



### Deut 2:1-23

## “All God’s Commandments Are Just and True”

NKJ Deuteronomy 2:1 "Then we turned and journeyed into the wilderness of the Way of the Red Sea, as the LORD spoke to me, and we skirted Mount Seir for many days.

2 "And the LORD spoke to me, saying:

3 'You have skirted this mountain long enough; turn northward.

4 'And command the people, saying, "You are about to pass through the territory of your brethren, the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir; and they will be afraid of you. Therefore watch yourselves carefully.

5 "Do not meddle with them, for I will not give you any of their land, no, not so much as one footstep, because I have given Mount Seir to Esau as a possession.

6 "You shall buy food from them with money, that you may eat; and you shall also buy water from them with money, that you may drink.

7 "For the LORD your God has blessed you in all the work of your hand. He knows your trudging through this great wilderness. These forty years the LORD your God has been with you; you have lacked nothing." '

8 " And when we passed beyond our brethren, the descendants of Esau who dwell in Seir, away from the road of the plain, away from Elath and Ezion Geber, we turned and passed by way of the Wilderness of Moab.

9 "Then the LORD said to me, 'Do not harass Moab, nor contend with them in battle, for I will not give you any of their land as a possession, because I have given Ar to the descendants of Lot as a possession.' "

10 (The Emim had dwelt there in times past, a people as great and numerous and tall as the Anakim.

11 They were also regarded as giants, like the Anakim, but the Moabites call them Emim.

12 The Horites formerly dwelt in Seir, but the descendants of Esau dispossessed them and destroyed them from before them, and dwelt in their place, just as Israel did to the land of their possession which the LORD gave them.)

13 " 'Now rise and cross over the Valley of the Zered.' So we crossed over the Valley of the Zered.

14 "And the time we took to come from Kadesh Barnea until we crossed over the Valley of the Zered was thirty-eight years, until all the generation of the men of war was consumed from the midst of the camp, just as the LORD had sworn to them.

15 "For indeed the hand of the LORD was against them, to destroy them from the midst of the camp until they were consumed.

16 " So it was, when all the men of war had finally perished from among the people,

17 "that the LORD spoke to me, saying:

18 "This day you are to cross over at Ar, the boundary of Moab.

19 'And when you come near the people of Ammon, do not harass them or meddle with them, for I will not give you any of the land of the people of Ammon as a possession, because I have given it to the descendants of Lot as a possession.' "

20 (That was also regarded as a land of giants; giants formerly dwelt there. But the Ammonites call them Zamzummim,

21 a people as great and numerous and tall as the Anakim. But the LORD destroyed them before them, and they dispossessed them and dwelt in their place,

22 just as He had done for the descendants of Esau, who dwelt in Seir, when He destroyed the Horites from before them. They dispossessed them and dwelt in their place, even to this day.

23 And the Avim, who dwelt in villages as far as Gaza -- the Caphtorim, who came from Caphtor, destroyed them and dwelt in their place.)

Last week we saw that Moses had recounted to Israel God's awesome demonstration of His absolute sovereignty over the affairs of man by refusing to allow Israel to enter the promised land for over thirty eight years after their rebellion at Kadesh Barnea. When God had been with them, nothing could have stood in their way, He would have gone before them like a cloud of Hornets and driven out the Canaanites, but they had not trusted in Him nor believed his promises and He had cursed that generation. Following that curse, there was *no* possibility that they could take the land. He would He said, not go with them, and when they tried to take the land by their own power, they had been whopped.

Now the fighting men of the generation that had rebelled are dead, after 38 years of wandering in the desert is summed up in a brief understatement in verse 1, "we skirted Mt. Seir for many days" and the Lord tells them their time of desert wander is at an end. Now is the time for them to prepare to enter into the land that God is giving them as a possession.

But just as before the sovereignty of God meant they couldn't enter in, Moses now wants to show them how other displays of God's sovereignty over all the earth should *encourage* them to go into the land and to keep his commandments.

One of the ways Moses does that is to show them how the Lord had kept his promises to their relations. First he mentions the Edomites, the descendents of Esau. The Israelites were descended from Joseph the son of the promise, while the Edomites were descended from his red and hairy brother Esau. Isaac had promised in his blessing in Gen 27:39 that Esau's "*dwelling shall be of the fatness of the earth, And of the dew of heaven from above*" a place with sufficient food and water, and the Lord had brought that about by giving him the land of Seir to dwell in, dispossessing the Horites who had lived there.

Now at this point Moses says something interesting, he says God will make the Edomites afraid of them, and that therefore they must *watch themselves carefully*. They had been given a great advantage but they were not to try to sinful misuse that advantage by acting unjustly. The Lord had made it clear that he had given Seir to Edom, and therefore although they would fear Israel they were not to try to take the Edomite's land, God wasn't giving it to them. Neither were they to use that fear to compel the Edomites to hand over supplies to them. They were specifically instructed to treat them justly by paying for whatever food or water they received, they were not to bully or to pillage, which was of course extremely unusual behavior and not something that the nations that knew not the Lord nor His commandments would have done.

This is especially the case because the Edomites had refused to let Israel pass through their land in Num. 20:21 and the carnal desire would be to be angry and desire revenge – they had "dissed" Israel. But the Lord is teaching them that as He said later in Deut. 35 – "*Vengeance is Mine*" and they must learn to forgive and not revenge themselves.

***But you see even here, as they are about to enter into the Land, they are to be a light amongst the nations – watch yourselves, says God, because the nations will be watching you, and through you they will be learning about ME. Am I trustworthy? Am I Just? They will learn the answers to those questions not by what you say, but what you do?***

The Lord says it is especially important that they pay for what they receive to show that the Lord has been blessing them and that those who serve the Lord have no need to steal what they need to survive. By doing this they show that the Lord was more than able as Psalm 23 puts it to *prepare a table before them in the presence of my enemies*. They must therefore walk by faith and not by sight.

After they passed by Edom they are also instructed not to attack the Moabites who dwell in Ar on the borders of the promised land. They too are brethren, the descendents of Abraham's nephew Lot, and God had also given them land. Now the Moabites as well had come into their possession because God had driven out the prior inhabitants. In this case they were a race of giants like the Anakim called the Emim. Here Moses wants the people to understand that the Giants that their ancestors so much feared could be destroyed even by the Moabites if the Lord decreed it. He was showing that as Ecclesiastes 9 puts it: ***“The race is not to the swift, Nor the battle to the strong”*** and if even little Moab can destroy these giants, how much more so can God's particular people do the same?

Finally, Moses relates the Command of God to get up and cross over the valley of Zered where they will come near the land of yet another one of the descendents of Lot, the Ammonites, they too are not to be attacked or mistreated and again the reason is that God has given the land to them and they too had driven out a race of giants.

Now the reason of all these accounts of the nations and the land that was promised to them and the nations they dispossessed was given is obvious. Moses is showing the people, look this God you serve is sovereign over the whole earth, every people and every place, and if he is able to give land to your distant relatives who do not have these special promises, nor his word, nor assurances of His love, how much more so will He give these things to you whom he calls His Firstborn Son. He keeps every promise, why on earth would he not keep the ones he made to you? He drove out giants for them, why will he not drive out the giants and dispossess the Canaanites for you?

Some Applications:

***First, and this is obvious, as Matthew Henry put it religion must never become a cloak for injustice.*** God's people are blessed, but they must never use this blessing as an excuse to steal or murder. Being his people means being held to a higher standard, not doing whatever you want. God's people have been given freedom, but freedom is not the right to do whatever you want, freedom is the ability to do what is right. We must therefore walk by faith and not by sight, and never use grace as an excuse to mistreat others, perish the thought. People will be looking at you to see what the God you serve is really like. Therefore let us remember what Matthew Henry points out: ***“Even wicked men have a right to their worldly possessions, and must not be wronged. The tares are allowed their place in the field, and must not be rooted out until the harvest. God gives and preserves outward blessings to wicked men, to show that these are not the best things, but he has better in store for his own children.”***

Which leads us to the Second, namely as we see how God raised up one nation and dispossessed another, we should see that not even land is something fixed and unchanging. That as he even gave these blessings to wicked men they are not as Matthew Henry says what is most important, God “makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.” He gives temporal blessings to all men, and is that all you want, to have food and water and a land to dwell in for a while. Is all you want to be like Esau?

***Heb. 11:16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.***

The people who settled America where in search of that heavenly country, the men of the Massachusetts bay colony wanted their settlement to be a shining city on a hill that would inspire men to live for God here and hereafter, but that has by and large has been forgotten. Now we seem to be following not in the footsteps of the martyrs, who remembered that like Abraham, and Isaac, they were sojourners and who sought the heavenly country, by following Christ. We seem to be going after the Romans who persecuted them and thinking only in terms of land and personal peace and prosperity. Brothers and Sisters do we not see that empires come and empires go? Where is Moab, or Edom, or Ammon today? They had their good things:

Luke 16:19 " There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day.

20 "But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate,

21 "desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

22 "So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried.

23 "And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

24 "Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.'

25 "But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your **good things**, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented.

26 'And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.'