

Deuteronomy

The One and Only Study 5 – Conquest!

Introduction

Deuteronomy chapter 7 & 8 address the subject of the conquest of Canaan together with the sacred ban (translated in the NIV “destroy them totally” (7:2) that the LORD imposes upon the land. It is a difficult and controversial subject and also a much misunderstood one. It is thus important that we take care to look carefully at what Deuteronomy 7 & 8 teach so that we may understand this difficult material correctly but also so that we may answer those for whom this material is a stumbling block to belief in God.

The first thing for us to note is that although destruction of ‘unholy things’ such as idols or shrines was demanded, the sacred ban did not necessarily imply the destruction of people. The NIV translation “destroy them totally” is thus unhelpful since we read it to mean the destruction of all the Canaanites. As we shall see, the object of the ban was that the land, which belonged to the LORD in the first place, should be cleansed and purified as a dwelling place for His holy people, a land in which the LORD’s rule and authority could be implemented in every part of societal life. Thus at the heart of the ban was the removal of everything that opposed the LORD and the removal of everything that may cause His holy people to turn away from following Him wholeheartedly. Provision was made within the LORD’s covenant for those who were non-Israelites to be assimilated within Israel or even cared for as foreigners in the land, but only on condition that they were willing to respect the LORD’s authority and do nothing to turn His people away from following Him. No rival religion or authority was to be tolerated within the land that the LORD was giving to His people. Those who were not willing to submit to the LORD’s rule in the LORD’s land, were either to leave the land over time or to face the consequences of their opposition to the LORD. This is what the ban involved in practice.

The second thing that we are to note is that the Israelites themselves were to remember that the land belonged to the LORD. It was not their land but the LORD’s land in which they were called to live as His holy people. As we read by the end of chapter 8, if they chose to repudiate the LORD’s authority and in practice become like the Canaanites they would like the Canaanites be placed under the ban and driven out of the land.

Read Deuteronomy 7:1-8:20



Investigate

1. What do these chapters teach us about the LORD's role within the conquest of Canaan? What part did Israel play? (Hint: list the verses that speak about the LORD's action and Israel's action)
2. According to 7:1-6 and 7:24-26 what was involved in Israel carrying out the LORD's 'ban' upon Canaan?
3. What reason are we given for the implementation of the LORD's ban upon all things Canaanite?
4. According to these chapters, why did the LORD choose the Israelites and give them the land?
5. What light does 7:10 cast upon the reason for the LORD's expulsion of the Canaanites?

6. What promises did the LORD make to the Israelites
 - a. About the conquest?

 - b. About life in the land?

7. What were Israel always to remember?

8. By what was their national life in the land to be characterised?

9. What would the result be of a refusal to do this?



Think

1. How would you answer someone who challenged you about the conquest of Canaan as being nothing more than ethnic cleansing and genocide?

2. What New Testament equivalent do we have for a place belonging to the LORD where no evil is permitted?

3. What lessons can we as Christians learn from these chapters?

Apply



In what way have Deuteronomy 7 & 8 informed or challenged your thinking?



In what way have Deuteronomy 7 & 8 spoken to your heart?



What needs to change in your daily life as a result of this study?