

God is Great

HN 18/12/05pm

Reading: Deuteronomy 10:12f, I Corinthians 8

Study Text: Deuteronomy 10:14-11:1

Sing Psalms: 93, 2:1-6, 50:1-6, 50:7-10

Some years ago we went to the Kumbh Mela, a massive religious festival in India. Millions came to worship almost as many gods. We saw idols of all shapes and sizes. Some has six arms, presumably to show they were powerful; some had two heads, maybe the more wise gods. Monkeys, elephants and rats were the focus of the worship some. There was a god there to satisfy everyone so it seemed. And each god could be worshipped according to ones desire. It was quite a spectacle – but also very depressing, for none of these gods represented truth. No one was worshipping the God of truth.

Are we free to make God in our own image as so many think? Is it not that we are made by God? How tragic that in this modern world many think God is like Santa Claus. ‘God must save everyone’ they say ‘for how can a loving God send anyone to Hell!’ Oh, they believe in God they will tell you, they have been good and so they will not go to Hell – after all there is not such place as Hell anyway. ‘It’s written in the Bible’ you remind them. They reply that the Bible is very old and science tells us so much more. Remember even the demons believe there is a God!

The wonderful thing we see in this passage is that God has spoken. He had not left us in the dark; he did not make us and then abandon us, as the Deists believe. No! God declared what he is like, and he has told us how we are to live and worship him.

God wonderfully and powerfully saved his people. He chose them and delivered them. He made a covenant with them. What did he require of them in return? He said they should love him. *In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins. Brothers if God so loved us we ought also to love one another* (I John 4:10-11).

‘What a magnificent picture of the grandeur of God to whom belong the heaven and the earth. The contrast with the insignificant Israel is striking’.

What God Is Like

Owner of All (10:14)

God made everything and he owns everything. He owns the heavens- the highest heavens Astronomers are always finding new stars but whatever they find it belongs to the Lord. And the earth belongs to him. He has given the earth to men that they might live on it and care for it, but it still belongs to the Lord (Psalm 115:16). He owns the cattle on a thousand hills (Psalm 50).

As his people entered Canaan they would be given tribal and family allotments. The land was their means of livelihood – it was not a commodity to be bought and sold for profit. It could

be sold but not permanently, for the land remained the Lords always. Every Jubilee it reverted to the original allotted family.

The Greatest (10:17)

God is great. He is God of gods and Lord of lords (10:17). He is mighty and awesome. There is none like him. Any who worship other gods are worshipping lesser gods. They are worshipping created things or figments of their own imagination. The true God revealed himself to Moses as the great, self-existent, I AM. He showed the people that he is more powerful than all other gods.

Thus says the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is holy (Isaiah 57:15). Let us be sure about one thing, as our society increasingly becomes like that of India. There is only one true and living God who told Moses his name YHWH, whom Jesus called 'My Father' and whom we also call our heavenly Father. All other gods are impostors and will one day be destroyed along with their blind followers.

Just (10:18)

The Lord your God administers justice. He shows no partiality nor takes a bribe (10:17). God ensures that both rich and poor get justice. He is concerned that the orphan, the widow and the stranger do not suffer oppression. No other god is like this. Made in the image of men, other gods are ruthless and selfish. The god of evolution says the fittest will survive, so the weak are left to perish—Hitler worshipped this god. Other gods have established the law of karma or fate. The poor are poor because they deserve to be. But the true God cares for the poor and needy and ensures they get justice.

Jesus showed the same concern for the poor and for justice as his Father. He raised to life the only son of the widow of Nain. He told of how Lazarus, a beggar rejected by the world and by the rich man, was the special focus of the God's mercy and salvation. Jesus, the king of heaven rules with absolute justice. People can suffer unbearably under the rule of an unjust king. We see it over and over again in history and even in the present day. But the throne of Jesus is marked by justice.

What God has done

Along with this brief reminder of who God is and some aspects of his nature, Moses also reminds the people what God had done in their midst.

Loved Them

The Lord set his love upon their fathers back in Egypt. He came to deliver them from bondage, to set them free to live as his chosen people. He chose them above all other peoples on the earth. They were privileged to have the true God love them and make a covenant with them. *He is your God who has done for you these great and awesome things which your eyes have seen (10:21).*

Moses takes them back even further. He chose Abraham and gave him the promises. He made a covenant with Abraham to be his God and to bless his descendants. Jacob went down to

Egypt during a famine- a family of just seventy. God blessed them and they increased until 400 years later this great multitude was ready to enter and possess their own land.

Like these people we are prone to forget all that God has done for us. We forget what life would be like without God – life without hope and without help. Do not take the love of God for granted, even if you can rest secure in his unfailing love. Remember you Creator, remember your Redeemer. Jesus left the glory of heaven to come and die for you that you might be free from bondage – because he loved you.

What You Should Be Like

‘Like father like son’ is a well-known saying. And it is true that the children of God should be like God. They should be imitators of God. Be holy as God is holy. Be just as God is just. Be loving as God is loving. Be a faithful steward of the creation for it is God’s creation.

New Heart

Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart and be stiff-necked no longer (10:16). What a strange saying! What does it mean? When God made a covenant with Abraham he told him to circumcise himself and his son as a sign of the covenant. The foreskin was cut off, symbolising separation, and what would happen to those who failed to keep the covenant. The body was permanently marked by circumcision.

The metaphor of circumcision is now applied to the heart. Sin must be put away and the heart opened to the words of God. The result of such circumcision will be submission to the will of God and an end to the stubborn nature. Without such circumcision of the heart, true fear of God and true love of God are both impossible.

Circumcision of the body was a permanent outward sign of the covenant. But as we see with men like the Pharisees, the outward things do not necessarily indicate what is in the heart. They were legalistic and appeared very holy, but their hearts were far from God. They knew nothing of the love of God. They would not humble themselves before the Lord. They were stiff-necked with uncircumcised hearts just like their fathers, as Stephen told them (Acts 7:51).

Paul exhorted such Jews, and indeed all men, to be circumcised without hands with the circumcision that is by the Spirit of Christ- a circumcision of the heart (Romans 2:29, Colossians 2:11). Put off sin and put on Christ. Baptism is the outward symbol of this inner change under the new covenant; hence the linking of baptism (infant baptism) with circumcision in Reformed teaching.

Fear, Love and Serve the Lord

Under the terms of the covenant the Lord made with his people they were to fear him, to love him and to serve him. Moses told them this back in 10:12 – and here reminds them again (10:20). Hold fast to the Lord he told them – do not fall back or turn away. Draw near to God and he will draw near to you (James 4:8).

Although not encouraging them to take oaths or make vows, Moses reminds them that oaths must be taken in the name of the Lord, not in the name of other gods. Oaths taken in the name

of the Lord are solemn and binding. His name is higher than any other. Indeed God could only swear by himself (Hebrews 6:13). Do you remember any oaths you have taken in the name of the Lord?

What You Should Do

Praise the Lord

The Lord was to be the object of all Israel's praise and worship (10:21). Men are worshipping creatures who will worship something whether it is worthy of devotion or not. But only the Lord our God is worthy of worship, and he demands all praise and glory – by reason of who he is and what he has done.

Love The Stranger

God loves the stranger and helps him – and so should we. In fact God often uses his people to provide food and clothing for the stranger rather than directly intervene. The second commandment, 'you shall love your neighbour as yourself' is alluded to in this command. Jesus reaffirmed this command, adding to 'love your enemies'. This is the power of God's love to us as shown in Jesus Christ. Do you know the power of that love? Are you able to love those who oppose you? Remember you were once afar off – a rebellious and stubborn person. But God in his grace forgave your sin and made you his own child.

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