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FOR THE SOWER ISA. 55: 1 0 FOR THE EATER
BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM

THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

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GOD'S LAW TO ISRAEL

The Word of God will speak forth truth each time we answer the questions that are asked in its pages. The answer, of course, must be correct and of such nature that it establishes a principle and fixes a position. In Deuteronomy 4:2 Moses put this question to Israel: **For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD (Yahweh) our God is in all things that we call upon Him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes, and judgments so righteous as all this law (torah) which I set before you this day?**

The questions asked by Moses were rhetorical. They were asked in order to create an effect, to emphasize a point. Thus there can be only one answer. Of all the nations upon the earth no other nation was given the laws that God legislated for Israel which are recorded in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

In the Biblical record, Genesis 12 marks an important turning point in God's dealing with the human race. That great river of people who came out of Adam have been a unit up to this point. In the call of Abraham and his separation from all other people, God made a distinction that created a difference. This difference can well be described as "the covenant people" and "the non-covenant people."

The call of Abraham and the covenant God made with him made no change in God's relationship to those who were not the descendants of Abraham. That which had been God's relationship with them before continued to be the same after Abraham's call. The only minute point that all outside of Abraham needed to remember was those who blessed him would in turn be blessed of God and those who cursed him would in turn be cursed. However, this promise was made only concerning Abraham and it did not include his descendants in perpetuity. No one can merit a blessing today by blessing some remote descendant of this man. As a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ my duty toward any of the descendants of Abraham is the same as my duty toward all men, as declared in Gal. 6: 10: **"As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially to them who are of the household of faith. "**

We are told in Hebrews that Abraham died in faith, not having received the promises, which were the main part of the covenant God made with him. However, after his death God confirmed the covenant to his son Isaac. Of Isaac's two sons, Esau and Jacob, it was Jacob who became the possessor of the birthright and with it the promises made in the covenant. Jacob's name was changed to Israel. He became the father of twelve sons who in turn became the heads of twelve families; these families developed into twelve tribes; and these tribes became what in Scripture is called the children of Israel. This later became the nation of Israel.

The increase of the children of Israel from seventy souls to a great multitude took place during the 400 years they spent in Egypt. Their pleasant years there suddenly changed to an era of bitter bondage, and they were rescued from Egypt through God's own intervention in their behalf. As they journeyed toward the land that God had promised to Abraham, they came to the wilderness of Sinai. Here an event took place which has a bearing upon the understanding of every part of the Word of God that follows Exodus 19:1. This was the giving of the law to Israel, an event which if misunderstood will draw a veil over all the rest of the word of God. Above all, at this point we need to get things straight and keep them straight.

When Israel encamped before Mount Sinai, the mount at once became a sanctuary where Moses could seek unto and meet with God. When Moses went up to God, the LORD (Yahweh) called unto him, and these were His words as recorded in Exodus 19:3-6:

Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel. The "house of Jacob" and "the children of Israel" are identical in meaning. The repetition here is for the sake of emphasis and clarification. These words were directed to a certain people.

Ye have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles wings and brought you unto Myself. They are reminded of God's past dealings. Every act of His had shown His love and care for them. It was all done for their benefit, not for His gain. He had demonstrated that he could be trusted; therefore, any agreement He proposes to them would be for their own blessing and highest possible good. He is now going to propose a one-sided agreement by which they would come into great blessings, and the only requirement of them was to do nothing more than what they should be doing, even what many were already doing.

Now therefore if you will obey my voice indeed. Before this offer from God, He had spoken to them many times. But their response had often been half-hearted. Their obedience had been accompanied with questions, murmurings, and complaints. He is going to continue to speak to them, but now he wants an immediate and willing

obedience to His words. He wants true submission (metanoia) and complete yielding in advance of knowing what His requirements will be.

And keep My covenant. The keeping of any covenant has to do with observance and fulfillment of its terms. Among men no one should ever enter into a covenant, contract, or agreement without knowing its terms. However, in Israel's dealings with God it was quite different. Their past experiences had clearly demonstrated His love for them. Therefore, they could accept without hesitation any agreement that God offered them. The benefits that would result from keeping this covenant are then stated.

Then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all peoples. These words describe something of intrinsic value that one acquires for a possession, not one to be traded or sold for profit. It signifies a treasure that will be cherished, preserved, and protected. For a people to become this in God's sight would guarantee their perpetuity, blessing, and glory. The believing ones in Israel who put their trust in Jesus Christ during the Acts period became a "peculiar treasure" in the sight of God (1 Peter 1:8,2:9). The people of Israel in Exodus 19 had the opportunity to become this by doing nothing more than what a people should do who are related to God (Micah 6:8).

And ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests. This is the genitive of character. It means a priestly government, one in which a nation stands as a priest to all other nations, just as the tribe of Levi was to all other tribes in Israel. The time will come when redeemed Israel will fill this place. A picture of this is set forth in Isaiah 2: 1-4. But this is nations, not individuals, and it will yet be true when God governs the nations upon the earth (Psalm 67:4).

And a holy nation. The word "holy" means set apart or hallowed by God for His own special use. This separation unto God is declared as a future blessing for Israel in Numbers 23:9: "**Lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations.**"

These are the words which thou (Moses) shall speak unto the children of Israel. Here "the party of the second part" in this covenant is mentioned for the second time. There is no way that anyone not mentioned in this agreement can plunge in the make himself a part of it. The two parties in this covenant are clearly set forth. When Moses laid these words before the people of Israel their response was immediate and favorable.

And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD (Yahweh) hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD (Yahweh) (Exodus 19:8).

It was at this point in history that "the people of Israel" became "the nation of Israel" in the sight of the LORD (Yahweh). And at this point in our studies it will be good to incorporate into our thinking the divine assurance that guarantees the preservation of Israel as a nation, making sure her future restoration.

Thus saith the LORD (Yahweh) which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar: the LORD (Yahweh) of hosts is His name: If those ordinances depart from before Me, saith Yahweh, then the seed (descendants) of Isra_1 also shall cease from being a nation before Me for ever. Thus saith the LORD (Yahweh): If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD (Yahweh). Jeremiah 31:35.37.

These words are Yahweh's complete answer to those in Christendom who say that God has cast away Israel, that God's relationship to them has been dissolved. Their position as God's chosen people is as secure as the divine decrees that regulate the course of nature. The heavens have not yet been measured and the foundations of the earth have not yet been searched out, and they never will be.

Israel made no mistake in readily accepting God's offer of a covenant that would bring them such rich blessings. Yahweh Himself commended their action; "They have well said all that they have spoken" (Deut. 5:25), were His words of approval. C.I. Scofield was wrong when he said of their action: "Grace given up for law." He was echoing the words of C.H. Mackintosh, whom he devotedly followed, who said: "Israel, in a spirit of dark and senseless legality, abandoned Jehovah's covenant of pure grace for man's covenant of works." (Notes on Exodus - page 247.)

This is not the day when God is offering to enter into covenant with nations. However, if God should offer to enter into any covenant with the nation of which I am a citizen by birth, I would cry out to every responsible person I could reach and say: "Lay hold of it. You cannot go wrong. God wants to give to us." We will consider the law further in our next study.

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