

Deuteronomy 29-30 • Ratifying the Covenant

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Deuteronomy 29. *“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.” (ESV)* Or Sinai, if you will.

So again, and there's a—verse 1 of this chapter probably refers to the chapters that came ahead. That's a debatable point, but it sounds like a summary, doesn't it? Of what we've really gotten before. And really, I think chapter 29 ought to begin here with verse 2, where it says, *“And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them: “You have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land, ³ the great trials that your eyes saw, the signs, and those great wonders.”*

Now listen, as he goes on in verse 4: *“But to this day the LORD has not given you a heart to understand or eyes to see or ears to hear.”*

Now stop there for a moment. That's a little bit of a wordplay on Moses's part, because he just got done saying to them, your eyes have seen all that the Lord did, all the wonders.

Now again, there's a generation of people who were raised up during the wilderness, but there's also a good number of folks who were alive then and are still alive now, and he's speaking to them and talking about all the things the Lord has done—all the things that they'd seen in terms of the great works of God and on, and on, and on.

And then he says in verse 4, but to this day, the Lord has not given you eyes to see. So you can see the little bit of a wordplay going on there. You've seen all these things, and yet God has given you eyes that you cannot see—or, I guess you should put it the other way: has not given you eyes that you might see.

That's an interesting statement, isn't it? You've seen, but you haven't seen. I don't know if you can relate to that. I think all of us at some particular point in our lives can relate to the fact that we've seen, but we haven't seen. And maybe we are brought to a place at some point in our lives where we are made to see, but there's a period of time in our lives when we don't see.

My life—I think about my life as a young, very young man—well, a boy, and then a young man, and then to the point where I really dedicated or gave my heart to the Lord, which was around—trying to remember—sometime around 25, I think. Something like that, age 25. And I have to tell you that before I came to the Lord and before the Lord began to give me eyes to see, I didn't see.

I saw, but I didn't see. I saw things in my life that were curious. And I saw things in my life that caused me to question and caused me to wonder, huh, I wonder how that happened, or I wonder why that happened that certain way. Can you relate?

And then later on, when you come to the Lord, and the Lord begins to open your eyes and say things like, here's what's been going on. I've had my hand working in your life during this time.

And in fact, when I was ordained, the Lord—I had a very, like I've told you guys many times before—I had a very biblical ordination, in that the elders who laid hands on me are the ones who had watched me as I'd been raised up, and raised up a little too quickly, in my estimation. I didn't think it at the time, but I can see it now.

But it was neat, in that they watched my life, they laid hands on me, they prayed over me, and there were even prophetic words spoken over my life, which I greatly appreciate today, believe me. But one of the things the Lord said to me when I was ordained was, I knew you when you knew Me not.

And that's one of those statements that the Lord just throws out there to get your attention, to say, you think this relationship has just started? This has been going on. I've had My hand on you. I've been watching your life.

I believe that's the same that's true for all of your lives too. I'm not trying to set myself out as being different or special. I believe God, when you and I were just doing our own thing, going our own way, living our own life, thinking our own thoughts—God knew you, and God was working in your life to bring about His purpose. He had His hand on you, even when you weren't aware of it.

So you saw, but you didn't see. But then later on, you saw, and you could really see what the Lord was doing. And that's what God is saying here to the nation of Israel at this juncture in their lives.

He says, you've seen all of these things that the Lord has done, but you haven't really seen them. And what He's talking about here is that you still really don't have a heart to know the Lord. You really still don't have a heart to serve God. You've seen all these incredible things. You've seen miracles. I mean, the nation

of Israel has seen miracles. And miracles don't cause people to become believers, right?

Be careful about praying—when you're praying for the unsaved—be careful about praying just that God would do a miracle in their life, because people can see miracles all day long and still say, I'm not going to believe.

What we need to pray is that God would give them a heart to believe—that God would open their eyes to really see, right? Because you can see a miracle and go, whoa, that's pretty cool.

I mean, frankly, doctors see miracles from time to time. And what I mean by that is intervention of the Lord that they just cannot explain. We don't know how this guy came back to life. We don't know—we thought he was a goner, or we thought this disease was going to take him in 6 months, and now it's gone, right? Or something like that.

And they'll look at it and just—they shake their head. And they see, but they don't see. Well, some of them. Right? So you get what kind of is being said here.

Now, he's going to go, and he's going to talk about this a little bit more. We're going to see the Lord is going to speak through Moses in a very prophetic way through these two chapters that we're hopefully going to be looking at tonight.

In fact, you'll notice as we go here in verse 5 and following, that Moses is going to begin to speak for the Lord in the first person. All right? Instead of saying the Lord, he's going to say I. So here we go.

Verse 5: *“I have led you forty years in the wilderness. Your clothes have not worn out on you, and your sandals have not worn off your feet.”*

Can you imagine having the same shoes for forty years? I mean, give me a break. Talk about being out of style, right?

My kids even tease me a little bit for having—I got some shoes in my closet that are older than some of my kids. And the youngest one's twenty, so that tells you a little something right there. We're talking borderline miracle here, right?

But the first thing God speaks to the nation of Israel here is, this is the stuff they saw but didn't see. Yeah, they saw it, but it didn't draw their hearts. He says, 40 years—40 years in the wilderness. I led you, and your clothes never wore out.

I had a couple of favorite shirts. I wish God would have done that miracle too. Can you imagine? 40 years. Good grief. I'm just impressed they could still fit in their clothes 40 years later. That's it. The thing that really surprises me.

Verse 6 says, *“You have not eaten bread, and you have not drunk wine or strong drink, that you may know that I am the LORD your God.”*

What's that all about? What is not eating bread or drinking wine? How does that prove the Lord's presence in their lives? Well, it's because of what they did eat. It's not what they didn't eat. It's what they did eat. What they ate was manna, which was supernaturally delivered to their doorstep every morning. And they drank water from the rock—supernaturally.

Water doesn't come out of rock. You probably have noticed that. And this was God's supernatural provision for them during the time of the wilderness. And so what is He saying? You saw these things every morning—every single morning you got up, you went outside, you yawned, stretched, and went and gathered up some manna and said, all right, guys, here we go. Let's cook this stuff up and make some manna cakes or banana bread or whatever we're making today, or whatever's on the menu.

And you saw, but you didn't see. You see? You saw this every single day, and yet your heart is still not drawn to the Lord. It's still not desirous of Him. You saw, but you didn't see.

Verse 7: *“And when you came to this place (meaning the place where they basically were right now—he says), Sihon the king of Heshbon and Og the king of Bashan came out against us to battle, but we defeated them.”*

Hey, that's God. These were big armies, and yet the nation of Israel conquered them.

He says in verse 8, *“We took their land and gave it for an inheritance to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of the Manassites.”*

And those are, of course, two and a half tribes of Israel. You understand that these two areas were not part of God's original promise to Abraham and his descendants. These weren't part of the promised land. These are on the opposite side of the Jordan. These are on the east side of the Jordan. This wasn't the promised land.

And yet what is God saying? I gave it to you. I gave you the ability to conquer your enemies who came out against you, and I gave you their land. And you saw, but you didn't see. And your heart is still not drawn toward me. Right? Even so.

Verse 9: *“Therefore keep the words of this covenant and do them, that you may prosper in all that you do.”*

Verse 10: *“You are standing today, all of you, before the LORD your God: the heads of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, all the men of Israel, ¹¹ your little ones, your wives, and the sojourner who is in your camp, from the one who chops your wood to the one who draws your water, ¹² so that you may enter into the sworn covenant of the LORD your God, which the LORD your God is making with you today, ¹³ 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.”*

And by the way, he says in verse 14, *“It is not with you alone that I am making this sworn covenant, ¹⁵ but with whoever is standing here with us today before the LORD our God, and with whoever is not here with us today.”*

He's talking now about the generations to come of the Jews. It's not just with this generation—not just with the people who can hear me talking right now, Moses says—but with your children and with your grandchildren. This would be a perpetual covenant with the nation of Israel.

He says in verse 16: *“You know how we lived in the land of Egypt, and how we came through the midst of the nations through which you passed. ¹⁷ And you have seen their detestable things, their idols of wood and stone, of silver and gold, which were among them. ¹⁸ Beware lest there be among you a man or woman or clan or tribe whose heart is turning away today from the LORD our God to go and serve the gods of those nations. Beware lest there be among you a root bearing poisonous and bitter fruit, ¹⁹ one who, when he hears the words of this sworn covenant, blesses himself in his heart (That's interesting isn't?), saying, 'I shall be safe, though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart.' (He said) This will lead to the sweeping away of moist and dry alike. (Which is a kind of poetic way of saying the whole community will suffer. And he says) ²⁰ The LORD will not be willing to forgive him, but rather the anger of the LORD and his jealousy will smoke against that man, and the curses written in this book will settle upon him, and the LORD will blot out his name from under heaven. ²¹ And the LORD will single him out from all the tribes of Israel for calamity, in accordance with all the curses of the covenant written in this Book of the Law.”*

So the Lord is being very clear here, isn't He? And even speaking to the heart—that's one of those areas that God can speak to that you and I, we can only guess at. I can't see what's in your heart. You can't see what's in my heart. We can guess, and we often do incorrectly. But God sees into our hearts perfectly.

And God begins to speak into the hearts of these individuals by saying, lest anyone in his heart would say... and then goes on to speak of this thing like, I'm going to be able to do what I want to do, and God's not going to notice. And notice it says he, instead of blessing the Lord, he blesses himself. That's a fascinating comment.

And what's going to happen? The Lord's going to see, and the Lord's going to respond.

Verse 22: *“And the next generation, your children who rise up after you, and the foreigner who comes from a far land, will say, when they see the afflictions of that land and the sicknesses with which the LORD has made it sick—²³ the whole land burned out with brimstone and salt, nothing sown (meaning nothing planted) and nothing growing, where no plant can sprout, an overthrow like that of Sodom and Gomorrah, (And then he talks about the other cities that were right around there) Admah, and Zeboiim, which the LORD overthrew in his anger and wrath—²⁴ all the nations will say, ‘Why has the LORD done thus to this land? What caused the heat of this great anger?’²⁵ Then people will say, ‘It is because they abandoned the covenant of the LORD, the God of their fathers, which he made with them when he brought them out of the land of Egypt,²⁶ and went and served other gods and worshiped them, gods whom they had not known and whom he had not allotted to them.²⁷ Therefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against this land, bringing upon it all the curses written in this book,²⁸ and the LORD uprooted them from their land in anger and fury and great wrath, and cast them into another land, as they are this day.’”*

Notice that there's this prophetic speaking already of what we know scripturally is going to come, which is: Israel will be ousted from their land. They will be taken to another land, into exile. They haven't even gone into the land yet as an entire people, and they're already hearing prophetically how they're going to fail to keep the covenant.

I want to stop for just a moment before I read that last verse there to say: you understand that the reason that Israel got into trouble with God was not because they had struggled keeping the covenant. We know that the law of God was not something that man could perfectly keep. We know that. God never promised if they kept it, they would go to heaven. He simply said, keep my covenant and I'll bless you in the land. But He knew that they weren't going to perfectly keep the covenant because from the very get-go, what did God incorporate into the law? A sacrificial system.

What was the sacrificial system for? It was to deal with their failures. God knew, before this whole thing even began, that they would fail. Now, when I say fail, I mean sin. I'm not necessarily referring to apostasy right now, which they did ultimately do. But understand: apostasy is not just failure.

Apostasy goes way beyond failure. We all fail, right? I fail. Don't you? Don't you mess up from time to time? Don't you do things you shouldn't do? Don't you think things you shouldn't think? We all do. But that's not the kind of failure he's prophesying about. He's talking about them actually departing from the Lord and worshiping other gods.

You understand, don't you, that they could have kept their place in Israel? They could have kept seeing the blessings of the Lord happening even in their failures. They could have done that if they just would have stayed with worshiping Yahweh, because He had already factored in a means of dealing with failure.

We all fail. The Bible says we all sin, right? The man who says he doesn't sin—what does the Bible say? What does John call him? A liar, right? In 1 John (1 John 1:8-10). So we all sin, we all mess up, we all fail in that sense. God has factored in our failure from the standpoint of the blood of Jesus Christ keeps on cleansing us from sin (1 John 1:7).

The Bible tells us—even under the old covenant—there was a method, there was a mechanism for them to be forgiven. And it was the sacrificial system. They didn't have to keep the law perfectly. None of them could. Even some of the people who loved God the most failed the biggest—David. Think of David.

I mean, colossal failures. He never apostatized. He never left the Lord. But man, did he fail big time—in technicolor. Do you understand what I'm saying? But the Lord never left David, because David never left the Lord. You understand, don't you? The reason that Israel was ousted from the land eventually is not because they failed or because they sinned.

It's because they departed from the Lord. It's because they abandoned God. It's because they began to worship other gods. The worship of those pagan gods was so attractive because along with that worship came all kinds of sexual stuff, and it just really appealed to the flesh. It was very flesh-based.

And so, of course it was appealing to them, right? So they were drawn after those things, and ultimately they departed from the Lord. So you need to just put all this into perspective. The Jews weren't ousted from the land just because the law was tough to keep. The law was tough to keep. But again, God factored in a means of dealing with failure, and it was the sacrificial system, which of course points to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ—the ultimate blood sacrifice for our sins.

So we need to remember that the law was not beyond them from the standpoint of them walking in it. It was beyond them from the standpoint of keeping it perfectly. Oh, no question with that. The only person who ever kept the law perfectly was Jesus.

But when they didn't keep the law perfectly, all they had to do was come back in repentance, and God would have received them like that. All they had to do was bring the prescribed sacrifices, which pointed toward the sacrifice of Jesus

that was still coming. And God would have forgiven them and dealt with it like that.

See, they didn't do that. They chose to worship other gods. It's very important that we keep that in tow in our thoughts.

Verse 29: *"The secret things belong to the LORD our God (you've heard that quoted), but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law."*

People like to quote this verse whenever they are facing something they don't know or they can't understand. And people like to quote it and say, well hey, the secret things belong to the Lord. And that's absolutely true. But that's not why Moses was necessarily saying this. He was saying to them, yeah, the secret things belong to the Lord, but you can't use that as an excuse here because I've been very clear. That's what Moses is saying.

He says, the secret things belong to the Lord, but these things have been revealed. These are not secret. These are not hidden. They're out in the open. Moses, bent over backwards to reiterate this law. Good grief, the whole book of Deuteronomy is essentially this reiteration of the law.

And then he told them from there to remember, erect all these reminders. So there's nothing hidden here. There's nothing secret. This isn't a secret society where you don't know what to do or how to do things until you get into the inside of things, and then we'll show you that—and there's a secret everything. None of that going on.

So, very important for us too—see what God is saying here. He's basically removing their excuse.

Now, as we get into Deuteronomy chapter 30, this is a very different chapter in a lot of ways because Moses is going to continue his prophetic speaking here, but he's going to find himself in a very odd sort of a place. Because for the longest time—and you guys know how long we've been studying Deuteronomy—but for the longest time, he's been going over and over the law.

And he's been saying, keep the law, keep the law. And he'll say things. Then he'll say, now do this. Now do it. Now he's going to find himself in a prophetic position in this chapter where he's going to speak to them about the fact that they won't do it. And where they will reject the law of the Lord. They will reject worship of Yahweh. And in so doing, they will invite all of the curses that God spoke in that law.

But in this chapter, Moses is not only going to tell them that they're going to trample worship of their God under their feet, but he's going to prophesy about them being taken away to a foreign land. And he's furthermore going to prophesy about them becoming very regretful about that.

And he's going to talk to them about how there's going to come a day when you guys are going to cry out, and God will hear you. And He'll bring you back, and He'll bless you, and He'll restore your fortunes. Boy, do we see the mercy of God in this chapter—just wait.

Deuteronomy chapter 30: *“And when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you...”*

In other words, they're going to start off being really good. And all the blessings God promised are going to happen. And then they're going to turn away. And then all the curses are going to start.

He says, *“...which I have set before you, and you call them to mind (look at this) among all the nations where the LORD your God has driven you,”*

And he's basically prophesying that will one day happen—that they'll be driven out of their country.

“²and return to the LORD your God, you and your children, and obey his voice in all that I command you today, with all your heart and with all your soul, ³then (look at this) the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have mercy on you, and he will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you.”

God not only prophesies that they're going to fall away. He prophesies they're going to be exiled, driven into another country. He prophesies that they're going to be regretful. And He prophesies that God is going to hear their cries and restore them from wherever they've been scattered.

He says it doesn't matter where you've been scattered—I'm going to bring you back.

He says in verse 4, *“If your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there he will take you. ⁵And the LORD your God will bring you into the land that your fathers possessed, that you may possess it. And he will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers.”*

Now you tell me the Bible isn't full of mercy in the Old Testament. You tell me it's not full of forgiveness. You tell me there's no compassion. You tell me that this God that we read about in the Old Testament is different from the God of

the New Testament. I beg to differ. This is mercy here. He says, you will cry out to Me, and I will restore you. And I'll restore even more to you than you had before. I'll make you more prosperous than your fathers.

But it doesn't end there. Look at verse 6—this is critical: *“And 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 all your soul, that you may live.”*

Now let me tell you why this is such an amazing verse. There'd never been any kind of lasting devotion to the Lord in Israel. We know that the nation of Israel came into the land, and while Joshua and the elders who served with him lived out their lives, the people continued to serve the Lord.

And by the time they died off, the next generation of people got raised up. And the book of Judges begins—it starts off by saying, and then another generation came up who knew not the Lord or His ways. (Judges 2:10) And you're—what? Are you joking? Mom and Dad went through all that incredible stuff, and they went in and took the land, and they saw God moving in powerful, dramatic ways, and their kids are apostate? Their kids didn't serve the Lord? They didn't even know the Lord? That's crazy. But that's the way it was in Israel.

Look what God says in verse 6, He says again, I am going to circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring. Now, this is, again, an amazing verse because you'll remember we started off the earlier chapter and what did God say about them?

He says, you see, but you don't see. And the reason you don't see is because you don't have a heart to see. What God is saying here in this chapter is, I'm going to give you a heart to finally see. I'm going to give you a heart to know. And here's what I'm going to call it: I'm going to call it circumcision of the heart.

Now, we know what circumcision is, and we don't have to dwell on that, but it's, at its root, a cutting away of the flesh. And so, circumcision has always been a picture of sanctification. It's a physical picture of sanctification.

And sanctification is the — I know that word you probably don't use in your regular vocabulary, frankly, neither do I — but it means separating. To separate — in this case — to separate from sin, to separate from the world, to separate from the things that corrupt.

So, circumcision, which is a separation of the flesh, is a picture of what God wants to do in every heart, which is to separate us from sin, to remove us from sin. Now, that work of ultimate circumcision of the heart comes through the work of the Holy Spirit, in conjunction with the Word of God.

And this is that work that God is promising is going to take place in some limited fashion with the nation of Israel. But the ultimate fulfillment of this passage is going to be when Jesus returns. That's the ultimate.

See, many times in the Scripture we have this law of double fulfillment. We've talked about this many times before as it relates to prophecy. And the law of double fulfillment says that there's a short-term and a longer-term prophetic fulfillment to that particular prophecy. And we know that after the period of the exile, there's going to be a partial fulfillment of this work of God in the nation of Israel.

And it's going to be very significant because they struggled with idolatry all their years up until the exile. They kept falling into idolatry. They kept adopting the ways of the nations around them. And then they went into exile for 70 years in Babylon, which, of course, then got taken over by the Persian Empire. The Medo-Persians took over.

And then, by that time, 70 years was up, and they were able to come back home. Well, they never struggled with idolatry again. The nation of Israel never dealt with idolatry again. It doesn't mean they were perfect. But that was that partial fulfillment of this work of God to strengthen their hearts and to make them more devoted to God.

But there is coming a day — and the Bible also talks about this — when Jesus will return to this earth, and this is going to be at the conclusion of the Great Tribulation. And all the nations of the earth are going to gather against Israel, and they are going to be ready to pounce and ready. And it's going to look like lights out for Israel. And Jesus is going to return, and He's going to fight against their enemies, and He's going to deliver them from their enemies. And the Bible says, they will look upon Him whom they have pierced, and they will mourn for Him as for an only Son.

They will see Him. They will recognize, this is Messiah. Oh, this is the one who came the first time, and we ignored Him and we rejected Him. And they will mourn for Him. They will mourn because they did not embrace Him at first, but they will embrace Him now. And this is what Paul refers to in Romans when he says, at that time, all Israel will be saved. All of Israel at that time will be saved. (Zechariah 12:10, Revelation 1:7 and Romans 11:26)

So that will be the final fulfillment, if you will, of this work that God is prophesying here through Moses — where God will circumcise their hearts completely, and they will be utterly devoted to the Lord at that point in time.

So this is really an amazing verse here, an amazing passage. And frankly, it gets repeated throughout Scripture elsewhere. Let me show you a passage from Ezekiel chapter 36. I'll put it up on the screen here:

Ezekiel 36:26-27 (ESV)

And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and be careful to obey my rules.

And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove (look at this, listen to this—I will remove) the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and be careful to obey my rules.”

Ezekiel 36, prophesying this work of God whereby the nation of Israel will ultimately be brought into the final devotion and knowledge of the Lord.

Let's keep reading. Verse 7: *“And the LORD your God will put all these curses on your foes (he says, at that time when they turn to Him) and enemies who persecuted you.”*

Now again, I believe this is a double fulfillment as well. Not only were the nations around them dealt with when they came back from the exile, but also in the last days, Jesus is going to fight against their enemies and put them asunder.

He says, *“⁸ And you shall again obey the voice of the LORD and keep all his commandments that I command you today. ⁹ The LORD your God will make you abundantly prosperous in all the work of your hand, in the fruit of your womb and in the fruit of your cattle and in the fruit of your ground. For the LORD will again take delight in prospering you, as he took delight in your fathers, ¹⁰ when you obey the voice of the LORD your God, to keep his commandments and his statutes that are written in this Book of the Law, when you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.*

¹¹ For this commandment that I command you today (look at this) is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. ¹² It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will ascend to heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ ¹³ Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ ¹⁴ But the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it.”

Now, Paul actually quotes these verses in the book of Romans — I believe chapter 5. So, Moses is reminding the nation of Israel here that the law, again, is

not some mysterious or hidden thing. It's not far off. They don't have to go looking for it. God has taken pain to bring it to them, to make it clear. And again, following it is not impossible because, once again, God factored in a means of dealing with failure. All right.

Verse 15: *““See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. ¹⁶If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you today, by loving the LORD your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules, then you shall live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. ¹⁷But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, ¹⁸I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish. You shall not live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess. ¹⁹I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, ²⁰loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life (and strength, excuse me) and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.””*

Did you notice in verse 19, he says, *“I call heaven and earth to witness against you today...”* Witnesses are a big deal to God. He does that a lot. The Bible talks a lot about witnesses. Every matter needs to be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. Israel's justice system was based on that.

And when God was confronting the Jews living in Judea about divorcing their wives — putting their wives away for any and every reason — he said, I am rising up as the witness against you, meaning the one who witnessed your wedding vows and who heard you say, I take this person for all of my life, and so forth. (Malachi 2:13–16) So, witnesses are a big deal in God's kingdom.

So what is he saying here? He says, I call heaven and earth to witness. He's calling them to hear the words that are spoken to the people of Israel this day — that He has set before them life and death, blessing and curse — and they just need to choose which one they're going to have.

And in order to choose life and blessing, they just have to keep worshiping Yahweh. That's really all they got to do. If they don't do it perfectly, well, there's a sacrificial system to rely on. Messed up that time? Okay. Well, we know what to do. And we know what to do, too, when we mess up. We go to the cross.

That's why, as Christians, we're never bothered when somebody calls us sinners. Other people are bothered, believe me. They consider it abusive when we tell people that they sin or that they're sinners. We're not bothered. And the reason

we're not bothered is we know what to do. We go to the cross, right? We just take it to the cross. If it's legit, if God has convicted me of sin, I go to the cross. I know how to deal with it.

The Jews knew how to deal with their sin. All they had to do is keep worshiping Yahweh, and they could choose life. What do they have to do to choose death? Worship other gods. So he says, *"I call heaven and earth to witness..."* And there are other passages in the Old Testament where he would once again call upon heaven and earth to sit in the jury box, if you will, as they had heard these things that the Lord had said.

Let me read a couple here for you. From Isaiah chapter 1:2, it says,

Isaiah 1:2 (ESV)

Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the LORD has spoken: "Children have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me."

Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the LORD has spoken: "Children have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me."

And then in Jeremiah chapter 2, He says,

Jeremiah 2:12-13 (ESV)

Be appalled, O heavens, at this; be shocked, be utterly desolate, declares the LORD, for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

Be appalled, O heavens, at this; be shocked, be utterly desolate, declares the LORD, for my people have committed two evils: (one) they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and (secondly, they've) hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water."

So again, the Lord uses this witnessing of heaven and earth and calls for the heaven and earth to witness once again, to hear and to respond to the apostasy of Israel.