

## Holy Land

HN 25/09/05 pm

Reading: Deuteronomy 7, I Timothy 3

Study Text: Deuteronomy 7:16-26

Sing Psalms: 91:1-4; 106:6-7, 34-37; 124 9 :9-13

On the farm next to ours the owner spent a lot of time and money clearing a paddock so he could grow crops. But for some reason he did not plant a crop in the first year nor in the second. He did nothing for a number of years. What do you think happened in that paddock? The trees started growing back even more densely than before. Within ten years the paddock had to be cleared all over again.

Moses told Israel that the Lord would drive out the Canaanite nations *little by little...lest the beasts of the field become too numerous for you* (7:22). It was one thing to drive them out – and the Lord could have done that – but another to hold the ground and establish themselves in this land. Victory obtained must become victory maintained.

We have come to the final section of this chapter. In this holy war the holy God was bringing his holy people into the holy land. We will look at the aspect of the holy land today. Most commentators take this section as beginning from v.17 – but v.16 can be included for it returns the focus to task of conquering the land.

### Fear Not

You shall conquer the Canaanites and utterly destroy them (7:2). The Lord will deliver them into your hands. All this Moses made clear to the Israelites as they prepared to cross over the Jordan into Canaan. He reminded them of this promise again and again.

Moses knew that they would face formidable enemies. They would be confronted by fortified cities and vast armies, including a few giants. They themselves were few in number and were not trained soldiers. Would they have the heart to go and fight or would their hearts melt in fear? *You shall not be afraid of them* said Moses (7:18). Easier said than done you might say, but Moses gives them a basis for confidence.

*Remember well what the Lord your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt* (7:18). Some of the older folks had seen with their own eyes the power of almighty God displayed. They were slaves; they could not overcome the King of Egypt. But the Lord sent plague after plague upon Egypt. Then to cap it off, he drowned Pharaoh and his whole army in the sea. Remember that said Moses, for the Lord will do the same thing again. He will do the same to *all the peoples of whom you are afraid* (7:19).

And he will do the same for you today, you his chosen one. Remember the great power with which God raised Jesus from the dead. That exceedingly great power is *toward us*

*who believe*(Eph esians 1:19). Remember all that the Lord has done for you in his Son, Jesus Christ. He has given life to your mortal bodies, he has rescued you from death, he has brought you out of darkness into the marvellous light of the Gospel. If you cannot remember the mighty works of God toward you then you need to ask yourself ‘am I one of his chosen people’!

The Lord has given us the Bible to help us – remember. He has given us the sacraments to help us – remember. We must partake of these means of grace lest we forget what the Lord has done and were turn again to fear. Our enemy the devil roars about seeking whom he may devour (I Peter 5:8). Those who walk in fear of man or in fear of the devil are easy prey. Jesus said *do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul* (Matthew 10:28). Fear God for he is all powerful, he alone will give the victory. Remember he has done it before.

Moreover the Lord your God will send the hornet among them said Moses (7:20). The Lord will drive out those nations (7:22). The Lord will deliver them over to you (7:23). Again and again with the same words and with different words Moses assured these people that the Lord would give them victory. In fact it was already theirs by divine decree.

*God will send the hornet among them.* What does this mean? Is it literal or metaphorical? It may well be that swarms of stinging insects are intended. God sent plagues of lice, locusts and flies upon Egypt – so why not upon Canaan? Moses also told them that the Lord would throw the enemy into ‘confusion’ – as some translations have in 7:23. God, who rules over all creation, can use whatever weapons he likes – and use them with powerful effect.

The weapons of our warfare are not carnal; they are not the weapons of this world (II Corinthians 10:4). We do not wage war as the world does, we do not fight against flesh and blood but against powerful forces of darkness. We fight against the enemy of our souls. Too often we try to fight in our own strength. When we do we are forced to retreat in fear.

Remember in Christ you already have the victory. ‘In the name of Jesus we have the victory’. Satan has been crushed, he has been defeated. *Who is he who overcomes the world? He who believes that Jesus is the Son of God* (I John 5:5).

## **Flee Idolatry**

*You shall destroy all the peoples whom the Lord your God delivers over to you* (7:16). We have already looked at the special features of holy war. It was a case of God bringing judgment upon a wicked nation. His judgment means total destruction, to wipe them off the face of the earth. Let there be no memory of the enemies of God (7:24).

The people of God were not bent on destroying the Canaanites. They were not even their enemies directly. They were their enemies because they were the enemies of God (Psalm

139:21 – *do I not hate those who hate you O Lord*). They were told not to make any treaty with them, nor to intermarry. Do not take pity on them said Moses (7:16). God's justice overrules human emotions and sentimentality – as does his love. Humanity is not the ultimate authority in the affairs of this world.

‘A purely human feeling of sympathy could so easily lead finally to idolatry’. How true this is – and how frequently it happens. Tolerance is proclaimed by many humanists. The man who goes to worship in a temple, a mosque and a church is admired – in theory anyway.

The Israelites were not bloodthirsty men. Moses was afraid they might take pity on the Canaanites. All the carved images had to be destroyed (7:25) along with the people, lest these things *be a snare to you* (7:16). They must completely abhor and utterly detest anything contaminated by the Canaanites.

*Come out from them, have nothing to do with them. Touch no unclean thing* (Isaiah 52:11, Jude 23). ‘Flee idolatry’ Paul told the Corinthian believers. *Have no fellowship with the unfruitful deeds of darkness but rather expose them for it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done in secret* (Ephesians 5:11f).

Plenty of snares will come your way in the Christian life, especially as we live in an increasingly decadent and ungodly society. Many have been ensnared already. Pray, pray earnestly, pray without ceasing for yourself and fellow believers. Have nothing to do with anything that looks, smells, tastes, sounds or feels like sin!

## **Firm Up the Foundations**

In 1918 the allied forces obtained victory over the German oppressors. Within twenty years Germany was again on the warpath. The war had to be fought all over again. The victory was not followed by the building of foundations, foundations for peace.

*I will not drive them out from before you in one year lest the land become desolate and the beasts of the field too numerous. Little by little I will drive them out* (Exodus 23:29, 30). If they took the whole land at once who would maintain the olive groves and the vineyards, not to mention the cities? They would go to rack and ruin. Weeds and wild animals would quickly take over. Little by little! It was not until the time of David, that the whole land was occupied and settled.

What is the lesson for us here? If an unclean spirit is cast out of a person and nothing enters in to take its place what happens? Jesus said that the unclean spirit will return with seven others and re-occupy the soul of that person (Luke 11:24f). We do not become mature Christians overnight. God sends his Spirit into our hearts when we believe and the HS begins to take control, he begins to subdue our old nature and *bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ* (II Corinthians 10:5).

Paul warned the church against putting new believers in positions of leadership. They must get firm foundations first. They must devote themselves to the apostles teaching and to prayer (Acts 2:42). A building does not get built overnight. It goes up brick by brick, little by little, upon solid foundations. We are all growing and maturing in Christ – or should be (Ephesians 4:15). By the power of the Spirit we continue to conquer new areas in our life.

Little by little. This is how the Lord himself builds his kingdom. He took Abraham, just one man and revealed himself to him. His purpose was to bring blessing to all nations but firstly he established the children of Jacob to be his holy nation. It was not until Christ came and returned to glory that the gospel was taken to all nations.

By grace through faith the Lord has brought you into his kingdom. But there is land yet to be occupied. He does not want you to be overwhelmed by having more than you can handle. Stand firm and occupy what he has given you. Serve him faithfully in the vineyard where you are now.

*Rev. Dr. Dennis K. Muldoon*