



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Deuteronomy 29 – 30:20

“The Call for Covenant Renewal”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the privilege of studying again the history of Israel and particularly do we thank Thee Lord for the way in which these incidents in Israel's experiences illustrate for us the later teaching of the word of God, both in the moral sense as well as in the prophetic sense. We pray that as we read and ponder these chapters in which Moses recounts the renewal of the Sinaitic Covenant that we may understand even better the way in which the children of Israel were related to Thee until the time of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. And be with us as we turn to the word.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] We are turning as I say to Deuteronomy chapter 29 and chapter 30. One of the rather assured results of recent Old Testament scholarship, relatively recent Old Testament scholarship is the fact that scholars have noticed a remarkable similarity between the ancient Near Eastern treaty patterns and the Old Testament and particularly in connection with the Book of Deuteronomy. So the same kind of pattern that one notices in those ancient Near Eastern treaties made between a conquering nation and those that were conquered is the kind of thing that we have for example in the Book of Deuteronomy and there is no need for us to enter into a discussion of that because it's not

too rewarding so far as the spiritual side of it is concerned to discuss the scholarship of it, but that’s a generally assured result and evangelicals have largely accepted that as well.

The ancient Near Eastern treaties that were made between peoples who had conquered other peoples, they were covenantal treaties, were treaties in which there was a kind of prologue and then there was a historical review of the relationship between the peoples. Then stipulations were set out as we might say the points that the conquerors wished to impose upon the others and the others were at least, having been defeated, were required to yield allegiance to.

Frequently there was also a little section in which a word was given concerning the place where these documents were to be kept and then also since most of these treaties were treaties made by people who were not believers in the God of Judaism, Yahweh, usually there was a reference made to the gods of the heathens who ultimately would see that these things were to be carried out. And sometimes, and this is particularly true in the case of Deuteronomy, one might find a kind of recapitulation of the treaty. Well scholars feel, evangelical scholars feel the Deuteronomy is arranged in much the same way, but there is a prolog in the beginning of the book, there is a historical review of things, there are set out the stipulations of the Sinaitic Covenant made at Mount Sinai or Mount Horeb, and then at the conclusion in the case of this Old Testament Covenant of Sinai, there is the recapitulation. So we look at it generally in that sense and we are in that part of the Book of Deuteronomy in which we are having a recapitulation of the relationship between the Lord God and the children of Israel as they are getting ready to enter into the land.

There are three speeches in the Book of Deuteronomy that Moses makes. One begins in the first chapter and goes to about the fourth chapter, then from the fourth chapter on through to the 28th chapter and then in the 29th and 30th chapters, we have the final and as you will notice chapter 21 verse 1 begins with “These are the words of the covenant which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the

land of Moab, beside the covenant which He made with them in Horeb. And Moses called unto all Israel, and said unto them.”

Now occasionally Moses will give direct word from the Lord God, but chapters 29 and 30 are essentially the words of Moses. They are getting ready to enter into the land and what we have then is a recapitulation of the Mount Sinai Covenant or as we would say the Covenant of the Lord.

Now let us keep in mind two things. First of all, the covenant that God made with Abraham, confirmed with Isaac and Jacob, was an unconditional promise-covenant. Abraham did not have any setout responsibility so far as that covenant was concerned. You remember that when the covenant was ratified, the animals were placed opposite one another, the pieces of them they were separated and Abraham waited. Well he waited almost a day we know because when he first encountered the Lord, it was nighttime and he waited until the next afternoon when the sun was going down and then through that remarkable appearance of the flaming oven that came signifying the presence of God, that went down through the pieces and Abraham was not invited to follow, that was designed to show that the Abrahamic Covenant was an unconditional covenant.

In other words, God was pledging that He would do something and what He would do would depend not upon Abraham or Isaac or Jacob or even ultimately upon the Nation Israel, it depended upon the Lord God. So that’s why we call that an unconditional covenant. It’s a one-way covenant. It’s a covenant in which a person makes a promise. Now if you read the Book of Galatians and chapter 3 verse 15 through verse 20, Paul refers to this as simply the promise. So it’s a promissory covenant and the fulfillment of it rests upon the faithfulness of God to His word.

Now I know what you are thinking. You are thinking well after all did not Abraham have to believe and do not the Israelites have to believe and in the future when Israel turns to the Lord, will they not have to believe? Yes, they will have to believe but

the point of the covenant is that the Lord God guarantees that they will believe. That’s part of the covenantal faithfulness. So everything depends upon the Lord God.

And as I have so often pointed out and others too in Believers Chapel in Zechariah chapter 12 and verse 10, remember the prophet there says, giving the words of God, I will pour out upon them the spirit of grace and supplications and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only son. And so Israel’s response will be the product of the efficacious grace of the Lord God. Now that’s one kind of covenant.

The covenant that God made with David is another illustration of that. No responsibilities were laid upon David. He was given a promise concerning a kingdom, a throne, and a realm.

In the case of the Covenant of Mount Sinai, it was different. That covenant was a conditional covenant. In fact, as you read Exodus 19 and the other passages, it is quite clear that God on His part laid down certain stipulations and in Israel on their part promised that they would do certain things from their side. If you remember when that covenant was ratified, the blood was sprinkled on the book representing the Lord God and then on the animals or the people in Exodus chapter 24. In reference to the fact that there was a covenant that was a conditional covenant, each had responsibilities.

Now that covenant can be called an administrative covenant in this sense. The Mosaic law was a covenant, which administrated the relationship between the Nation Israel and the Lord God and in which that administration was an administration to govern and regulate and make imposition in a sense upon the nation in the relationship to the Lord God. And so the offerings, the priesthood, the civil requirements, and all aspects of the Mosaic law, particularly those three aspects, were governed and regulated by the Mount Sinai Covenant. So the Abrahamic Covenant is an unconditional promissory covenant. The Mosaic Covenant is a conditional and administrative covenant.

As we look at this, Moses is going to recapitulate, he is going to speak about that covenant made at Horeb, but he is going on to extend it and expand it now because it's some years since the covenant was given to Israel. So here we will have details, stipulations set out by Moses in the name of the Lord by which Israel is to be governed during the Mosaic Age and they will be under these stipulations until the time that the Lord Jesus Christ comes, takes the judgment of the broken law upon himself, and the Mosaic Age comes to an end. So now Moses is in a sense, this is a new generation remember, the generation that sinned at Kadesh-Barnea has now fallen in the wilderness. Forty years almost have elapsed, so it's a new generation and now there will be a call for a new commitment to the Mosaic Regulations. So I begin by reading the first nine verses or first ten verses or so.

These are the words of the covenant which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab besides the covenant which he made with them in Horeb. Now that might sound as if there are two covenants proposed and there is a sense in which you could say that they are, but most evangelical scholars and others as well think that what this really means is a renewal and an expansion of that preceding covenant.

“And Moses called unto all Israel, and said unto them, Ye have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes in the land of Egypt unto Pharaoh, and unto all his servants, and unto all his land; the great temptations which thine eyes have seen, the signs, and those great miracles, yet the Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day. And I have led you forty years in the wilderness: your clothes are not waxen old upon you, and Thy shoe is not waxen old upon Thy foot. Ye have not eaten bread, neither have ye drunk wine or strong drink: that ye might know that I am the Lord your God. And when ye came unto this place, Sihon the king of Heshbon, and Og the king of Bashan, came out against us unto battle, and we smote

them: And we took their land, and gave it for an inheritance unto the Reubenites, and to the Gadites, and to the half tribe of Manasseh. Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do.”

So Moses is calling upon them to make a fresh commitment.

Now notice you can see already Moses is putting his finger upon the fact that the children of Israel have been a disobedient and stubborn people. Notice he says you have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes in the land of Egypt unto Pharaoh and unto all his servants and unto all his land. Then he mentions the fact that they have not responded and notice how he does it. He will put it as if the Lord is the ultimate one who gives responsiveness.

Notice the great testings which thine eyes have seen, the signs and those great miracles, yet the Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive and eyes to see and ears to hear unto this day. In other words Israel, though they have seen the mighty miracles performed by Moses and then the passage through the Red Sea and then the other miracles of the wilderness days, still they have been stubborn, stiff-necked people. One thinks of the New Testament times and Paul’s words in 2 Corinthians chapter 3 when he speaks of the same kind of thing beginning at verse 12 through verse 18, Paul says in 2 Corinthians 3,

“Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech: And not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished: But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart.”

Though we needn’t read any further, you can see that what he is saying is that Israel still abides in the darkness of unbelief. He goes on to say yet the Lord led them for forty years in the wilderness and their clothes have not waxed old upon them and their shoe is not waxed old upon Thy foot. Remarkable miracles that their clothes should not be worn, their shoes should not be worn. You haven’t eaten bread, neither have you drunk wine nor strong drink that you might know that I am Yahweh your God. There is no excuse for the unbelief of the nation. In other words, God has done mighty miracles for them. He has also given them victories over Sihon and Og and others and in spite of this, they have been unresponsive to the word of God.

Now we needn’t talk about application of this because it's so obvious to us I think that this is characteristic of human nature. We are just such individuals as the children of Israel. We come in an evangelical church, we listen to the word of God week after week, moth after month, year after year, and for some of us decade after decade, and our hair gets gray, that is if it's still there at all, it gets gray and our lives are often characterized by the same dullness of hearing and stubbornness of response to the word of God. These words given to Israel should be of the greatest significance for every one of us. I think it would be a great victory if after our meeting tonight, we would all go home, get down by our bed or by our chair and ask God to deliver us from the kind of dullness of heart that is spoken of here. So Moses calls upon them in the 9th verse, "Keep therefore the words of this covenant and do them, that you may prosper in all that you do."

Now then he goes on to speak further about this in verse 10 through verse 15. Listen to these words. “Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God; your captains of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, with all the men of Israel, Your little ones, your wives, and Thy stranger that is in Thy camp, from the hewer of Thy wood unto the drawer of Thy water.” That’s an Old Testament expression by the way that was often used of the servants. Those that had the duties of cutting the wood and getting the

water. And in Joshua three-four times you will find reference to the hewers of wood and the drawers of water.

That's what we need around in a church like Believers Chapel, some people who will be hewers of wood and drawers of water. That is who will do the tasks that need to be done. Mrs. Ray for example. She has to do that every now and then. Do you know the other day I arrived at the Chapel and she was out doing the yard. Well at least she was out to give in directions to Tom to do the yard, and so we need hewers of wood and drawers of water and these are the servants and they are included.

And Moses goes on to say that,

“Thou shouldest enter into covenant with the Lord Thy God, and into his oath, which the Lord Thy God maketh with Thee this day: That he may establish Thee to day for a people unto himself, and that he may be unto Thee a God, as he hath said unto Thee, and as he hath sworn unto Thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.”

You will notice the linking of the two covenants, the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, that governs the total promises and the promise of the land, the promise of blessing and the land, but it's the Mosaic Covenant that is the administrative covenant. So one is the promissory covenant, unconditional.

The Mosaic is the one that is conditional and lays down the stipulations for the enjoyment of the blessings and Moses there reminds them of the fact that today as they are gathered here, they stand in the presence of the Lord God. Evidently he regarded this as a very solemn occasion. In fact some feel that probably there was some kind of special celebration that lies in the background of these words, but nothing is said about it, so that's pure speculation but it may have been some kind of special gathering of the people, all of the particular people were there that you might expect to be there. He mentions the captains of their tribes, the elders, the officers, the little ones, the wives, the stranger,

the hewers of wood, the drawers of water. So all the people were there, a very solemn occasion and he is going to call upon them to respond to the conditional covenant that God has made with them because that governs the enjoyment of the land into which he is going to bring them.

Now I remind you of making a careful distinction between in that governs the possession of the land and the enjoyment of it. What governs the ultimate possession of the land is the Abrahamic unconditional covenant. It will ultimately be theirs because God rests the faithfulness of his word and character upon that, but the enjoyment of that covenant rests upon their obedience, passing thing. So he talks about bringing them into the covenant. The Hebrew expression in verse 12 “That Thou shouldest enter into covenant” is to pass over into a “covenant with the Lord Thy God, and into his oath, which the Lord Thy God maketh with Thee this day.” And then notice the covenantal language because this is the covenantal language of the Old Testament in verse 13 “That he may be unto Thee a God, as he hath said unto Thee, and as he hath sworn unto Thy fathers.” The characteristic covenantal language is that the people of God will be his people and he will be their God. In other words, there is a union between the Lord God and his people.

Now in the New Testament time, when Paul speaks about this and the fullness of the divine revelation, he will talk about believers being in Christ; that is in union with Christ and in being in union with Christ, in union with the triune God. So the covenant confirmed by the blood on Calvary’s cross has now been ratified and those who believe enter into that relationship, but here Moses is speaking before the accomplishment of that acceptance so far as their faith will be rewarded in the future with the fulfillment of the promises. And notice he mentions the Abrahamic Covenant.

Now he goes on to say that this covenant is universally accessible. Notice the 14th verse.

“Neither with you only do I make this covenant and this oath; But with him that standeth here with us this day before the Lord our God, and also with him that is not here with us this day: (For ye know how we have dwelt in the land of Egypt; and how we came through the nations which ye passed by; And ye have seen their abominations, and their idols, wood and stone, silver and gold, which were among them:). Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the Lord our God, to go and serve the Gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood; And it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imaginations of mine heart.”

Now some of you have an NIV and it reads something like this will bring disaster on the watered land as well as the dry. That's because there is some question about how to render the last part of verse 19.

“The Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven.”

Now you can see here again that Moses is at this point saying that this covenant is a covenant that is accessible to all. Not simply to those who hear, but also with those who are not here this day. In other words, written into the Abrahamic promises and also the stipulations concerning the Mosaic Covenant is the fact that this is going to be a lengthy period of time. In other words if Israel had paid close attention to what was being said to her through Moses, they would have known that a rather lengthy history awaited them in the future and that others would enter into these blessings as well.

Well that’s to be expected because the Abrahamic Covenant said, did it not, and in Thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed. That was in anticipation of the fact that there would be a lengthy period of time in which the divine program would be carried out. Notice the warnings that are given in verse 20.

“The Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven. And the Lord shall separate him unto evil out of all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant that are written in this book of the law.”

Now we didn’t have time to talk about this but the curses have been given to us in the immediately preceding chapter, The Blessings and The Curses, and that of course is what Moses is speaking about and he is warning them that in order to participate in the blessings individually, it is necessary for them to believe. Now Paul later on will say that the Romans, not all who are of Israel, are Israel. Now what he means by that is not that when he says not all who are of Israel are Israel. He is not saying the gentiles are Israelites. He is saying there are two kinds of Israelites. There are believing Israelites and there are unbelieving Israelites. So not all who are of Israel are Israel.

So there is an elect Israel. He calls it in a little while later the election according to grace, the remnant according to the election of grace. So what Moses is stressing here is the fact that it is necessary for each individual in Israel to respond in faith and trust to the stipulations of this covenant. If they do not respond to the stipulations and trust, then the curses shall fall upon them even though they are Israelites, but that will not cancel the ultimate hope of Israel as a people, as a nation. You will notice that he said that they stand before him today as a people and so Israel has become a nation and the promises

pertain to the nation. There is a national future, but individuals must believe in order to participate in that.

Now chapter 29 beginning at verse 22, we will read on through the end of the, well to the next of the last verse. Verse 22, the punishment suggested by these things is expiated,

“So that the generations to come of your children that shall rise up after you, and the stranger that shall come from a far land, shall say, when they see the plagues of that land, and the sicknesses which the Lord hath laid upon it; And that the whole land thereof is brimstone, and salt, and burning, that it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the overthrow of Sodom, and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim (these were cities that were destroyed when Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed), which the Lord overthrew in his anger, and in his wrath: Even all nations shall say, Wherefore hath the lord done thus unto this land? what meaneth the heat of this great anger?”

You know one might have said this at the beginning of the 20th Century as he looked at the land which we know today is the land of Israel. That’s what returning travelers to the Holy Land used to frequently say. This land is a land that looks as if it rests under a curse. Today things are different largely because God has it seems to me in his providence has brought the Israelites back into the land and there have been marvelous improvements in the condition of that land, and so one cannot look at the land and say quite the same thing today, but there may be a time in the future when they do.

I know that evangelicals tend to think because of the war of 1948 that because Israel is back, that’s it. But we have no assurance so far as the word of God is concerned that Israel shall not be driven out of the land, that is the present nation of Israel may not be a nation. I was just reading in *The New York Times* just today, there was an article with reference to Rabbi Meir Kahane who is the one of the rightists of the rightists in

Jerusalem, now sits in the Knesset and the influence that he has had in the land and in the course of the letter from a Jewish man in the city of Brooklyn to the editor of *The New York Times*, he made the statement and I can only tell you what he said. My notes are on my desk at [indistinct], but it went something like this; that according to a recent scientific poll, it has been shown incontrovertibly, these were the words that he used, incontrovertibly that eighty percent of the Arab citizens of Israel would like to destroy the country.

Now that doesn’t say anything about the countless millions, about eighty or so, that are gathered around the Nation Israel who would like nothing better than to see Israel destroyed. So we don't really have any assurance that what has transpired over the past forty years almost is really the restoration of the nation Israel. We do know that for centuries if you had looked at that land, you might have wondered how God could ever have called it through Moses a land flowing with milk and honey.

And you can easily see how someone might well have said wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this land? What meaneth the heat of this great anger? And then the answer comes and it's very appropriate for today. Israelis don't like to hear this, but nevertheless here it is right in their word in the renewal of the covenant that their own Moses made with them. Listen 25th verse “Because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord God of their fathers, which he made with them when he brought them forth out of the land of Egypt.” The great mass of people in Israel today are not believers at all in the God of Israel. That’s largely an agnostic country and while it is filled with all kinds of small groups of people, in fact it's remarkable to look at a panorama of the government of that land, and while on one side there is the Likud faction on the right, and there is the Labor Party on the left, each one of them is made up of a lot of other little factions and in fact sometimes only one person is in the Knesset for one particular group.

The Orthodox are of course very strong there, but they are not believers in the word of God. This morning also in *The New York Times* there was a section in which the

Orthodox Jews were objecting to the Mormons being in Jerusalem because the Mormons’ Brigham Young University established a part of their school there, and so they’ve finally gotten some property and they are building and the Orthodox do not like it and so they are carrying signs around. It showed a picture of some of the signs about the Mormons. One was ‘Is not Utah big enough?’ Another one was ‘We are the chosen people. This is our land. Out.’ And then there were several others I have forgotten. I wish I had my notes. I was going to read one or two other things that they were carrying around to let people know about it.

One that impressed me very much was that showed that they understood something about what the Mormons believe. You see the Mormons are saying they are not going to proselytize, and they are so afraid that they are going to proselytize, and so one of the signs says, how can you promise to go against your own religion? That’s very clever I think. That’s like a Christian. How can a Christian make a promise not to evangelize? When the word of God says that we have to be evangelists of the Gospel, but this individual representing the Mormon Church says we are not here to proselytize, we promise that we won’t do it, and so the Orthodox Jewish fellow recognized that was violating their own principles. So he says, how can you do that?

Well the reason that that land is as it is today is because just as Moses has said here they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord God of their fathers which he made with them and if you wanted to just point an Israeli to the word of God and say look this is why the conditions are as they are in the land, here is a text to which you can point. You have forsaken the covenant of the Lord God of your fathers which He made with them when He brought them forth out of the land of Egypt. Looked at from the historical standpoint of the Old Testament, that would be applicable to them. Now of course this finds its greatest fulfillment in the fact of the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ who was the promised mediator that was promised to Abraham and confirmed to the fathers.

Now the last verse of chapter 29 is a verse that we often refer to in theology. We talk about the things that the scriptures say about the divine revelation and we say “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.” We lay stress upon the fact that God is our mission and we can never understand all the knowledge of God because His knowledge is infinite.

The only thing that we can possibly understand is that which is revealed, that is ectypal knowledge, that is knowledge that is given to us out of the archetypal knowledge, all the knowledge that God has. So the knowledge that is available for us is only partial. God has all knowledge. His knowledge may be illustrated by the dark side of the moon. We cannot know what that’s like. We know that it’s there. We know God understands things which are not even revealed in the word of God. His knowledge is infinite. He is omniscient, but now I would like for you to put it in this context.

That’s a great text. Theologians have often used it. It’s a fair use of it but it’s found in a certain context and its context is simply this. He says, “The secret things belong unto the lord our God: but those things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.” In other words he is saying there are many things that the Lord God knows and that belong to His infinite knowledge and wisdom, but our responsibility, Moses says, is to do the words of this law. That’s our responsibility. In other words, he makes the application to them with reference to the Mosaic law or the renewal of it here in this particular instance.

Now in chapter 30, he goes on to speak about the way in which they may return. Now I want you to notice that while the details are not given here, it is anticipated that Israel is going to be scattered and disciplined to the four corners of the earth. That’s spelled out in Leviticus chapter 26, but it’s not spelled out here, but it’s anticipated. Notice verse 27,

“And the anger of the Lord was kindled against this land, to bring upon it all the curses that are written in this book: And the Lord rooted them out of their land in anger, and in wrath, and in great indignation, and cast them into another land, as it is this day.”

Now then in verse 30, he will give the basis upon which Israel may be restored,

“And it shall come to pass when all (I will read the first ten verses) and it shall come to pass when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither the Lord our God hath driven thee, and shalt return unto the Lord thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul; that then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the Lord thy God has scattered thee. If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the Lord thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee.”

That's one of the interesting things about today in Israel. They are the Sephardim and the Ashkenazi Jews, and they literally come from over the face of the earth. It's very, very inspiring to think about it, whether it's the final fulfillment or not, we must leave that to the Lord God. Our minds are finite.

“And the Lord thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it.” (You notice it says specific land which the fathers have possessed which Israel is to possess.) “And thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers. And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all

thy soul, that thou mayest live.” (You notice again effectual grace promised by the Lord God ultimately to the nation.) “And the Lord thy God will put all these curses upon thine enemies, and on them that hate thee, which persecuted thee. And thou shalt return and obey the voice of the Lord, and do all his commandments which I command thee this day. And the Lord thy God will make thee plenteous in every work of thine hand, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy land, for good: for the Lord will again rejoice over thee for good, as he rejoiced over thy fathers. If thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which are written in this book of the law, and if thou turn unto the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul.”

So in other words, the enjoyment of the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant depends upon the faith of the individuals. The ultimate fulfillment depends upon God and His sovereign grace, His faithfulness to His work, but the entrance into the blessing will depend upon the responsiveness of the nation. To this day that has not come, Israel is an unrepentant people and that’s why she hasn’t entered into these blessings. Now he says in the 11th verse “For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off.” You will recognize this probably as a passage Paul cites in Romans chapter 10. Listen to what he says.

“It is not in heaven, that thou shouldst say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that Thou shouldst say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.”

One might ask what is the meaning of this commandment in verse 11. Now I would like for you just to notice this. This commandment is singular, but now in the preceding context, look at verse 8. “And Thou shalt return and obey the voice of the Lord, and do all his commandments.” Plural. Verse 10, “If thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes” but then the latter part of verse 10 says “and if thou turn unto the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul. For this commandment.” What commandment? All those commandments of the Mosaic law which have been renewed here? No. This commandment is the commandment if you turn unto the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. This commandment which I command you this day, it's this commandment that's not hidden from thee, it's not far off. It's not in heaven, as if you should say, Who shall go up to heaven? It's not in the abyss as Paul would later say. It's not beyond the sea. It's a word that's nigh thee. It's in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.” So you see everything depends upon the response of faith.

Now what do you do after you have told people everything depends upon the response of faith? Then you call upon them for decision. We Calvinists believe in the decision of the will. Arminians like to say, after Calvinists say there is no such thing as free will, but we believe in a will. Well Calvinists believe in the will. They believe you must make a decision of the will. They just differ with our Arminian friends in saying we believe the decision is traceable to the Grace of God.

You believe the decision is traceable to your own free will. In other words, it's traceable to you, and we say logically your salvation is God's and yours. We say salvation is of the Lord. We say not that you are not Christian; we just say you're confused. Now we don't mean that in a big sense. We mean confused in a little sense, because most of us Calvinists have passed through this. So we are very sympathetic, we welcome you and if you haven't yet come to an understanding of that, we want to treat you as a brother or a sister, and say we want you to come on and understand that salvation is of the Lord.

You must make a decision and if you like to stress that, then you can stress it in our Calvinistic understanding because that's precisely what Moses does. He says,

“See, I have set before this day life and good, and death and evil; in that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the Lord Thy God shall bless Thee in the land whither Thou goest to possess it. But if thine heart turn away, so that Thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither Thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it.”

Now it was customary in the ancient Near Eastern treaty patterns to call upon the Gods and so Moses does, but he doesn't call upon the gods, he calls upon the only God. “I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: That thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land.” Now notice how the conditional covenant is ultimately that that determines the enjoyment of the unconditional promissory covenant “The land which the Lord sware unto Thy fathers, to Abraham, and to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.”

Well I don't know whether what I have said to you tonight is like my notes. When I get home, I will look at my desk and I'll say well, I forgot to say that or I said some things not on my notes, but essentially this is what Moses was trying to tell the children of Israel. As they entered into the land, he was calling upon them for a fresh dedication to the covenant that God had made with them which regulated their enjoyment of the land in which he was bringing them.

May God help us to make the proper application and to remember that it's not enough to know, but we are to choose and we are to respond and we are to trust and if by God's grace we go to Him and say Lord I want to obey Thee, He will do what He did and promised to them. He will circumcise our hearts to love the Lord our God with all our hearts and with all our minds. May God help us to do that! Let's bow together in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we are grateful to Thee for these words that have been given to us and we are thankful for the warnings and admonitions and the great promises which Thou didst give to the nation through Moses, the mediator, the servant of God. Speak to our hearts.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.