

APRIL 4

Deuteronomy 26-27

Deuteronomy 26

What we have in this chapter is something totally unique. The only thing I can think of like this for the believer is baptism. Because this was also to have been accompanied by an outpouring of rejoicing and generosity, in principle, it sort of trumps baptism. The real question is: Did anyone ever do this?

Vs. 1-4 The first event seems to be something everyone in Israel was supposed to do as an individual and not as part of a regular feast. This could be what is mentioned in Deuteronomy 14:22-29, but this seems like a special one-time event. At the time of their very first harvest, each person was supposed to bring a basket of the firstfruits of their harvest to the tabernacle.

V. 3 Then they made this declaration. Notice that it is a reference to the promise to Abraham. Again, people were saved by faith in God's promise to Abraham, not adherence to the law.

V. 4 Then the priest responded by taking those very firstfruits and setting them before the altar.

Vs. 5-11 Then each person was supposed to make this declaration. I have been at baptisms where nothing this heartfelt was said. This is amazing. This is the story of their deliverance attached to the promise to the patriarchs and concluded by worshiping God and celebrating with those you brought with you from your home town.

Vs. 12-15 This also looks similar to Deuteronomy 14:22-29, but here there is also a declaration. This pronouncement is impressive if a person really loved God and obeyed. Look at the different things this person said to God. I wonder if anyone ever did this. If I thought of anyone who might have done this, it would be Boaz in the book of Ruth.

Vs. 16-19 I am so impressed when I read this. I think that if they had only grasped the wonder of their salvation and God's grace and love to them, they would have been an incredible people. And then I think that I wish more churches and disciples could grasp this too. What a difference it would make serving with one mind, side by side in the harvest, reaching the lost and making disciples, who make disciples, who make disciples.

Deuteronomy 27

Vs. 1-8 In preparation for going into the land and the initial dedication of the people before God, God commanded that the entire book of Deuteronomy would be written on *stones*. Possibly all five books, but certainly Deuteronomy would have been written out. *Stones* probably gives the wrong impression. It is possible that they built something like Stonehenge in England. The Egyptians and other cultures did this. The technique was known and there was no lack of stone and plaster. It might have looked like a long wall or it might have been a circular series of blocks, but it would have been like a memorial monument. Remember, the fathers of these people built Egyptian cities, pyramids and monuments. They had the skill and know-how. This would be a remembrance of the people "becoming" God's people. Interestingly enough, it would be built on the mountain of the curse, as seen below.

The fact that they were to build an altar suggests that this would be a kind of memorial park, possibly with the altar in the middle and the stones surrounding it.

Vs. 9-10 This was a moment of recommitment to the Lord.

Vs. 11-26 This ceremony was commanded earlier, but restated here with more clarity. It would take place in Joshua 8:33. With the stones and the altar and 2 million people standing on opposite sides of the valley, this must have been an awesome and memorable event. Here we get just a

summary of what the curses would sound like. I get the feeling that chapter 28 gives a fuller idea of what the blessings and curses might have actually been.

The examples that Moses gives here are taken from Leviticus and Numbers, giving me the idea that this ceremony would have taken hours to perform, and it took hours of preparation by the priests to locate all the commands and make them blessings and curses.

Although this is just a "taste" of what would be said at the ceremony, it is obvious that the Spirit made sure these examples were given. What kinds of things come to your mind regarding God when you read these curses? I'm glad we don't have an equivalent of this in knowing Christ. The curse is gone and the Spirit dwells within.

Luke 10:38-11:13

Luke 10:38-42

This is a great story that only Luke has. So, what was the one necessary thing? Isn't it great that it's ok if we live at Jesus' feet. We can take that time even when the world is on fire. God can handle things without us for a while. In fact, we must take that time to be at His feet. If you need some extra Bible work to do, hunt down all the people who ended up at Jesus' feet. That's the one thing that is necessary.

Here we are first introduced to Martha and her sister. Now if you want some interesting trivia about this story, think about when this happened. Jesus had just duked it out with the Jews in Jerusalem during the Feast of the Tabernacles in John 8-10:21. That was the October before Jesus died. The rest of John 10 happened in December. That means this probably took place in November, just 5 months before Jesus died. I wonder if this was when Jesus met Martha, Mary and Lazarus. In any event, this is when we are introduced to them.

Luke 11:1-13

This is absolutely indispensable discipleship stuff. If we were in a group together, we might need to do these passages on a retreat.

What you get out of these verses is very important. I'll just give you some leading thoughts.

The entire section is a response to the disciples' question on how to pray. It is praying in three parts, but it is one complete lesson and one complete answer to their request, *Teach us to pray*. Luke introduces this section telling us that Jesus Himself was praying and His prayer life led into this occasion.

Vs. 1-4 Jesus must have taught often about prayer using the Lord's Prayer as His basic lesson. This event is at least a year and a half after His giving of the Lord's Prayer when He selected the Twelve and gave all of His disciples their disciple orientation in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus had already taught them how to pray, but now the Twelve are desperately feeling the need.

The occasion for them asking how to pray now is their fear and seeing that public opinion has turned against them. The Jewish leaders want to kill Jesus. To make matters worse, Jesus keeps uttering "suicidal" thoughts about crucifixion or something. They are in need. Before, the Lord's Prayer just sounded like interesting information. Now they are ready to learn. Jesus gives them the "street" version of the Lord's Prayer, but the disciples have heard it before and can fill in the blanks.

The Lord's Prayer is for them to tune their hearts to God in prayer.

Vs. 5-8 Jesus' second lesson is on persistence. This is unique to Luke. Jesus is saying that their insistence and need should be bothersome to God. They shouldn't give up.

Vs. 9-10 This is an application to vs. 5-8 and a bridge to vs. 11-13. This was also in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7:7.

Vs. 11-13 Lesson three is on expectance. This was also given in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7, but Jesus changed it a little.

Notice in v. 13 that the Father gives the Holy Spirit; whereas in Matthew, He gives all good gifts. How do you put these two different answers together and figure this out? You can work it out yourself by looking at what Paul says about the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 2:9-16.

I think there comes a point in following Christ in the harvest when you don't know what specific things to ask for. You know God is working and more than anything you want His will. You trust His wisdom, knowing He will do those things that are needed. You need to accept His leading, and to receive His mercy and patience. You don't need a certain thing; you need the leading and the working of the Spirit. I think Jesus intentionally changed this here so the disciples would see that they didn't need their expectations met. What the Father was doing was beyond their wisdom. They needed the peace and discernment of the Spirit as they followed.

Psalm 76

So which son of Asaph wrote this psalm, and when? Since a great victory has just been won and the enemy has sunk into sleep (v. 5), I'm going to suggest this was written during Hezekiah's reign when the Assyrians threatened Zion and spoke against Yahweh. The situation was totally impossible, but men prayed and God acted; and the next morning the Assyrian army found that 185,000 of their men had died in their sleep. This is in 2 Kings 19:32-35.

Vs. 1-6 If this is the event, God protected Zion and showed His glory and majesty. This humbling of Assyria became an important event for other nations too. Everyone was talking about Israel's God.

Vs. 7-9 The contrast between the strength and arrogance of the Assyrians and the humility of Jerusalem was pretty apparent. God's judgment made everyone in every nation see that God was to be feared.

Vs. 10-12 The wrath of man was seen in the violence of the Assyrian army and in the words of Rabshakeh. Yet God used all of this for His glory. In a sense God lured Assyria to stand before Zion in its arrogance. In destroying that army, God sent a message to all nations.

God's glory and majesty will be victorious and those who resist Him will be broken. As disciples, this is good to remember.

Proverbs 12:15-17

I think vs. 15 and 16 are a process that most young people, even Christians, go through. It takes a long time to listen to advice and to be patient when our expectations or plans are not fulfilled. God is a good teacher if we're willing to learn. And we become better, humbler followers of Christ, walking more in the Spirit than in the strength of our ideas or expectations.

V. 17 But what if we say nothing. That is testimony too, right? But it is not in keeping with the grace we have been given so freely in Christ. We are made to bear testimony and to bear fruit in the harvest.