

“For A New Year” • Deuteronomy 31:1-6

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *Time Travel*

1. I’ve always been a fan of time-travel stories.
2. Ever since I was a kid I’ve enjoyed movies and books about going back into the past or ahead into the future.
 - a. HG Well’s, *The Time Machine* with Rod Stieger was the first time travel film I saw and I was hooked. I’ve seen that movie at least a dozen times.
 - b. Then there was *The Time Tunnel* TV show years ago.
 - c. *Timeline • Back to the Future*
3. I’m intrigued by the whole idea of moving back and forth in time and have often wondered which would be more fun –
 - a. To go back into the past and witness history firsthand,
 - b. Or jump into the future and see what’s coming.
 - c. It would certainly be *more profitable* to see the future because you’d be able to invest in those things the future will be using.
 - d. If you know what the future holds, you can *prepare* better *today*.
 - e. We all know the truth of that when we wish we knew 10 years ago what we know today.
4. Well, we *do* know some things about the future.
5. The Bible contains many prophecies about what the Last Days will be like.
6. As we’ll see in our Prophecy Update on New Year’s Eve, we live in an age when those prophecies stand poised to see their *literal* fulfillment.
7. I cannot speak this morning with a prophetic voice & say, “Thus saith the Lord” about what the new year holds, but I think the Bible has already told us about the general direction of things.
8. A bit later, we’ll get into that, but in light of what the new year in all likelihood holds, we find much insight in how to approach 2005 in the words of Moses in Deut. 31.

B. *Set The Scene*

1. Let’s set the context for our passage.
2. This is it, the last day of Moses’ leadership of Israel.
3. When he concludes his words here in chs. 31-33, he will make one last trek up the side of Mt. Nebo there on the eastern border of the Promised Land.
 - a. From the top of the mount he will look across the Jordan to the west & see the whole length of Canaan stretched out before him.
 - b. Then he will breath his last and die.
4. Knowing this is it, that these are his last words to the nation, he is filled with all the emotion of a man who has led these people for 40 years.
5. He knows the massive challenge that awaits them and the faith it will take to accomplish the task set before them – conquering Canaan.
6. It is this emotion, this passion that they press forward into Victory that drives him as we read . . .

II. TEXT

A. Vs. 1-2

1 Then Moses went and spoke these words to all Israel. 2 And he said to them: “I am one hundred and twenty years old today. I can no longer go out and come in. Also the LORD has said to me, ‘You shall not cross over this Jordan.’

1. At 120, Moses is an old guy.
2. His first 40 years were spent in the royal court of Egypt, enjoying a privileged life.
3. His second 40 years were spent in exile as a shepherd in the desert of Midian.
4. Then, at about 80 years of age, God sent him back to Egypt to lead Israel out of bondage.
5. The Exodus lasted another 40 years, so here he is at 120.
6. He says that he “can no longer go out & come in.”
 - a. His age has advanced him beyond the place where he can lead them in the next phase of their journey – which is a *military conquest* of the Promised Land.
 - b. The last verses of Deut. tell us when Moses died at 120 his eyesight was clear and he still possessed his natural vigor. [34:7]
 - c. He had enough strength to ascend the side of a mountain – which is no easy feat.
(If you’ve hiked up a mountain, you know that.)
 - d. Though Moses is old, he’s not *feeble*.
 - e. But he doesn’t possess the strength to lead Israel in the *on-going warfare* that will be needed to conquer Canaan & make it a homeland for Israel.
7. Besides, as Moses makes clear, God had told him it was not his calling to step one foot west of the Jordan River.
8. It’s time for the leadership of the nation to pass to another.

B. V. 3

3 The LORD your God Himself crosses over before you; He will destroy these nations from before you, and you shall dispossess them. Joshua himself crosses over before you, just as the LORD has said.

1. For the last 40 years, the people have come to understand that Moses is God’s man.
2. So as he informs them the time has come for him to step aside from leading the nation & that he won’t be going with them, he knows they might jump to the conclusion God *also* won’t be going with them.
3. He assures them that God will not only go *with them* into the Promised Land, He will go *ahead of them* & prepare the way. Look at v. 3 again . . .

The LORD your God Himself crosses over before you . . .

- a. Yes, certainly they will have to fight –
 - b. But the victory was assured because God was already at work in Canaan weakening the enemy’s defenses.
 - c. *Remember that* – We’ll come back to it later.
4. God knows His people need a leader, so when Moses stepped aside, He

- provided a new leader in the person of Moses' faithful assistant, Joshua.
5. He would provide the kind of leadership Moses was now too old to render – a military strategy that would divide, then *conquer* Canaan & set the tribes of Israel within their regions.

C. Vs. 4-5

4 And the LORD will do to them [the Canaanites] as He did to Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites and their land, when He destroyed them. 5 The LORD will give them over to you, that you may do to them according to every commandment which I have commanded you.

1. As Israel stood on the eastern bank of the Jordan River knowing that the next step would carry them into the land of the Canaanites, they were fearful.
2. The different people groups who lived in Canaan were well known for their skill in battle, their cruelty, and their great size & strength.
3. They were warriors with a long history of battle while Israel was composed of ex-slaves and their kids.
 - a. They had no tradition of warfare & no warrior class as the Canaanites did.
 - b. When it came to weapons, it was a terrible mismatch.
 - 1) The Canaanites possessed bronze
 - 2) While Israel had little more than wood & stone weapons.
4. But God had *already shown* Israel that with His help, they could bring down forces much better equipped & trained than they were.
5. Sihon & Og were Amorite kings on the eastern side of the Jordan, they'd already defeated easily.
6. Moses tells them what God had done to the Amorites, He would do to the Canaanites.
7. Israel's single duty was to follow through & take the victory *God was giving them*.

C. V. 6

6 Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the LORD your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you."

1. In light of the Lord's presence & promise, there was no reason for fear.
2. God has commanded them to enter & take Canaan.
3. They needed to know that when God gives a command to do a thing, it's not only possible, it's *assured* as they move forward in faith.
4. Where God *guides*, He *provides*. And where God *commands*, He *stands & hands* the strength to obey.

III. A Word For The New Year

A. A New Year

1. Just as Israel stood poised on the eastern bank of the Jordan River, preparing to cross over into a new day in her life as a nation –
2. Here we are this morning, just a few days away from crossing over into a new year.
3. As I look at the Word of God and what it has to say about the last days, I'm

- convinced that 2005 will prove to be another difficult year for many of us.
4. Now, I know this isn't what you want to hear. It isn't what I want to say.
 - a. We'd all much prefer to hear that everything is going to be peachy.
 - b. That daisies will spring up under our feet and birds will sing cheerful tunes in the trees.
 - c. That it will be warm sunshine all day, & gentle rains at night.
 5. But the Bible says that as we move into the Last Days, things will get worse, not better.
 6. In Matthew 24, Jesus said that just like labor pains, troubles would increase in both frequency & intensity as the end nears.
 - a. He warned of natural disasters, political turmoil, & economic upheaval.
 - b. Religious & spiritual deception will abound.
 - c. Evil will grow *so pervasive* it will infiltrate the ranks of those called by His name.
 7. In 1 Tim. 4:1, the Apostle Paul says,

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons.
 8. In 2 Tim. 3:1-5 he says

¹ But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come:

 - a. That word *perilous* is better translated as "dangerously stressful"
 - b. The last days will be days of danger because they will present a *moral challenge* so great many will not know what to do.
 - c. Then he goes on to describe what people will be like -

² For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³ unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, ⁴ traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵ having a form of godliness but denying its power.

 - d. It's that last phrase that ought to bother us *most*.
 - e. After describing a society in complete moral meltdown Paul says it wears a mask of spirituality, a paper-thin veneer of religion.
 - f. in a recent poll, 85% of adults identified themselves as Christian. 85%!!!
 - g. nearly 40% called themselves "born again" which makes you wonder what people mean by the term "Christian."
 - h. if you're not a "born again Christian" what kind are you?
 - i. anyway – even though 85% say they're a Christian, 64% say there is no such thing as absolute truth; that truth is always determined by one's circumstance & feelings.
 - j. these are the very people Paul was speaking of when he said they have a form of godliness, but deny its power.
 9. These and many other passages make it clear that the last days will be days of difficulty and challenge.
 10. But so were the days ahead of Israel here in Deuteronomy.

11. They were entering into enemy held territory and were given the task of defeating that enemy to lay claim to ground long held by the opponents of God.
12. What Moses spoke to Israel that day the Spirit speaks to us.
13. The new year is likely filled with difficult challenges, but it's the future the Lord has called us in to.
 - a. yesterday is gone – we cannot live there any longer.
 - b. today will soon be yesterday.
 - c. tomorrow is coming – it cannot be stopped. It is our God-ordained destiny.
14. And He wants us to go forth into the new year with a determination to live victoriously, laying claim to all He has for us.
15. Let the words of the Apostle Paul encourage you as we look to 2005 [Phil. 3:12-14]

12 It's not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. 13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have [laid hold of it]; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

B. He's Already There

1. None of us in this room has entered in to all the Lord has for us.
2. There is more in Christ.
3. There is *new* spiritual territory & blessing God wants you to possess.
4. There are *old* enemies He wants you to defeat.
5. And just as He promised to go *before* Israel and prepare the way, so God has *already gone* into your future, into the new year & marked out the path for you to take.
 - a. He's already softening up the enemy's position.
 - b. He's already *in* your tomorrow, preparing it for your arrival.
6. Look at v. 6 again –

6 Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the LORD your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you."

7. In Luke 21:26, Jesus said there would be an epidemic of *paralyzing fear* that would grip the earth in the latter days.
8. No matter how tough things may get, we need never fear because the fact is, *God is with us.*
9. Jesus repeated this promise to His disciples just before His ascension. In Matthew 28:20 He said . . .

"I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

C. Go For It!

1. It's precisely *because* 2005 is going to be a difficult year, that it's also a year of great opportunity.
2. Many of the people around you who've been uninterested in God will *become open* because of the trouble they cannot cope with.

3. Others will become interested as they witness the graceful way *you* negotiate *your* challenges.
4. But there's something I'm convinced of – 2005 is a year when people will be brought face to face with the reality of their commitment to Christ and will make a decision that determines their eternal destiny.
 - a. many will realize they've been playing a game and need to get *serious* with God,
 - b. they'll surrender themselves to Him without reservation.
 - c. but some will move *the other way*; they'll turn their backs on God & go off into complete deception.
 - d. they will become bitter foes of Christ & His people.
5. What will it be for you?
6. I'll tell you what it will be for me – I'm asking God to make 2005 a year of the deepest intimacy with Him I've ever known.
7. I'm asking Him to go before me into tomorrow and then show me all that He wants me to enter into and lay claim to for His glory.
8. I want to live without an ounce of fear, conquering all those things in my life that have stood in the way of who and what God wants me to be.