

אֶרֶץ זָבַת חָלֶב וְדָבָשׁ

9:26



He has brought us to this place and has given us this land, "a land flowing with milk and honey;"

וַיְבִיאֵנוּ אֶל-הַמָּקוֹם
הַזֶּה, וַיִּתֵּן-לָנוּ
אֶת-הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת,
אֶרֶץ זָבַת חָלֶב וְדָבָשׁ

May 14th 2012
KALLERSON

Deuteronomy 26:1-11

The First of the Fruit

October 10, 2021

“And it shall be, when you come into the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, and you possess it and dwell in it, ² that you shall take some of the first of all the produce of the ground, which you shall bring from your land that the LORD your God is giving you, and put it in a basket and go to the place where the LORD your God chooses to make His name abide. ³ And you shall go to the one who is priest in those days, and say to him, ‘I declare today to the LORD your God that I have come to the country which the LORD swore to our fathers to give us.’

⁴ “Then the priest shall take the basket out of your hand and set it down before the altar of the LORD your God. ⁵ And you shall answer and say before the LORD your God: ‘My father was a Syrian, about to perish, and he went down to Egypt and dwelt there, few in number; and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous. ⁶ But the Egyptians mistreated us, afflicted us, and laid hard bondage on us. ⁷ Then we cried out to the LORD God of our fathers, and the LORD heard our voice and looked on our affliction and our labor and our oppression. ⁸ So the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm, with great terror and with signs and wonders. ⁹ He has brought us to this place and has given us this land, “a land flowing with milk and honey”; ¹⁰ and now, behold, I have brought the firstfruits of the land which you, O LORD, have given me.’

“Then you shall set it before the LORD your God, and worship before the LORD your God. ¹¹ So you shall rejoice in every good thing which the LORD your God has given to you and your house, you and the Levite and the stranger who is among you.

A friend of mine emailed me a few days before typing this sermon and found the words of a Christian author that he normally liked hard to understand. He was sure that the guy taught eternal salvation, but he wasn't syncing on what the guy was saying in one particular point. The author is AW Tozer and he said –

“We are saved by accepting Christ as our Savior.” “We are sanctified by accepting Christ as our Lord.” “We may do the first without doing the second.” What a tragedy that in our day we often hear the gospel appeal made in this way: “Come to Jesus! You do not have to obey anyone. You do not have to give up anything. Just come to Him and believe in Him as Savior!” The fact that we hear this everywhere does not make it right! To urge men and women to believe in a divided Christ is bad teaching-for no one can receive a half or a third or a quarter of the divine Person of Christ!”

Tozer is right, but it does not negate that some people are saved and are not obedient to Christ. Belief in the gospel saves. Obedience to Christ comes at a different level for every person who has ever been saved. My response was –

- 1) We are saved by believing the gospel. It is done (1 Cor 15:3, 4 / Eph 1:13, 14 & so on).
- 2) After salvation we should live as if we are saved because Christ is our Lord. (Eph 4:1 / 1 Thess 2:12 & so on).

I concluded the email with the words, “When we don't believe the gospel, we have not been saved. When we are saved and don't live for Christ as Lord, we are not being obedient to the word.”

With that understood, we will talk about confessing Jesus as Lord today. That is a different issue than being obedient to Jesus as Lord. One is referring to His deity – Jesus is the Lord, Jehovah. The other is referring to His position of authority over us. Jesus is the Lord (Master) over us.

It's an important distinction because people tend both to under and overthink Romans 10:9, 10. As such they misunderstand what Paul is saying, and they can get off on some odd tangents in doing so.

Text Verse: *“The LORD has made bare His holy arm
In the eyes of all the nations;
And all the ends of the earth shall see
The salvation of our God.” Isaiah 52:10*

The words of Isaiah are relevant to today's passage as well. The arm of the Lord signifies what the Lord is reaching out to do. In the end, what God does in Christ is what the Lord is reaching out to do. Keep that in mind.

As far as our passage today, one of the verses refers to a confession made about the Israelite's father. One clause of that verse is quite widely translated, and I thought I would give you a few of the different possibilities as to what is being said –

My father was a wandering Aramean. NIV
My father was a Syrian, about to perish. NKJV
My father was led to Aram. Aramaic
My father abandoned Syria. Brenton Septuagint
My ancestor was homeless, an Aramean. CEV
The Syrian pursued my father. Douay-Rheims
My ancestor was a wandering Aramean. GNT
My ancestors were wandering Arameans. GWT

These, and several other possibilities, have been given for this clause. The Hebrew is just three words, and yet there is this much disagreement on what is being conveyed. If you ever wonder why translations vary so much, it is because the Bible is a big, complicated book.

Not only the words themselves have to be evaluated, but what the words may be referring to do as well. Remember this as you do your studies, and don't just go with the first translation.

And, also, don't just go with the first commentary. There is a lot involved in what the Bible is telling us.

If we can have such a divergence on three seemingly simple words, just imagine how difficult the greater doctrines set forth in the word can be argued over. Hence, we have 8 billion different denominations – all claiming they have the answer. Be careful what you accept and be sure to have the basics right.

We will see the very basic of the basics, the first of the fruit of our life in the Lord, referred to in today's passage. Great things are to be found in His superior word. And so, let us turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. I Declare Today to the Lord (verses 1-11)

“And it shall be, when you come into the land which the LORD your God is giving you

The words of this first verse are not unlike many other verses already seen in Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. In Leviticus and Numbers, the Lord repeated the words in the first person again and again –

“Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When you have come into the land you are to inhabit, which I am giving to you.’” Numbers 15:2

Moses gives the same general thought in Deuteronomy 18:9, stating it in the third person –

“When you come into the land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations.”

Introducing this expression at the beginning of the chapter sets the tone for everything that follows. Israel is not yet in Canaan, and yet they are promised that they will enter the land, a land being given to them by the Lord.

They were brought out of bondage, they were given the law, they were conducted to the door of Canaan and yet they faithlessly turned away from it, they were sentenced to exile in the wilderness because of their faithlessness, and yet they have been cared for by the Lord through the many years of exile for disobedience.

Now, at the end of their time of exile, right on the banks of the Jordan, they are promised they will – in fact – enter the land. The inheritance was promised to their fathers and to them. They

will possess the land, and the Lord will see them through to the satisfactory completion of His promise.

In this, and because it's been a while since the typology has been considered, all of what occurred has been a picture of Israel's rejection of Christ. In Numbers 14, Israel refused to enter Canaan. It was a perfectly clear picture of Israel's rejection of Jesus.

From there, they were led into exile in the wilderness. All of that time in the wilderness has been typical of Israel's exile over the past two thousand years. And just as He brought Israel through the years of wandering and to the door of Canaan once again, so He has brought Israel back to the land in preparation of their coming to their Messiah.

Through their constant faithlessness towards the Lord, He has remained steadfastly faithful to Israel – both in the historical account recorded in the Pentateuch and in the historical account of their time since the Roman exile.

The words now spoken by Moses are reminding them that entrance into the promise is not because of anything they have done. Rather, it is based on the granting of it by the Lord – “And it shall be, when you come into the land which the LORD your God is giving you.” It will be the land given...

^{1 (con't)} **as an inheritance,**

nakhlah – “an inheritance.” One inherits an inheritance. Thus, it is given by another and not earned. This is the state of the land in which the Israelite is to live, and it is in this state – and from this reference point – that the rite to be explained is mandated.

As for Israel as a nation, they have not yet come to Christ who is the anticipated true inheritance. He is what Canaan only anticipates. That life is still ahead of them. Someday they will enter, just as Moses says Israel will enter. It is this time that is being anticipated. Understanding this, Moses says...

^{1 (con't)} **and you possess it and dwell in it,**

v'rishtah v'yashavta bah – “and you possess and you dwell in it.” Again, Moses speaks of these things as a certainty. They shall inherit the land, they shall possess it, and they shall dwell in it. For Israel on the banks of the Jordan, the anticipation is Canaan. But for Israel without Christ, the anticipation and the promise is Christ.

As surely as they rejected God's offer and turned from Canaan, they rejected God's offer and turned from Christ. And as surely as they will enter Canaan, they will – someday – accept Christ.

The denial of both the Jews who still reject (and many curse) His name, as well as the denial of those in the church who say God is finished with Israel, are both denials that ignore the typology clearly seen in the words of Moses.

But more, they reject the words of the prophets, and they continue to reject the words of the apostles and of Jesus Himself that assure us reconciliation is yet ahead for Israel.

Regardless of that, the typology is set, the promises will come to pass, and Israel will both enter Canaan as stated by Moses, and they will come to Christ as noted in Scripture. As such, Moses has a word for the people when they enter and possess the land. It is...

² that you shall take some of the first of all the produce of the ground,

v'laqakhta m'reshit kal peri ha'adamah – “and you shall take from first all fruit the ground.” Because of the use of “from” the words are a bit confusing. This is not referring to the Feast of Firstfruits, but rather of the first of all the produce. In Exodus 23, we read –

“Three times you shall keep a feast to Me in the year: ¹⁵You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread (you shall eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt; none shall appear before Me empty); ¹⁶and the Feast of Harvest, the firstfruits of your labors which you have sown in the field; and the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you have gathered in the fruit of your labors from the field.” Exodus 23:14-16

That is then further defined saying –

“The first of the firstfruits of your land you shall bring into the house of the LORD your God.” Exodus 23:19

The *bikkurim*, or firstfruits, signifies the first of the harvest cycle, and it is the time when the second pilgrim feast was conducted. Of that harvest of firstfruits, a portion was presented to the Lord. That is the *reshit bikure*, or “first of the firstfruits.”

It is that, and any other firsts, that are certainly referred to here. In other words, that was one harvest, but there will be harvests of barley, wheat, figs, grapes, olives, pomegranates, and whatever else is grown by the people. Deuteronomy 8:8 gives a good summary of such things.

But these “firsts” would also include that of the fleece of the sheep as well. This was stated in Chapter 18 –

“The firstfruits of your grain and your new wine and your oil, and the first of the fleece of your sheep, you shall give him. ⁵ For the LORD your God has chosen him out of all your tribes to stand to minister in the name of the LORD, him and his sons forever.”
Deuteronomy 18:4, 5

The first from each of these, whatever they may be, was to be brought forward...

² (con’t) **which you shall bring from your land that the LORD your God is giving you,**

The repetition concerning the land is not unnecessary. It is an added reminder that not only did He give them the land, but he also is the One who gives them what comes from the ground in the land.

Therefore, just as He can give them the land and remove them from it, He can also provide from the ground or withhold what comes from it. They will be explicitly reminded of this, in minute detail, in Chapter 28.

As this is so, they are obligated to give of the first of the fruits that come from the ground. No amount is stated, and thus it is according to the generosity of the heart of the giver to decide. Whatever amount it is, they are to collect it...

² (con’t) **and put *it* in a basket**

Here is a new and rare word, *tene*. It signifies a basket, coming from a root probably meaning “to weave.” Thus, it is a woven basket of willows or the like. It will be seen four times between now and Deuteronomy 28:7.

² (con’t) **and go to the place where the LORD your God chooses to make His name abide.**

In other words, the presentation is to be brought to the place of the tabernacle at the times of the pilgrim feasts. This would probably be something that happened at all three of the feasts, bringing forth whatever crop came ripe at that time.

³ **And you shall go to the one who is priest in those days,**

This simply refers to whatever priest is on duty at the time, be it the high priest or whatever priest was in attendance. The number of people coming to the pilgrim feasts would make it

impossible for the high priest alone to meet and then accept the offering of every family that came. Thus, they were to come to one of the priests...

³ (con't) **and say to him, 'I declare today to the LORD your God**

The word *nagad* is used. It is variously translated as declare, profess, acknowledge, testify, show, and so on. It is a general word that gives the sense of "to be conspicuous." One might say, "I openly proclaim today..."

In saying "today," it has been passed on that this proclamation would be made only once a year. That does not logically follow. If one is to bring the first of the fruits, it would be much more logical for them to be presented as they became ripe. Hence, one would expect this to be done at each pilgrim feast, despite what Jewish commentators state.

By saying, "I'Yehovah elohekha," or "to Yehovah your God," it is demonstrating that the priest is acknowledged as the mediator between the people and the Lord. The profession is to be a constant reminder before the Lord. As such, he is to then say...

³ (con't) **that I have come to the country which the LORD swore to our fathers to give us.'**

The Hebrew more specifically says, "swore to our fathers to give **to** us." It is not to all of Israel, but that a particular generation would receive the promise. The rest could only anticipate what these people, standing before the priest, would actually receive.

Thus, in saying this, and in providing the fruit at this time, it is a tangible proof that the Lord had fulfilled His oath. The Lord had sworn, and the Lord fulfilled. And more, the presentation of the fruit not only proved they possessed the land, but that the land was productive and fruitful.

Therefore, it is to be understood by them that even the fruit from the land, meaning their continued existence, was from the hand of the Lord. The presentation was to then be considered an offering of both thanks and praise for what it represented in the greater harvest they had received.

Whatever work they did to bring forth the fruit was only possible because they had been given the land, and the land itself was productive enough to bring forth from their labors. This is all tied up in the presentation of the fruit. As such...

⁴ **"Then the priest shall take the basket out of your hand and set it down before the altar of the LORD your God.**

The priest, as the mediator, takes the offering and transfers it to the place before the altar, meaning the altar of sacrifice in the courtyard. Thus, the offering is considered as a sacrifice. In placing it before the altar, it is then representative of having been received by the Lord. As such, an acknowledgment of the Lord's hand in this is to be proclaimed...

⁵ And you shall answer and say before the LORD your God:

The translation is right, "answer and say." The first statement was made, the basket was taken from the hands and placed before the altar. It is as if the Lord (through the priest) has said, "I accept your offering." With that accomplished, the person responds to the acceptance of the offering, saying...

⁵ (con't) 'My father *was* a Syrian, about to perish,

arami oved avi – "Aramean, wandering, my father." Translating as "Syrian" is for our benefit. Although there are several unique ways of translating these words, the reference is surely to Jacob. He was born in Canaan, but he was not a Canaanite. Abraham was from Ur of the Chaldeans, and thus considered under Syria.

And more, his mother Rebekah was an Aramean. He also lived for twenty years in Paddan-Aram, his wives were from there, and his children were then reckoned as such as well.

Concerning the word *avad*, it can mean perishing, wandering (as in a lost animal), and so on. If "perishing" is intended, that would indicate the many times in his life when his existence was threatened, such as when Esau was of a mind to kill him, when he toiled under his father-in-law, Laban, when he feared being killed by the Shechemites of Canaan in Genesis 34, and when the great famine came which caused them to go to Egypt.

If "wandering" is intended, it is because he owned none of his own land but remained a nomad and a pilgrim throughout his life. As the word signifies both thoughts, it is probably intended to mean both, as a pun. He was a perishing and wandering Aramean.

The reason for this is because of the proclamation now being made by the presenter of the fruits. He is neither perishing nor wandering. He has both a possession and he has abundance – testified to by the basket. What the Lord promised this Aramean in his humbled state has been realized for his descendants.

⁵ (con't) and he went down to Egypt and dwelt there, few in number;

Again, both thoughts, perishing and wandering, fit the narrative here. There was no food in Canaan, and they thus wandered from Canaan to Egypt. There was nothing firm or stable in their existence, and they were a small clan, as Jacob himself acknowledged in Genesis 34:30.

The family number at the time of entering Egypt was 70 souls...

⁵ (con't) **and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous.**

That was recorded first in Exodus 1:7 –

“But the children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly, multiplied and grew exceedingly mighty; and the land was filled with them.”

But in their massive growth, affliction, not prosperity, resulted...

⁶ **But the Egyptians mistreated us, afflicted us, and laid hard bondage on us.**

Again, it is seen in Exodus 1 –

“Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. ⁹ And he said to his people, “Look, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we; ¹⁰ come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and it happen, in the event of war, that they also join our enemies and fight against us, and so go up out of the land.” ¹¹ Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh supply cities, Pithom and Raamses. ¹² But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were in dread of the children of Israel. ¹³ So the Egyptians made the children of Israel serve with rigor. ¹⁴ And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage—in mortar, in brick, and in all manner of service in the field. All their service in which they made them serve was with rigor.” Exodus 1:8-14

Each thing that is being answered by the presenter of the basket is to remind him of his own state before the Lord. *“This is where I have come from, and without the Lord, this is where I – as an Israelite – would still be.”* Such is evidenced in the next words...

⁷ **Then we cried out to the LORD God of our fathers, and the LORD heard our voice and looked on our affliction and our labor and our oppression.**

This is referring to the words of Exodus 2 & 3 (and elsewhere) –

“Now it happened in the process of time that the king of Egypt died. Then the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage. ²⁴So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. ²⁵And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God acknowledged them.” Exodus 2:23-25

“And the LORD said: ‘I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows. ⁸So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites. ⁹Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. ¹⁰Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.’” Exodus 3:7-10

In their affliction, labor, and oppression, the Lord heard their cry and acted accordingly, demonstrating his power and sovereign authority over Egypt. As Moses says...

⁸So the LORD brought us out of Egypt

v'yosienu Yehovah mimitsrayim – “And brought us out, Yehovah, from Egypt.” Israel was in bondage. Israel cried out to the Lord. And the Lord brought Israel forth from the bondage of Egypt...

⁸ (con't) **with a mighty hand**

b'yad khazaqah – “in hand mighty.” It is the same words spoken to Moses in Exodus 6:1 –

“Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh. For with a **strong hand** he will let them go, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land.”

It speaks of the Lord's effectual power to accomplish what was necessary to bring the mighty nation of Egypt to its knees in order to bring about the release of Israel.

⁸ (con't) **and with an outstretched arm,**

u-bizroa netuyah – “and in arm outstretched.” Again, it is a repeat of Exodus 6:6 –

“I am the LORD; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.” Exodus 6:6

This speaks of the effectual reach of the Lord to accomplish the delivery. When a man desires to show His strength or to defeat an enemy, he will stretch his arms out. In this one stance, he will both defend some and work against others.

8 (con't) **with great terror**

u-b'mora gadol – “and in terror great.” The effects of the Lord’s powerful workings against Egypt can only be described as terrifying.

8 (con't) **and with signs**

u-b'othoth – “and in signs.” The *othoth*, or signs, are things given to represent something else. The Lord gave Moses three signs to give to Israel – the rod which turned into a snake, the leprous hand, and the water which turned to blood. He also gave signs to Pharaoh concerning what would come upon them as the Lord accomplished His work. Also...

8 (con't) **and wonders.**

u-b'mophtim – “and in wonders.” The *mophtim*, or wonder, comes from *yaphah*, or beautiful. Thus, it speaks of that which is conspicuous and amazing. The word “wonders” gives us the right sense. It speaks of the plagues which came upon the land. And yet, it also speaks of the fact that Israel was spared at the same time. While Egypt was destroyed, Israel survived through the plagues – each time it was a wonder in itself.

The Lord fought the battles, it was His strength that worked against Egypt, it was His reach that devastated them while Israel remained safe, and it was His actions that brought terror upon the foe.

The words of this verse are a general summary of what occurred in the time of the plagues upon Egypt and during the exodus from there. They are a close repeat of Moses’ words of Deuteronomy 4:34 –

“Or did God ever try to go and take for Himself a nation from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs, by wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?” Deuteronomy 4:34

And in bringing Israel out of Egypt, the Lord safely conducted Israel through the many years of disobedience, right to the shores of the Jordan. As such, he is to next acknowledge...

⁹ He has brought us to this place and has given us this land,

In acknowledging the Lord's power over Egypt, it is an acknowledgment that their possession of the land was only because of the Lord. There would have been no exodus without the effectual working of the Lord's power, and there would, thus, be no land for Israel to receive the abundance from what they now possessed. Everything is tied up in what the Lord has done, and what the Lord has given them, it is...

⁹ (con't) **"a land flowing with milk and honey";**

This is the third of six times this particular phrase is used in Deuteronomy, this time speaking as if he were an Israelite standing before the Lord. The abundance and blessings are realized and confirmed in his words. The word for "land" is *eretz*. It speaks of the land as a whole, of which he is a partaker of.

Jacob was a wandering (and ready to perish) Aramean, and this Israelite now avows that he is the recipient of a land of fertility – all because of the Lord's care of him. In acknowledgment of that...

¹⁰ and now, behold, I have brought the firstfruits of the land which you, O LORD, have given me.'

v'atah hineh heveti eth reshit peri – "and now, behold, I have brought the first fruit." As in verse 2, it is not the *bikurim* or "firstfruits," but "the first fruit." Unless the distinction is made, actual points of theology concerning Christ can be easily confused.

This is the first ripe fruit of whatever the land produces. As such, the Israelite is standing before the Lord acknowledging that. For it to not be what is claimed would then be tantamount to lying to the Lord. Also, the word translated as "land" here is the same as in verse 2, *ha'adamah*. It should be translated as "the ground." It is what the ground produces that is being referred to.

¹⁰ (con't) **"Then you shall set it before the LORD your God, and worship before the LORD your God.**

v'hinakhto liphne Yehovah elohekha – "And you shall set it before the Lord your God." What happens here seems confusing. In verse 4, it said that the priest was to take the basket out of

the hand of the offeror, and to then place it before the altar. Since then, nothing has been said of the basket, and yet it says he is to set it before the Lord.

Some take this as the priest setting the basket before the altar, signifying it is a sacrifice to the Lord. From there, it was then returned to the offeror, who would then make his proclamation before the Lord over the sacrifice. After that is done, he then sets the basket before the Lord, meaning it is the priest's portion who is the representative of the Lord.

Others see this as simply a continuation of verse 4. But that doesn't seem to fit because the priest is said to have taken the basket. Rather than the word "then" which is used in verse 4 and verse 10, both times it simply says "and."

What may be the case is that the words, "*And you shall set it before the Lord your God,*" are speaking of the entire process. One might paraphrase it for understanding as, "This is how you are to set it before the Lord your God."

While that is being accomplished, he is also bowing and making his proclamation, here called "worship." The whole process is then summed up in this verse. It is one act of presentation that includes bowing as it is conducted. When this is complete, Moses says...

***11 (fin) So you shall rejoice in every good *thing* which the LORD your God has given to you and your house, you and the Levite and the stranger who *is* among you.**

This builds upon what has already been said several times in Deuteronomy, such as –

"There you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hand, and all your choice offerings which you vow to the LORD. ¹² And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you and your sons and your daughters, your male and female servants, and the Levite who is within your gates, since he has no portion nor inheritance with you." Deuteronomy 12:11, 12

In other words, this is a part of the same process that is referred to for each of the pilgrim feasts. Though it is mentioned later, this is an integral part of what the people were to do at each such feast.

Once this rite is complete and the first of the fruit has been presented, only then would the people go about eating their tithes and offerings and rejoicing before the Lord. There would be relaxing, eating of meat, and drinking of wine – feasting and celebration.

There would be meeting up with old friends and making new ones. The intent of the pilgrim feasts was for the people to rest in the presence of the Lord, acknowledge His goodness toward them, and to praise Him for each and every blessing they had received.

The annual marking of these pilgrim feasts was a rite that was only failingly observed by the people, and even when they were observed, they were quickly forgotten again. As such, the words of Jeremiah – words that closely mirror much of our passage today – speak of the judgment upon the people for their failings –

“Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for You. ¹⁸ You show lovingkindness to thousands, and repay the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them—the Great, the Mighty God, whose name is the LORD of hosts. ¹⁹ You are great in counsel and mighty in work, for Your eyes are open to all the ways of the sons of men, to give everyone according to his ways and according to the fruit of his doings. ²⁰ You have set signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, to this day, and in Israel and among other men; and You have made Yourself a name, as it is this day. ²¹ You have brought Your people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs and wonders, with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, and with great terror; ²² You have given them this land, of which You swore to their fathers to give them—“a land flowing with milk and honey.” ²³ And they came in and took possession of it, but they have not obeyed Your voice or walked in Your law. They have done nothing of all that You commanded them to do; therefore You have caused all this calamity to come upon them. Jeremiah 32:17-23

*What will I proclaim, what will I profess?
What will I declare to the Lord my God?
Is there an exalted name, one I can confess?
One that the heavenly host will applaud?*

*And when I make my solemn profession
Will it be about something I have done?
Or will my mouth’s holy confession
Be about what God had done in Christ, His Son?*

*It is He who brought about the victory for us
And so, it is His name alone that I will confess
I shall proclaim “The Lord is Jesus!”
Yes. This is what my mouth shall profess*

II. Life in Christ

Like the Feasts of the Lord, because this is a part of the conduct of those feasts, the passage today looks to life in Christ. The land the Lord promised is typical of our life in Christ. Israel was given the land; the church is given Christ. Israel was to inherit the land; Christ is our inheritance. Paul speaks of life in Christ as such –

“For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise.” Galatians 3:18

Paul shows that the inheritance is of God and is not obtained through works of the law. As we noted, one inherits an inheritance. Thus, it is given by another; not earned. Further, Paul expressly states that the inheritance is obtained already by faith in Christ. It is also something promised with a guarantee in Christ –

“In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, ¹² that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.

¹³ In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.” Ephesians 1:11-14

It is this guarantee that fulfills the words of our passage today “and you possess it and dwell in it.” We, even now, possess the inheritance and we have obtained the inheritance, even if it is not realized in us yet.

In this state, we see a reflection of Paul’s word of Romans 10 in the next verses. The Israelite is told to take the first of every fruit and put them in a basket and take them to where the Lord is.

Good fruit in the New Testament is that which is pleasing to the Lord. It is the outworking of the faith that is possessed. What is the first of the fruit of the Lord? It is to acknowledge the Lord. As we saw in the passage today, the word *nagad* was used.

It is variously translated as declare, profess, acknowledge, testify, show, and so on. It is a general word that gives the sense of “to be conspicuous.” One might say, “I openly proclaim today...” The first of the fruit of our salvation is what Paul refers to in Romans –

“that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Romans 10:9, 10

People try to claim that “confessing” is a work and that Paul has it all wrong. That is nonsense – as is seen right here in Deuteronomy. It is an acknowledgment of the work of the Lord – an open declaration.

Just as Israel was to declare “*I’Yehovah elohekha,*” or “to Yehovah your God,” the Christian is to profess the Lord Jesus. The priest of Israel was the mediator who only anticipated Christ the Lord, our Mediator.

With the profession made by the Israelite, the priest was to take the basket and set it before the altar of sacrifice. That is typical of our profession of Christ, acknowledging Him as our sacrifice. “I was born of Adam, like him, I am set to perish and to wander until my days are ended. In that state, I was in Egypt, in the bondage of sin, but as the redeemed of the Lord, we called out in our agony, and You looked on our affliction and delivered us.”

This is all implied in 1 Corinthians 15. Christ died for our sins. Christ was buried. Christ rose. He did all of the work with His mighty hand (His effectual power to accomplish what was necessary to redeem us from the devil), and by His outstretched arm (His effectual reach to accomplish the delivery).

He stretched out His arm, He died on the cross, He accomplished the victory! In Him death is defeated. He worked against the powers of darkness, and He worked for His people.

This is what is being pictured in the passage today – a reminder of a person’s first moments in Christ. How can anyone say that to confess the Lord is a work? Who can BUT confess the Lord! He did the work; we are asked to simply acknowledge that.

Confession is more than the audible words which occur with the mouth. To “confess” is almost synonymous with to “profess.” However, one can confess a lie; one only professes the truth.

The audible confession stands because of the inward profession. This is why Paul says in Romans 8 that “the word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart.” It is as close to us as the air which enters and exits our mouth and fills our lungs, and it is both audible in tone and truthful to the heart.

The reason for the audible profession is obvious. No one would hide their true belief in the Lordship of Jesus. If He is, in fact, Lord, then He is alive. If He is alive, then He triumphed over

the cross. If He did this, then He was without sin because “the wages of sin is death.” If He is without sin, then He is God because “all have sinned and all fall short of the glory of God.”

As you can see by logically thinking this through, the incarnation of Jesus Christ – being the God/Man – is inextricably tied up in the confession of “the Lord Jesus.” One cannot deny His Lordship, meaning His deity, and be saved. This is the heart of what God has done in the stream of time for the redemption of mankind.

Therefore, confession “with your mouth” is the making of an open profession that Jesus is God, thus denying all other gods. One must make the confession which is a true profession as is seen in the words “and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead.”

Paul directly ties the resurrection to Jesus’ Lordship. One cannot honestly call on a dead savior and so acknowledging His resurrection returns us to the thought that He was sinless in His life and death.

The priest, taking the basket out of the hand of the Israelite is also a picture of Christ’s deity. Just as the first of the fruit of Israel was taken by the priest and placed “before the altar of the Lord your God,” meaning the altar of sacrifice, the first of the fruit of the believer is taken by Christ, our Mediator, who places it before the altar of the Lord, meaning His own sacrifice.

Everything is tied up in what Christ has done – everything. With that understood, the passage ended with the thought of rejoicing in every good thing that the Lord has given to the person, and to his house, and which is to also include “the Levite and the stranger who *is* among you.” The entire thought is beautifully reflected in the words of our closing verse today.

For now, let each of us be thankful for what God has done. We were wandering through life. We were perishing and destined for a bad end, we were kept in the shackles of sin, and it is Christ who delivered us from those things. By His mighty hand, and by His outstretched arm we have been brought home to God’s heavenly inheritance.

Let us rejoice in this. Let us be grateful to God for this. And let us, now and forever, magnify that great and exalted Name which is above every name. Let us exalt JESUS!

Closing Verse: *“Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. ¹⁶ But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.” Hebrews 13:15, 16*

Next Week: Deuteronomy 26:12-19 *Properly explaining these words will leave many pastors a’writhing...* (The Third Year – The Year of Tithing) (74th Deuteronomy Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. But He also has expectations of you as He prepares you for entrance into His Land of Promise. So, follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The First of the Fruit

“And it shall be, when you come into the land

Which the LORD your God is giving you as

-----an inheritance all around

And you possess it and dwell in it

That you shall take some of the first of all the produce

-----of the ground

Which you shall bring from your land

That the LORD your God is giving you, where you will reside

And put it in a basket and go to the place

Where the LORD your God chooses to make His name abide

And you shall go to the one who is priest in those days

And say to him, ‘I declare today to the LORD your God thus

That I have come to the country

Which the LORD swore to our fathers to give us

“Then the priest shall take the basket out of your hand

And set it down before the altar of the LORD your God

And you shall answer and say

Before the LORD your God (with an acknowledging nod):

‘My father was a Syrian, about to perish

And he went down to Egypt and dwelt there

Few in number; and there he became a nation

Great, mighty, and populous – so you shall declare

But the Egyptians mistreated us, afflicted us, and laid

-----hard bondage on us

Then we cried out to the LORD God of our fathers –

-----calling out our confession

And the LORD heard our voice and looked on our affliction

And our labor and our oppression

So the LORD brought us out of Egypt

With a mighty hand, after our Egyptian plunders

And with an outstretched arm

With great terror and with signs and wonders

He has brought us to this place and has given us this land

“A land flowing with milk and honey

And now, behold, I have brought the firstfruits of the land

-----in your hand

Which you, O LORD, have given me

“Then you shall set it the LORD your God before

And worship before the LORD your God

-----worship and praise, and so much more

So you shall rejoice in every good thing
Which the LORD your God has given to you
and your house
You and the Levite and the stranger who is
among you
And be sure to bring along your spouse

Lord God, turn our hearts to be obedient to
Your word
Give us wisdom to be ever faithful to You
May we carefully heed each thing we have
heard
Yes, Lord God may our hearts be faithful
and true

And we shall be content and satisfied in You
alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of
praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have
shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to You for all of our
days

Hallelujah and Amen...