

Deuteronomy 10:1-11  
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“At that time [after God accepted Moses’ intercession for the Israelites] the LORD said to me, ‘Cut out for yourself two tablets of stone like the former ones, and come up to Me on the mountain, and make an ark of wood for yourself.’<sup>2</sup> ‘I will write on the tablets the words that were on the former tablets which you shattered, and you shall put them in the ark.’<sup>3</sup> “So I made an ark of acacia wood and cut out two tablets of stone like the former ones, and went up on the mountain with the two tablets in my hand.<sup>4</sup> “He wrote on the tablets, like the former writing, the Ten Commandments which the LORD had spoken to you on the mountain from the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly; and the LORD gave them to me [renewing the covenant].<sup>5</sup> “Then I turned and came down from the mountain and put the tablets in the ark which I had made; and there they are, as the LORD commanded me.”<sup>6</sup> (Now the sons of Israel set out from Beeroth Bene-jaakan to Moserah. There Aaron died and there he was buried and Eleazar his son ministered as priest in his place [Num 20:28; 33:38].<sup>7</sup> From there they set out to Gudgodah, and from Gudgodah to Jotbathah, a land of brooks of water.<sup>8</sup> At that time the LORD set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark of the covenant of the LORD [as custodians of the covenant tablets inside], to stand before the LORD to serve Him [with sacrifices; cf. Ezek 44:11] and to bless in His name until this day [Num 6:22-26].<sup>9</sup> Therefore, Levi does not have a portion or inheritance with his brothers [no land, but cities; Num 35:1-8]; the LORD is his inheritance, just as the LORD your God spoke to him [the Levites had perpetual work and received the tithes; Num 18:20-24].)<sup>10</sup> “I, moreover, stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights like the first time, and the LORD listened to me that time also; the LORD was not willing to destroy you.<sup>11</sup> “Then the LORD said to me, ‘Arise, proceed on your journey ahead of the people, that they may go in and possess the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.’

**Observations:**

In the previous chapter, Moses gave a history lesson to the second generation of Israelites, explaining how the nation came near to destruction because they had angered God by their rebellion and disobedience. But like other occasions, Moses had interceded for them, and God’s anger was averted. Moses then describes how God renewed the covenant with them, saying “At that time the LORD said to me, ‘Cut out for yourself two tablets of stone like the former ones, and come up to Me on the mountain, and make an ark of wood for yourself’” (Deut 10:1). God, being gracious, was willing to renew the relationship with His people. Commanding Moses

to cut out two tablets of stone implied God would rewrite the Ten Commandments on them as He'd done the first time.

God told Moses, "I will write on the tablets the words that were on the former tablets which you shattered, and you shall put them in the ark" (Deut 10:2). God, who had initiated the covenant at Mount Sinai, was willing to renew it. The ark made of acacia wood was the container where the covenant tablets were stored (Ex 25:16). Moses revealed himself as obedient to God's command, saying, "So I made an ark of acacia wood and cut out two tablets of stone like the former ones, and went up on the mountain with the two tablets in my hand" (Deut 10:3). It's likely this ark was a temporary container that would hold the two copies of the Ten Commandments. Later, Moses commissioned a more elaborate ark to be constructed by the expert craftsman Bezalel (Ex 37:1-9). The final ark was kept by the priests in the Holy of Holies and was significant, especially on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:11-14). It would seem Moses carried the tablets with him up the mountain, but left the ark with the priests.

Moses records that God carried out His word, saying, "He wrote on the tablets, like the former writing, the Ten Commandments which the LORD had spoken to you on the mountain from the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly; and the LORD gave them to me" (Deut 10:4). With the second copy of the Ten Commandments in hand, Moses states, "Then I turned and came down from the mountain and put the tablets in the ark which I had made; and there they are, as the LORD commanded me" (Deut 10:5). As Israel's leader, Moses portrays himself as obedient to the Lord, following His commands.

What follows in Deuteronomy 10:6-9 is parenthetical, as Moses presents the Levites as the custodians of the covenant tablets. Furthermore, current scholarship has not been able to accurately identify the places that are mentioned here; except perhaps Moserah, which is likely near Mount Hor, the place where Aaron died (Num 20:23-24; 33:38-39; Deut 32:50). Moses records, "Now the sons of Israel set out from Beeroth Bene-jaakan to Moserah. There Aaron died and there he was buried and Eleazar his son ministered as priest in his place. From there they set out to Gudgodah, and from Gudgodah to Jotbathah, a land of brooks of water" (Deut 10:6-7). Though the location of these places cannot be accurately identified, they nonetheless reveal the events as both historical and geographical, occurring in time and space.

Moses gives special attention to the tribe of Levi, saying, "At that time the LORD set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark of the covenant of the LORD, to stand before the LORD to serve Him and to bless in His name until this day" (Deut 10:8).

The Levites were blessed to serve as custodians of the covenant tablets that were kept inside the ark, which only they were permitted to carry. More so, the Levites were called to “stand before the Lord to serve Him”, which meant they were responsible for the sacrifices (Ezek 44:11). The Levitical priests were to mediate between God and the people.

Furthermore, Moses explained the Levites did not have a land inheritance, but something more; namely, God Himself would be their inheritance. Moses wrote, “Therefore, Levi does not have a portion or inheritance with his brothers; the LORD is his inheritance, just as the LORD your God spoke to him” (Deut 10:9). The Levites were not given land, but they were given cities where they could live (Num 35:1-8), and these cities were spread throughout the land of Canaan. Having the Lord as their inheritance meant they would have a perpetual place of service in Israel and would receive the tithes (Num 18:20-24).

Today, there is no specialized priesthood, and the Catholic Church—or any organization—is not justified in creating a priestly cast within the body of Christ. Presently, in the church age, every Christian, at the moment of salvation, positionally becomes a priest to God. Peter wrote of Christians, saying, “you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 2:5), and “you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Pet 2:9).<sup>1</sup> This is the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, who “has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father” (Rev 1:6), and “You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth” (Rev 5:10; cf. 20:6). Furthermore, we do not worship at a temple; rather, “we are the temple of the living God” (2 Cor 6:16; cf. 1 Cor 3:16-17). And we do not bring animal sacrifices, but “offer up spiritual sacrifices” to God (1 Pet 2:5). The basic functions of the Christian priesthood include:

1. The continual giving of the body for service to the Lord (Rom 12:1-2).
2. Confessing our sins directly to God (1 John 1:6-9).
3. Sharing the gospel with others (Rom 15:15-16).
4. Offering praise to God (Heb 13:15).

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum argues that the references in 1 Peter 2:5-9 refers narrowly to Jewish Christians, and there is merit to his argument. He also makes clear that all Christians, both Jews and Gentiles, are priests to God, and references Revelation 1:6; 5:10, and 20:6 as his prooftexts. For further investigation, read *Israelology*, pages 720-722.

5. Doing good works and sharing with others (Heb 13:16; cf. Phil 4:18).
6. Giving our lives for the benefit of others (Phil 2:17; cf. Phil 1:21-26; 2:3-4).
7. Walking in love (Eph 5:1-2; cf. 1 Pet 1:22).

The Christian becomes a priest at the moment of salvation; however, the practice of the priesthood begins when he/she surrenders their body as a “living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship” (Rom 12:1). Unlike the OT animal sacrifices which surrendered their lives once, the Christian life is a moment by moment, continual surrender to God. This spiritual service is performed by the believer “to our God” (Rev 5:10), for the benefit of others (Gal 6:10; Phil 2:3-4; Heb 13:16). Lastly, pastor-teachers are not a special class of priests, nor is tithing obligatory for Christians. However, the NT makes it clear that it is valid for “those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel” (1 Cor 9:14), and “The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches him” (Gal 6:6). In this way, believers support their pastors for the work they do. However, a pastor may refuse this support if he thinks it’s an impediment to ministry. When Paul ministered in Ephesus, he said, “I have coveted no one’s silver or gold or clothes. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my *own* needs and to the men who were with me” (Acts 20:33-34; cf. 1 Cor 9:18; 2 Cor 11:7; 1 Thess 2:9; 2 Thess 3:8).

In the last two verses of this pericope, Moses recapitulates his intercession for the nation and God’s turning from His anger and intent to destroy them because of their sin. Moses said, “I, moreover, stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights like the first time, and the LORD listened to me that time also; the LORD was not willing to destroy you” (Deut 10:10). Moses’ intercession is part of what kept God from destroying the nation when they sinned. With a renewed covenant in hand, God directed Moses and the nation to resume their journey onward to the land of Canaan. The Israelite’s relationship with God was restored, and now they could walk together, with God leading them into the promised land. Moses wrote, “Then the LORD said to me, ‘Arise, proceed on your journey ahead of the people, that they may go in and possess the land which I swore to their fathers to give them’” (Deut 10:11). Moses’ prayer touched the throne of God, and the people were blessed with the opportunity to continue onward.

God’s answer to Moses’ prayer encourages us to intercede for others. Prayer works, but only when it agrees with God’s plan. God is always sovereign and can, at times, say “no” to our requests. Remember, God had refused to answer Moses’ prayer concerning his desire to enter the Promised Land. Moses prayed to God, saying, “Let me, I pray, cross over and see the fair land that is beyond the Jordan, that good hill

country and Lebanon. But the LORD was angry with me on your account, and would not listen to me; and the LORD said to me, ‘Enough! Speak to Me no more of this matter’” (Deut. 3:25-26). God’s decision concerning Moses was final. Moses would not enter the Promised Land, for the Lord said, “Go up to the top of Pisgah and lift up your eyes to the west and north and south and east, and see it with your eyes, for you shall not cross over this Jordan” (Deut. 3:25-27; cf. Deut. 1:37; 31:1-2). God explained to Moses why He would not hear his prayer, saying, “because you broke faith with Me in the midst of the sons of Israel at the waters of Meribah-kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin, because you did not treat Me as holy in the midst of the sons of Israel” (Deut. 32:51). No amount of prayer would change God’s mind, so He told Moses to stop praying about it. Though God denied Moses’ request to enter the land of Canaan, He said yes to his request to spare the nation when they sinned.

Our personal walk with God is to be one of righteousness as we seek to learn His Word and live His will. Our walk not only impacts us on a personal level, but it also impacts the lives of those around us. Others are blessed when we live as we ought. And they are cursed when we do not. Our prayer life is a manifestation of our walk, for the more we walk with God the more we will come before His throne of grace in prayer, and the more others will be blessed.