

For a Thousand Generations – Deuteronomy 7:1-26

Introduction – Surrounding one of the most mind-boggling statements of God’s faithfulness to His people is a chapter demanding the destruction of idols, the demands of a holy God for His people to refuse to compromise at all in their worship and service of Him. *You shall have no other gods before Me.* But notice once again that God only commands what He gives. This chapter should rattle us in many ways – and awaken faith.

No Compromise (vv1-5) – God would give Israel the land and the policy they were to have was the destruction of the Canaanites and their idols. The seven nations are probably a symbolic number. Israel was to refuse to enter into any compromise with them, whether political (v2), marital (v3), or religious (v4). The nations were stronger and mightier than Israel, but that was not to stop them nor cause them to negotiate (v1). In the Gospel Age of this covenant, the church is no longer authorized to use the sword, but the sword of the Spirit (2 Cor 10:3-5), but this does not change the fact of holy war against all polytheism and pluralism. Therefore, eleven apostles (and a small band of followers) were commissioned to disciple all the nations. In a pluralistic society, this means Christians should expect to be unpopular and radically out of step with the culture. We define right and wrong, for instance, only because “God says...”

A Special Treasure (vv6-8) – The reason Israel is to act this way is because they are a holy (a “cut off” or “set apart”) people, but not in the carnal eyes of the world. They are holy to “Yahweh your God.” He chose them (and not the other way around), and they are His special treasure. This covenant love was not set upon Israel because they were impressive in size, but because He loved them, loved their fathers, and kept His oath which He swore. This covenant love is ours in Jesus Christ as well (Eph 2:4-6).

Our Covenant Identity (vv9-10) – These verses are the heart of the chapter and the heart of the matter. Yahweh is “*the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy...*” He keeps covenant with those who keep covenant with Him, but this is no escape clause. Some might think this means that since no one is perfect, God keeps covenant with no one. But “*Abraham believed God and it was accounted to Him for righteousness*” (Rom 4:3, quoting Gen 15:6). Covenant keeping is, at the heart of it, promise believing. In other words, God keeps covenant with sinners, not with perfect people. Consider again the verse – He keeps covenant *and mercy*. We are covenant keepers by being in Christ by faith for He is the only true Covenant Keeper. When we have faith in Christ, God uses this as the instrument by which His righteousness is imputed to us.

The Objectivity of the Covenant – There have been and will be blessings and curses within this covenant. There were treacherous people in the covenant before Christ (i.e. the previous generation under Moses), and there were treacherous people in the New Covenant after Christ (i.e. Acts 20:28-30). We must remember that we still cannot see hearts and the secret things belong to God (Deut 29:29) but our responsibility is covenant faithfulness. There are curses, even greater curses today, for those who refuse to keep covenant (Heb 10:28-31). This should not make us jumpy because there are greater blessings as well.

Keeping Covenant unto Blessings (vv11-19) – We imitate God, the great covenant keeper, by keeping covenant (vv11-12) and as the holy people of God, we still do (Eph 5:1, Col 3:12). And again, this is not done by works, but by faith in our covenant keeper and Savior, Jesus Christ. He gives what He commands and then He blesses faithfulness. These covenant blessings were not invisible although they were and are spiritual. These spiritual blessings included children and land, grain and wine, health and freedom. Blessing comes from faithfulness and a refusal to enter into compromise or idolatry (v16), and when they fear that this cannot be done, they must again remember what God did (vv17-19).

The Work of God (vv20-26) – God will miraculously bring the victory again (v20), and so they must not fear (v21). Even so, the victory will come slowly, lest the land become too wild (and so God has purposes for unbelievers even today for His people – v22). And yet, in the end, He will destroy them and their idols (vv 23-24) and so Israel should do the same (vv25-26).

Conclusion: For a Thousand Generations – You have to remember how, on the face of it, these promises seemed ludicrous and impossible. The only way to walk in this covenant is to believe the unbelievable: God’s people win. This is the Christian faith and it is mind-boggling. God saved you, a sinner, an idolater, and an enemy. Now, in covenant with Him, He promises to keep covenant with you and with your children for a thousand generations. No, not just that – covenant *and mercy* – for a thousand generations. There is no isolated faithfulness. We are to love God over generations. The faith God has granted you is a faith which believes in one’s salvation and in the salvation of descendants he does not even know. How is this possible? Because we know God knows them. We are not sufficient for these things, but God is and Christ is our covenant keeper. We believe. We love and worship God and we do so in the context of community and in our families in such a way that, because we loved our wives and children in this faith, countless great, great, great grandchildren will assemble with us before the throne of grace. And the meek shall inherit the earth.