

Blessings for Following the Lord

Deuteronomy 30

Deuteronomy 30:1-10 - *Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the Lord your God drives you, ² and you return to the Lord your God and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul, ³ that the Lord your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the Lord your God has scattered you. ⁴ If any of you are driven out to the farthest parts under heaven, from there the Lord your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you. ⁵ Then the Lord your God will bring you to the land that your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers. ⁶ And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live. ⁷ Also the Lord your God will put all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate you, who persecuted you. ⁸ And you will again obey the voice of the Lord and do all His commandments which I command you today. ⁹ The Lord your God will make you abound in all the work of your hand, in the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your land for good. For the Lord will again rejoice over you for good as He rejoiced over your fathers, ¹⁰ if you obey the voice of the Lord your God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this Book of the Law, and if you turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.”*

Background Notes

In our last Talk, we mentioned that Deuteronomy 29-30 likely constituted Moses' third sermon or address that Moses delivered to the children of Israel. It was given as they were camped on the plains of Moab, ready to cross the Jordan River to possess the land that God had given them. A question about chapters 29-30 is whether or not a new covenant was introduced (sometimes called the "Palestinian Covenant"), because of the words of Deuteronomy 29:1 - *"These are the words of the covenant which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which He made with them in Horeb."*

Or were chapters 29-30 simply a **renewal** of the Mosaic Covenant with the new generation? After the forty years in the wilderness, the older generation that had come out of Egypt had died, and the people of Israel were now a new generation. The Mosaic Covenant was made at Mount Horeb with the former generation. Was the Mosaic Covenant now being renewed with the new generation on the plains of Moab? We can't be sure. In any case, these two chapters emphasized that the nation of Israel would possess the Promised Land if they kept the covenant - but they would be sent out of the Land if they broke the covenant.

Chapter 30 contains predictions of good news and bad news. The bad news was that they would break the covenant, and thus they would be sent out of the Land. The good news was that God also revealed to Moses that after they were scattered as outcasts to the ends of the earth, the Jewish people would have a change of heart in the future and turn back to the Lord. They would not only be restored to the **Lord**, but they would be brought back to the **Land** as well.

Doctrinal Points

1. Some of the predictions of Deuteronomy 30 have been fulfilled in the past.

Deuteronomy 30:15-20 - *See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, ¹⁶ in that I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the Lord your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess. ¹⁷ But if your heart turns away so that you do not hear, and are drawn away, and worship other gods and serve them, ¹⁸ I announce to you today that you shall surely perish; you shall not prolong your days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to go in and possess.*

¹⁹ I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; ²⁰ that you may love the Lord your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them.

We know the rest of the story. The people of Israel did not obey the Lord. They did not choose the “way of life” (v19). Their hearts turned away from the Lord; they turned to foreign gods, and worshiped and served them. So they were driven out and banished from the Land (v1), and they were scattered among the nations around the world (v3). Some of the predictions of Deuteronomy 30 have been fulfilled in the past. In fact, the Jewish people today are scattered around the world - living proof of the accurate fulfillment of this prophecy! The amazing thing about this prophecy, especially when we compare Israel to so many of the ancient peoples that no longer exist, is that the Jewish people still exist as a distinct people group. They have not lost their identity, even though they have been scattered around the world. This fact makes possible the fulfillment of the predicted good news of Deuteronomy 30.

2. Some of the predictions of Deuteronomy 30 will be fulfilled in the future.

Again notice that this chapter is a **sure** prophecy of Israel’s future - not a “maybe” set of “circumstances.” Notice that the word used in verses 1-2 is not **“if”** - the word is **“when.”** *“Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the Lord your God drives you, ² and you return to the Lord your God and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul, that the LORD your God will bring you back*

from captivity and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the Lord your God has scattered you”(v1-3).

Notice what is promised for Israel in the future:

a. **The Jewish people would be brought back** from the ends of the earth to the Land that their fathers had possessed. Verses 3-5: “The Lord your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the Lord your God has scattered you. ⁴ If any of you are driven out to the farthest parts under heaven, from there the Lord your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you. ⁵ Then the Lord your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it.”

b. **The Jewish people would have a change of heart** and return to the Lord, and they would continue to be abundantly blessed if they continued to follow and obey the Lord (v6-10).

c. **The enemies of Israel would be judged.** Verse 7: “The Lord your God will put all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate you, who persecuted you.”

Now comes the big question. Have these predictions already been fulfilled in history? The answer is: they have been only “partially fulfilled.” The Jewish people did return from their captivity in Babylon, and God has judged certain of the enemies of Israel throughout history. But the Jewish people never returned to Israel *from the ends of the earth* until modern times, and they certainly have not yet returned to the Lord. They continue to reject their Messiah. And the enemies of Israel still exist - in fact, many enemies today want to annihilate Israel, and wipe the Jewish people off the face of the earth.

But the story isn't over yet! The fact that the Jewish people are going back to the Land that was given to their fathers is just the beginning of the blessings that will fully come in the future when the Lord returns.

In the meantime the enemies of Israel will continue, and in fact they will increase. But as a result, many of the Jewish people will turn back to the Lord, and they will be given a new heart in the future. What a great time that will be!

Some Christians “spiritualize” these prophecies, and say that they are being fulfilled in the Church today, but we do not believe this is the case. The Church does not replace Israel, and the Church is not the “New Israel.” And the Land that was possessed by the Jewish people - and is promised here to the Jewish people who return - is not some spiritualized “gospel land,” or “Church Land,” or Heaven! These verses were speaking of the **literal** Land of Israel, the Land that the children of Israel conquered and possessed soon after Moses gave this message. So some of the prophecies of Deuteronomy 30 still wait to be fulfilled in the future.

Practical Application

Thank the Lord that “getting saved” is not difficult!

“For this commandment which I command you today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off. ¹² It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ ¹³ Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ ¹⁴ But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it” (v11-14).

The point of these verses is that it was not that difficult for the children of Israel to do what God so greatly desired and requested. He was not asking them to do the impossible - like fly up to heaven (v12), or something costly and hard - like making a pilgrimage to a far country (v13). No, the Lord simply asked the people to love Him, to follow Him, and to be obedient to Him.

The prophet Micah captured the essence of God’s desire in Micah 6:8, *“And what does the LORD require of you? But to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.”*

The apostle Paul used these verses from Deuteronomy 30 and applied them to the gospel in Romans 10:6-8 - *“But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down from above) ⁷ or, “Who will descend into the abyss?” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). ⁸ But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart (that is, the word of faith which we preach).”*

The apostle Paul applied these verses that were given to Israel to make his point: It’s not all that difficult to follow God! He quoted these verses from Deuteronomy 30 in reference to the gospel. In other words, it’s not difficult to believe the good news of the gospel! Then Paul concluded this passage with the simple way to be saved in Romans 10:8-9, *“That is, the word of faith which we preach: ⁹ 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.”*

Paul’s point was that ***it’s not difficult to get saved!*** Aren’t you glad? Thank the Lord that getting saved is not difficult!