

Adult Bible Class

The Book of Deuteronomy - Chapters 30 - 32

Deuteronomy Chapter 30

A Call to Return to the Lord

Deuteronomy 30:1 "In the future, when you experience all these blessings and curses I have listed for you, and when you are living among the nations to which the Lord your God has exiled you, take to heart all these instructions. **2** If at that time you and your children return to the Lord your God, and if you obey with all your heart and all your soul all the commands I have given you today, **3** then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes. He will have mercy on you and gather you back from all the nations where he has scattered you. **4** Even though you are banished to the ends of the earth, the Lord your God will gather you from there and bring you back again. **5** The Lord your God will return you to the land that belonged to your ancestors, and you will possess that land again. Then he will make you even more prosperous and numerous than your ancestors!

In our last lesson, we studied Deuteronomy chapter 28 which is a very difficult chapter to read. After the wonderful blessings for obedience, we read of the terrible curses because of idol worship and disobedience. The chapter is actually a prophecy of what will happen to Israel because of their unbelief.

Israel's history swings like a pendulum from tremendous blessing during the days of David and Solomon to utter ruin and cursing at the end of the days of the kings when both the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah were defeated and taken away captive to another nation. The people of Israel lost their land because of their disobedience and unbelief. But then, the pendulum swung again, and God had mercy on them and brought them back to their land in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah.

However, Israel's history continued. Once again, God judged them for their disobedience about forty years after the time of Jesus Christ. Once again, they were defeated by a foreign power - this time, Rome. When the Jewish people were defeated and scattered among the nations of the earth, this was called the *Diaspora* (the dispersion of Israel among other nations). The first dispersion of the people of Judah lasted seventy years. But the second dispersion of the Jewish people - the *Diaspora* - lasted almost 2000 years. In 1948, Israel became a sovereign nation once again. It was one of the greatest miracles of rebirth of all time. Though they were "*banished to the ends of the earth*" for nearly two thousand years, God returned them to the land of their ancestors, and they now possess it once again.

One could argue that the return of the Jews to their land after nearly 2000 years is the greatest miracle of all time. Jews from nearly every nation on earth now live in the land of Israel.

6 "The Lord your God will change your heart and the hearts of all your descendants, so that you will love him with all your heart and soul and so you may live! **7** The Lord your God will inflict all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate and persecute you. **8** Then you will again obey the Lord and keep all his commands that I am giving you today.

Deuteronomy 30:9 "The Lord your God will then make you successful in everything you do. He will give you many children and numerous livestock, and he will cause your fields to produce abundant harvests, for the Lord will again delight in being good to you as he was to your ancestors. **10** The Lord your God will delight in you if you obey his voice and keep the commands and decrees written in this Book of Instruction, and if you turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and soul.

The modern nation of Israel has not yet experienced the revival spoken of above. Though the people of modern Israel have a respect for the Scriptures and for their own history, they have not had a national change of heart. That will be a work of the Spirit in the future - a part of the last days and the end times.

Ezekiel gave this prophecy to a future generation:

Ezekiel 36:24 (NKJV) For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. **25** Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. **26** I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. **27** I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do *them*. **28** Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God.

Romans 11:25 For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery. . .that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. **26** And so all Israel will be saved. . .

Israel has returned to her land, and soon she will experience a spiritual revival ordained by God.

The Choice of Life or Death

Deuteronomy 30:11 "This command I am giving you today is not too difficult for you, and it is not beyond your reach. **12** It is not kept in heaven, so distant that you must ask, 'Who will go up to heaven and bring it down so we can hear it and obey?' **13** It is not kept beyond the sea, so far away that you must ask, 'Who will cross the sea to bring it to us so we can hear it and obey?' **14** No, the message is very close at hand; it is on your lips and in your heart so that you can obey it.

15 "Now listen! Today I am giving you a choice between life and death, between prosperity and disaster. **16** For I command you this day to love the Lord your God and to keep his commands, decrees, and regulations by walking in his ways. If you do this, you will live and multiply, and the Lord your God will bless you and the land you are about to enter and occupy.

17 "But if your heart turns away and you refuse to listen, and if you are drawn away to serve and worship other gods, **18** then I warn you now that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live a long, good life in the land you are crossing the Jordan to occupy.

19 "Today I have given you the choice between life and death, between blessings and curses. Now I call on heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Oh, that you would choose life, so that you and your descendants might live! **20** You can make this choice by loving the Lord your God, obeying him, and committing yourself firmly to him. This is the key to your life. And if you love and obey the Lord, you will live long in the land the Lord swore to give your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."

God's command - His covenant - for ancient Israel was not out of reach. God asked them to love Him whole heartedly and obey His commandments. The difference between obedience and disobedience was the difference between life and death. It was the difference between blessings and curses.

This was an extremely important matter. God said, *“This is the key to your life.”* The way of God in the Old Testament could be summed up in three parts: the Law, the sacrifices, and the choice. Though they were expected to obey the Law, when they failed, they could utilize the sacrifices to restore right relationship with God. They must make the choice to love and serve the Lord.

Deuteronomy Chapter 31

Joshua Becomes Israel’s Leader

Deuteronomy 31:1 (NLT) When Moses had finished giving these instructions to all the people of Israel, **2** he said, “I am now 120 years old, and I am no longer able to lead you.

An elderly man may possess reasonable health and ability yet be past effectiveness. Everyone has their time - their generation - for living, doing and accomplishing. Such was the case with Moses. His calling was to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt and give them the Law of God, bringing them to the edge of the Promised Land. He had done exactly that. Joshua will be called by God to take Israel across Jordan and lead them into the Promised Land, overseeing them as they conquer it, judging the wicked nations there in the process.

Deuteronomy 34:7 says, *Moses was 120 years old when he died, yet his eyesight was clear, and he was as strong as ever.* It wasn’t because Moses was physically weak that he was being replaced. It was because it was time for the next generation to “have their day.” Moses’ day of service was about over. In addition, we can’t forget Moses’ sin at Meribah in Kadesh where he hit the rock instead of speaking to it. God told Moses and Aaron at that time that they would not enter into the Promised Land because of their rebellion in this incident.

The spiritual picture that is painted for us is this: the Law will never save us in and of itself. The Law was given to show us that we could never live up to it in our own strength. Paul said:

Galatians 3:24 (KJV) Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

25 But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

Galatians 2:20 (KJV) I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

21 I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

Let’s continue in Deuteronomy:

Deuteronomy 31:2 The Lord has told me [Moses], ‘You will not cross the Jordan River.’ **3** But the Lord your God himself will cross over ahead of you. He will destroy the nations living there, and you will take possession of their land. Joshua will lead you across the river, just as the Lord promised.

Deuteronomy 31:4 "The Lord will destroy the nations living in the land, just as he destroyed Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites. 5 The Lord will hand over to you the people who live there, and you must deal with them as I have commanded you. 6 So be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid and do not panic before them. For the Lord your God will personally go ahead of you. He will neither fail you nor abandon you."

7 Then Moses called for Joshua, and as all Israel watched, he said to him, "Be strong and courageous! For you will lead these people into the land that the Lord swore to their ancestors he would give them. You are the one who will divide it among them as their grants of land. 8 Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord will personally go ahead of you. He will be with you; he will neither fail you nor abandon you."

Just as Moses is a picture or type of the Law, Joshua is a picture or type of Jesus Christ. Joshua would do what Moses could not do - finish the job and lead his people into the Promised Land.

Joshua was to be strong and courageous. He could do this because God was with him and God was going before him! That is the foundation of true courage! Notice that while Joshua was going to lead the Israelites to conquer the peoples of the land, God said that *He* would do it. It was God's work, and God was using His people to accomplish it.

In the church today, Jesus Christ has conquered the enemy - sin and satan. He has commanded the church to go forth and conquer, winning souls for Him. The work is His, but He has commanded us to go forth and accomplish in His name.

Public Reading of the Book of Instruction

9 So Moses wrote this entire body of instruction in a book and gave it to the priests, who carried the Ark of the Lord's Covenant, and to the elders of Israel. 10 Then Moses gave them this command: "At the end of every seventh year, the Year of Release, during the Festival of Shelters, 11 you must read this Book of Instruction to all the people of Israel when they assemble before the Lord your God at the place he chooses. 12 Call them all together—men, women, children, and the foreigners living in your towns—so they may hear this Book of Instruction and learn to fear the Lord your God and carefully obey all the terms of these instructions. 13 Do this so that your children who have not known these instructions will hear them and will learn to fear the Lord your God. Do this as long as you live in the land you are crossing the Jordan to occupy."

Having the Word of God written down was a new thing! Abraham did not have it. Jacob did not have it. Joseph did not have it. But now, the great Law of God was written down so that it could be referenced and reviewed. Words that are transmitted orally can be changed (think of the children's game of "telephone" where a message is whispered from one to the other, and comes out totally different than originally spoken). With the advent of the written Law of God, God had established exactly what He expects of His people. Now the people had no excuse for not obeying God's Law.

Regular reading of the Word of God was put into the hands of the priests. Every seven years, after Israel had entered the Promised Land, they were to let the land rest. During this time of little labor, God wanted the priests to read the entire Law of God to the people - everyone - men, women, and children, and even the foreigners among them. The reason? So they would all learn to love and obey God.

Israel's Disobedience Predicted

Deuteronomy 31:14 Then the Lord said to Moses, "The time has come for you to die. Call Joshua and present yourselves at the Tabernacle, so that I may commission him there." So Moses and Joshua went and presented themselves at the Tabernacle. **15** And the Lord appeared to them in a pillar of cloud that stood at the entrance to the sacred tent.

16 The Lord said to Moses, "You are about to die and join your ancestors.

Very little is said in the Old Testament about heaven or what happens to a person after they die. Here, a tiny bit of information is given - Moses will join his ancestors who lived before him. The KJV says, *Thou shalt sleep with thy fathers.*

After you are gone, these people will begin to worship foreign gods, the gods of the land where they are going. They will abandon me and break my covenant that I have made with them. **17** Then my anger will blaze forth against them. I will abandon them, hiding my face from them, and they will be devoured. Terrible trouble will come down on them, and on that day they will say, 'These disasters have come down on us because God is no longer among us!' **18** At that time I will hide my face from them on account of all the evil they commit by worshiping other gods.

Was this a foregone conclusion? Did this prophecy mean that there was no hope for Israel and no future?

When God sent Jonah to Nineveh with the prophetic warning that He was about to destroy the city for its wickedness (*Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown*, Jonah 3:4), the people repented, and God did not destroy them.

If Israel had repented of their idol worship and rebellion against God, their history would have been different. Instead, this prophecy came true about 700 years later.

19 "So write down the words of this song, and teach it to the people of Israel. Help them learn it, so it may serve as a witness for me against them. **20** For I will bring them into the land I swore to give their ancestors—a land flowing with milk and honey. There they will become prosperous, eat all the food they want, and become fat. But they will begin to worship other gods; they will despise me and break my covenant. **21** And when great disasters come down on them, this song will stand as evidence against them, for it will never be forgotten by their descendants. I know the intentions of these people, even now before they have entered the land I swore to give them."

22 So that very day Moses wrote down the words of the song and taught it to the Israelites.

23 Then the Lord commissioned Joshua son of Nun with these words: "Be strong and courageous, for you must bring the people of Israel into the land I swore to give them. I will be with you."

24 When Moses had finished writing this entire body of instruction in a book, **25** he gave this command to the Levites who carried the Ark of the Lord's Covenant: **26** "Take this Book of Instruction and place it beside the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord your God, so it may remain there as a witness against the people of Israel. **27** For I know how rebellious and stubborn you are. Even now, while I am still alive and am here with you, you have rebelled against the Lord. How much more rebellious will you be after my death!

28 "Now summon all the elders and officials of your tribes, so that I can speak to them directly and call heaven and earth to witness against them. **29** I know that after my death you will become utterly corrupt and will turn from the way I have commanded you to follow. In the days to come, disaster will come down on you, for you will do what is evil in the Lord's sight, making him very angry with your actions."

No one - not even Moses - is irreplaceable. God was preparing Joshua to lead the people after Moses' death. Joshua must be "*strong and courageous*," for the task ahead was great, but God would go before and work with them.

The people of Israel will "play the harlot" with idol gods. Therefore, God instructed Moses to write a song. Moses wrote the song and taught it to the children of Israel. Words that are set to music are easier to remember.

Moses finished the first five books of the Old Testament - Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The Ten Commandments (the stone tablets) were placed inside the ark of the covenant, and the whole book of the law (all five books) was placed beside the ark of the covenant. The law would stand as a witness to the future rebellion of Israel.

The next chapter gives us the song that Moses wrote. In this song, Moses sets before the Israelites their whole history to the end of the days. We read of Israel's present condition and its future fate.

Deuteronomy Chapter 32

Deuteronomy 32:1 (NLT) "Listen, O heavens, and I will speak!

Hear, O earth, the words that I say!

2 Let my teaching fall on you like rain;

let my speech settle like dew.

Let my words fall like rain on tender grass,

like gentle showers on young plants.

3 I will proclaim the name of the Lord;

how glorious is our God!

This song (or Psalm) of Moses can be divided into six parts. The first three verses comprise the first part which emphasizes the importance of these teachings. Just as the rain comes from heaven, God's doctrine or teaching comes from heaven as well. When a child of God is full of desire for the things of God, the teaching and preaching of God's Word is "soaked up" like the rain is soaked up by thirsty plants.

4 He is the Rock; his deeds are perfect.

Everything he does is just and fair.

He is a faithful God who does no wrong;

how just and upright he is!

5 "But they have acted corruptly toward him;

when they act so perversely,

are they really his children?

They are a deceitful and twisted generation.

6 Is this the way you repay the Lord,

you foolish and senseless people?

Isn't he your Father who created you?

Has he not made you and established you?

The second part of the song compares the faithfulness of God to the ingratitude of Israel. God is called "the Rock," meaning that He is an unchangeable and faithful stronghold or refuge. Then we read the contrast between God and His

people. The Israelites are “corrupt, perverse, deceitful, twisted, foolish, and senseless.” Instead of acting like children of their gracious Father, they have behaved shamefully and without gratitude.

Deuteronomy 32:7 Remember the days of long ago;
think about the generations past.

Ask your father, and he will inform you.

Inquire of your elders, and they will tell you.

8 When the Most High assigned lands to the nations,
when he divided up the human race,
he established the boundaries of the peoples
according to the number in his heavenly court.

9 “For the people of Israel belong to the Lord;
Jacob is his special possession.

10 He found them in a desert land,
in an empty, howling wasteland.
He surrounded them and watched over them;
he guarded them as he would guard his own eyes.

11 Like an eagle that rouses her chicks
and hovers over her young,
so he spread his wings to take them up
and carried them safely on his pinions.

12 The Lord alone guided them;
they followed no foreign gods.

13 He let them ride over the highlands
and feast on the crops of the fields.
He nourished them with honey from the rock
and olive oil from the stony ground.

14 He fed them yogurt from the herd
and milk from the flock,
together with the fat of lambs.
He gave them choice rams from Bashan, and goats,
together with the choicest wheat.

You drank the finest wine,
made from the juice of grapes.

15 “But Israel soon became fat and unruly;
the people grew heavy, plump, and stuffed!
Then they abandoned the God who had made them;
they made light of the Rock of their salvation.

16 They stirred up his jealousy by worshiping foreign gods;
they provoked his fury with detestable deeds.

17 They offered sacrifices to demons, which are not God,
to gods they had not known before,
to new gods only recently arrived,
to gods their ancestors had never feared.

18 You neglected the Rock who had fathered you;
you forgot the God who had given you birth.

This third part of the song goes back in time to remind Israel that God favored them when He established the human race and divided the nations after Babel. God cared for Israel like an eagle cares for its young. He was bringing them to a land of “milk and honey” and many other provisions and blessings. But even before

Israel arrived at the Promised Land, they abandoned their God and preferred gods of the Canaanites - gods that are called “demons.”

Deuteronomy 32:19 “The Lord saw this and drew back,
provoked to anger by his own sons and daughters.

20 He said, ‘I will abandon them;
then see what becomes of them.

For they are a twisted generation,
children without integrity.

21 They have roused my jealousy by worshiping things that are not God;
they have provoked my anger with their useless idols.

Now I will rouse their jealousy through people who are not even a people;
I will provoke their anger through the foolish Gentiles.

The fourth part of the song states that because of Israel’s rejection and rebellion, God will draw back and abandon them for a time. God became jealous of Israel because they went after other gods. Therefore, God will provoke the jealousy of Israel when He does a great work among the Gentiles. We can see how this song spans centuries of time - even speaking of the New Testament age.

The Apostle Paul, in speaking about the rebellion of Israel and the rejection of Christ by much of the Jewish people, quoted verse 21 in Romans 10:19. God used the Gentiles in the New Testament era to “provoke Israel to jealousy,” or make them mad that people who are not supposed to know a thing about God and His ways (the Gentiles) are leading the way to salvation and spirituality!

22 For my anger blazes forth like fire
and burns to the depths of the grave. [NKJV: ...burn to the lowest hell]

It devours the earth and all its crops
and ignites the foundations of the mountains.

23 I will heap disasters upon them
and shoot them down with my arrows.

The fourth part continues with the above two verses - and the seriousness of God’s anger.

24 I will weaken them with famine,
burning fever, and deadly disease.

I will send the fangs of wild beasts
and poisonous snakes that glide in the dust.

25 Outside, the sword will bring death,
and inside, terror will strike

both young men and young women,
both infants and the aged.

26 I would have annihilated them,
wiping out even the memory of them.

27 But I feared the taunt of Israel’s enemy,
who might misunderstand and say,

“Our own power has triumphed!
The Lord had nothing to do with this!”

28 “But Israel is a senseless nation;
the people are foolish, without understanding.

29 Oh, that they were wise and could understand this!
Oh, that they might know their fate!

Deuteronomy 32:30 How could one person chase a thousand of them,
and two people put ten thousand to flight,
unless their Rock had sold them,
unless the Lord had given them up?

31 But the rock of our enemies is not like our Rock,
as even they recognize.

32 Their vine grows from the vine of Sodom,
from the vineyards of Gomorrah.

Their grapes are poison,
and their clusters are bitter.

33 Their wine is the venom of serpents,
the deadly poison of cobras.

34 "The Lord says, 'Am I not storing up these things,
sealing them away in my treasury?

In this fifth part of the song, many punishments are threatened - famine, disease, wild beasts, the sword, terror - and the list goes on. God says that He would have completely destroyed them except for the sake of His own name among other nations.

If only Israel would act like they had some sense! In this song, God is telling them their fate if they don't change. God is their faithful Rock. He is not like the rocks (the false gods) of the heathen peoples.

God has a treasury. Vengeance is sure for God's enemies. Israel should not make herself the enemy of God.

35 I will take revenge; I will pay them back.

In due time their feet will slip.

Their day of disaster will arrive,
and their destiny will overtake them.'

36 "Indeed, the Lord will give justice to his people,
and he will change his mind about his servants,
when he sees their strength is gone
and no one is left, slave or free.

37 Then he will ask, 'Where are their gods,
the rocks they fled to for refuge?

38 Where now are those gods,
who ate the fat of their sacrifices
and drank the wine of their offerings?

Let those gods arise and help you!
Let them provide you with shelter!

39 Look now; I myself am he!

There is no other god but me!

I am the one who kills and gives life;

I am the one who wounds and heals;

no one can be rescued from my powerful hand!

40 Now I raise my hand to heaven

and declare, "As surely as I live,

41 when I sharpen my flashing sword
and begin to carry out justice,

I will take revenge on my enemies
and repay those who reject me.

42 I will make my arrows drunk with blood,
and my sword will devour flesh—

the blood of the slaughtered and the captives,
and the heads of the enemy leaders.”

Deuteronomy 32:43 “Rejoice with him, you heavens,
and let all of God’s angels worship him.

Rejoice with his people, you Gentiles,
and let all the angels be strengthened in him.

For he will avenge the blood of his children;
he will take revenge against his enemies.

He will repay those who hate him

and cleanse his people’s land.” [NKJV: He will provide atonement for His land *and* His people.]

In the sixth and final part of the song, the Lord would show His people the utter worthlessness of their idols and bring them to acknowledge Him as the one and only true God. God says, “*I raise my hand to heaven,*” meaning that He swears an oath by Himself that He will take vengeance on His enemies and those that reject Him.

Verse 43 speaks of the Gentiles rejoicing with God’s people. God will provide the atonement and the land will be cleansed.

44 So Moses came with Joshua son of Nun and recited all the words of this song to the people.

45 When Moses had finished reciting all these words to the people of Israel, **46** he added: “Take to heart all the words of warning I have given you today. Pass them on as a command to your children so they will obey every word of these instructions. **47** These instructions are not empty words—they are your life! By obeying them you will enjoy a long life in the land you will occupy when you cross the Jordan River.”

Remember that the book of Deuteronomy gives the people “a choice.” They could choose life or a curse. Moses says above that these instructions “*are your life.*”

Moses’ Death Foretold

48 That same day the Lord said to Moses, **49** “Go to Moab, to the mountains east of the river, and climb Mount Nebo, which is across from Jericho. Look out across the land of Canaan, the land I am giving to the people of Israel as their own special possession. **50** Then you will die there on the mountain. You will join your ancestors, just as Aaron, your brother, died on Mount Hor and joined his ancestors. **51** For both of you betrayed me with the Israelites at the waters of Meribah at Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin. You failed to demonstrate my holiness to the people of Israel there. **52** So you will see the land from a distance, but you may not enter the land I am giving to the people of Israel.”