

Deuteronomy
November 9, 2008
Restoration
Chapters 29-30

I. What Is the Purpose of Rituals or Monuments to Our Spiritual Being?

The renewal of the covenant in Moab has two main objectives:

1. Remembrance of the past, especially the events at Horeb/Sinai
2. Anticipation of the future

II. Chapter 29:1: The Covenant

This first verse probably refers to everything written since the twelfth chapter, or at least the blessings and curses of the last two chapters. As verse 13 indicates, this is not a new covenant, but an affirmation of the original one made to Horeb/Sinai. Chapter 30 and the rest of this chapter explore the failures of the past and of the promises for the future if they obey.

III. Chapter 29:2-29: Learning to Follow God

Why do we follow God? How do we know if God is worthy of being followed?

The new generation of Israelites has learned to follow God through Moses' leadings. Soon Moses will be gone, and they will no longer be travelling in the wilderness. Will they forget God? How will they stay close to God?

Note the NT answer to the above questions:

Rom 12:1-2

12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship. 2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.

NIV

So what is the OT answer? (Hint: See verse 29:29)

Verse 2: Collectively the nation of Israeli has seen what the LORD has done; the older ones of the people might have seen it directly while young. Many of those now living might not have seen much of it directly, but their parents would have. Indeed, they would have lived all their lives with the ramifications of what had happened.

Verse 4: They do not have a full understanding. When they entered into the Promised Land, we see that some understands more than others, such as Joshua and Caleb who saw much with only a little bit of information. They also seem to see more when they enter the Promised Land accomplishing what God wants us to do.

Verse 9: As always the blessing of God in the covenant is dependent upon the scrupulous adherence to His covenant terms.

Josh 1:8-9

8 Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. 9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."

NIV

Verse 11: Basically, the covenant is for all, not for just the top people in their society. Certainly this does not preclude different types of people having different roles and responsibilities. However, Israel probably took the roles and responsibilities too far and thereby violated the inclusiveness of the covenant. Probably some Christians do the same today with the new covenant.

Verse 15: "Those who are not here today" are the generations to come, the ones who are part of the nation of Israel but not yet born.

Verse 19: This is a dialogue of a person who chooses not to follow God. God will single them out for disaster, but the nation will go on. This passage also points out that the individual has personal accountability. The NT uses the nation of Israel as an example (or type) for NT Christians, but that does not mean that all Israelites are "saved." Indeed, at many points in their history, it is clear that most are not.

Verse 21: While deviation from God's starts with one person, it does not end there. Eventually, the whole nation becomes involved. Therefore, when a person is involved in such sin, he must be cut off so that he does not contaminate others and finally the whole nation.

Verse 23: This is very vivid, a description of the land at the end of the Diaspora. Israel will make the desert bloom.

Isa 35:1-2

The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, 2 it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon; they will see the glory of the LORD, the splendor of our God.

NIV

Verse 29: This is a general statement of wisdom that has been inserted to show what the Israelites must do. They cannot have all the answers, but they can know what to do. They need to follow the LORD fully. Even with the destruction and the Diaspora, the Israelites still have the option of repenting and following the LORD.

This verse is not only a fitting end to what has just been said/written. It is also a good introduction of the next chapter. The point is that our first reaction is to do exactly what the LORD tells us to do. Once we get that down, then we can proceed to determine what else He wants us to do.

IV. Chapter 30:1-10: God's Assured Fidelity

- Verse 1: The reason for the Diaspora is not that it is inevitable, but only a consequence of their behavior based on the blessings and curses indicated earlier. Of course, in another sense, it is inevitable, because God knows the behavior that the Israelites will be. The blessings and curses are part of God's divine intervention to bring the people back to Him.
- Verse 4: Nothing is beyond God's control. It does not matter how far we have drifted from Him. It does not matter how precarious our situation might be. Nothing is being His control, but we must trust and obey Him.
- Verse 5: Israel has been kicked out of Israel on several occasions, and yet has always returned. Israel is in the land today.
- Verse 6: The key is the circumcision of the heart, which happens only when we turn to the Lord and obey Him.

Rom 2:28-29

28 A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical.

29 No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God.

NIV

- Verse 10: Notice that the highly conditional nature of this verse, which affects verse 9. It is not clear that the Jews ever fulfilled this completely. Certainly after they returned to Jerusalem the first time, they seemed to be cured of physical idolatry, but that is a far cry from totally fulfilling this verse. Indeed, it is impossible without belief in Jesus Christ.

V. Chapters 30:11-20: "To Life"

- Verse 11: It should also be noted that since loving the LORD comes from being circumcised of heart, the Israelites could still be living by the law even if they broke it. The law did not save them, but God's work in them did save them. In a sense, NT and OT are much alike in this way.
- Verse 12: Without God's help, heaven is beyond their reach. They know what they need to do. It is not beyond their ability to understand what they need to do. It is not head knowledge but seeking to do all that God has commanded with our hearts. (Notice that Paul makes use of this part of Scripture in Romans 10:6-8).
- Verse 14: Basically, the word is all around them and even in them. The word is so close to them that they can actually say it ("it is in your heart"). The mouth says it (i.e. we live it out in our lives), and the heart believes it! (See Romans 10:9-10).
- Verses 15-16: In many ways, verses 15 and 16 summarize the overall theme of the entire book of Deuteronomy.
- Verse 19: Yet the Jews choose disobedience. Even today, they are not making sacrifices at the temple, and none of those laws has been cancelled as far as their view of God. Some Jews today even use this verse to rationalize why they do not have sacrifices, why they have not rebuilt the temple. Actually, this verse teaches that they deserve death if they do not do such things, per their law. Part of the rationalization is that this is a command to "choose life"; the problem is that choosing life according to the world is different from choosing life according to God.

From "To Life" from *Fiddler on the Roof*:

"To life, to life, l'chai-im,!

L'chai-im, l'chai-im, to life!

Life has a way of confusing us

Blessing and bruising us,

Drink l'chaim, to life"

In Jesus Christ, much more of the mystery of God has been made known to us. We still might not have all the answers that we might want, but we have enough. We have what God has chosen to give to us. We should offer our bodies as living sacrifices, learning more about God as we do. Then we can know His goodness in a way that no printed word can ever convey to us.