

Adult Bible Class

The Book of Deuteronomy - Chapters 27 - 29

Deuteronomy Chapter 27

The Book of Deuteronomy consists of four parts. The first part is an introduction with a review of Israel's recent past, including their rebellion at Kadesh which resulted in forty years of wilderness wandering. The second part (which is most of the book) is a review of the Ten Commandments, the ceremonial law, the civil law, criminal law, and social law of the new nation of Israel.

From chapter 27 to 30, we come to the third part of the book where blessings and curses are given, and the covenant is renewed. After this, the fourth part includes the final words of Moses and his death.

The Altar on Mount Ebal

Deuteronomy 27:1 (NLT) Then Moses and the leaders of Israel gave this charge to the people: "Obey all these commands that I am giving you today. **2** When you cross the Jordan River and enter the land the Lord your God is giving you, set up some large stones and coat them with plaster. **3** Write this whole body of instruction on them when you cross the river to enter the land the Lord your God is giving you—a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the Lord, the God of your ancestors, promised you. **4** When you cross the Jordan, set up these stones at Mount Ebal and coat them with plaster, as I am commanding you today.

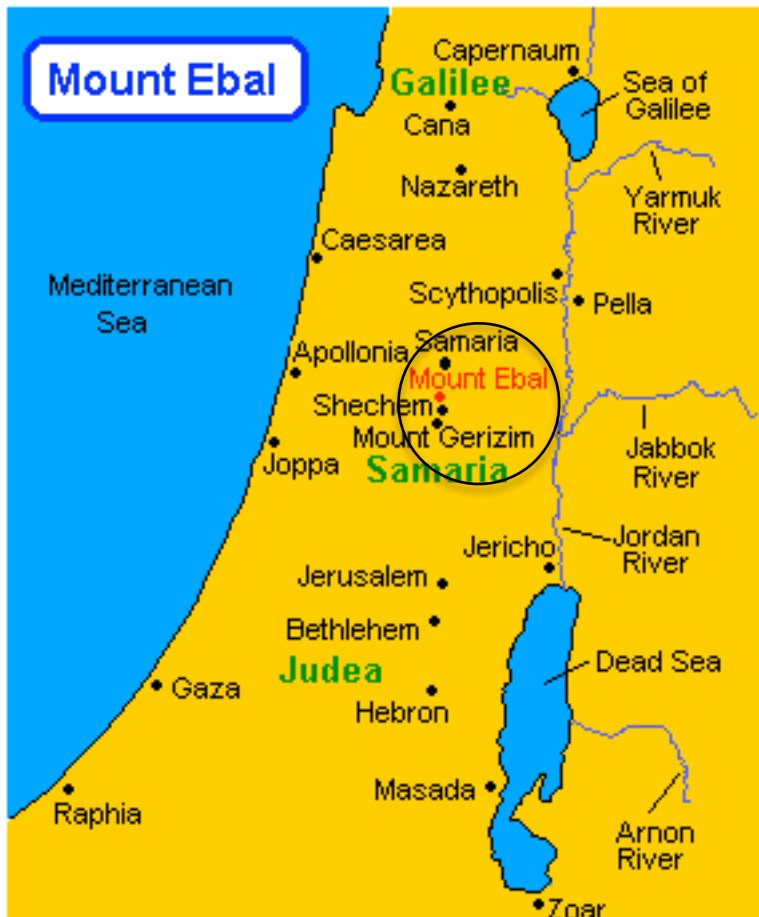
God commanded His people to set up stones at Mt. Ebal (which is in the center of the land of Canaan) right after they entered into the land and began conquering it. They were to cover these stones with white plaster so they could write the entire Law of Moses on the stones. The Jews say there are some 613 laws. It would not have been too difficult to write all of these laws on the plastered stones for all to see. Writing laws on stone pillars was a common thing to do in that day and time.

5 "Then build an altar there to the Lord your God, using natural, uncut stones. You must not shape the stones with an iron tool. **6** Build the altar of uncut stones, and use it to offer burnt offerings to the Lord your God. **7** Also sacrifice peace offerings on it, and celebrate by feasting there before the Lord your God. **8** You must clearly write all these instructions on the stones coated with plaster."

9 Then Moses and the Levitical priests addressed all Israel as follows: "O Israel, be quiet and listen! Today you have become the people of the Lord your God. **10** So you must obey the Lord your God by keeping all these commands and decrees that I am giving you today."

The conquering Israelites were to set up the stones at Mt. Ebal which is across from Mt. Gerizim. They were also to build an altar for burnt offerings and peace offerings. Ancient Hebrew altars were always made of natural, uncut stones. This pictured that man was not to desecrate or decorate the place of sacrifice. Sinful man would only have polluted it.

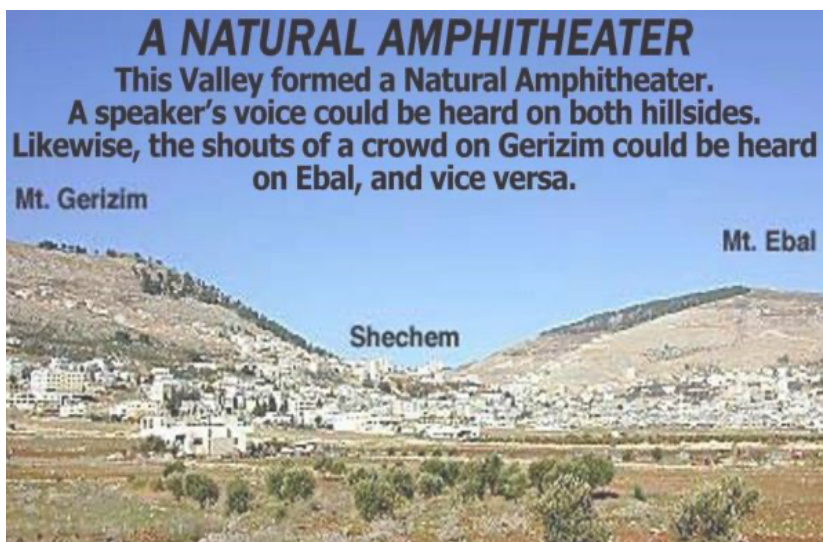
Remember - the burnt offering pictures consecration and total devotion to God. The peace offering pictures fellowship with God and man.



Curses from Mount Ebal

Deuteronomy 27:11 That same day Moses also gave this charge to the people: **12** "When you cross the Jordan River, the tribes of Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin must stand on Mount Gerizim to proclaim a blessing over the people. **13** And the tribes of Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali must stand on Mount Ebal to proclaim a curse."

The tribes were to be divided - six on the mount of cursing and six on the mount of blessing. The people of Israel were identified with the land that God gave them. When Israel obeyed God, they and their land were blessed. After they crossed Jordan River to possess the land, they were going to shout to each other across this valley, and they were going to proclaim to the land itself these blessings (and curses) that tied them to their land.



It has been tested whether or not one could hear the shouts from one side to the other. The shouts *can* be heard - and remember, there was a huge crowd of people.

The Law testifies to man's sin. But the altar of sacrifice in the middle testifies to the grace of God and atonement.

Paul wrote:

Galatians 3:10 But those who depend on the law to make them right with God are under his curse, for the

Scriptures say, "Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the commands that are written in God's Book of the Law." **11** So it is clear that no one can be made right with God by trying to keep the law. For the Scriptures say, "It is through faith that a righteous person has life." **12** This way of faith is very different from the way of law, which says, "It is through obeying the law that a person has life."

13 But Christ has rescued us from the curse pronounced by the law. When he was hung on the cross, he took upon himself the curse for our wrongdoing . . .

Deuteronomy 27:14 "Then the Levites will shout to all the people of Israel:

15 'Cursed is anyone who carves or casts an idol and secretly sets it up. These idols, the work of craftsmen, are detestable to the Lord.'

And all the people will reply, 'Amen.'

16 'Cursed is anyone who dishonors father or mother.'

And all the people will reply, 'Amen.'

17 'Cursed is anyone who steals property from a neighbor by moving a boundary marker.'

And all the people will reply, 'Amen.'

18 'Cursed is anyone who leads a blind person astray on the road.'

And all the people will reply, 'Amen.'

19 'Cursed is anyone who denies justice to foreigners, orphans, or widows.'

And all the people will reply, 'Amen.'

Verses 20 to 23 proclaim a curse on incest and other forbidden sexual practices.

. . . **24** 'Cursed is anyone who attacks a neighbor in secret.'

And all the people will reply, 'Amen.'

25 'Cursed is anyone who accepts payment to kill an innocent person.'

And all the people will reply, 'Amen.'

26 'Cursed is anyone who does not affirm and obey the terms of these instructions.'

And all the people will reply, 'Amen.'

We can read in the book of Joshua where Joshua obeyed this command of Moses after conquering Jericho and Ai:

Joshua Renews the Covenant

Joshua 8:30 (NKJV) Now Joshua built an altar to the Lord God of Israel in Mount Ebal, **31** as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the Book of the Law of Moses: "an altar of whole stones over which no man has wielded an iron tool." And they offered on it burnt offerings to the Lord, and sacrificed peace offerings. **32** And there, in the presence of the children of Israel, he wrote on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written. **33** Then all Israel, with their elders and officers and judges, stood on either side of the ark before the priests, the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, the stranger as well as he who was born among them. Half of them were in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded before, that they should bless the people of Israel. **34** And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and the cursings, according to all that is written in the Book of the Law. **35** There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded which Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel, with the women, the little ones, and the strangers who were living among them.

Deuteronomy Chapter 28

This chapter proclaims the national blessings and curses that are promised to Israel, considering their obedience to God and His laws. The chapter dwells mostly on the curses, and as we read we will see that it is prophetic of Israel's future.

Paul wrote about Israel: *They are the people of Israel, chosen to be God's adopted children. God revealed his glory to them. He made covenants with them and gave them his law. He gave them the privilege of worshiping him and receiving his wonderful promises* (Romans 9:4). Though Israel was blessed to be God's chosen people (and a light to the world), they did not live up to their privilege and responsibility.

Some people say that this is the most awful chapter in the entire Bible. While the blessings are great, the curses are almost more than a person can imagine. Yet, everyone of these curses came to Israel as a nation. We can read about their fulfillment in later books of the Bible and in history.

Blessings for Obedience

Deuteronomy 28:1 (NLT) "If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully keep all his commands that I am giving you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the world. 2 You will experience all these blessings if you obey the Lord your God:

3 Your towns and your fields
will be blessed.

4 Your children and your crops
will be blessed.

The offspring of your herds and flocks
will be blessed.

5 Your fruit baskets and breadboards
will be blessed.

6 Wherever you go and whatever you do,
you will be blessed.

7 "The Lord will conquer your enemies when they attack you. They will attack you from one direction, but they will scatter from you in seven!

8 "The Lord will guarantee a blessing on everything you do and will fill your storehouses with grain. The Lord your God will bless you in the land he is giving you.

9 "If you obey the commands of the Lord your God and walk in his ways, the Lord will establish you as his holy people as he swore he would do. **10** Then all the nations of the world will see that you are a people claimed by the Lord, and they will stand in awe of you.

11 "The Lord will give you prosperity in the land he swore to your ancestors to give you, blessing you with many children, numerous livestock, and abundant crops. **12** The Lord will send rain at the proper time from his rich treasury in the heavens and will bless all the work you do. You will lend to many nations, but you will never need to borrow from them. **13** If you listen to these commands of the Lord your God that I am giving you today, and if you carefully obey them, the Lord will make you the head and not the tail, and you will always be on top and never at the bottom. **14** You must not turn away from any of the commands I am giving you today, nor follow after other gods and worship them.

Curses for Disobedience

Deuteronomy 28:15 "But if you refuse to listen to the Lord your God and do not obey all the commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come and overwhelm you:

16 Your towns and your fields
will be cursed.

17 Your fruit baskets and breadboards
will be cursed.

18 Your children and your crops
will be cursed.

The offspring of your herds and flocks
will be cursed.

19 Wherever you go and whatever you do,
you will be cursed.

20 "The Lord himself will send on you curses, confusion, and frustration in everything you do, until at last you are completely destroyed for doing evil and abandoning me. **21** The Lord will afflict you with diseases until none of you are left in the land you are about to enter and occupy. **22** The Lord will strike you with wasting diseases, fever, and inflammation, with scorching heat and drought, and with blight and mildew. These disasters will pursue you until you die. **23** The skies above will be as unyielding as bronze, and the earth beneath will be as hard as iron. **24** The Lord will change the rain that falls on your land into powder, and dust will pour down from the sky until you are destroyed.

25 "The Lord will cause you to be defeated by your enemies. You will attack your enemies from one direction, but you will scatter from them in seven! You will be an object of horror to all the kingdoms of the earth. **26** Your corpses will be food for all the scavenging birds and wild animals, and no one will be there to chase them away.

27 "The Lord will afflict you with the boils of Egypt and with tumors, scurvy, and the itch, from which you cannot be cured. **28** The Lord will strike you with madness, blindness, and panic. **29** You will grope around in broad daylight like a blind person groping in the darkness, but you will not find your way. You will be oppressed and robbed continually, and no one will come to save you.

30 "You will be engaged to a woman, but another man will sleep with her. You will build a house, but someone else will live in it. You will plant a vineyard, but you will never enjoy its fruit. **31** Your ox will be butchered before your eyes, but you will not eat a single bite of the meat. Your donkey will be taken from you, never to be returned. Your sheep and goats will be given to your enemies, and no one will be there to help you. **32** You will watch as your sons and daughters are taken away as slaves. Your heart will break for them, but you won't be able to help them. **33** A foreign nation you have never heard about will eat the crops you worked so hard to grow. You will suffer under constant oppression and harsh treatment. **34** You will go mad because of all the tragedy you see around you. **35** The Lord will cover your knees and legs with incurable boils. In fact, you will be covered from head to foot.

36 "The Lord will exile you and your king to a nation unknown to you and your ancestors. There in exile you will worship gods of wood and stone! **37** You will become an object of horror, ridicule, and mockery among all the nations to which the Lord sends you.

38 "You will plant much but harvest little, for locusts will eat your crops. **39** You will plant vineyards and care for them, but you will not drink the wine or eat the grapes, for worms will destroy the vines. **40** You will grow olive trees throughout your land, but you will never use the olive oil, for the fruit will drop before it ripens. **41** You will have sons and daughters, but you will lose them, for they will be led away into captivity. **42** Swarms of insects will destroy your trees and crops.

43 "The foreigners living among you will become stronger and stronger, while you become weaker and weaker. **44** They will lend money to you, but you will not lend to them. They will be the head, and you will be the tail!

Deuteronomy 28:45 "If you refuse to listen to the Lord your God and to obey the commands and decrees he has given you, all these curses will pursue and overtake you until you are destroyed. **46** These horrors will serve as a sign and warning among you and your descendants forever. **47** If you do not serve the Lord your God with joy and enthusiasm for the abundant benefits you have received, **48** you will serve your enemies whom the Lord will send against you. You will be left hungry, thirsty, naked, and lacking in everything. The Lord will put an iron yoke on your neck, oppressing you harshly until he has destroyed you.

49 "The Lord will bring a distant nation against you from the end of the earth, and it will swoop down on you like a vulture [eagle]. It is a nation whose language you do not understand, **50** a fierce and heartless nation that shows no respect for the old and no pity for the young. **51** Its armies will devour your livestock and crops, and you will be destroyed. They will leave you no grain, new wine, olive oil, calves, or lambs, and you will starve to death. **52** They will attack your cities until all the fortified walls in your land—the walls you trusted to protect you—are knocked down. They will attack all the towns in the land the Lord your God has given you.

53 "The siege and terrible distress of the enemy's attack will be so severe that you will eat the flesh of your own sons and daughters, whom the Lord your God has given you. **54** The most tenderhearted man among you will have no compassion for his own brother, his beloved wife, and his surviving children. **55** He will refuse to share with them the flesh he is devouring—the flesh of one of his own children—because he has nothing else to eat during the siege and terrible distress that your enemy will inflict on all your towns. **56** The most tender and delicate woman among you—so delicate she would not so much as touch the ground with her foot—will be selfish toward the husband she loves and toward her own son or daughter. **57** She will hide from them the afterbirth and the new baby she has borne, so that she herself can secretly eat them. She will have nothing else to eat during the siege and terrible distress that your enemy will inflict on all your towns.

58 "If you refuse to obey all the words of instruction that are written in this book, and if you do not fear the glorious and awesome name of the Lord your God, **59** then the Lord will overwhelm you and your children with indescribable plagues. These plagues will be intense and without relief, making you miserable and unbearably sick. **60** He will afflict you with all the diseases of Egypt that you feared so much, and you will have no relief. **61** The Lord will afflict you with every sickness and plague there is, even those not mentioned in this Book of Instruction, until you are destroyed. **62** Though you become as numerous as the stars in the sky, few of you will be left because you would not listen to the Lord your God.

63 "Just as the Lord has found great pleasure in causing you to prosper and multiply, the Lord will find pleasure in destroying you. You will be torn from the land you are about to enter and occupy. **64** For the Lord will scatter you among all the nations from one end of the earth to the other. There you will worship foreign gods that neither you nor your ancestors have known, gods made of wood and stone! **65** There among those nations you will find no peace or place to rest. And the Lord will cause your heart to tremble, your eyesight to fail, and your soul to despair. **66** Your life will constantly hang in the balance. You will live night and day in fear, unsure if you will survive. **67** In the morning you will say, 'If only it were night!' And in the evening you will say, 'If only it were morning!' For you will be terrified by the awful horrors you see around you. **68** Then the Lord will send you back to Egypt in ships, to a destination I promised you would never see again. There you will offer to sell yourselves to your enemies as slaves, but no one will buy you."

The blessings and curses above are promised to the nation of Israel, not to individuals. What Israel experienced nationally is a lesson to us individually. From the blessings, we learn that a man's destiny is placed in his own hands in that man has a choice. We reap what we sow. We also learn that our responsibility is to believe and obey, and it is God's responsibility to provide. Though we live in the age of grace, grace never gives in to lawlessness. Grace brings us to a right relationship with God through God's plan of salvation; and through the power of the Holy Spirit, we can please God. The blessings of God are peace with God, a clear

conscience, enjoyment of the gifts that God has given, satisfaction with what God has given, and faith that *“all things work together for the good”* to them that love the Lord.

From the curses we learn that God takes disobedience and sin very seriously, and there is a consequence for sin. God’s love and care is certainly seen in the blessings. But even in the curses, God’s ways and His holiness are protected. As was previously stated, what Israel experienced in the natural is a spiritual lesson to New Testament believers. We can certainly see that there is a punishment for rejecting God and His law. For Israel, it was national rejection and suffering. For us, it is the prospect of eternal separation from God.

One writer said, “Prosperity is the blessing of the Old Testament; adversity is the blessing of the New, which carrieth the greater benediction, and the clearer revelation of God’s favour.” In other words, Christians will experience persecution and suffering - Jesus warned it, and the apostles wrote that it would come. But it is persecution and suffering that shapes and molds the Christian to be what he needs to be for God. In the New Testament we are taught that not only should we expect it, but we should rejoice over it because it works for our good.

John 16:33 (NLT) I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.

2 Timothy 3:12 Yes, and everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

1 Peter 2:19 For God is pleased when, conscious of his will, you patiently endure unjust treatment.
20 Of course, you get no credit for being patient if you are beaten for doing wrong. But if you suffer for doing good and endure it patiently, God is pleased with you.

21 For God called you to do good, even if it means suffering, just as Christ suffered for you. He is your example, and you must follow in his steps.

Acts 5:41 The apostles left the high council rejoicing that God had counted them worthy to suffer disgrace for the name of Jesus.

Romans 8:18 Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later.

2 Corinthians 4:17 For our present troubles are small and won’t last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever!

Deuteronomy Chapter 29

Deuteronomy 29:1 (NLT) These are the terms of the covenant the Lord commanded Moses to make with the Israelites while they were in the land of Moab, in addition to the covenant he had made with them at Mount Sinai.

About forty years previously, Israel made a covenant with God at Mount Sinai (KJV says “Mount Horeb” - they are the same place). Exodus 24:7-8 says, *Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said,*

“All that the Lord has said we will do, and be obedient.” And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, “This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you according to all these words.”

All of the people age twenty and older who made that covenant with God at Mount Sinai had died in the wilderness. They had been a generation of unbelief and disobedience (Kadesh Barnea and Baal Peor bring to mind their failings). Hopefully, those under twenty and those who were born in the wilderness - the new generation that was now assembled in the land of Moab across the Jordan River from Canaan - would be a people of faith and obedience. God wanted to make a covenant with this new generation.

Moses Reviews the Covenant

Deuteronomy 29:2 Moses summoned all the Israelites and said to them, “You have seen with your own eyes everything the Lord did in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to his whole country— **3** all the great tests of strength, the miraculous signs, and the amazing wonders. **4** But to this day the Lord has not given you minds that understand, nor eyes that see, nor ears that hear!

Back in Egypt, the people of Israel were eyewitnesses to the Ten Plagues that God brought upon the Egyptians. They saw the death of the firstborn of the Egyptians, but Israel’s firstborn were spared through the blood of the lamb. They witnessed the parting of the Red Sea and how the waters destroyed their enemies. In the wilderness, they ate manna provided daily by the hand of the Lord. In the desert they drank water that God had provided. Yet - in spite of witnessing the miraculous works of God - they failed at believing and obeying God.

5 For forty years I led you through the wilderness, yet your clothes and sandals did not wear out. **6** You ate no bread and drank no wine or other alcoholic drink, but he provided for you so you would know that he is the Lord your God.

7 “When we came here, King Sihon of Heshbon and King Og of Bashan came out to fight against us, but we defeated them. **8** We took their land and gave it to the tribes of Reuben and Gad and to the half-tribe of Manasseh as their grant of land.

In the desert where there are no resources, God provided their daily needs. When enemies attacked, God gave them victory.

9 “Therefore, obey the terms of this covenant so that you will prosper in everything you do. **10** All of you—tribal leaders, elders, officers, all the men of Israel—are standing today in the presence of the Lord your God. **11** Your little ones and your wives are with you, as well as the foreigners living among you who chop your wood and carry your water. **12** You are standing here today to enter into the covenant of the Lord your God. The Lord is making this covenant, including the curses. **13** By entering into the covenant today, he will establish you as his people and confirm that he is your God, just as he promised you and as he swore to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

14 “But you are not the only ones with whom I am making this covenant with its curses. **15** I am making this covenant both with you who stand here today in the presence of the Lord our God, and also with the future generations who are not standing here today.

God made a covenant with all the people that day (leaders, men, women, children, servants, etc.). But this covenant was far reaching - even to generations to come.

Deuteronomy 29:16 "You remember how we lived in the land of Egypt and how we traveled through the lands of enemy nations as we left. **17** You have seen their detestable practices and their idols made of wood, stone, silver, and gold. **18** I am making this covenant with you so that no one among you—no man, woman, clan, or tribe—will turn away from the Lord our God to worship these gods of other nations, and so that no root among you bears bitter and poisonous fruit.

19 "Those who hear the warnings of this curse should not congratulate themselves, thinking, 'I am safe, even though I am following the desires of my own stubborn heart.' This would lead to utter ruin!

20 The Lord will never pardon such people. Instead his anger and jealousy will burn against them. All the curses written in this book will come down on them, and the Lord will erase their names from under heaven. **21** The Lord will separate them from all the tribes of Israel, to pour out on them all the curses of the covenant recorded in this Book of Instruction.

God warns those who worship idol gods that though they may experience a temporary "peace," judgment is coming. The curses of the law will eventually come to those who forsake the Lord. The wicked may have a temporary "peace," but it comes from ignorance. Eventually, there will be no more peace.

22 "Then the generations to come, both your own descendants and the foreigners who come from distant lands, will see the devastation of the land and the diseases the Lord inflicts on it. **23** They will exclaim, 'The whole land is devastated by sulfur and salt. It is a wasteland with nothing planted and nothing growing, not even a blade of grass. It is like the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, which the Lord destroyed in his intense anger.'

24 "And all the surrounding nations will ask, 'Why has the Lord done this to this land? Why was he so angry?'

25 "And the answer will be, 'This happened because the people of the land abandoned the covenant that the Lord, the God of their ancestors, made with them when he brought them out of the land of Egypt. **26** Instead, they turned away to serve and worship gods they had not known before, gods that were not from the Lord. **27** That is why the Lord's anger has burned against this land, bringing down on it every curse recorded in this book. **28** In great anger and fury the Lord uprooted his people from their land and banished them to another land, where they still live today!'

Israel's judgment will be a message to future generations. A wise person observes the mistakes and calamity of others and learns from it - that disobedience is not worth the price! Even other nations would learn from observing rebellious Israel. A negative example can instruct as well as a positive one.

29 "The Lord our God has secrets known to no one. We are not accountable for them, but we and our children are accountable forever for all that he has revealed to us, so that we may obey all the terms of these instructions.

Moses relates a principle concerning how God reveals Himself to us. The NKJV says, "*The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.*" God has certain knowledge that He does not share with us. We must have faith that God will reveal to us what we *need to know*, but if He withholds information from us, we must trust Him that it is for our good.

God gives us information or revelation for a purpose, and we are accountable for what God reveals to us. For example, when God illuminates His word so that we understand the plan of salvation - repentance, water baptism, and the infilling of the Holy Spirit - then we are accountable to God and we need to obey this wonderful truth that He has so graciously revealed from His holy Word.

God's revelation is for us and "*our children*" - it spans the generations. The plan of salvation for this New Testament age has not changed - and we must not try to change it.