

THE STRONG APPEAL AND HOPE OF THE COVENANT: RESTORATION — REPENTANCE AND FORGIVENESS DEUTERONOMY 30:01–20

Introduction

Decisions sometimes confront us that are very difficult to make. We simply do not know what to do. Difficult decisions often involve health or personal difficulty; marital, family or employment problems; or some business, national or world issue. There are events that happen in life that are simply impossible to predict. At other times an event occurs because we have made a wrong decision; we just could not see into the future.

This is not the case with God: the future is known by God, even the details of future events. Because He knows all things — God was able to predict the terrible apostasy of the Israelites referred to in the recent message preached by Moses (see notes, Deut 28:1-68). Now, one of the most interesting and captivating prophecies in all of Scripture is to be made. Speaking through Moses, God predicts the restoration of Israel, a day when the Jews will return to the promised land, modern-day Palestine. Has this prophecy been fulfilled? Was the return of the Jews to Palestine in 1948 a fulfilment of this prophecy? Some Bible commentators say, “Yes!” But if the return of the Jews to Palestine is a fulfilment of this prophecy, then the conditions that are covered by this passage have not yet been met. The Jewish people as a whole community or nation have not yet renewed their commitment to God; they have not yet rededicated their lives to the new covenant established by God. This is the discussion of this important passage of Scripture: *The Strong Appeal and Hope of the Covenant: Restoration — Repentance and Forgiveness*, Deuteronomy 30:1-20.

- I. The conditions of the covenant (vv. 1-2).
- II. The promises of the covenant: restoration — forgiveness and acceptance (vv. 3-10).
- III. The appeal of the covenant: the call to love and obey the LORD (vv. 11-16).
- IV. The final warning against breaking the covenant (vv. 17-18).
- V. The final appeal to accept the covenant (vv. 19-20).

I. Deuteronomy 30:01–02 *The Conditions of the Covenant*

The conditions of the covenant are spelled out. Keep in mind what Moses had just preached: the terrible apostasy of the Israelites. A day was coming when the Israelites would turn away from God and turn to idolatry and false worship. As a result, the judgment of God would fall upon their heads. A foreign nation was to conquer the Israelites and enslave them. The Israelites were to become exiles in a foreign nation that they knew nothing about (28:36).

But now, Moses predicted that a glorious day of restoration would come. After suffering the terrible judgment and curses of God, the people would fulfil the conditions of the covenant. Note the Scripture and outline:

1. The people must sense the need for repentance (v. 1). They must come to their senses and recall the blessings and curses of God. Note the great hope laid out by Moses: eventually the people would recall the blessings of God as well as the curses for disobedience. By meditating upon the blessings and judgments of God, they would begin to sense their need for repentance. A deep sense of need would grip their hearts but, tragically, only after they had been enslaved by the world and suffered a broken heart.
2. The people must repent, return to the LORD (v. 2). They must turn away from their hypocrisy and from engaging in idolatry and false worship. They must turn away from their lives of sin and shame and return to God.
3. The people must obey the LORD, obey Him with their whole hearts and souls (v. 2). Obedience is an absolute essential for restoration and forgiveness.

If the people were going to rededicate their lives to God, if they were going to renew their commitment and covenant with God, the people must repent and obey the LORD.

Thought 1. A renewal or rededication of life involves two things: repentance and obedience to the LORD. No matter how terrible a sin we have committed, God will forgive us and restore us. But we must sense the need for repentance and actually repent. True repentance is an absolute essential. So is obedience. To be forgiven and restored before God, we must repent and obey God.

(1) Repentance is necessary.

Mat 3:2 And saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

Luke 13:3 "I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish."

Acts 3:19 Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.

Acts 8:22 Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart.

2 Chr 7:14 If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

Isa 55:7 Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

Ezek 18:31 Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die, O house of Israel?

Joel 2:12 'Even now,' declares the LORD, 'return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.'

Ezek 18:21 *“But if a wicked man turns away from all the sins he has committed and keeps all my decrees and does what is just and right, he will surely live; he will not die.”*

(2) Obedience — obeying God with all of one’s heart and soul — is necessary to be restored to God.

Mat 7:21 *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”*

John 15:10 *“If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love.”*

John 15:14 *“You are my friends, if you do what I command.”*

Rev 22:14 *“Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.”*

Deut 26:16 *The LORD your God commands you this day to follow these decrees and laws; carefully observe them with all your heart and with all your soul.*

II. Deuteronomy 30:03–10 The Promises of the Covenant: Restoration, Forgiveness and Acceptance

The promise of the covenant is clearly stated, the wonderful promise of restoration — forgiveness and acceptance by the LORD. This is the great promise of restoration given to Israel, and through Israel, given to every person who ever repents and turns to the LORD to follow Him wholeheartedly. Note the wonderful promise given by God:

1. The LORD will have compassion and restore His people (vv. 3-5). He will restore the Israelites from all nations, even the most distant lands (v. 4). He will restore them to the promised land (v. 5). Once they have repented of their sins, they will again lay claim to their inheritance and walk victoriously in the promised land of God.
2. The LORD will make His people more prosperous and numerous than ever before (v. 5).
3. The LORD will circumcise or cut away the sins of their hearts and forgive them (v. 6). He will chisel away at their hard, stubborn hearts. He will enable them to love Him completely and to live forever before Him.
4. The LORD will actually transfer all the curses of His judgment upon the enemies of His people (v. 7). The very people who had ridiculed, mocked, enslaved and persecuted His people will suffer the terrible curses of God’s judgment.
5. The LORD will stir His people to obey all His commandments (v. 8). At long last — sometime in the future — the people of God will become obedient. They will keep the commandments of God, obey His Holy Word.
6. The LORD will pour out His blessings upon His people. He will bless their lives, work and property (v. 9). The LORD will make His people prosperous and successful, causing Him to joy and rejoice in them.

7. But note: the warning is again issued. The promises of the new covenant are conditional: the restoration and blessings are conditional (v. 10). Standing before the people and preaching his heart out, Moses declared: to be forgiven and restored before God...

- you must obey the LORD and His commandments
- you must repent, turn to the LORD with your whole heart and soul

Thought 1. This Scripture covers one of the great promises of God, the promise of forgiveness. But note: the promise is conditional. If we confess and repent of our sins, God will forgive us. He will restore us before His face.

Acts 5:31 God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Saviour that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel.

Acts 13:38 Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you.

Eph 1:7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Psa 51:12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit.

Isa 43:25 "I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more."

Isa 44:22 "I have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist. Return to me, for I have redeemed you."

Isa 55:7 Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

Jer 3:22 "Return, faithless people; I will cure you of backsliding." "Yes, we will come to you, for you are the LORD our God."

Hosea 14:4 "I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them."

Micah 7:19 You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.

Thought 2. The restoration of Israel is one of the great prophecies of the Bible. Scripture after Scripture predicted that the Jews, the Israelites, would someday return to the land promised them by God, the land that is known today as Palestine.

Rom 11:26-27 And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins."

Deut 30:3-5 *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. 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. 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.*

Isa 1:26 *“I will restore your judges as in days of old, your counsellors as at the beginning. Afterward you will be called the City of Righteousness, the Faithful City.”*

Isa 11: 11-12 *In that day the LORD will reach out his hand a second time to reclaim the surviving remnant of his people from Assyria, from Lower Egypt, from Upper Egypt, from Cush, from Elam, from Babylonia, from Hamath and from the islands of the Mediterranean. He will raise a banner for the nations and gather the exiles of Israel; he will assemble the scattered people of Judah from the four quarters of the earth.*

Isa 27:13 *And in that day a great trumpet will sound. Those who were perishing in Assyria and those who were exiled in Egypt will come and worship the LORD on the holy mountain in Jerusalem.*

Isa 49:22 *This is what the Sovereign LORD says: “See, I will beckon to the Gentiles, I will lift up my banner to the peoples; they will bring your sons in their arms and carry your daughters on their shoulders.”*

Isa 60:10 *Foreigners will rebuild your walls, and their kings will serve you. Though in anger I struck you, in favour I will show you compassion.*

Jer 23:3-8 *“I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and will bring them back to their pasture, where they will be fruitful and increase in number. I will place shepherds over them who will tend them, and they will no longer be afraid or terrified, nor will any be missing,” declares the LORD. “The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land.” In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteous Saviour. “So then, the days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when the people will no longer say, ‘As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the Israelites up out of Egypt,’ But they will say, ‘As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the descendants of Israel up out of the land of the north and out of all countries where he had banished them.’ Then they will live in their own land.”*

Jer 31:31-33 *“The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD. “This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after*

that time,” declares the LORD. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.”

Ezek 20:40 *For on my holy mountain, the high mountain of Israel, declares the Sovereign LORD, there in the land the entire house of Israel will serve me, and there I will accept them. There I will require your offerings and your choice gifts, along with all your holy sacrifices.*

Ezek 37:21-28 *And say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will take the Israelites out of the nations where they have gone. I will gather them from all around and bring them back into their own land. I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel. There will be one king over all of them and they will never again be two nations or be divided into two kingdoms. They will no longer defile themselves with their idols and vile images or with any of their offenses, for I will save them from all their sinful backsliding, and I will cleanse them. They will be my people, and I will be their God. My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd. They will follow my laws and be careful to keep my decrees. They will live in the land I gave to my servant Jacob, the land where your ancestors lived. They and their children and their children’s children will live there forever, and David my servant will be their prince forever. I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant. I will establish them and increase their numbers, and I will put my sanctuary among them forever. My dwelling place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people. Then the nations will know that I the LORD make Israel holy, when my sanctuary is among them forever.’”*

Hos 2:14-16 *“Therefore I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her. There I will give her back her vineyards, and will make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. There she will respond as in the days of her youth, as in the day she came up out of Egypt. “In that day,” declares the LORD, “you will call me ‘my husband’; you will no longer call me ‘my master.’”*

Zec 1:17 *“Proclaim further: This is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘My towns will again overflow with prosperity, and the LORD will again comfort Zion and choose Jerusalem.’”*

Zec 14:11 *It will be inhabited; never again will it be destroyed. Jerusalem will be secure.*

Mal 3:4 *And the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the LORD, as in days gone by, as in former years.*

III. Deuteronomy 30:11–16 The Appeal of the Covenant: The Call to Love and Obey the LORD

The appeal of the covenant is a strong call, a call to love and obey the LORD. Moses now turned away from prediction and prophecy and focused upon the audience before him. As he faced them, he knew that they desperately needed to rededicate their lives to the

LORD. They had a dire need to renew their covenant, their commitment to the LORD. With a strong sense of urgency burning within his heart, he challenged the people to love and obey the LORD:

1. The call to obey God is not unreasonable nor impossible (vv. 11-14). The commandments of God are not in some distant, inaccessible place (vv. 12-13). They are not up in heaven, still unrevealed and hidden in the heart of God. The commandments are not beyond the sea in a foreign land (v. 13). No! The Word of God is near us. It has been revealed by God so that we can obey it (v. 14).

God has demonstrated His love to us in a most wonderful way. He has not left us in the dark, groping, grasping and stumbling about, seeking the answers to life on our own. No! God has revealed His Holy Word to us, telling us how to live life, how to find God, and how to have the assurance of living forever. The Word of God is near, very near, right at our fingertips.

2. All of a sudden, with passion burning in his soul, Moses called upon the people to make a decision (v. 15)...
 - between life and death
 - between good and evil
3. Moses spelled out exactly what he meant by the call of the covenant (v. 16). The call was...
 - to love the LORD
 - to walk in His ways
 - to obey His commandments
4. The decision to love and obey the LORD will result in the most wonderful life. A person will live a full and fruitful life and be wonderfully blessed in the promised land (v. 16).

Thought 1. The call to us is direct and forceful: we must love and obey the LORD. We who live today are without defence, totally without excuse. For God has not only given us the Written Word but also the Living Word. The Written Word is the Holy Bible, the Scriptures that have been written down for us to obey. The Living Word is the Lord Jesus Christ, the greatest witness to the truth that could ever be conceived by the mind of man. Yes, God did a marvellous thing in giving us the Written Word of God. But God did a far more marvellous thing by giving us the Living Word of God. Jesus Christ actually lived out the Written Word of God. He obeyed every commandment in the Holy Scripture, and by obeying, showed us how to obey God. By living upon this earth, Jesus Christ showed us how to live life. But not only this: being the Perfect Man — obeying all of the commandments of God and being sinless — He became the Ideal Man. As the Ideal Man, He was able to bear all our sins and pay the penalty of our condemnation. He was able to take the judgment that was due us — take it and bear it for us.

As the Living Word of God, Jesus Christ is a far greater gift from God than even the Written Word of God. Because of living in this day and time, we are of all people without excuse. If a people were ever confronted with a decision that desperately needed to be made, it is we who live today. We must make the decision to love and obey the LORD.

John 14:15-16 *“If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever — the Spirit of truth.*

John 14:23 *Jesus replied, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”*

John 16:27 *“No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.”*

Eph 6:24 *Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.*

2 Th 3:5 *May the Lord direct your hearts into God’s love and Christ’s perseverance.*

1 Pet 1:8 *Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy.*

Jude 1:21 *Keep yourselves in God’s love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.*

Deut 6:5 *Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.*

Deut 10:12 *And now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.*

Psa 31:23 *Love the LORD, all his saints! The LORD preserves the faithful, but the proud he pays back in full.*

IV. Deuteronomy 30:17–18 The Final Warning Against Breaking the Covenant

The final warning against breaking the covenant was issued. Stressing the judgment of God would again show the people the desperate need to rededicate their lives to God, to renew their covenant and commitment to Him.

Sensing deep compassion and love for the people, Moses warned them against turning away from God and becoming disobedient. They must — absolutely must — guard against idolatry and false worship (v. 17). Moses shouted that they would surely perish and be destroyed if they turned away from God. They would not live long in the promised land, not live full and victorious lives (v. 18).

Thought 1. The warning to us is as clear as it can be stated: if we do not trust the LORD — follow and obey Him — we will perish, be utterly destroyed. We will not live long in the promised land of God.

John 3:16-18 *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.”*

John 3:36 *“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.”*

John 8:24 *“I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins.”*

John 16:8-9 *“When he comes he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: In regard to sin because men do not believe in me.”*

Heb 3:8-12 *Do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the wilderness, where your ancestors tested and tried me, though for forty years they saw what I did. That is why I was angry with that generation; I said, ‘Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.’ So I declared on oath in my anger, ‘They shall never enter my rest.’ See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.*

Heb 4:1-2, 11 *Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith....Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.*

V. Deuteronomy 30:19–20 The Final Appeal to Accept the Covenant

The final appeal to accept the covenant was urged upon the people. Urgency and immediate attention were called for. Every compelling fact Moses could impress upon the people he had preached. Only one thing remained: the decision. The people had a choice to make: life or death, blessings or curses (v. 19). Having a heart broken with compassion and a gripping sense of urgency, he appealed to the people: “Choose life! Choose life so that you and your children will live” (vv. 19-20).

=> Choose to love God.

=> Choose to obey His voice, His Word.

=> Choose to cling, to hold fast to Him.

Note that Moses gave two strong reasons why the people must choose life, why they must rededicate their lives to God, renew their commitment and covenant with God.

First, because “the LORD is your life” (v. 20). The LORD “gives life, preserves life, restores life and prolongs life by His power.” The fullness of life that overflows with blessing after blessing, and the victorious life that conquers all the trials, temptations, and enemies of this world all come from “the LORD [who] is your life.”

But this is not the only reason to make a decision of rededication; there is a second strong reason. If you will renew your covenant and commitment, the LORD will give you a long life in the promised land. You will walk victoriously throughout all of life, conquering all the trials, temptations and enemies that confront you. You will march victoriously through and over all, march right into the promised land of God.

Thought 1. The choice is ours. A decision has to be made. We choose either life or death, either blessings or curses. The appeal of God’s Holy Word is this: Choose life! Choose life so that you and your children will live full and victorious lives over all the trials, temptations and enemies of this world.

Mark 10:21 *Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”*

John 5:20 *“For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, and he will show him even greater works than these, so that you will be amazed.”*

John 6:67 *“You do not want to leave too, do you?” Jesus asked the twelve.*

2 Cor 6:2 *For he says, “In the time of my favour I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.” I tell you, now is the time of God’s favour, now is the day of salvation.*

Deut 30:15 *See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction.*

Deut 30:19-20 *This day I call heaven and 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. 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.*

Josh 24:15 *But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”*

1 Kng 18:21 *Elijah went before the people and said, “How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.” But the people said nothing. ■*