

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Deuteronomy: Moses' Great Appeal For Israel To Obey God For Blessing Part VII: Moses' Summary Of God's Covenant Requirements, Deuteronomy 29:1, 2-30:20

A. Learning God's Lesson On Multiple, Big Trials (Deuteronomy 29:1, 2-29)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

When we witness many unusually difficult trials people in the world around us face, and then we get hit with a wide variety of personal trials ourselves, we can wonder if the **Lord** is trying to send us a message (as follows):

(1) While typing up the first draft of this sermon last Tuesday, I was under pressure to get the first draft of this message typed into the computer while also having to drive to a medical clinic in Southbury, Connecticut to pick up some medication. My wife was still ill at home, and I needed to get the first draft of these sermon notes and the April 9 Prayer Meeting lesson notes typed into the computer that day so that if my wife needed me to do so, I could spend time out of the office all day Wednesday addressing shopping and various household chores.

When I arrived at the clinic, I learned that I had not been charged enough money on a service I had received there on a previous date, so I ended up paying for a bill I had not known I owed. I thus returned to the Church office not only under the "trials" of my wife's illness and what time constraints I had relative to the preparation of these sermon and the April 9 prayer meeting notes, but with the added burden of the unforeseen new medical bill!

(2) However, while dealing with my own little set of mounting trials, I noticed the world around me was struggling with mounting trials as well: (a) I heard radio talk show host Brad Davis on The Talk of Connecticut show last week tell his audience that he had received a large number of e-mails from listeners who were concerned that our nation is being turned into a "socialistic state." Brad tried to encourage his listeners, saying that just because many people do not like the current administration, it did not mean the country was turning socialistic, for administrations like this have come and gone throughout our nation's history. Nevertheless, I have heard Brad repeatedly address this issue in an ongoing barrage of concerns from his listeners who are not as optimistic as he is.

(b) Many still struggle financially due to the nation's economic problems: E. S. Browning's "Moneybeat" column in The Wall Street Journal, April 7, 2014, p. C2 ("Stocks Grind Higher Won't Be Easy") cited Bruce McCain, chief investment strategist at Cleveland's Key Private Bank that oversees over \$20 billion, to say, "This isn't your father's or your grandfather's economic recovery. We still have endemic slow-growth problems." Mr. Browning summed: "Investors are realizing the economy still isn't back to normal."

Need: *So, we ask, "If I and others I face big, varied trials, what might God be communicating through it all?"*

- I. Following the suzerain treaty format of the book of Deuteronomy that ends at Deuteronomy 29:1 is the Deuteronomy 29:2-29 summary of God's demands for blessing, B. K. C., O. T., p. 313-314, and that summary includes the significant claim that Israel did not grasp the lesson in the trials she had seen:**
 - A. God led Moses in the concluding summary section of the book of Deuteronomy to assert in Deuteronomy 29:4 that Israel's people still had not received a "heart to understand or eyes to see or ears to hear."
 - B. The *context* of this unusual claim is the **RECOLLECTION** of the **TRIALS** Israel had **WITNESSED** to date:
 1. First, Israel had seen great trials, signs and wonders performed by God upon the Egyptians, Deut. 29:2-3.
 2. Second, Israel had personally faced great trials of livelihood needs in her wilderness travels, Deut. 29:5-6.
 3. Third, in approaching the Promised Land, Israel had personally faced the trials of war, Deut. 29:7-8.
 - C. Thus, Israel still had not grasped the lesson in these many and varied trials that the nation had witnessed!
- II. However, in EACH of these segments of trials, GOD had HELPED Israel in ways meant to **TEACH** her to **CLEAVE to HIM ALONE VERSUS ALL OTHER FALSE GODS** she would be tempted to follow:**
 - A. In regard to the great trials on the Egyptians, God had demonstrated His sovereignty over all their false gods (Exodus 12:12b), directing Israel thus **NOT** to retain allegiance to *any* of **Egypt's false gods**, Exodus 20:1-6.
 - B. In regard to her own great livelihood need trials in the wilderness, God had met every need Israel faced for 40 years with a huge lesson in **NOT** following the **false fertility gods** she would face upon entering **Canaan**:
 1. The main Canaanite god was Baal, a **fertility** deity sought for rain since, unlike Egypt that Israel had left that was watered by the Nile, Canaan needed rain to produce a **livelihood**, Z. P. E. B., v. One, p. 431-433.
 2. Thus, to teach Israel **not** to seek after any false fertility deity for her livelihood, God led Israel through the wilderness, **Himself faithfully** meeting **all** of her **daily livelihood needs** for **40 years**:
 - a. For 40 years, Israel's clothes had not worn out regardless of the harsh wilderness climate, Deut. 29:5a.

- b. For 40 years, even Israel's shoes had not worn out regardless of much wilderness trekking, Deut. 29:5b.
- c. For 40 years, Israel had not eaten regular bread or drunk wine or strong drink, foods produced by rain in Canaan, for **God** had **daily** sustained the nation with manna and miraculously supplied her water, Exodus 16:12-35; 17:6 et al. Indeed, God's goodness is seen in His gift of an **extra day's** supply of manna when Israel reached Canaan and chose to eat of its crops versus that day's divine supply of manna, Joshua 5:12!
- C. Then, lest Israel be tempted to turn to false war gods or to abandon God's call that she conquer Canaan by faith in Him, He had given Israel great victories over Sihon king of Heshbon and Og king of Bashan near Canaan:
 - 1. When Sihon king of Heshbon had resisted Israel's request to pass through his land without harming it, and he had fought against Israel with all of his people, God gave Sihon's forces into Israel's hand though Sihon had formerly defeated Moab and seized much of its land, Deuteronomy 29:7a, c with Numbers 21:23-31.
 - 2. When Og king of Bashan had resisted Israel in fighting against her with all of his people, God gave his forces into Israel's hand though Og's people were the last of the giants, the Rephaim, Deut. 29:7b,c with Num. 21:32-34 and Deut. 3:11. Indeed, Israel slew all of them (Num. 21:35) though she had previously been faithlessly terrified back in Kadesh-barnea of having to fight such giants, Numbers 13:32-14:3.

III. Thus, God *EXTENSIVELY APPLIED* the *LESSON* of these *TRIALS* in Deuteronomy 29:9-29, urging Israel to look to HIM ALONE as GOD versus ANY OTHER GOD, or SUFFER GREAT DISCIPLINE:

- A. In Deuteronomy 29:9, God directed Israel through Moses thus to heed His words for blessing.
- B. Then, in Deuteronomy 29:10-15, God reminded Israel of the solemnity of the covenant she was making to heed the Lord for blessing, hinting in Deuteronomy 29:16-17 that she was to avoid heeding any other god.
- C. Indeed, were Israel to turn idolatrous, starting with one person and having that person's influence impact the rest of the nation to sin, Deuteronomy 29:18-29 warned that this would lead to great, extensive discipline.

Lesson: *God made Israel see His great judgments on Egypt's gods, He met her livelihood needs in her own trials in the wilderness in critique of Canaan's fertility cult and gave her great war victories to teach her to avoid idolatry!*

Application: *(1) May we trust in Christ to be saved, John 3:16. (2) If we see many and/or great trials others or we face, may we (a) examine ourselves for any idolatry (cf. 1 John 5:21), and (b) confess it as sin to God, 1 John 1:9. (3) May we firmly cleave to the Lord, worshiping Him alone in reverence and awe, Hebrews 12:28 NIV.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

In view of the trials named in our sermon introduction, not to mention numerous other trials that could have been listed there, I am convinced that God is seeking to warn us today about the idolatry of trusting in man as god.

To explain, the recent debate between evolutionist Bill Nye, "the Science Guy" and creationist Ken Ham of Answers in Genesis, was seen by millions, and in it Mr. Nye "repeatedly claimed that he was his own authority, 'as a reasonable man.'" (Mike Matthews, "The Debate Has Changed," Answers, April-June, 2014, p. 31-32. "This novel idea was birthed by modern skeptics who believed mankind can determine truth without God. Ken Ham called it the 'religion of naturalism'" (Ibid., p. 32), and Dr. Al Mohler, President of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, was cited in the Answers article above as saying: "The problem with human reason is that it . . . was corrupted by the fall . . . We are completely dependent upon divine revelation for the answers to the most important questions of life," Ibid.

Bill Nye's sole reliance on human intellect is touted in academic circles and filters down in society to where even we Christians can fall prey to relying on our intellect as our final source of reality when we **should** rely on **God!**

However, the futility of such thinking is seen in an interview Belinda Luscombe of Time ("10 Questions," April 14, 2014, p. 64) had with atheist Barbara Ehrenreich, whose Ph.D. dissertation was on cellular immunology. Ms. Ehrenreich said she "was educated as a scientist" to assert "(i)f you have a result that doesn't fit your theory, that falls way off the curve in your graph -- I'm sorry, you don't get to erase that." Then, admitting she has had a mystical experience, and asked by Luscombe if she would explore if its source "could be God," Ehrenreich said: "I would not explore monotheistic religions [like Christianity]. The religions that impress me are those which involve ecstatic communion with a deity or spirit -- like voodoo," Ibid., brackets ours. So, relying ultimately on human intellect can lead even an allegedly objective Ph. D. in science over the cliff of subjectivity into the darkness of witchcraft itself!

Indeed, historian George Marsden in The Twilight of the American Enlightenment (Barton Swaim, "The Roots of the Culture War" in Bookshelf, Ibid., The Wall Street Journal, p. A17) noted the latter 20th century's secular American philosophers "flatly contradicted" themselves, claiming "the highest good lay in personal self-fulfillment" while also holding "the only unquestionable kind of knowledge was knowledge arrived at through scientific inquiry."

May we trust in Christ to be saved and hold to Scripture's God alone versus man as a god for blessing!