

**Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes**  
**Fourth Quarter 2021: *Present Truth in Deuteronomy***  
**Lesson 6 “For What Nation Is There so Great?”**

**Read for this week’s study**

Deuteronomy 4:1–9; Matthew 15:1–9; Numbers 25:1–15; 1 Corinthians 10:13 Deuteronomy 4:32–35; Matthew 5:13–16.

**Memory Text**

“ ‘And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day?’ ” (Deuteronomy 4:8, NKJV).

**Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide**

- I. Introduction
- II. Do Not Add or Take Away
- III. Baal Peor
- IV. Cleave to the Lord Your God
- V. For What Nation Is There So Great?
- VI. Your Wisdom and Your Understanding
- VII. Further Study

**Questions and Notes for Consideration**

**Facilitator: Jon Paulien**

1. Read this week’s memory text, Deuteronomy 4:8. What context would cause anyone to be this excited about rules and obligations? (Sabbath afternoon’s lesson)
2. The first three chapters of Deuteronomy are basically a history lesson, reminding the people of the whole forty-year Exodus experience they, or at least their parents, had been through. In chapter 4, the history lesson shifts into more of a sermon style. What role do you think history plays in the cosmic conflict? (Sabbath afternoon’s lesson)
3. Read Deuteronomy 4:1-2. Chapter 4 begins with “so now” or “and now” (Hebrew: *we attah*). This is somewhat equivalent to the “therefore” in the middle of many of Paul’s letters. There is a shift from theology and history to practical application. Because of what God had done for Israel in the past, Moses encourages them to obedience in what would follow. What warning does Moses give in verse 2 and why does he give it? How does Matthew 15:1-9 illustrate the danger he was warning Israel against? (Sunday’s lesson)

4. Read Deuteronomy 4:3-4. What was Baal-Peor and why did Israel need this warning at this time? Read the account of Baal-Peor in Numbers 25:1-13. What should the people have learned from this incident? What was the plague and why did Phineas' actions stop it? Was the plague an active judgment of God or a natural consequence of their actions? Why is Phineas' action regarded as so praiseworthy? Why is sexual sin so attractive to followers of God and what steps can believers take to avoid falling into it? (Monday's Lesson)
5. How does Deuteronomy 4:4 explain the difference between those who fell into sin and those who didn't? What do you think Moses meant by the word translated "cleave" or "hold fast"? How do 1 Corinthians 10:13 and Jude 24 relate to this idea? What kinds of things can we do to "hold fast" to the Lord? (Tuesday's Lesson)
6. Read Deuteronomy 4:5-9. Why would God want Moses to communicate these things to the Israelites? What was God's purpose in promising to make them great? What are the two things that made Israel special in the world? Read Deuteronomy 4:32-35. What else had God done for them? (Wednesday's Lesson)
7. Read Deuteronomy 4:6 again. What specifically does the Lord say is their "wisdom" and "understanding" in the eyes of the other nations? What is it about their obedience that would particularly impress outsiders? How did Jesus express something similar in Matthew 5:13-16? Does any of that apply to us today? How? (Thursday's Lesson)
8. If we have truly come to know the truth about God, what difference would that make in our lives? How would we be different? To put it in other words, how do you put the truth about God into practice? (Friday's Lesson)
9. What does it mean to add or take away from God's commands? Could something like that happen without us being aware of it? Please explain. (Friday's Lesson)

### Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

"And Hezekiah welcomed them, and he showed them [now, what did he show them? What would you have shown them?] all his treasure house, the silver, the gold, the spices, the precious oil, his armory, all that was found in his storehouses."

And can you see him, as he takes them through all this, interspersing his reports with the phrase, "The Lord has blessed me; the Lord has blessed me"? Have you ever noticed someone who seems to be unusually well endowed with this world's goods, he seems to have to say that every once in a while, "The Lord has blessed me; the Lord has been very good to me"? So Hezekiah may have been saying that all the way through, "The Lord has been very good to me." "There was nothing in his house or in all his realm that Hezekiah did not show them." Now, what's wrong with that?

“Then Isaiah the prophet came to King Hezekiah, and said to him, ‘What did these men say? And whence did they come to you?’ And Hezekiah said, ‘They have come from a far country, from Babylon.’ He said, ‘What have they seen in your house?’ And Hezekiah answered, ‘They have seen all that is in my house; there is nothing in my storehouses that I did not show them.’”

And you know the end of the story. The visitors had taken note that it would be worth coming back to pick it all up. Now, what is the implication in all of this? What should he have done? It’s implied in the story. What should he have done? Should he have told them about his God? He didn’t mention him at all, he might have said, “The Lord has blessed me,” but the concentration was on all these material things. What I’ve wondered about is, at the present time, when the world comes to inquire, how do we respond? What do we want them to know? What do we Adventists want to be known for? Do we even want to be known for the fact that we may live a little longer than other people because of some good health habits?

So what is the good news? It seems to me, Hezekiah’s mistake was, as you put it, he didn’t give them the good news. He gave them the good news about how the Lord had blessed him in all these ways, instead of talking about the one who did the blessing. So it’s this sort of evidence in scripture that leads me to my definition of the good news; that the good news is about God. The good news isn’t about us. Would that we were better news, to be sure, because we are members of the family. But the good news is about God, the kind of person that he is. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in All 66 – 1 & 2 Chronicles*, recorded November 1981, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

\*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1983:

<http://pkp.cc/21MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/22MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

### **Further Study with Ellen White**

All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us. {DA 668.3}

He finds His faithful ones, and holds communion with them, encouraging and strengthening them. And angels of God, that excel in strength, are sent forth by God to minister to His human workers who are speaking the truth to those who know it not. {8T 17.3}

We are witnesses for God as we reveal in ourselves the working of a power that is divine. Every individual has a life distinct from all others, and an experience differing essentially from theirs. God desires that our praise shall ascend to Him, marked by our own individuality. These precious acknowledgments to the praise of the glory of His grace, when supported by a Christ-like life, have an irresistible power that works for the salvation of souls. {DA 347.3}

Men put God out of their knowledge and worshiped the creatures of their own imagination; and as the result, they became more and more debased. The psalmist describes the effect produced upon the worshiper by the adoration of idols. He says, "They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them." Psalm 115:8. It is a law of the human mind that by beholding we become changed. Man will rise no higher than his conceptions of truth, purity, and holiness. If the mind is never exalted above the level of humanity, if it is not uplifted by faith to contemplate infinite wisdom and love, the man will be constantly sinking lower and lower. The worshipers of false gods clothed their deities with human attributes and passions, and thus their standard of character was degraded to the likeness of sinful humanity. They were defiled in consequence. "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. . . . The earth also was corrupt before God; and the earth was filled with violence." God had given men His commandments as a rule of life, but His law was transgressed, and every conceivable sin was the result. The wickedness of men was open and daring, justice was trampled in the dust, and the cries of the oppressed reached unto heaven. {PP 91.2}

It is a law both of the intellectual and the spiritual nature, that by beholding, we become changed. The mind gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is allowed to dwell. It becomes assimilated to that which it is accustomed to love and reverence. Man will never rise higher than his standard of purity or goodness or truth. If self is his loftiest ideal, he will never attain to anything more exalted. Rather, he will constantly sink lower and lower. The grace of God alone has power to exalt man. Left to himself, his course must inevitably be downward. {GC 555.1}

It is a law of the mind that it gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is trained to dwell. If occupied with commonplace matters only, it will become dwarfed and enfeebled. If never required to grapple with difficult problems, it will after a time almost lose the power of growth. {PP 596.2}

God bids us fill the mind with great thoughts, pure thoughts. He desires us to meditate upon His love and mercy, to study His wonderful work in the great plan of redemption. Then clearer and still clearer will be our perception of truth, higher, holier, our desire for purity of heart and clearness of thought. The soul dwelling in the pure atmosphere of holy thought will be transformed by communion with God through the study of Scriptures. {COL 60.1}

As we try to become acquainted with our Heavenly Father through His word, angels will come near, our minds will be strengthened, our character will be elevated and refined, and we shall become more like our Saviour. And as we behold the beautiful and grand in nature, our affections go out after God; while the spirit is awed, the soul is invigorated by coming in contact with the Infinite through His works. Communion with God through prayer develops the mental and moral faculties, and the spiritual powers strengthen as we cultivate thoughts upon spiritual things. {FE 443.1}

If in our ignorance we make missteps, the Saviour does not forsake us. We need never feel that we are alone. Angels are our companions. The Comforter that Christ promised to send in His name abides with us. In the way that leads to the City of God there are no difficulties which those who trust in Him may not overcome. There are no dangers which they may not escape. There is not a sorrow, not a grievance, not a human weakness, for which He has not provided a remedy. {MH 249.1}

There is no power in the whole satanic force that can disable the soul that trusts, in simple confidence, in the wisdom that comes from God. {ML 316.3}

Christ is our tower of strength, and Satan can have no power over the soul that walks with God in humility of mind. The promise, "Let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me; and he shall make peace with Me." In Christ there is perfect and complete help for every tempted soul. . . . If we will look to Jesus as the One in whom we may trust, He will never fail us in any emergency. {ML 316.4}

The tempter has no power to control the will or to force the soul to sin. He may distress, but he cannot contaminate. He can cause agony, but not defilement. {FLB 327.6}

Live in contact with the living Christ, and He will hold you firmly by a hand that will never let go. Know and believe the love that God has to us, and you are secure; that love is a fortress impregnable to all the delusions and assaults of Satan. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." Proverbs 18:10. {MB 119.2}

And the same compassion that reached out to rescue Peter is extended to every soul who has fallen under temptation. It is Satan's special device to lead man into sin, and then leave him, helpless and trembling, fearing to seek for pardon. But why should we fear, when God has said, "Let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me; and he shall make peace with Me?" Isaiah 27:5. Every provision has been made for our infirmities, every encouragement offered us to come to Christ. {COL 156.1}

God desired to bring all peoples under His merciful rule. He desired that the earth should be filled with joy and peace. He created man for happiness, and He longs to fill human hearts with the peace of heaven. He desires that the families below shall be a symbol of the great family above. {COL 290.2}

God chose Israel to reveal His character to men. He desired them to be as wells of salvation in the world. To them were committed the oracles of heaven, the revelation of God's will. In the early days of Israel the nations of the world, through corrupt practices, had lost the knowledge of God. They had once known Him; but because "they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, . . . their foolish heart was darkened." Romans 1:21. Yet in His mercy God did not blot them out of existence. He purposed to give them an opportunity of again becoming acquainted with Him through His chosen people. Through the teachings of the sacrificial service, Christ was to be uplifted before all nations, and all who would look to Him should live. {AA 14.1}

Divine wisdom has appointed, in the plan of salvation, the law of action and reaction, making the work of benevolence, in all its branches, twice blessed. God could have accomplished His object in saving sinners without the help of man, but He knew that man could not be happy without acting a part in the great work of redemption. That man might not lose the blessed results of benevolence, our Redeemer formed the plan of enlisting him as His coworker.—*R. & H.*, March 23, 1897. {CS 346.1}

By beholding we are to become changed; and as we meditate upon the perfections of the divine Model, we shall desire to become wholly transformed, and renewed in the image of His purity. It is by faith in the Son of God that transformation takes place in the character, and the child of wrath becomes the child of God. He passes from death unto life; he becomes spiritual and discerns spiritual things. The wisdom of God enlightens his mind, and he beholds wondrous things out of His law. As a man is converted by the truth, the work of transformation of character goes on. He has an increased measure of understanding. In becoming a man of obedience to God, he has the mind of Christ, and the will of God becomes his will. {1SM 338.1}

Peace comes with dependence on divine power. As fast as the soul resolves to act in accordance with the light given, the Holy Spirit gives more light and strength. {TM 518.1}

God is the author of truth. He enlightens the darkened understanding and gives to the human mind power to grasp and comprehend the truths which He has revealed. {SL 49.1}

God is able and willing to bestow upon His servants all the strength they need and to give them the wisdom that their varied necessities demand. He will more than fulfill the highest expectations of those who put their trust in Him. {AA 242.1}

If men will walk in the path that God has marked out for them, they will have a counselor whose wisdom is far above any human wisdom. {2BC 993.1}

Jesus does not call on us to follow Him, and then forsake us. If we surrender our lives to His service, we can never be placed in a position for which God has not made provision. Whatever may be our situation, we have a Guide to direct our way; whatever our perplexities, we have a sure Counselor; whatever our sorrow, bereavement, or loneliness, we have a sympathizing

Friend. If in our ignorance we make missteps, Christ does not leave us. His voice, clear and distinct, is heard, saying, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." [John 14:6.] "He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper." [Psalm 72:12.] {GW 263.1}

The supply of divine wisdom is inexhaustible, and the Lord encourages us to draw largely from it. {3BC 1146.8}