

Deuteronomy 28

Good morning and thank you for joining us. Would you please turn in your bibles to Deuteronomy chapter 28?

This is a tough chapter. There are some very graphic images imbedded in here. But my prayer is when our study is over you will see not only why Deuteronomy 28 is so important to the rest of the OT, but how it also points to Christmas.

The title of this morning's message is THE HOLINESS OF GOD
Before we begin our study, LETS PRAY

A husband and wife of 50 years were being counseled by a doctor. The husband was suffering from a severe stress related illness. Shockingly, the doctor gave the grim prognosis of only 3 months to live for the husband. After some time, the doctor asked the wife to speak to her in private.

As the husband left the room, the Dr. told the wife- 'your husband has just received a grim prognosis of 3 months, but I want to let you know it's possible you could extend his life. If you cook him his favorite breakfast every day. If you ensure not to pressure him to do housework or home improvements. If you allow him to watch all the sports he wants, without any complaining, the lack of stress could extend your husband's life by a couple of years.' The wife gratefully thanked the doctor.

As they were leaving the hospital the husband asked his wife, 'what did the doctor say to you in private?'

The wife took a deep breath and responded-"3 months goes by fast so we need to cherish every moment."

The word "if" is a small word, but it looms large in the Bible. In Deuteronomy 28 Moses exhorts the nation with a choice.

Here we see God's Old Testament plan of evangelism. God intended to convert the pagan nations of the world by how He treated Israel. If Israel obeyed His Law, God intended to bless Israel with prosperity beyond what any people before or since had enjoyed.

But if Israel disobeys God's Law, He promises to heap such curses on His people that the attention of the world will likewise be drawn to Israel. The choice was up to them.

Halley's Bible Handbook makes this statement, "The 28th chapter of Deuteronomy placed alongside the history of the Hebrew nation, constitutes one of the most astounding and indisputable evidences of the Divine inspiration of the Bible."

The blessings and curses discussed in chapter 28 are like reading a history book before it happens.

1-3

1 "Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth.

2 And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the LORD your God:

3 "Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the country. It didn't matter where they resided-they would be blessed.

4-6

4 "Blessed shall be the fruit of your body, the produce of your ground and the increase of your herds, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks.

5 “Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl.

6 “Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out. Now we all know people whom when we see them arrive are a real blessing to us. They come through the door and your countenance brightens.

But we all probably have some folks who the greatest blessing takes place not when they arrive, but rather when they leave. Here, no matter what the Hebrews did, they would be blessed.

7 “The LORD will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before your face; they shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways. As we go through the OT we will see this fulfilled multiple times. We’ll see it with Joshua, Gideon, Deborah, Samson, Samuel, and David. God uses everything from hornets to trumpets to an angel slaying 185,000 Syrians. It’s a reminder that God has ways of accomplishing victory that we cannot even fathom.

But notice there would still be enemies. In our mind we think God’s going to clear out all the obstacles, and we won’t endure hardship when in His will. But that’s not the case.

8 “The LORD will command the blessing on you in your storehouses and in all to which you set your hand, and He will bless you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you.” In the days of King David, and afterwards under the reign of Solomon, Israel was a world empire – for a time the most prosperous country on earth.

9 “The LORD will establish you as a holy people to Himself, just as He has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in His ways. 10 Then all peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they shall be afraid of you. This is exactly what happened when

the Queen of Sheba visited Solomon 1 Kings 10 6 Then she said to the king: "It was a true report which I heard in my own land about your words and your wisdom. 7 However I did not believe the words until I came and saw with my own eyes; and indeed the half was not told me. Your wisdom and prosperity exceed the fame of which I heard. 8 Happy are your men and happy are these your servants, who stand continually before you and hear your wisdom! 9 Blessed be the LORD your God, who delighted in you, setting you on the throne of Israel! Because the LORD has loved Israel forever, therefore He made you king, to do justice and righteousness."

The queen of another nation saw Israel's prosperity and credited God.

Remember God's desire was to bless Israel in such a profound and undeniable way that the rest of the world would take notice.

11 And the LORD will grant you plenty of goods, in the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your ground, in the land of which the LORD swore to your fathers to give you. 12 The LORD will open to you His good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season, and to bless all the work of your hand. Pause here-notice they still had to work. They would still have to plant the seed, they would still have to reap the harvest while in God's will. Work is God's idea.

...12 You shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. Israel will be so blessed financially they will be the world's first central bank.

13 And the LORD will make you the head and not the tail; you shall be above only, and not be beneath, if you heed the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you today, and are careful to observe them. 14 So you shall not turn

aside from any of the words which I command you this day, to the right or the left, to go after other gods to serve them. Now this seems like a pretty awesome deal, doesn't it? God says obey me, follow my ways, and you can count on these wonderful blessings.

Now the rest of the chapter, God clearly explains to the nation what will happen if they do not obey His ways.

15-19

15 "But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you:

16 "Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the country.

17 "Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl.

18 "Cursed shall be the fruit of your body and the produce of your land, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks.

19 "Cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out. So the opposite of what we just read in verses 2-6 will take place.

20-22

20 "The LORD will send on you cursing, confusion, and rebuke in all that you set your hand to do, until you are destroyed and until you perish quickly, because of the wickedness of your doings in which you have forsaken Me. 21 The LORD will make the plague cling to you until He has consumed you from the land which you are going to possess. 22 The LORD will strike you with consumption, with fever, with inflammation, with severe burning fever, with the sword, with scorching, and with mildew; they shall

pursue you until you perish. There would be no possible way of escaping the physical ramifications of disobeying God.

23 And your heavens which are over your head shall be bronze, and the earth which is under you shall be iron. 24 The LORD will change the rain of your land to powder and dust; from the heaven it shall come down on you until you are destroyed. If the children of Israel forsook the Lord, their land would turn to dust, their physical health would disappear, their emotional stability would crumble. And it gets worse...

25 “The LORD will cause you to be defeated before your enemies; you shall go out one way against them and flee seven ways before them; and you shall become troublesome to all the kingdoms of the earth. 26 Your carcasses shall be food for all the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and no one shall frighten them away. If we had the time, we could chart Jewish persecution through the centuries. Instead, I'll give a brief overview

In 586 BC the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem and burned the Temple – then deported the Jews to Babylon. The Jews returned 70 years later in the days of Ezra.

In 70 AD, Jerusalem was flattened and the Temple again destroyed - this time by the Romans.

A century later the Romans drove the remaining Jews from their homeland into foreign lands.

Jews became a dispersed people – scattered all over the world. For several centuries it was illegal for a Jew to live in Jerusalem. And for the two millenniums since those days - until recent times - the Jews have been hated and persecuted everywhere they've tried to settle. They literally have been cursed “when they come in... and when they go out.”

Countless Jews were victimized by Europe's crusades, Spain's inquisition, the programs in Russia - ultimately the death camps of Nazi Germany. Six million Jews died in the holocaust.

And tragically, Christians have played in the torture of the Jewish people. In the Middle Ages the Roman Church felt it was their duty to help God enact these curses, so the church devised ways to persecute Jews.

When Crusader armies left Europe to liberate the holy land from the Muslims - on the way to Palestine - they found clusters of Jews to torture and murder. They burned down entire Jewish neighborhoods, calling the Jewish race "Christkillers." And unfathomably, these Christians pushed the Jews away from their own Messiah.

27 The LORD will strike you with the boils of Egypt, with tumors, with the scab, and with the itch, from which you cannot be healed. 28 The LORD will strike you with madness and blindness and confusion of heart. 29 And you shall grope at noonday, as a blind man gropes in darkness; you shall not prosper in your ways; you shall be only oppressed and plundered continually, and no one shall save you. God tells the Hebrews plainly and clearly that if they disobey, not only will they have these horrible afflictions come upon them, but they will not be able rely on others to help them.

If these curses weren't bad enough, they're about to get worse...
30-32.

30 "You shall betroth a wife, but another man shall lie with her; you shall build a house, but you shall not dwell in it; you shall plant a vineyard, but shall not gather its grapes. 31 Your ox shall be slaughtered before your eyes, but you shall not eat of it; your donkey shall be violently taken away from before you, and shall

not be restored to you; your sheep shall be given to your enemies, and you shall have no one to rescue them. 32 Your sons and your daughters shall be given to another people, and your eyes shall look and fail with longing for them all day long; and there shall be no strength in your hand. As you read the OT, and in Isaiah see the Assyrians capture the northern kingdoms, remember these verses. As you read Jeremiah and Babylon's conquest of the southern kingdoms, remember these verses.

Yet these verses were even fulfilled in the last 100 years when the Nazis split Jewish families apart, and packed the Jews onto trains that were headed for the concentration camps.

33 A nation whom you have not known shall eat the fruit of your land and the produce of your labor, and you shall be only oppressed and crushed continually. 34 So you shall be driven mad because of the sight which your eyes see. I wonder how it must've pained God to pronounce such judgments. The human eyes were created and designed to see the glory of God.

But the fall of mankind in the garden of Eden has brought sin into our lives, and changed what our eyes see. Our sight is distorted. But one day when we're with Jesus we'll see the fulfillment of **1 Cor 13:12 For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.**

35 The LORD will strike you in the knees and on the legs with severe boils which cannot be healed, and from the sole of your foot to the top of your head.

36 "The LORD will bring you and the king whom you set over you to a nation which neither you nor your fathers have known, and there you shall serve other gods—wood and stone. After Solomon, out of 39 kings, only 7 are written with high regard in

the scriptures. The people set kings over them whom God had not selected.

37 And you shall become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword among all nations where the LORD will drive you. "Israel" eventually became so judged that the name Israel became a synonym for the word "curse".

38-43

38 "You shall carry much seed out to the field but gather little in, for the locust shall consume it. 39 You shall plant vineyards and tend them, but you shall neither drink of the wine nor gather the grapes; for the worms shall eat them. 40 You shall have olive trees throughout all your territory, but you shall not anoint yourself with the oil; for your olives shall drop off. 41 You shall beget sons and daughters, but they shall not be yours; for they shall go into captivity. 42 Locusts shall consume all your trees and the produce of your land.

43 "The alien who is among you shall rise higher and higher above you, and you shall come down lower and lower. 44 He shall lend to you, but you shall not lend to him; he shall be the head, and you shall be the tail. If Israel disobeys God, instead of being an exalted nation, they will be stripped of everything, and other nations will rule over them.

45-48

45 "Moreover all these curses shall come upon you and pursue and overtake you, until you are destroyed, because you did not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which He commanded you. 46 And they shall be upon you for a sign and a wonder, and on your descendants forever.

47 “Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joy and gladness of heart, for the abundance of everything, 48 therefore you shall serve your enemies, whom the LORD will send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in need of everything; and He will put a yoke of iron on your neck until He has destroyed you. Again we don’t have time, but you may want to notate Jeremiah 27 and Jeremiah 28-read these 2 chapters for this fulfilment.

49 The LORD will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flies, a nation whose language you will not understand, 50 a nation of fierce countenance, which does not respect the elderly nor show favor to the young. Interestingly enough, both Babylon and Rome marched under the emblem of an eagle.

51 And they shall eat the increase of your livestock and the produce of your land, until you are destroyed; they shall not leave you grain or new wine or oil, or the increase of your cattle or the offspring of your flocks, until they have destroyed you.

52 “They shall besiege you at all your gates until your high and fortified walls, in which you trust, come down throughout all your land; and they shall besiege you at all your gates throughout all your land which the LORD your God has given you. 53 You shall eat the fruit of your own body, the flesh of your sons and your daughters whom the LORD your God has given you, in the siege and desperate straits in which your enemy shall distress you. In both the Roman and Babylonian sieges – the people became so hungry they resorted to cannibalism. In 70 AD the Romans surrounded Jerusalem and cut off the supply lines. The goal was to starve the Jews into surrender. Jews tried to escape, but many were captured and crucified – as many as 500 per day. It’s

estimated more than 600,000 Jews starved to death during the siege.

54-57

54 The sensitive and very refined man among you will be hostile toward his brother, toward the wife of his bosom, and toward the rest of his children whom he leaves behind, 55 so that he will not give any of them the flesh of his children whom he will eat, because he has nothing left in the siege and desperate straits in which your enemy shall distress you at all your gates. 56 The tender and delicate woman among you, who would not venture to set the sole of her foot on the ground because of her delicateness and sensitivity, will refuse^[fn] to the husband of her bosom, and to her son and her daughter, 57 her placenta which comes out from between her feet and her children whom she bears; for she will eat them secretly for lack of everything in the siege and desperate straits in which your enemy shall distress you at all your gates.

We read these words and shake our heads in disbelief. This became horribly true in **2 Kings 6:24-30** 24 And it happened after this that Ben-Hadad king of Syria gathered all his army, and went up and besieged Samaria. 25 And there was a great famine in Samaria; and indeed they besieged it until a donkey's head was sold for eighty shekels of silver, and one-fourth of a kab of dove droppings for five shekels of silver.

26 Then, as the king of Israel was passing by on the wall, a woman cried out to him, saying, "Help, my lord, O king!"

27 And he said, "If the LORD does not help you, where can I find help for you? From the threshing floor or from the winepress?" 28 Then the king said to her, "What is troubling you?"

And she answered, "This woman said to me, 'Give your son, that we may eat him today, and we will eat my son tomorrow.' 29 So

we boiled my son, and ate him. And I said to her on the next day, 'Give your son, that we may eat him'; but she has hidden her son."

The book of Lamentations vividly describes the horrors of the siege of Jerusalem.

Lamentations 4:1-11 1 How the gold has become dim!

How changed the fine gold!

The stones of the sanctuary are scattered

At the head of every street.

2 The precious sons of Zion,

Valuable as fine gold,

How they are regarded as clay pots,

The work of the hands of the potter!

3 Even the jackals present their breasts

To nurse their young;

But the daughter of my people is cruel,

Like ostriches in the wilderness.

4 The tongue of the infant clings

To the roof of its mouth for thirst;

The young children ask for bread,

But no one breaks it for them.

5 Those who ate delicacies

Are desolate in the streets;

Those who were brought up in scarlet

Embrace ash heaps.

6 The punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people

Is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom,

Which was overthrown in a moment,

With no hand to help her!

7 Her Nazirites^[fn] were brighter than snow

And whiter than milk;

They were more ruddy in body than rubies,

Like sapphire in their appearance.

8 Now their appearance is blacker than soot;

They go unrecognized in the streets;

Their skin clings to their bones,

It has become as dry as wood.

9 Those slain by the sword are better off

Than those who die of hunger;

For these pine away,

Stricken for lack of the fruits of the field.

10 The hands of the compassionate women

Have cooked their own children;
They became food for them
In the destruction of the daughter of my people.

11 The LORD has fulfilled His fury,
He has poured out His fierce anger.
He kindled a fire in Zion,
And it has devoured its foundations.

Horrific scenes that we cannot fathom. Tragically, it was all avoidable...

58-62

58 “If you do not carefully observe all the words of this law that are written in this book, that you may fear this glorious and awesome name, THE LORD YOUR GOD, 59 then the LORD will bring upon you and your descendants extraordinary plagues—great and prolonged plagues—and serious and prolonged sicknesses. 60 Moreover He will bring back on you all the diseases of Egypt, of which you were afraid, and they shall cling to you. 61 Also every sickness and every plague, which is not written in this Book of the Law, will the LORD bring upon you until you are destroyed. 62 You shall be left few in number, whereas you were as the stars of heaven in multitude, because you would not obey the voice of the LORD your God. The nation which numbered in the millions would be scattered after their conquests, fulfilling this warning from God.

63 And it shall be, that just as the LORD rejoiced over you to do you good and multiply you, so the LORD will rejoice over you to destroy you and bring you to nothing; and you shall be plucked

from off the land which you go to possess. Now we know that God does not delight in the death of the wicked. We see this in Ezekial 33:11 “Say to them: ‘As I live,’ says the Lord GOD, ‘I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?’”

So what is the rejoicing the Lord describes here? He would rejoice at the calamity because the world would credit Israel’s pain to the power of God.

64 “Then the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods, which neither you nor your fathers have known—wood and stone. 65 And among those nations you shall find no rest, nor shall the sole of your foot have a resting place; but there the LORD will give you a trembling heart, failing eyes, and anguish of soul. For 2000 years this had been the defining headline of Jews as they had no homeland.

Yet Ezekiel 37 describes, how God will - and has begun to - revive the Jewish people as back from the dead, and prepare them to be used in these last days. God is not done with Israel, and the curse will not be their final legacy. God did the impossible, and on May 14, 1948 Israel was once again declared a nation. And now the clock is ticking for the return of Christ.

Let’s finish the chapter...

66 Your life shall hang in doubt before you; you shall fear day and night, and have no assurance of life. 67 In the morning you shall say, ‘Oh, that it were evening!’ And at evening you shall say, ‘Oh, that it were morning!’ because of the fear which terrifies your heart, and because of the sight which your eyes see.

68 “And the LORD will take you back to Egypt in ships, by the way of which I said to you, ‘You shall never see it again.’ And there you shall be offered for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but no one will buy you.” After the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, the Romans sold 97,000 Jews in the Egyptian salt mines. And during the Nazi occupation, several thousand Jews were also transported to Egypt.

Wow a tough chapter, wasn't it? This text isn't exactly overflowing with Christmas cheer is it?

Or perhaps it is, and we just have to look a little deeper....

The Bible tells us that God does not change. He is the same yesterday, today and forever.

And this chapter shows us God's holy righteousness. God's demand for obedience. God does not excuse sin and disobedience; He doesn't turn a blind eye toward it. In fact, we see all of God's fury poured out on our wicked world in Revelation 6-14.

And because we all fall short of God's standard; we deserve God's wrath don't we.

But Christmas reminds us of God's love and mercy. That His wrath and His fury were poured out on His Son at Calvary.

God has given us the greatest gift.