

Exegetical Notes, Deuteronomy 29:1-30:20

“Choose Life”

Prepared by Charles H. Jensen, Pastor, Cornerstone Fellowship

101 Kyllies Road, Coatesville, PA 19320

610-384-1375

charleshjensen@aol.com

Deuteronomy 29:1-30:20

Verse 29:1

These are the terms of the covenant the LORD commanded Moses to make with the Israelites in Moab, in addition to the covenant he had made with them at Horeb.

- As Israel was poised to enter the land of promise, YHWH commanded Moses to reiterate the terms of the covenant God was offering them. These chapters contain the speech which Moses made to the people of Israel on the day the covenant was renewed.

Verses 2-8

² Moses summoned all the Israelites and said to them:

Your eyes have seen all that the LORD did in Egypt to Pharaoh, to all his officials and to all his land. ³ With your own eyes you saw those great trials, those signs and great wonders. ⁴ But to this day the LORD has not given you a mind that understands or eyes that see or ears that hear. ⁵ Yet the LORD says, “During the forty years that I led you through the wilderness, your clothes did not wear out, nor did the sandals on your feet. ⁶ You ate no bread and drank no wine or other ⁸fermented drink. I did this so that you might know that I am the LORD your God.”

⁷ When you reached this place, Sihon king of Heshbon and Og king of Bashan came out to fight against us, but we defeated them. ⁸ We took their land and gave it as an inheritance to the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh.

- All of the first generation which had chosen not to follow God but to follow the report of the spies and would not enter the promised land had died in the wilderness trip. But the children of that generation had been present when God moved against Pharaoh and then led the Israelites to the

promised land. They had seen the powerful display and the tender care of God with their own eyes.

- But Moses' words also address the nation of Israel in all generations. Because of the careful record kept in the books of Moses, all generations, to this very day, know how God moved to protect and guide Israel.
- This history has been carefully explained in the exegetical notes on the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and now Deuteronomy.
- However, verse four makes it clear that even though Israel saw these great and wondrous signs, she had not yet fully understood their meaning.

Verses 9-29

⁹ Carefully follow the terms of this covenant, so that you may prosper in everything you do. ¹⁰ All of you are standing today in the presence of the LORD your God—your leaders and chief men, your elders and officials, and all the other men of Israel, ¹¹ together with your children and your wives, and the foreigners living in your camps who chop your wood and carry your water. ¹² You are standing here in order to enter into a covenant with the LORD your God, a covenant the LORD is making with you this day and sealing with an oath, ¹³ to confirm you this day as his people, that he may be your God as he promised you and as he swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. ¹⁴ I am making this covenant, with its oath, not only with you ¹⁵ who are standing here with us today in the presence of the LORD our God but also with those who are not here today.

¹⁶ You yourselves know how we lived in Egypt and how we passed through the countries on the way here. ¹⁷ You saw among them their detestable images and idols of wood and stone, of silver and gold. ¹⁸ Make sure there is no man or woman, clan or tribe among you today whose heart turns away from the LORD our God to go and worship the gods of those nations; make sure there is no root among you that produces such bitter poison.

¹⁹ When such a person hears the words of this oath and they invoke a blessing on themselves, thinking, "I will be safe, even though I persist in going my own way," they will bring disaster on the watered land as well as the dry. ²⁰ The LORD will never be willing to forgive them; his wrath and zeal will burn against them. All the curses written in this book will fall on them, and the LORD will blot out their names from under heaven. ²¹ The LORD will single them out from all the tribes of Israel for disaster, according to all the curses of the covenant written in this Book of the Law.

²² Your children who follow you in later generations and foreigners who come from distant lands will see the calamities that have fallen on the land and the diseases with which the LORD has afflicted it. ²³ The whole land will be a burning waste of salt and sulfur—nothing planted, nothing sprouting, no vegetation growing on it. It will be like the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboyim, which the LORD overthrew in fierce anger. ²⁴ All the nations will ask: “Why has the LORD done this to this land? Why this fierce, burning anger?”

²⁵ And the answer will be: “It is because this people abandoned the covenant of the LORD, the God of their ancestors, the covenant he made with them when he brought them out of Egypt. ²⁶ They went off and worshiped other gods and bowed down to them, gods they did not know, gods he had not given them.

²⁷ Therefore the LORD’s anger burned against this land, so that he brought on it all the curses written in this book. ²⁸ In furious anger and in great wrath the LORD uprooted them from their land and thrust them into another land, as it is now.”

²⁹ The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.

- If Israel had understood the power and authority of God, she would never have chosen to reject his laws because she would have known with whom she was making a covenant. She would have followed God’s word and been richly blessed. Because she did not understand, she chose her own way, which brought curses on the people and on the land. (See Deuteronomy 28)
- As a result of her refusal to honor the terms of the covenant God offered, Israel was driven from the promised land.

Verses 30:1-10

^{30:1} When all these blessings and curses I have set before you come on you and you take them to heart wherever the LORD your God disperses you among the nations, ² and when you and your children return to the LORD your God and obey him with all your heart and with all your soul according to everything I command you today, ³ then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you. ⁴ Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there the LORD your God will gather you and bring you back. ⁵ He will bring you to the land that belonged to your ancestors, and you will take possession of it. He will make you more prosperous and numerous than your ancestors. ⁶ The LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul,

and live.⁷ The LORD your God will put all these curses on your enemies who hate and persecute you.⁸ You will again obey the LORD and follow all his commands I am giving you today.⁹ Then the LORD your God will make you most prosperous in all the work of your hands and in the fruit of your womb, the young of your livestock and the crops of your land. The LORD will again delight in you and make you prosperous, just as he delighted in your ancestors,¹⁰ if you obey the LORD your God and keep his commands and decrees that are written in this Book of the Law and turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

- When Israel returned to her senses and recovered her understanding, when she returned to God and asked him to forgive her sin and to restore his relationship with her, God would hear her cry for help and forgive her sin and restore her to her place provided her repentance was sincere.
- He would restore her and bless her abundantly!

Verses 11-20

¹¹ Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. ¹² It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, "Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" ¹³ Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, "Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" ¹⁴ No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it.

¹⁵ See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. ¹⁶ For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess.

¹⁷ But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, ¹⁸ I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess.

¹⁹ This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live ²⁰ and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

- God never forces anyone into relationship with him. On this day Moses called upon Israel to choose to follow YHWH or to choose NOT to follow

him. To follow God meant blessing and life. To NOT follow God meant death and disaster. But Israel was free to choose!

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *Choose Life*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by Dr. Jensen and *Cornerstone Fellowship*.)