

A LESSON FOR TODAY

Gary McDade

The reason God chose Israel as the nation through whom the Messiah would come was because they were “the fewest of all people,” according to Moses. In the thoughts Moses related to them prior to their entrance into the Land of Promise he wrote,

The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations; And repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face (Deuteronomy 7:7-10).

God’s power through which He would fulfill his promise to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3) is all the more impressive in consideration of the fact that “the fewest of all people” were chosen instead of a great and mighty nation. The fulfillment would seem much less likely in the void of huge numbers of people. Less people from whom to draw their army. Less people to tend the flocks and herds and cultivate the land. Less people from whom to develop leaders spiritual and political. Yet, in view of the purpose of their calling, clearly Israel was the most crucial nation in the history of the world where the hope of eternal salvation is concerned.

God had expectations of being honored and obeyed by this nation of people in order for them to occupy such a high place among the nations and history of the world. Again, Moses plainly declared it.

This day the Lord thy God hath commanded thee to do these statutes and judgments: thou shalt therefore keep and do them with all thine heart, and with all thy soul. Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice: And the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee, and that thou shouldest keep all his commandments; And to make thee high above all nations which he hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honor; and that thou mayest be an holy people unto the Lord thy God, as he hath spoken (Deuteronomy 26:16-19).

God made clear what it meant for Israel to be a “holy people unto the Lord.” When their hearts turned from God, He would remove from their favored nation status and drive them away from the Land of Promise.

Joshua the successor to Moses painted a picturesque word portrait to Israel of what God would do when these eventualities occurred.

And, behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof. Therefore it shall come to pass, that as all good things are come upon you, which the Lord your God promised you; so shall the Lord bring upon you all evil things, until he have destroyed you from off this good land which the Lord your God hath given you. When ye have transgressed the covenant of the Lord your God, which he commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed yourselves to them; then shall the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and ye shall perish quickly from off the good land which he hath given unto you (Joshua 23:14-16).

The “lesson for today”—in view of the biblical truth that now the church of Christ is the spiritual Israel of God (Galatians 6:16) and His chosen generation, royal priesthood, and holy nation (1 Peter 2:9)—is that while in comparison with the billions of people who today populate the earth few are walking in heaven’s way. Jesus foretold it, “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:13-14). And, though the church of Christ may be “the fewest of all people” today, still God loves the church of Christ because she is the bride of Christ, and Christ is the head of the church (Ephesians 5:23).

The utterances of Moses from the distant past reverberate down through the corridors of time to find lasting application to members of the church of Christ today.

This day the Lord thy God hath commanded thee to do these statutes and judgments: thou shalt therefore keep and do them with all thine heart, and with all thy soul. Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice: And the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee, and that thou shouldest keep all his commandments; And to make thee high above all nations which he hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honor; and that thou mayest be an holy people unto the Lord thy God, as he hath spoken (Deuteronomy 26:16-19).

A burden and a blessing reside with the church of Christ today: A burden of doing what God has instructed in the Bible and a blessing in being His holy people whom He will make “high above all nations which he hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honor.”