

## Lesson 46 - ISSUES OF LIFE AND DEATH      *Deuteronomy 30*

As we come to *Deuteronomy 30*, we see Israel getting ready to enter the Promised Land. Moses reads the terms of the Mount Sinai Covenant to them to remind them of its terms and emphasize the importance of it. There are several things to keep in mind about this whole situation. First, their entering into and taking possession of the Promised Land was based on the covenant that God made with Abraham over 400 years before this. That covenant with Abraham was an UNCONDITIONAL PROMISE COVENANT. It was not conditioned on Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, or upon the Israelites. It was a unilateral covenant that rested totally upon God's faithfulness and power (*Gal. 3:15-20*). God had determined to give them the land and use them as the human instrument through whom the Messiah would come into the world. This is what the phrase "salvation is of the Jews" meant (*John 4:22; cf. Rom. 1:3; 9:5*). Their very existence as a nation, sinful though they be, was the glory of God in the salvation of His chosen people, SPIRITUAL Israel, both Jew and Gentile, by His grace through the Lord Jesus Christ.

But for the last few chapters Moses had set before them blessings conditioned on national obedience and cursing conditioned on national disobedience, showing that the covenant of Mount Sinai was different. That covenant was a conditional covenant. The Mosaic law was a covenant which guided the relationship between the nation Israel and the Lord God. So, Moses, in the name of the Lord, set forth the conditions by which Israel was to be governed during the Old Covenant Age, and they were under these conditions until the time that the Lord Jesus Christ came and took the judgment of the broken law upon Himself. Then the Old Covenant came to its end. This covenant marked a temporal, physical, and ceremonial relationship, even union, between the Lord God and the physical nation of Israel. But this union would not last. In fact, it was never intended by God to last. It was intended by God to come to its end when Christ would come and finish His work (*Heb. 8*).

God knew that Israel would never keep that covenant. They never measured up to the righteousness of the law set forth in that covenant (*Deut. 29:25-28*). So, why did God put them under this covenant? It was never a covenant of salvation. It could never make them righteous, and it could not give them spiritual life or a heart to believe, follow, and serve the Lord. It was given to show them their sinfulness and depravity, the impossibility of righteousness by the law, salvation by their works, and to cause them to look to God Who by His grace would send the Messiah to save His people from sin and bring forth the righteousness of the law to justify sinners in His sight (*Rom. 5:20-21; Gal. 5:19*).

In *Deuteronomy 29:27-28*, it is anticipated that Israel is going to break the law and be scattered to the four corners of the earth. Here in *Deuteronomy 30*, Moses speaks of the way in which they may return. In *Deuteronomy 29:29* they are told that there are many things that the Lord God knows and that belong to His infinite knowledge and wisdom, but their responsibility, Moses says, was to seek and follow that which the Lord God had revealed. For example, we know that man by nature will not seek the Lord, yet the Lord commands us to seek Him. We know that man, if left to himself, will never believe the Gospel and repent, yet the Lord God commands all men everywhere to believe and repent. Sinners will seek, find, and believe in the Lord when He brings them to do so in power, grace, and truth (*Rom. 1:16-17; 10:13-17; Eph. 2:8-10; 2 Thess. 2:13-14*).

**(Deut. 30:1-10)** - These words contain a prophecy. The question is - What is the fulfillment of this prophecy? Was it fulfilled when Israel returned from their 70-year captivity in Babylon? Will it be fulfilled in some millennial future by God bringing them back to the physical land of Palestine and reinstating the earthly priesthood and tabernacle services? *Deuteronomy 30:6* makes it clear that this prophecy concerns a SPIRITUAL gathering and return. Many people

believe this speaks of a restoration of an earthly kingdom to the land of Palestine. Even the disciples seemed to believe this until the Lord taught them otherwise, and it was made clearer at Pentecost (*Acts 1:6-8; 2:14ff.*). Later, the Lord used the Apostle Paul to reveal more of the details of this (*Rom. 2:28-29; 9:6-8; Gal. 6:14-16*). There are some who, because of their interpretation of statements Paul made in *Romans 11*, believe this will be fulfilled by a future spiritual restoration of the Jews who will be brought to faith in Christ and true repentance. That would be a glorious thing to behold, but this probably describes the future restoration of all SPIRITUAL Israel, God's elect both Jew and Gentile, to faith in Christ. Verse 10 - The only way a sinner can say sincerely and truly that he hearkens unto the voice of the Lord his God, keeps the Lord's commandments, and turns unto the LORD his God with all his heart and with all his soul is by believing in and submitting to Christ as the Lord our Righteousness (*Rom. 10:4*).

**(Deut. 30:11-14)** - God the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to cite these verses in *Romans 10:6-10*. Notice that in *Deuteronomy 30*, that in verses 8 and 10 the word "commandments" is plural. Here in *Deuteronomy 30:11* "this commandment" is singular. What "commandment"? It is the commandment to turn unto the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. This commandment which I command you this day is not hidden from you. It is not far off. It is not in heaven, as if you should say, "Who shall go up to heaven?" It is not in the abyss as Paul would later say. It is not beyond the sea. It is a word that is near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it, meaning to believe it. And what specifically is that word? Paul tells us in *Romans 10:9-17* (*cf. Isa. 46:12-13*). It is the word of God's Gospel of grace wherein the righteousness of God (the imputed righteousness of Christ) is revealed to be believed. It is the near righteousness of God which comes near in and by the Lord Jesus Christ.

**(Deut. 30:15-20)** - Moses concluded in much the same way in which Paul concluded *Romans 10* by showing how there is only death in disobedience and life in righteousness. But it is clear that no sinner can work his way unto righteousness, and righteousness can only be found in the grace of God through the glorious Person and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of God's people, both Jew and Gentile. Israel would eventually be cast out of the land of promise because of their disobedience, but there was (and is) always hope for all who turn to the Lord for salvation by His grace in Christ and based on His righteousness imputed to them by God and received by God-given faith. The command of the Gospel, then, is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for all salvation and turn from our dead works and idolatry. In their natural self-righteousness, as is common to us all by nature, the unbelieving Jews refused to believe God and insisted on seeking righteousness by works of the law. As Paul stated in *Romans 9*, they did not achieve what they were seeking (*Rom. 9:31-10:3*). But, as Paul also stated in *Romans 11*, there was (and is) always "a remnant according to the election of grace" (*Rom. 11:5*). This remnant was a small number of the Jews whom God brought to faith in the promised Messiah and to be submitted to Him as their righteousness for justification and life. So, the true chosen people of God, which is SPIRITUAL Israel, includes all who are brought by God to believe in Christ. This includes both Jews and Gentiles who are saved by God's grace in Christ. They are part of the "all Israel" who "shall be saved" (*Rom. 11:26*). Issues of life and death, then, are determined by our relationship with Christ. Sinners are either standing before God on their own and pleading their own works, which is eternal death, or they stand before God IN CHRIST, washed in His blood and clothed in His righteousness, which is eternal life.