us irrevocable harm. I know it's going to be tempting when we see what these gods represent, but I know what's best for your lives and I want you to live as I desire as it's the best way to use the time you have to live."

6. Verse 6: For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.
- a) The key to reading this verse is not to see it as applying to the Israelites who lived back then, but to anyone and everyone willing to trust God to guide their lives. A classic idea to ponder is, "Why did God pick me? What did I do to deserve this? The answer is, "Why not you?" God loves us just because He does. I like to use the illustration that if someone really enjoys painting or sculpting or just playing a musical instrument, they do it, as they can't stand "not doing it". (That's why I write these lessons, by the way.) My point is God is a God of love and wants to express that love upon someone, and has chosen us to be the one's He wants to express that love upon for all of eternity. All we have to do is accept it, and out of our free will, choose to accept His love and freely love Him in return.
  - b) The reason God picked the Israelites living back then, is He wanted a group of people to be His witnesses to the world around them. If you look at a map of Israel, it is literally a "land bridge" between Europe, Asia and Africa. Therefore, as people want to cross from Euro/Asia to Africa, they'd have to travel through Israel (assuming they don't go by sea) and there they can be God's witness to the world. My point is God didn't create us to live in our own little bubble and ignore the world around us. Just as they're called to live in Israel, so we're called as Christians to be a witness for Jesus in the world that's around us. That's what the "Promised Land" is, to trust Jesus to guide us through every aspect of our lives so God can use our lives for His glory.
7. Verse 7: The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. <sup>8</sup>But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your ancestors that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt.
- a) This continues the thought of "Why them, or why us?" God wants to make it clear that they (and us) were not picked because they were something special. They were picked as "well, just because they were". Stop and consider that God called a man named Abraham and told him he'd have a huge number of descendants even though he didn't have any of his own children until he was about 100 years old. It's amazing to consider how from that one couple, came millions of people who were slaves in another country and then through a series of miracles, were separated from that other nation and became a large group that still exist to this day. To put it another way, how many Hittites, Amorites, and Perizzites are around today? None. Yet the Israelites have survived as a group despite some horrid periods of persecution to this day. If you ever wonder why so many people are hell bent on destroying that nation, I'm convinced it's demonic in the sense that Satan is well aware that if the Israelites are completely destroyed, "he wins" as then Jesus can't return to rule from a nation of Israelites as the bible promises.
    - i) OK, we get the idea that God separated them as He wanted a group of people to be His witnesses to the world around them. Why us? Why did God pick me and not say my neighbor? First God may pick your neighbor too, as we can't tell who is saved by looking at someone. That's why we pray for all people.
    - ii) So assuming I believe that Jesus died for all my sins and I believe He is God, why did God pick me? Why not you is the best answer? It's because He loves us and cares for us as individuals that He chose us. The answer is not to question it, but just to accept it and use our lives for His glory based on that acceptance.
  - b) Before I move on, let me talk about Egypt for a moment. Are there Egyptians that God has called to be with Him forever? Of course as I've met some. At the time Moses wrote this, Egypt was the most powerful nation on earth. Also at that time, Egypt has literally hundreds of gods that they worshipped. What God rescued the Israelites from is a life of trusting in anything and everything that isn't the true God who created all things.

8. Verse 9: Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments. <sup>10</sup> But those who hate him he will repay to their face by destruction; he will not be slow to repay to their face those who hate him.
- a) Remember that I said this lesson is about how we can be blessed or cursed by God? What Moses is saying is that God wants to bless us, and all we have to do is accept that blessing. If we choose to live as God desires we live, we will be blessed, so accept it as fact. If we're willing to accept the fact that God is faithful to those He's called to serve Him, no matter what we're going through in life, then we can realize He'll always be there to guide us through whatever we're dealing with at any and all moments of our lives.
  - b) For a long time, I was stuck on what the bible meant by a "thousand generations". If one figures a generation is 40 years, then that means it will be 40,000 years before Jesus returns to wrap things up. Then I learned that in the original language and that culture, that the term "A thousand generations" is a figure of speech and not a phrase to be used literally. It would be like a mom saying to her child, "I've told you a thousand times not do that." It's not meant to be taken literally, but an expression to show us just how much God loves us and cares for us (beyond our ability to comprehend it).
  - c) What about the negative aspects of these verses? They say that God is not slow to repay to "their face" those who hate Him? To state the obvious, many atheists and many people who don't care about pleasing the God of the bible live out full lives. So how can God say He's not slow to repay them to their face? The answer is stop and consider how short our time to live really is. Whether we only live a few years or to hundred, life is short and our life here will be over before we know it. From God's eternal perspective, He isn't slow to repay those who turn from Him. To put it simply, one never wins in the long run if one is opposed to His will for our lives. We can count on that promise as much as any other one written in the bible.
9. Verse 11: Therefore, take care to follow the commands, decrees and laws I give you today.
- a) This is Moses saying, "You want motivation to obey God? Realize first of all, we've been separated to serve Him. Then realize we'll be blessed in this life and the next one when we choose to use our lives to serve Him. Finally realize that God's not slow to punish those who refuse to turn their lives over to Him."
  - b) Let me answer the classic question, "What about those people living in a Muslim world or on an island where no knowledge of the true God exists? What about them? First I recall that this is God's world, and if He created it then He gets to decide what to do with it, and who'll be with Him forever. I believe God will judge people fairly based on what they do know about Him and how they lived according to that knowledge. Since those of us who have been exposed to Jesus and what He's accomplished, we have no excuse. For those who live in cultures who haven't been exposed to that truth, I'm positive God will fairly judge them. As the classic saying goes, if you worry about those people so much, go be a witness to them so they can know the truth. In the meantime, control what we can control which is our own lives and let God worry about what is beyond our control.
10. Verse 12: If you pay attention to these laws and are careful to follow them, then the LORD your God will keep his covenant of love with you, as he swore to your ancestors.
- a) I promised that these two chapters are full of blessings for those who trust in God and full of curses when we turn from Him. Just how we are blessed is answered starting with the next verse. Before we get to those blessings, Moses throws in this little warning here for us to pay attention to them carefully. Before I discuss what those blessings are, let's recall why God wants us to obey them: This isn't about salvation, but about living as He desires we live so we can make a difference for Him in the world around us. God is giving them that land as He made an unconditional promise to Abraham to do so. At the same time, the Israelites could be "booted out of there" for a time being if they fail to trust Him.

- b) Let me explain how that applies to us. If we fail to trust God with our lives here and now, God can and does "boot us out" from being a witness for Him. In the book of Acts there is the classic story of a couple named Ananias and Sapphria (Chapter 5). They believed in Jesus but lied to the apostles about what they were giving away. My point is God has the power at any time to take any one of us "out of the ballgame" if we fail to be a witness for Him with our lives. I'm not saying we have to be perfect. I'm saying that the price of our commitment to be a witness for Jesus is that we're always "on the witness stand" and God has the right at any time to end our life or more likely end our ministry opportunities if we fail to be a good witness for Him. I can think of a few fairly famous pastors who lost their ministries when they failed to be a good witness. If that scares you, it should. Again I believe we can't lose our salvation as that depends upon our trust in what Jesus did for us. However, God can bless us for doing His will and "curse" our lives here and now if we choose to turn from Him. If you get that, you get the central point of this lesson. In the meantime, let's keep our focus on something more positive and read of the blessings:
11. Verse 13: He will love you and bless you and increase your numbers. He will bless the fruit of your womb, the crops of your land – your grain, new wine and olive oil – the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks in the land he swore to your ancestors to give you. <sup>14</sup> You will be blessed more than any other people; none of your men or women will be childless, nor will any of your livestock be without young. <sup>15</sup> The LORD will keep you free from every disease. He will not inflict on you the horrible diseases you knew in Egypt, but he will inflict them on all who hate you. <sup>16</sup> You must destroy all the peoples the LORD your God gives over to you. Do not look on them with pity and do not serve their gods, for that will be a snare to you.
- a) I could spend a whole lesson discussing each of these ways in which God blesses us when we choose to be obedient to Him. I wanted you to see all of them "at once" which is why I put all these verses here together. Let's start with the basics: If we're pretty much healthy at this moment and live in a free society where one can discuss God with others, we need to be grateful for what we have and not complain too much about our problems. All of us have problems we have to deal with, but if we're fairly healthy and free to talk about Jesus as a start, be grateful for that. With that said, let me discuss a few of these things:
- b) The first principal here is that God promises children. My wife and I for years struggled with getting pregnant, so this is personal. We now have two beautiful daughters and we are grateful for a number of people who prayed for us and helped us through those years. Do the references to having children mean that everyone who trusts God will be blessed with children if they desire to do so? In most cases yes, however, there are cases where it isn't God's will for someone to have children at that time, and often it's to teach us some specific lesson. One of my wife's best friends back then couldn't get pregnant. Her and her husband split up over that issue. They both got remarried and both had children with their new spouses. The main point here is God does promise those who trust in Him will increase in number as a society based on that trust.
- c) The second blessing promised here has to do with food. Notice God isn't saying the food will grow all by itself. The point is the land God gave the Israelites is the type of land that is good for growing food. As relatively small a country as Israel is, it's one of the largest exporters of food and plants in all of Europe. So does this mean that wherever we live, God will bless that land for food? I don't see food growing in "wastelands" or an always frozen place like Antarctica, so I don't think that's the point. This is specific to the land of Israel and also a principal that God will guide our lives and "give us a brain" to lead us to live in a place where food is available. It does not mean "free food". Again, God's saying this land is a good place to grow food and raise animals.
- d) The final blessing is about avoiding certain diseases. Our knowledge of germs and how diseases spread didn't come into knowledge until the last few centuries. Let me explain how and why the Israelites got to avoid diseases common to that culture at that time:

- i) The answer had to do with washing: Some of God's laws involve washing rituals before eating. This included washing food and hands. Again the knowledge of germs wasn't until the last few centuries. Much of the Jewish population didn't suffer through the "great plagues" of the Middle Ages simply because they washed not knowing it benefited their lives that way.
- ii) There have been books written about the survival of Jewish people versus other cultures living around on this topic. A good book on this topic is "None of these diseases" that discusses what diseases were common in ancient Egypt and how the Israelite society as a whole did avoid them. The point is God worked to help that nation grow and flourish both by providing them with a land good for growing food as well as keeping diseases away from them, as well as good "reproducing" ability. Everything in that paragraph is about growing as a society.
- e) Before I move on, let me address those of you suffering with some bad disease or sickness at this time. At this time, someone close to me who is a strong Christian is suffering from a horrible cancer and the doctors didn't give him long to live. What has impressed me as I watch his life now, is how much he's enjoying the time he has left. He's come to accept it and because he realizes how valuable his time is, it appears he's enjoying it far more than any other time in his life. The point here is that God never promises a pain-free life if we do trust Him with our lives. What He promises is to be there with us as we go through it so we can use our lives for His glory.

12. Verse 17: You may say to yourselves, "These nations are stronger than we are. How can we drive them out?" <sup>18</sup> But do not be afraid of them; remember well what the LORD your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt. <sup>19</sup> You saw with your own eyes the great trials, the signs and wonders, the mighty hand and outstretched arm, with which the LORD your God brought you out. The LORD your God will do the same to all the peoples you now fear. <sup>20</sup> Moreover, the LORD your God will send the hornet among them until even the survivors who hide from you have perished. <sup>21</sup> Do not be terrified by them, for the LORD your God, who is among you, is a great and awesome God. <sup>22</sup> The LORD your God will drive out those nations before you, little by little. You will not be allowed to eliminate them all at once, or the wild animals will multiply around you. <sup>23</sup> But the LORD your God will deliver them over to you, throwing them into great confusion until they are destroyed. <sup>24</sup> He will give their kings into your hand, and you will wipe out their names from under heaven. No one will be able to stand up against you; you will destroy them.

- a) All of these verses can be summed up with the phrase, "don't be afraid". As alluded to in this chapter earlier, the number of people living in the land of Israel back then was greater than all of the Israelites that are about to attack. The reason the previous generation failed to conquer it was due to their fears of what could happen to them. Moses is saying to the Israelites, God Himself will drive them out "little by little" and the size of an army is not relevant to the fact it is God's will for those Israelites to live there.
- b) OK assume we know enough about history to realize the Israelites did live there for many millenniums. If we realize the Israelites did listen to God and went forward, why should we care about any of this ancient history? The issue isn't learning history, the issue for us is to learn from history. If God made it possible to drive out the "squatters" on that land and have the Israelites completely wipe them out, what makes us think God can't work in our lives to make a difference for Him? Even if we believe God exists and wants to guide our lives, we don't get verbal instructions to go do this or that. Think of our lives in terms of what we do fear? It could be death, failure, or even embarrassment in some way. This text is saying, "I'm more powerful than any of those things, trust me to go forward despite our fears of those things and trust that I want to work in your (our) life."
  - i) If we get that, what are the specifics? We may need a job and we have to trust Him as we do the footwork. I think in terms of "time". I pray in the morning, God, my time is yours, what do you want me to do with it? From there He'll guide us.



- ii) Jesus command for His followers (that's us) is to go out into the world and make disciples (more followers) for Him. I view the results as God's problem. The effort is our issue. We don't get a notch in our bible for every person we save. We're just called to make an effort for Him and leave the results to Him. Just as the Israelites were called to go attack and be blessed for that effort, God promises us blessings if we're willing to take that step forward, trust Him and make a difference for Him.
  - iii) What about the practical aspects? What about getting that job of facing the reality of say, a bad injury or sickness? God promises that if we seek Him first, He'll lead us through it. I view it as God on the other end of a rope saying, "Hold on, I'll pull you through this". In other words, do the necessary footwork and trust that God is guiding us through whatever it is we have to face. That's the point of these verses.
  - c) Before I move on, I want to discuss the phrase "little by little" some more. God says that if the Israelites did wipe them out too fast, wild animals will multiply too fast. On a literal note, if the Israelites did kill lots of bodies real fast, wild animals would eat those bodies and multiply quicker. If God's willing to lead them to victory, why couldn't He deal with those animals as well? The answer is to teach them and us a valuable life lesson: That is, if God gave us everything we need all on "day one", I guarantee we'll get our focus off of Him as well, we have all we need. The idea of "little by little" is the idea of staying close to God as He guides us for His glory. In effect, the wild animals were an excuse God gave as to why He wants the Israelites to enjoy each victory one moment at a time. Remember what's in this for God, a long term, loving relationship what He created as we use our life to serve Him in all that we do. Therefore, the "little by little" keeps us close to Him as we stay close to Him and use our lives to make a difference for Him.
    - i) I remember hearing a story about a woman who wrote a fictional book. She then fell in love with one of the characters she created in that story. The author decided to "write herself" in that novel so she could marry that character she loved. That in effect is a great illustration of what God did. He put "Himself" in our world so He can spend eternity with what He created. I bring it up here as the "little by little" idea is about continuing to draw close to God so we can continue that relationship with Him in this life as well as the next one.
  - d) Finishing the verses, there are illustrations comparing the victory to a "hornet's nest". If you've ever been attacked by a bunch of angry hornets, all one wants to do is run away. The text also says God will throw their enemies into confusion and no one will be able to stop the Israelites from winning, as God is working behind the scenes to give the Israelites that victory. The point for us is God is working behind the scenes in our lives to lead us to do His will, if we're willing to work past our fears of failure and trust Him to guide us.
  - e) OK, we get all of that. What do we do specifically? The answer is what's logical. We look at the situation in front of us, use our brains as I like to say, and make good decisions. As we do that we trust God is guiding our lives for His glory. In hindsight, it's easy to look back and realize how God's guiding our lives. The trick is to overcome our fears of failure and simply go forward to make the right decision so God can bless our lives.
13. Verse 25: The images of their gods you are to burn in the fire. Do not covet the silver and gold on them, and do not take it for yourselves, or you will be ensnared by it, for it is detestable to the LORD your God. <sup>26</sup> Do not bring a detestable thing into your house or you, like it, will be set apart for destruction. Regard it as vile and utterly detest it, for it is set apart for destruction.
- a) The danger with "God's victory" is we're tempted to stop and possess what God means for us to destroy. Let me discuss the literal aspect first: Silver and gold are elements that can't be destroyed. Moses is saying here is to melt and reshape those things so they won't be a temptation to study and worship what's represented by those images. The idea is that the land of Israel was full of statues honoring false gods. They are to be completely destroyed as what they represent can turn the Israelites away from trusting God.

- b) If one reads from the book of Judges through 2nd Kings, one can read how the Israelites failed to do this and the problems it caused them for many centuries. What I'd rather do is explain why we should care about this stuff. Let's say we spend time helping someone get their life back on the right track and they leave behind a lot of bad stuff that hurt their lives. The idea is not to be tempted by what is "sitting there" that they left. I'll leave to our imagination what examples could go there.
- c) With that said, we're going to cover one more chapter, as this next one is short:
14. Chapter 8, Verse 1: Be careful to follow every command I am giving you today, so that you may live and increase and may enter and possess the land the LORD promised on oath to your ancestors. <sup>2</sup>Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. <sup>3</sup>He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. <sup>4</sup>Your clothes did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these forty years. <sup>5</sup>Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the LORD your God disciplines you.
- a) These verses focus on that tough word "discipline". It's a reminder that who God loves He disciplines. God reminds the present generation of Israelites that their parents had to travel for forty years through the wilderness in order for this generation to get to where they are today. There were times in that history where they didn't have enough to eat or drink and God provided for them. Moses is also reminding them of a miracle He did that they probably didn't realize: In those 40 years their clothes didn't wear out and their feet did not swell up from all the walking. I also learned this week that when we don't get the right vitamins in our diet, our feet swell. This is God's way of saying, despite all the hard things you and your parents faced I (God) was there leading you the whole time and I got you safely to where you are now. If I've gotten you this far, what makes you think I can't lead you to victory to where you are going next?
- b) Again, the issue is overcoming our fears. God's reminding us that He's lead us to where we are at this point in life. Why do we fear the future when we realize that the same God who's gotten us this far, can't lead us into the next step? Think about life this way: Their parents didn't have to do much during the Egyptian miracles except show loyalty to God during that time. God fed them during those 40 years. Now that the journey is over, why fear what's next? In our journey through life, God will usually "hold our hands" as to do amazing things to get us to trust He's there. After awhile, those miracles don't come as often as He wants us to realize He's there as we go forward to make a difference for Him. That's what living in the "Promised Land" is all about for Christians, trusting that God is guiding our lives even though we don't see Him working moment by moment. Just as He got the Israelites "this far", He'll lead us past our fears if we're still willing to trust Him.
- c) I can't leave this section without commenting on Verse 3. Jesus Himself quoted this verse when Satan was tempting Him out in the wilderness. Jesus point is essentially the same as Moses' here: Given a choice between eating and studying God's word, His word comes first. It isn't that eating is bad. It is we're to digest His word for guidance as to know His will and not just be interested in say, where is our next meal coming from.
15. Verse 6: Observe the commands of the LORD your God, walking in obedience to him and revering him. <sup>7</sup>For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land – a land with brooks, streams, and deep springs gushing out into the valleys and hills; <sup>8</sup>a land with wheat and barley, vines and fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil and honey; <sup>9</sup>a land where bread will not be scarce and you will lack nothing; a land where the rocks are iron and you can dig copper out of the hills.
- a) OK, back to the blessings: God's effectively saying, "I'm not going to rain food down on you for much longer as the place I'm leading you to is a good land to grow food and raise animals. Even the metals you need to make things are available to be dug out of the hills.

- b) Good for them I suppose, what does that have to do with me? As I said earlier, when we first realize God is guiding our lives, He'll often allow great miracles and things to occur to prove He exists. Then He says to us over time, "OK, enough of that. Now just trust I'm here and go forward to make a difference for Me as I promise that the life we'll have as we "work for God" will be a much greater life than anything we do for ourselves.
  - c) That's the "discipline" that God's trying to get across in this text. When we go through a tough time that's God saying to us, "Do you still trust Me, even now, even through this?" God wants the best for us and our lives. The text isn't implying that life will be easy once we dedicate our lives to serving Him. It's saying life will be better than the alternative of only living to get stuff for ourselves. Remember the acronym JOY: Jesus, others, yourself. When we consider living by those terms we are blessed far greater than when we just care about getting stuff for ourselves. That's how we get blessed by God.
  - d) Coming back to the text, notice that the food, water and metals they need to live will not be handed to them. They still have to "work" the land they conquer. That's what God is saying to us as well. I'll give you all the supplies you'll need to make a difference for Me, but we still have to "work" to make that difference for Him. That's how He gets us in His game plan of making a difference for Him in our world.
16. Verse 10: When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you. <sup>11</sup> Be careful that you do not forget the LORD your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. <sup>12</sup> Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, <sup>13</sup> and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, <sup>14</sup> then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.
- a) The danger presented in these verses is the danger of success. The literal danger is when we start to enjoy how God has blessed our lives and forget that He gave us those blessings in the first place. Suppose we've lived the "American Dream" of owning a nice home, we have lots of stuff and for the most part, life is going well. That's when it's easy to think, I did all of this, now I can kick back and enjoy it and forget about God."
  - b) Stop and consider when we pray the hardest: When life is going well or poorly. It's when things are going bad is when we think, "There's nothing else I can do, I'll just pray." That is when God is probably thinking, "Glad to hear from you, it's been awhile!" This is why it's important to develop good habits of praying and spending time in His word, so when we do enjoy the good times, our habits remind us who gave us those blessings to begin with.
  - c) This is why God is constantly reminding the Israelites how they were slaves at one time. It is so we realize how we too were "slaves to sin" and God rescued us out of that lifestyle. What I'm getting at is never fail to be grateful for how God is blessing our lives no matter what we're going through. That's how we can have joy during the best or worst times of our lives, when we stop and see it from His perspective.
17. Verse 15: He led you through the vast and dreadful wilderness, that thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions. He brought you water out of hard rock. <sup>16</sup> He gave you manna to eat in the wilderness, something your ancestors had never known, to humble and test you so that in the end it might go well with you. <sup>17</sup> You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." <sup>18</sup> But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today.
- a) Once again, we have Moses reminding the second generation of Israelites how God did a whole bunch of miracles to show them that God's done amazing things to get you this far in life and what makes you think He's going to forget you at this point. The danger of not seeing God work in our life is we think, "We did all this, we made it possible." That type of arrogance is what Moses is warning against in this section of the text.

- b) Moses is saying the only reason they'll have success there is due to God's unconditional promise to their ancestors. The amazing thing is to realize that God loves us as much as He loves them. Trusting in Jesus is more than realizing He paid the full price for all of our sins. It's to realize God wants to guide all aspects of our life for His glory. That's why the text spends so much time emphasizing trusting God no matter what. We are reminded how God guided them (and us) even in ways we didn't realize. In this text the Israelites were reminded that the wilderness was full of poisonous scorpions and snakes. To sum this up, it's another reminder, hey, you're alive and well reading this text, so who do you think made it possible for you to read it in the first place?
  - c) To say this another way, we can accept that Jesus paid the full price for our sins, and then go do nothing about it and still be saved. The amazing part of living out the Christian life is to use the time God's given us to make a difference for Him. Not to earn His love but to show our appreciation for how He's saved us. That's why the text is emphasizing how He gets the credit for all the good things we did. It's easy to say our hard work got all of this for me, and forget that God gave us that ability to perform that hard work to begin with.
18. Verse 19: If you ever forget the LORD your God and follow other gods and worship and bow down to them, I testify against you today that you will surely be destroyed.<sup>20</sup> Like the nations the LORD destroyed before you, so you will be destroyed for not obeying the LORD your God.
- a) I've been saying since I started this lesson that the whole thing is full of blessings if we're live in gratitude for the good things God does for us and warnings of the dangers we face if we turn from Him. Bottom line is to be saved means we're "stuck" with God for better or for worse. The way I like to put it is, I'm not impressed with people who put an "I love Jesus bumper stickers" on their car. I'm impressed with people who change their lifestyle based on their trust in Jesus and use their lives to make a difference for Him. To state the obvious again, we're not more saved by doing so, but I'm convinced people who use their lives for His glory are going to appreciate this life and the next life a lot more.
  - b) With that said, notice the "destruction" aspect of these final two verses. What this text is saying effectively is that we'll suffer badly if we choose to turn against Him. First one has to think about this in the "collective sense". The Israelites themselves were kicked out of the land of Israel many centuries later for literally doing the same things that those living in the land of Israel at the time of Moses' speech were doing. If we're not acting any better than the nonbelievers acting around us are acting, God has every right to "take us out of the ballgame" for failing to be a witness for Him. Most of us know of famous preachers who've lost their ministries for failing to be true to their office. I recall one man who used to raise millions of dollars on television. He was caught having an affair and then he lost everything. I know of another local man who sold millions of books until he was caught doing something bad and lost his ministry. Even if we're not famous, the point is we are held accountable for whatever ministry opportunities we have and we can lose what we have if we're not being a good witness for God.
    - i) Of all things, it may help to remember the difference between being a hypocrite vs. a sinner. A sinner says, "We should live this way, but falls temptation to sin". On the other hand a hypocrite says, "You should live this way, but I'm better than you and I'm not subject to those standards". If we live as a hypocrite for Jesus, God can strike us down as He's done many times in history. If we sin and are exposed for it, we too can lose our ministry opportunities, but not our salvation since we still believe Jesus died for our sins.
    - ii) Therefore, both of these chapters state both the rewards of life for our obedience to God and the warnings of the danger of turning from Him. I'm not saying we have to be perfect to be a witness for Jesus. I'm saying if we don't put our time and our resources "where are mouths are" we can suffer in this lifetime for those mistakes.
    - iii) With that tough warning staring at us in the face, let's close in prayer.

19. Heavenly Father, without your power in our lives, we can never make a difference for You. May we use the most valuable thing you give us, our time and our resources to make a difference for You in the world around us. Help us to remember that we can't get "more saved" by living this way. We only do it out of gratitude for what You've done for our lives. While we're never sure what lies ahead for us in our lives, help us to use our time for Your glory while still fulfilling the obligations we have in our lives. Guide us for Your glory. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.