

17. The future of Israel and new generation

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It has been almost 40 years since the beginning of the Jesus Movement – a.k.a. Calvary Chapel movement, started in early 1970s. The majority of Calvary Chapel pastors across America now are somewhere around 50 to 60 years old or older. Many of the ones who are in their 60s are considering passing their torches to the younger generation and stepping down from the pulpits and choose to work behind the scene as the supporting roles of their younger pastors.

Though I am in my mid 50s, I must start to raise the younger generation to take over the pulpit if the Lord's time for the rapture is later than we hope.

A couple of years ago, one young man from our Youth Group told me, "Pastor Joonho, you are old and you are going to retire pretty soon. I am going to take over your job." He was serious. I wasn't sure whether I should bob his head for calling me old, or pat on his back for his eagerness. So I told him how much he should study the Bible to learn more about Jesus and willing to give up worldly things for living more godly life. All of sudden, he was not interested in my job anymore. I guess he thought I only work a few hours a week for two services.

Tonight we are going to see two important parts of the Book of Deuteronomy:

1) The future of Israel after the people of the nation realized their disobedience and sins against the Lord

2) The inauguration of Joshua as the new leader

I know that the last few studies have been somewhat tedious due to the nature of a bunch of laws, but they were still good. But in these two chapters, we will find more gems of God's truth for our lives.

A. THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL AND THEIR FUTURE

Deuteronomy 30:1-6 "Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the Lord your God drives you, 2 and you return to the Lord your God and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul, 3 that the Lord your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the Lord your God has scattered you. 4 If any of you are driven out to the farthest parts under heaven, from there the Lord your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you. 5 Then the Lord your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers. 6 And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.

So often in Scripture, the thundering voice of judgment is followed by the loving voice of hope from the Lord. No nation in history has suffered more than the nation of Israel, and yet no nation has given so much spiritual wealth to the Lord. Under the inspiration of the Lord, Moses knew that all the rebellion and disobedience of the next generation of the Israelites would come upon them.

No writer could write a better script than the actual history of Israel. You talk about a drama – from the pinnacles of God’s physical presence with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses, and followed by the great king David to the deeply troubled valley of the divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah, the exile to Babylon, the persecutions by Rome and other foreign nations. Its people scattered throughout all over the world and then six million Jews lost their lives by Nazi Germany during the World War II. Now, Israel is standing all alone against the hostility of all the nations around the world including the United States of America, thanks to our President who always is for muslim countries and more than happy to bow down to the king of Saudi Arabia.

Moses is here looking forward to the time when a chastened Israel will repent, turn from their wicked ways, and come back to the Lord.

Bible scholars disagree about the future of Israel. Some say that the church is now “spiritual Israel” and that all of these OT promises are now being fulfilled in a spiritual sense in the church. This theology is known as the “Replacement Theology”. The late Dr. D. James Kennedy was the central figure of this theology. Though I have a great deal of respect for this godly man, but he was wrong on this one.

Others say that the OT promises must be taken at face value and that we should expect a fulfillment of them when Jesus Christ returns to establish His kingdom on earth.

Allow me to explain why the Replacement Theology is wrong. Moses seems to be speaking here to and about Israel and not some other “people of God” in the future, such as the church. The church has no covenant relationship to the land of Israel, because God gave that land to Abraham and his descendants according to Genesis 15; and the blessings and curses were declared to Israel, not the church.

It is obvious that there will be a literal fulfillment of these promises to Israel. When they repent, turn back to God the Jehovah, and open their hearts to the operation of His Spirit according to Ezek. 37:1-14; Isa. 11:2; Joel 2:28-29, God will save them from their sins and establish them in Messiah’s glorious kingdom.

Let’s go back to v5:

Deuteronomy 30:5 Then the Lord your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers.

Until 1948, many biblical scholars doubted that this would ever happen. A dead nation came back to life again as it is written in Ezekiel 37 about the dry bones became humans again and assembled into a great army.

As you already may know, Israel has the fourth strongest military power in the world and they really don’t care whom they are against. They don’t fight for some political or religious agendas or ego, but for sheer survival. That makes a big difference.

B. THE WORD IS VERY NEAR YOU

Deuteronomy 30:11-14 “For this commandment which I command you today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off. 12 It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ 13 Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’”

14 *But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it.*

Since all of us are born with free will to choose, the Lord calls us to make right decisions. We are not robots. We can hear God's Word, learn His will, and decide either to obey or disobey Him.

To make sure that we have clear guidance, the Lord made His Word available to all of us. We don't have to go to heaven to learn His truth, nor do we have to do anything special to achieve any spiritual and emotional level to obtain this truth. It is readily available through the Bible for just about anyone who seeks the truth.

Apostle Paul quoted this passage v12 in his epistle to the Roman Christians in chapter 10, v6-10 to prove that righteousness isn't obtained by doing great feats but by exercising simple faith in Jesus Christ.

C. THE CHOICES WE MAKE

Deuteronomy 30:15-20 "See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, 16 in that I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the Lord your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess. 17 But if your heart turns away so that you do not hear, and are drawn away, and worship other gods and serve them, 18 I announce to you today that you shall surely perish; you shall not prolong your days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to go in and possess. 19 I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; 20 that you may love the Lord your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them."

The biggest choice that a person would make in one's life is deciding one's eternal life or death. But who in their right mind would deliberately choose death? Much to our surprise, the majority of the world population still choose death over life when it comes to spirituality. They may do everything right for their physical lives – eat right, exercise right, take the right medications to extend their live length for a couple of years, etc. But what about their spiritual life? Many of them disregard God's truth for the sake of the acceptance from fellow humans.

D. I CAN'T, BUT THE LORD WILL

Deuteronomy 31:1-3 Then Moses went and spoke these words to all Israel. 2 And he said to them: "I am one hundred and twenty years old today. I can no longer go out and come in. Also the Lord has said to me, 'You shall not cross over this Jordan.' 3 The Lord your God Himself crosses over before you; He will destroy these nations from before you, and you shall dispossess them. Joshua himself crosses over before you, just as the Lord has said.

In Numbers 20:7-12, Moses misrepresented the Lord to his assembly when they complained about not having water. Instead of speaking to the Rock as he was told by the Lord that followed them and gave them water in the wilderness, Moses struck the rock twice in his anger with a prideful attitude. Consequently, the Lord told him that he ain't going into the Promised Land.

Numbers 20:12 Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them."

Nothing is better than the Lord is going before us. He will take care of everything in our path. That doesn't mean that our path is trouble free, but it would be arranged by Him for His glory. All we have to do is simply obey His commands and follow His footsteps, like following a mine detecting device operator in the middle of a mine field.

E. THE INAUGURATION OF JOSHUA AS THE NEXT LEADER

Deuteronomy 31:7-8 Then Moses called Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, "Be strong and of good courage, for you must go with this people to the land which the Lord has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall cause them to inherit it. 8 And the Lord, He is the one who goes before you. He will be with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed."

Joshua wasn't a stranger to the people of Israel, because he'd been serving them well ever since they left Egypt. He was Moses' servant long before he became Moses' successor. It was Joshua who led the Jewish army in defeating the Amalekites when they attacked the nation after the Exodus, and he had been with Moses on Mount Sinai. Joshua was one of the twelve spies who scouted out Canaan with Caleb.

In the work of the Lord, there's no substitute for godly leadership. As Moses did with Joshua, Christ with His apostles, and Paul with Timothy and Titus, the older generation must equip the younger generation to take their place. The Lord has given us the qualifications for leaders in the church in 1 Tim. 3 and Titus 1. We must give ourselves to mentoring and training qualified people to become those leaders.

The final test of a leader is that he leaves behind him in other men the conviction and the will to carry on.

Leaders must not only be qualified, but they must also be prepared and proved. Joshua proved himself, first, as a servant, now the Lord is appointing him and Moses is commissioning him.

F. KEEP THE WORD CLOSE TO YOU

Deuteronomy 31:9-13 So Moses wrote this law and delivered it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and to all the elders of Israel. 10 And Moses commanded them, saying: "At the end of every seven years, at the appointed time in the year of release, at the Feast of Tabernacles, 11 when all Israel comes to appear before the Lord your God in the place which He chooses, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing. 12 Gather the people together, men and women and little ones, and the stranger who is within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the Lord your God and carefully observe all the words of this law, 13 and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the Lord your God as long as you live in the land which you cross the Jordan to possess."

During his 40 long years of ministry, Moses had kept a record of what God had done and said. Now he deposited that record with the priest who carried the ark of the covenant. In future years, Israel's king was required to write a copy of the Law, study it, and keep it with him.

Hearing God's Word, meditating on it, and obeying it was the best remedy against apostasy. Unfortunately, after the death of Moses and Joshua, the people of Israel listened to the false prophets and turned aside from God's truth and practiced idolatry.

There's an important lesson here for the church today, because God has given His people the truth of His Word, and we must guard it, obey it, and pass it along to the next generation. The church of Jesus Christ is always one generation short of extinction, so it's important that each believer studies the Scriptures, receives the truth, practices it, and passes it on to others.

My heart often aches when I see our younger generation is becoming more and more selfish and not having a servant heart.

G. APPLICATIONS

- 1) The final test of a leader is that he leaves behind him in other men the conviction and the will to carry on.
- 2) Leaders must not only be qualified, but they must also be prepared and proved.
- 3) Hearing God's Word, meditating on it, and obeying it is the best remedy against apostasy.