

**GOD'S COVENANT WITH ISRAEL****Deuteronomy 29–31**

**Memory Verse:** *If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved* (Rom. 10:9 ESV).

**Background Helps:**

For the fourth and final week we are studying God's covenant (the "old covenant") with Israel through Moses in the book of Deuteronomy. "These are the words of the covenant that the LORD commanded Moses to make with the people of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant that he had made with them at Horeb" (Deut. 29:1). According to this verse, this covenant made at Moab is a supplement to the covenant made at Horeb (Sinai) forty years before. This covenant at Moab consists of the entire book of Deuteronomy and amounts to a renewal of the covenant God had previously made with Israel at Sinai. "Deuteronomy is best seen as a renewal and expansion and shaping of the Sinai covenant focusing particularly on life in the land of Canaan."<sup>1</sup> It is a new Israel that receives this covenant in Moab, since the previous generation had died during the forty years of wilderness wandering.

Here is an overview of Deuteronomy 29–31:

- Deuteronomy 29:2-9: Moses reviews the last forty years of Israelite history and concludes: "Therefore keep the words of this covenant and do them, that you may prosper in all that you do" (v. 9).
- Deuteronomy 29:10-15: Moses instructs the whole nation in order that "you may enter into the sworn covenant of the LORD your God, which the LORD your God is making with you today, that he may establish you today as his people, and that he may be your God, as he promised you, and as he swore to your fathers to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob" (vv. 12-13). Notice that this covenant at Moab is based on the earlier covenant God made with the patriarchs in Genesis. Also, God makes this covenant not just with the present generation of Israelites but with all future generations (vv. 14-15).
- Deuteronomy 29:16-29: Moses warns the people against breaking this covenant and describes the consequences that will follow if they serve other gods, namely, "the curses of the covenant written in this Book of the Law" (v. 21; cf. vv. 20, 27).
- Deuteronomy 30:1-10: On the other hand, Moses promises the restoration of blessing to the nation if they wholeheartedly return to the LORD. In fact, Moses promises that "the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with your soul, that you may live" (v. 6). This promise sounds like the promise of the new covenant (Jer. 31:31-34).

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<sup>1</sup> Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *God's Kingdom through God's Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 183.

- Deuteronomy 30:11-20: Moses reminds the people of the accessibility of the commandment God has given to them (vv. 11-14). He sets before the people a choice: “life and good, death and evil” (v. 15) and exhorts them to “choose life” (v. 19) by “loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, . . . that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them” (v. 20).
- Deuteronomy 31: Moses makes provision for a successor, Joshua (vv. 1-8, 14-15, 23). He makes provision for the law to be read publicly every seven years (vv. 9-13), but the LORD predicts, nonetheless, that Israel will break the covenant in the future (vv. 16-18). Moses finishes writing the book of Deuteronomy and instructs the Levites to place it beside the ark of the covenant (vv. 24-29).

### **Lesson Helps:**

Make the memory verse, Romans 10:9, the heart of your lesson this week. A possible lesson aim: My students will learn about the accessibility of the law that God gave to Israel, so that they will take advantage of the accessible gospel of Jesus Christ. This aim is based on Paul’s quotation of Deuteronomy 30:11-14 in Romans 10:6-10, including the memory verse (see Thursday’s reading).



In class give an overview of the readings (Deut. 29–31), perhaps drawing from some of the material in the Background Helps above. Then focus on the accessibility of the commandment, that is, the old covenant, according to Deuteronomy 30:11-14. Moses says, it “is not too hard for you, neither is it far off, etc. . . . But the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it.” Moses had not only preached this law to the people at Moab (the whole book of Deuteronomy), but he wrote it down and made provision for it to be read to the whole nation every seven years (31:9-13), and he instructed the Levites to place a written copy of the law next to the ark of the covenant. It was accessible.

Still, Moses warned that the people would disobey the law and break the covenant. But God made provision for a new covenant (Jer. 31:31-34), which he would write on the hearts of the people. Deuteronomy 30:6 seems to refer to this new covenant when Moses says that, in the future, God will circumcise their hearts.

In Romans 10:6-10 Paul quotes from Deuteronomy 30:11-14 to show that the gospel (the new covenant) is even more accessible than the law (the old covenant). We don’t have to go up to heaven or down into the abyss to obtain it, because Christ has already come down from heaven and risen from the dead. In fact, “the word [of the gospel] is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (Rom. 10:8; cf. Deut. 30:14). So, “if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Rom. 10:9)—it’s that simple.

Close your class by inviting your students to believe that Jesus is alive and to confess him as their Lord.

### **Home Assignment:**

-  Read Joshua 1; 3:1–6:27; 8:30-35; 11:16-23; 21:43-45; 23–24 (two weeks’ readings).
-  Memorize Joshua 21:45 and 24:15 ESV (two weeks’ memory verses).