



Deuteronomy 4:25-31 **Seek the Lord Your God**

In the passage today, there is lots of bad news for Israel if they disobey, and Moses seems to take it as an axiom that they will – in fact – disobey. This isn't the beginning of such bad news. There have been numerous warnings and promised punishments for disobedience already, and more are forthcoming in the chapters ahead.

And yet, at the same time, the great themes of mercy, grace, forgiveness, and covenant faithfulness are seen in just these few verses. The Lord has spoken such words, and Moses confirms them here in Deuteronomy.

But one problem with Israel, and it is a problem with all of us, is that we often tend to rely a bit too heavily on the good stuff while ignoring the warnings. Some years ago, I heard a Jewish rabbi speaking on some show about how religions and denominations anticipate forgiveness.

He kind of flippantly said that for Jews, they just acknowledge they did wrong and that's it. There was no sense of any offense

having been made. Kind of an uncaring, “Yeah, I did wrong.” He then shrugged his shoulders and that was it.

The key point is that every religion that was interviewed all acknowledged that wrongdoing exists in our actions. If that is so, someone must be offended, or it can't be wrong. If the offended One is God, and if we get the means of obtaining forgiveness wrong, that becomes hugely problematic.

Text Verse: “Where can I go from Your Spirit?
Or where can I flee from Your presence?

⁸If I ascend to heaven, You are there;
If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there.” Psalm 139:7, 8 (NASB)

Whenever I come to this passage in Deuteronomy, and I get to verse 28 where it speaks of serving gods that are the work of men's hands, it always brings back the memory of my time owning a retail business. I imported and sold things from Asia, a large percentage of the things were idols – everything from Buddha and Krishna to Hanuman and Lakshmi, and anything else that would sell.

Of course, at that time, I was as brain dead as the people that bought the things, trading the truth of God for worthless images, but it never ceased to surprise me the number of Jews who would come in and buy them. The Jewish population of Sarasota is not that big, but they all seemed to have this in common.

I always thought of them as a religious people, being obedient to their God and faithfully observing their law. How absolutely wrong I was. It didn't take long to know that the outward appearances, and the boasting in the heritage, has nothing to do with a sound relationship with the Lord.

Until I really came to know Christ, and to understand what it means to be a true Jew, I had no idea that almost all Jews do not qualify for that title. Rather, they perfectly fit the prophetic words of Moses here, even those who appeared to be observant perfectly match what he says.

In other words, they are no different than the people among whom they live, despite living separately from the people among whom they live. The difference between them and the others is that they are bound under this covenant in a unique way.

Any who are not in Christ are condemned. The Bible makes that absolutely clear. But the Jews face a kind of double trouble. This is because they bear the name of the Lord, even when they don't acknowledge the Lord. And in that, there are responsibilities and consequences.

We will see this again today. In the end, everyone needs Jesus, but the Jew needs Him individually and in a collective manner as well. Hence, the past 2000 years have not been very friendly to them. This is a truth which is to be found in His superior word. And so, let us turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. I Call Heaven and Earth to Witness (verses 25 & 26)

In the previous passage, Moses began to speak of idolatry. The people saw no form of the Lord, and therefore the Lord is not to be worshiped through a form – a representation of who He is. But more, a form of any other god is a form of no god at all, and they likewise were not to be set up and worshipped.

With that understood, Moses will continue with that thought for a moment, and then he will turn to the penalty for doing such things,

including the greatest penalty for the people, exile. Moses explains, in advance, what will happen in exile, and what will bring them to restoration from it.

But Moses will also confirm one major point of Israel's punishment, destruction, and exile – that a covenant exists between the Lord and Israel. No matter what happens, even in the breaking of the covenant by Israel, God will remember it and keep His side of it. This is the scope of what will now be seen...

²⁵ “When you beget children and grandchildren

The words of this verse are in the singular – you. It is speaking to all of Israel as a single entity, even if every Israelite is included. The Hebrew reads, “When you beget sons and son's sons.” The words here call to reminder what Moses had just said in verse 4:9, using the same expression –

“Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren,
¹⁰ *especially concerning* the day you stood before the LORD your God in Horeb, when the LORD said to me, ‘Gather the people to Me, and I will let them hear My words, that they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and *that* they may teach their children.’” Deuteronomy 4:9, 10

The admonition was given first, “Take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget.” Moses now takes it as an axiom that the people will not only fail to take heed, but they will also forget. That begins to be implied in the next words...

²⁵ (con't) and have grown old in the land,

v'novoshantem ba'arets – “And have slumbered in the land.” The word is *yashen*, and it needs explanation. It comes from a root

which signifies to be slack, or languid. By implication, it means to sleep, even a figurative sleep of death, or to grow old, stale, etc.

Here, it certainly isn't speaking of the people's age, but of their time in the land. However, it is not necessarily an extended period there. Most translations say, "have grown old in the land," or "have lived long in the land." But this is not the correct idea as is evidenced by the early turning away from the Lord to idolatry. Immediately after Joshua's death, even in Judges 2, it says –

"Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals; ¹² and they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed other gods from *among* the gods of the people who *were* all around them, and they bowed down to them; and they provoked the LORD to anger. ¹³ They forsook the LORD and served Baal and the Ashtoreths. ¹⁴ And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel." Judges 2:11-14

The idea of Moses' use of this word cannot be separated from the idea of sleep, which is how it is usually translated. Of this, Charles Ellicott rightly states, "Prosperity often sends true religion to sleep, and brings conventional, or fashionable, religion in its stead." This is exactly the thought Moses now conveys.

In the forming of Eve from Adam's rib, it says that "the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam and he slept." Two different words are used in that verse for "sleep." The second, "and he slept," is the word Moses now uses.

The idea then is that Israel won't be attentive. Instead, they will slacken in their responsibility to pay heed and keep themselves. This is akin to what Paul says in the New Testament, such as in 1 Thessalonians 5 –

"You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. ⁶ Therefore let us not sleep, as others *do*, but let us watch and be

sober. ⁷ For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night.” 1 Thessalonians 5:5-7

It is this that Moses warns them of, slumbering. In this inattentive, sleeping state, they will forget the Lord their God...

25 (con't) and act corruptly and make a carved image in the form of anything,

This is just what Moses warned against only two verses earlier –

“Take heed to yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the LORD your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of anything which the LORD your God has forbidden you.” (vs 23)

Moses just warned them of this, he noted that it was a part of the covenant, and that it was a forbidden part at that. Immediately after that, he said that “the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.”

And yet, he – just one verse later now – assumes that the people will actually do this thing, and they will find out what it means concerning this aspect of the Lord. He knows they will, in fact, break the covenant...

25 (con't) and do evil in the sight of the LORD your God

There is an article before “evil” in the Hebrew. It is the specific deed – the evil, or that which is evil – which Moses is referring to. The stress is there because such idolatry inevitably leads to countless other problems. It is also that which is seen directly in front of the eyes of the Lord...

25 (con't) to provoke Him to anger,

l'hakiso – “to provoke Him to anger.” It is a new word, *kaas*, coming from a primitive root meaning “to trouble.” Thus, by

implication, to be angry or provoke to anger. This is exactly what it meant when Moses said the Lord is a jealous God.

As this is so, and as He is also described as a “consuming fire,” the implication is obvious. The Lord isn’t just going sit and stew. Rather, their provoking Him to anger will then bring upon them what is expected of One who is jealous. Moses therefore explains exactly what that means, starting with the next words which begin with a summons for witnesses...

²⁶I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day,

haidoti bakem hayom eth ha'shemayim v'et ha'arets – “I call to witness against you this day the heavens and the earth.” The words here go from the second person singular to the second person plural. In essence, “I call these witnesses against you all.”

The meaning of Moses’ words is not that of judgment. In other words, in Leviticus 26:19, the Lord says concerning disobedient Israel –

“I will break the pride of your power;
I will make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze.”

That is a consequence of disobedience. Moses is not calling for judgment, but for witnesses that will testify to the just nature of any coming judgment and punishment. That is why he refers back to the first sentence of the Bible, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

In this, the heavens and the earth are being likened to the surety of the covenant. Just as God is the Creator and Sustainer of the heavens and the earth, He is the Initiator and Monitor of the covenant.

In other words, it is not speaking of those who dwell on the earth and those who dwell in heaven to be witnesses. Rather, it is saying that even the heavens and earth *are* the witnesses.

As evident as these are to remind us of the existence of God, so shall it be the same when judgment comes. Thus, Israel should then rightfully say, “As sure as I am standing on the ground, and as surely as the heavens are above my head – both created by God – so is my punishment deserved.” They speak out the obvious reality of what has occurred in Israel’s punishment, which Moses next speaks of...

26 (con’t) that you will soon utterly perish from the land

ki avod tovedun maher meal ha’arets – “perishing, you will perish quickly from the land.” Moses uses an adjective seen just once so far, *maher*. It isn’t an especially rare word, but the previous time it was used was in Exodus 32:8 where the people turned aside quickly out of the way the Lord commanded them. In this, they made a golden calf to worship during Moses’ absence.

The people quickly turned from the Lord, and there were dire consequences because of it. Moses promises now that if they do evil in the land, the Lord will just as quickly turn His favor from them and punish them, removing them from the land...

26 (con’t) which you cross over the Jordan to possess;

asher atem oberim eth ha’yarden shamah l’rishtah – “which you cross over the Jordan to possess.” The verb translated as “cross over” here is identical in spelling to the noun “Hebrew.” It gets its meaning based on the structure of the sentence, just as a homograph in English.

Without stretching the intent too far, it almost appears to be a pun. Moses is speaking to the Hebrew people, “You (Hebrews) are crossing over the Jordan, but if you don’t pay heed, then you aren’t true Hebrews, because what you crossed over to possess you will be dispossessed from.”

If this is subtly the intent, it is well reflected by a similar thought from Paul in Romans 2 –

“For he is not a Jew who *is one* outwardly, nor *is* circumcision that which *is* outward in the flesh; ²⁹ but *he is* a Jew who *is one* inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise *is* not from men but from God.” Romans 2:28, 29

The Hebrew word for Jew means “praise.” Thus, Paul was making a pun concerning the nature of a true Jew. A true Jew has crossed over the Jordan, a picture of Christ, and is circumcised in the heart by the Spirit. Likewise, for the Hebrews to fail to adhere to the covenant, they would prove themselves false Hebrews. Thus...

²⁶ (con’t) you will not prolong *your* days in it,

Moses is speaking to all the people. In this, it is not speaking immediately about long life for each person, but a long continuance in the land for the people. However, this does not negate the thought of a shortened life for each person.

If the land is attacked, and if the people are exiled, it will mean that for many, the days of their lives will be cut short. As people and as individuals they will not continue...

²⁶ (con’t) but will be utterly destroyed.

hishamed tishamedun – “in being destroyed, you will be destroyed.” The word *shamad* gives the sense of extermination.

Thus, the people, collectively and individually can expect being cut off. The words here are reflective of the similar warning coming from Moses in Deuteronomy 30 –

“I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, *that* I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live;” Deuteronomy 30:19

However, even in the prospect of extermination, and even in the horror which continues to be relayed in the next verse, there is in it also to be found a note of covenant faithfulness by Lord...

*Heaven and earth are witnesses today
Of the words I now call out to you
Be circumspect on the path as you wind your way
Because the words are sure, and the warnings are true*

*You must be obedient to the Lord your God
Pursuing His precepts always, never shall you stray
Let your feet not depart from the path that you trod
Be circumspect on the path as you wind your way*

*Fix your eyes on the One who has gone before you
Fix your eyes on the Lord Jesus, and you will never stray
Should you wander off the path, He remains faithful and true
He will be with you on the path as you wind your way*

II. The Lord Your God Is a Merciful God (verses 27-31)

²⁷ And the LORD will scatter you among the peoples,

The words remain in the second person plural – “I will scatter you all.” To be scattered among the peoples implies being alive. The very fact that this is recorded indicates that the Lord is aware of those who remain, even if they are further punished in the land of their exile. Which is what is to be expected based on what the Lord has already said.

In these verses, Moses has called the words of the covenant to remembrance. In Leviticus 26, the Lord said –

“I will scatter you among the nations and draw out a sword after you; your land shall be desolate and your cities waste.” Leviticus 26:33

Here Moses repeats, and yet amends, that thought saying, *v’hepits Yehovah etkem ba’amim* – “and will scatter you Yehovah among the peoples.”

In Leviticus, the Lord used the word *zarah*. Here Moses uses *puts*. Both convey the same basic meaning, but the root of the word Moses uses carries more force, meaning “to dash in pieces.” The people would be dashed to pieces and what was left would fly off in all directions. In this, Moses says...

27 (con’t) and you will be left few in number

The Hebrew reads, “men of a number.” It is an idiomatic expression indicating that there will be so few, that it will be no effort to count them. The once-great nation would be so greatly reduced that there would be little left.

And yet, to be left few in number implies... being. The hand of the Lord may be heavy upon the people, but the people remain. The intent of Haman in Esther was to destroy all of the Jews. The exile of Israel, and the punishment they received among the nations at that time were self-inflicted wounds.

However, Haman didn’t simply want punishment, but annihilation. The Lord intervened, and the people – even if few in number – were spared.

Again, Hitler didn't simply want the Jews kicked out of Germany. Rather, he wanted them exterminated. The woes of Israel for the previous 1900 years were brought upon them through their rejection of Christ – another self-inflicted wound. But through their punishment, they remained a people.

This is the intent of the words of both Leviticus 26 and of what is seen, and what will continue to be seen, here in Deuteronomy. To be left few in number, as tragic as that is, is a note of covenant faithfulness, not by Israel, but by the Lord, even...

27 (con't) among the nations where the LORD will drive you.

Moses withholds nothing. It is Israel who will break the covenant, and it is the Lord who will execute the judgments of the covenant. Of this verse, Charles Ellicott again rightly states –

“Our familiarity with this fact in history must not blind us to its force when uttered as a prophecy. The fact that the Jews were taken captive for idolatry, and dispersed for the rejection of JESUS, is a remarkable proof that the real reason why they were brought into Canaan, and kept there, was to be witnesses for Jehovah.” Charles Ellicott

Having died in 1905, he said this long before Israel was returned to the land in 1948. Thus, he had no knowledge that what he said was true, not only in the past, but in our present.

Israel was placed in the land to testify of the Lord. Israel was exiled to testify of the Lord. There would be no exile if Israel obeyed, and there would be no horrors in exile if the people took heed to the word.

But both occurred because the people willingly disobeyed, and they failed to heed. Thus, Moses here uses the word *nahag*, meaning to drive. John Lange notes that the word itself, and the

form in which it is used “indicates ... not a gentle leading, but a driving and urgent pressure.” Israel sinned; Israel is punished.

But the obstinacy of Israel is seen when even with the obvious nature of what has occurred – meaning the heavens and the earth are witnesses to it, and thus Israel should have known better when it occurred – they would still fail to accept the Lord’s correction and turn from their sin...

²⁸ And there you will serve gods, the work of men’s hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell.

It remains second person plural – “There you all will serve.” The senselessness of serving dead idols is well summed up as a contrast to the nature of the Lord. First, Moses calls them *elohim*, or “gods.” This does not mean that they are actually gods, but that they are people’s gods, and thus false gods.

In this, Moses then contrasts them to the Lord. He says they are *maaseh yede adam*, “work (of) hands man.” Moses has appealed to the Ten Commandments in verse 13. The fourth of those commandments says, “For *in* six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that *is* in them, and rested the seventh day” (Exodus 20:11).

As He created the heaven’s and the earth, and as He created man from the earth, the contrast is absolute. The God of Israel is THE GOD, and anything else is a false god.

Next, he says, “wood and stone.” In verses 12 and 15, it noted that the people saw no form. Here, form is implied. Thus, there is THE GOD without form, and anything else is a false god bearing form.

Next, he says, “which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell.” In verse 7, it said that Israel’s God could be called upon for any

reason. It implies that He hears. In verse 25 it says the people would do evil *b'ene* – in the sight, or literally, in the eyes of the Lord. It implies that the Lord sees. And finally, in verse 24, it said that the Lord is a consuming fire, using the word *akal* – to eat. It implies that the Lord can devour as a mouth would.

Thus, in this one chapter, Moses has woven into his words a complete contrast to the false gods, meaning the idols Israel would serve in the lands of their dispersion and punishment.

With that thought in mind, there are at least two ways to view what “serve gods” means. The first is that the people would serve these gods, meaning that they would be in bondage to them. The people of those gods would rule over them and thus they would serve those people and, thus, those gods.

The second is that it would mean that Israel will serve those gods, giving them worship and devotion. The Jewish commentator Rashi over-piously chooses the first meaning, as if in their exile they never actually served idols.

It was and has been true that Israel served other peoples who served their own false gods. However, that is hardly the intent of Moses' words. He is quite clear that they are serving (meaning worshiping) the gods. This is certain for quite a few reasons.

First, it is the reason for their exile in the first place. The warning against this was seen in verses 15-19 and it was then repeated in verse 23. The acknowledgment that it would actually come to pass is seen in verse 25.

Since then, Moses has been telling of the effects upon the people for doing this. They worshipped and served idols in the land, having rejected the Lord and the covenant. Thus, they were exiled.

Secondly, it doesn't say that they would serve the people of other gods, it says that they would serve other gods. This is repeated in Deuteronomy 28 –

“Then the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods, which neither you nor your fathers have known—wood and stone.” Deuteronomy 28:64

The words, “which you nor your fathers have known,” would be superfluous unless it meant that they were worshipping new gods – false gods. But this type of idolatry goes beyond carved images. It extends to gods which Israel is abundantly known to serve. This is stated by the scholar Keil who, in turn, cites the scholar Schultz –

“The more refined idolatry of image-worship leads to coarser and coarser forms, in which the whole nature of idol-worship is manifested in all its pitiableness. ‘When once the God of revelation is forsaken, the God of reason and imagination must also soon be given up and make way for still lower powers, that perfectly accord with the I exalted upon the throne, and in the time of pretended 'illumination' to atheism and materialism also’ (Schultz)”.

Atheism, materialism, communism, humanism, and a plethora of other isms are the main staple of secular and religious life among the vast majority of Jews in the world, even to this day. They follow these gods with reckless abandon, having forsaken the Lord God. And thirdly, the words of the next verse imply that this is referring to active worship of false gods...

²⁹ But from there

In the previous verse, it said, “there (*sham*) you will serve gods.” Now it says, “But from there (*mi'sham*) you will seek the Lord your God.” The context is the same and the two words correspond to one truth.

They are in exile for serving other gods (among other things), and in their exile, they continued to do so, even to the point where they no longer retain a knowledge of the true God, Yehovah, as is confirmed by the words...

29 (con't) you will seek the LORD your God,

It is second person plural – “You all will seek.” One only seeks that which one does not possess. I will seek after one of my dogs because it has flippantly ignored my calls and run off to annoy one of the neighbors. I no longer possess my wayward furry friend, and I must go seek after him.

If Israel possessed Yehovah, as their God, they would not need to seek Him. But the truth remains that He is, in fact, the Lord their God, as Moses acknowledges right in these words. They have forgotten Him, but He has not forgotten them. To Israel, He remains “the Lord your God.”

29 (con't) and you will find *Him* if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul.

Remarkably, the words here now change, in the middle of the verse, to the second person singular – you will find; you seek; your heart; your soul. Each individual forms into a collective whole. Not all may find, but those who are of the collective who do, will find.

The Lord will be found when He is sought with the heart, meaning the seat of intellect and reason, and the soul, meaning the place of inner yearning and desire in the animated life.

To seek the Lord with the intellect and not the with a yearning desire is to seek after an understanding of who God is, but not caring about Him personally. This would be the scholar who is so busy learning about God, that he never gets to know Him.

To seek the Lord with the soul but not the intellect is to, most probably, find a relationship without a sound basis for it. This is the Jehovah's witnesses etc., who *think* they have a relationship with God, but who failed to do the due diligence only to discover they have called on a false god.

Moses assures Israel that after their exile, they will find the Lord their God when they search for Him with all of their heart and with all of their soul. This promise will be restated and built upon in Chapter 30 –

“Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call *them* to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God drives you, ² and you return to the LORD your God and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul, ³ that the LORD your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the LORD your God has scattered you. ⁴ If *any* of you are driven out to the farthest *parts* under heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you. ⁵ Then the LORD your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers. ⁶ And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.” Deuteronomy 30:1-6

Of this verse, Adam Clarke – who died in 1832, a time in which it was unimaginable to most of the world that Israel would be reconciled to God – asked, “Is not this promise left on record for the encouragement and salvation of lost Israel?”

The foresight of Clarke was lost to the vast majority of scholars prior to him, contemporary with him, and even of those who continue to teach replacement theology to this day.

Having died over a hundred years before the reestablishment of Israel, he picked up his Bible, accepted it at face value, and rejected the theology of those who rejected Israel as a people bound by the covenant of the Lord, and thus still under the care and watchful eye of the Lord.

Despite this, there is the truth that Israel of today has not met the demands of these words of Moses. They have not sought the Lord, they are still immersed in idolatry, and they remain under the law and apart from Christ.

Therefore, the words, remain anticipatory for them. Even though the land has been returned to them, many of them have not returned to the land, and most of them have not returned to the Lord. Therefore, the continued words of the passage still ring true...

³⁰ When you are in distress, and all these things come upon you

The second person singular continues here. The word “when” is not in the Hebrew. It more closely reads, “In distress you are, and find you all these words.” The “words” are things, but they are based on Moses’ words. In other words, what he says here is what will happen. They will be found in the state prophesied here.

Despite possessing the land, Israel does not – at this time – possess the Lord. They are His possession, but they are not yet His people. Moses prophesies that this would be the case...

³⁰ (con’t) in the latter days,

b’akharit ha’yamim – “in end the days.” The words here can be paraphrased as “a time of messianic completion.” If one was to assume that this is speaking of the completed work of Christ, he

could then argue that this is referring to the initiation of the church age and thus the entire church age.

From both a Hebrew and a Mosaic Covenant perspective, these would both be incorrect. For a Gentile-led church age, that argument could be made based on Paul's words of 1 Timothy 4:1 where he speaks of the "latter times." But that has nothing to do with Moses' words here now.

It is speaking of a time, at the end of the age, when the messianic promises will be realized in Israel. Q: Has this ever occurred in history. A: No. They began to be realized, but the nation as a whole rejected Him. Thus, this has a future fulfillment to us now. That is seen in the words...

30 (con't) when you turn to the LORD your God and obey His voice

The words, as noted, are in the second person singular. Each individual who comprises the collective whole is addressed, and thus it is speaking to all as one. However, the translation is lacking. The word is *shuv* – to return, or to turn back.

Saying "turn" could lead a person to think this might be speaking of the church, turning to Christ, rather than Israel returning to the Lord. But Moses is speaking to Israel, and he has noted that they have departed from the Lord. Therefore, it signifies more than a *turn* to the Lord, but a *return* to Him.

With this in mind, it should be noted that several great scholars of the past rightly pinpoint this as speaking of Israel, though the details from them vary on what it means to return to the Lord. Does it mean to the law, or what the law anticipated – meaning Christ?

But they agree that it is Israel, and it will be a return to the Lord. However, many other scholars make the galactically incorrect leap to indicate that this is referring to the church. For example, John Lange says –

“The condition and the time for the return of Israel are arranged in parallel clauses, (Deut 4:30), i. e., when the distress, the curse of the law, is completed, then also will the time of Israel be completed, then will be the end of days, and as the threatening will be fulfilled, so also the promise, the return to the Lord. Thus there is revealed a future of Israel, when through its returning obedience to the law, (and hearkening to his voice, Deut 4:30, Matt. 5:17; 7:24 sq.) it makes effective in humanity, the peculiar idea of its nationality, see Deut 4:6 sq. (comp. upon 2:25). Since salvation comes from the Jews, (John 4:22), the national Israel may be considered a spiritual, which in that respect is the completion of Israel, when through the ingrafted fulness of the Gentiles in the place of the hardened portion, which takes place more and more, ‘all Israel shall so (in this way) be saved,’ Rom. 11:26.”

The error of this thinking goes on and on. First, it ignores that there is a people in exile and under punishment for having rejected the Lord. This can never be applied to the Gentiles as he states. The Gentiles never had the Lord, and so the punishment and dispersion cannot apply to them.

Secondly, the repeated changing in point of view from the singular to the plural would make absolutely no sense if it was applied to Gentiles. Moses is speaking to Israel and changing the perspective to show individual and combined character within the nation as well as national character.

Thirdly, regardless as to whether Moses is speaking of a return to the law, or to what the law anticipates, meaning Christ, the Gentiles were never under the Law of Moses. Christ’s fulfillment of the law, on our behalf, does not set this aside.

It may be God's standard, because Christ is the embodiment of the law, but Moses cannot ascribe to the Gentiles aspects of a law which has never applied to them. He has referred to the law, and he will continue to do so throughout Deuteronomy. But the law applied to Israel, and only to Israel.

One more logical argument will suffice, and that will be reviewed before we complete the next verse...

³¹ (for the LORD your God *is* a merciful God),

ki el rakhum Yehovah elohekha – “For God compassionate, Yehovah your God.” The word is *rakhum*. This is only its second use. It is an adjective seen 13 times in the Old Testament. It is always used when speaking of the Lord.

It is from the same root as *rekhem*, meaning “womb.” One can see how just as a mother cares for the child in her womb, so the Lord is compassionate. Though the word is referring to the Lord and His character, the loving care of Israel is clearly seen in it. The context is Moses speaking to Israel concerning the Lord being Israel's God. That same thought continues with...

³¹ (con't) He will not forsake you nor destroy you,

The word translated as “forsake” is *raphah*. It gives the sense of letting go. In Exodus, Pharaoh accused the Hebrews of being, *raphah*, lazy. The Lord will never fail Israel by letting go of them, nor would He actively destroy them, meaning utterly wipe them out. They would remain as a people, even if individually they were wiped out. Plus, there is one more promise which will close out our words today...

*³¹ (fin) nor forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore to them.

Moses promises that the Lord will not forget the covenant made with Israel's fathers, as it says, "which He swore to them." This is an obvious reference to the covenant which the Lord swore to Abraham, and then to Isaac, and then to Jacob, as He said in Exodus 33 –

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Depart *and* go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt, to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, 'To your descendants I will give it.'" Exodus 33:1

There is no doubt that this is what is being referred to. In fact, he repeats that sentiment in Leviticus 26 –

"...then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and My covenant with Isaac and My covenant with Abraham I will remember; I will remember the land." Leviticus 26:42

The covenant promises are repeated in the very chapter where the blessings and curses are spoken, which Moses' words here now refer to. The promises, as noted, go beyond Abraham to include both Isaac and Jacob. And, they are inclusive of the land.

For this reason, this cannot be speaking of the Gentiles. This is for two reasons. The first is that no land promise is ever recorded for the Gentiles. Secondly, the promise of Messiah for Gentiles, which Paul appeals to, is one which is only inclusive of Abraham and his faith. It says nothing of Isaac or Jacob.

Though these points could be argued or spiritualized, Leviticus 26 does not end on that note. Rather, after saying this, it then goes on to appeal to the Mosaic Covenant –

"But for their sake I will remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be

their God:

I am the LORD.” Leviticus 26:45

The Lord, after citing the covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, which included a land grant, lastly appealed to the covenant of Israel’s ancestors, who He brought out of the land of Egypt. In other words, He is looking forward in time and referring to the covenant He was in the process of giving.

That is this covenant, having started at Sinai, and which is continuing to be made right now through Moses, to which the Lord – in the end of days – would remember.

Therefore, the “covenant of their ancestors” there in Leviticus refers to the Mosaic Covenant. The Lord’s words speak of the people far in the future but looking back to this time – as Moses speaks. It cannot refer to the Gentiles because they were never brought out of Egypt and given a covenant to live by.

This same point is bound to be reviewed again while we are in Deuteronomy, but it is a point that cannot be reviewed enough. God made a covenant with Israel. That covenant has not yet been ended, even though it is fulfilled in Christ.

The reason it has not ended is because even though individuals of Israel entered into the New Covenant, Israel the nation did not. Until that happens, they remain under the confines and the bondage of the Old.

But this is exactly why they have been kept as a people. The Lord covenanted with them that they would remain, and remain united, until and after they entered into the New Covenant.

During their time of exile and punishment, however, the Lord has not wasted time. Any person, Jew or Gentile, can receive what

Israel missed. They can accept what God has done in Christ, they can be saved through His shed blood, and they are – at that time – granted eternal life.

God's gifts and His calling are irrevocable. Israel was called, and Israel shall be granted what they have missed for so long. This is the faithful God we serve, and this is the marvel of His faithfulness to His unfaithful people – meaning the Jew first, but also the Gentile. Thank God for the compassion of the Lord which is fully displayed in the giving of Jesus Christ.

Closing Verse: “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. ¹² Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. ¹³ And you will seek Me and find *Me*, when you search for Me with all your heart. ¹⁴ I will be found by you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back from your captivity; I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, says the LORD, and I will bring you to the place from which I cause you to be carried away captive.” Jeremiah 29:11-14

Next Week: Deuteronomy 4:32-40 This is true; take it to heart, brother... (There Is No Other) (17th Deuteronomy Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. But He also has expectations of you as He prepares you for entrance into His Land of Promise. So, follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Seek the Lord you God

When you beget children and grandchildren
And have grown old in the land – pay heed, this is no joke
And act corruptly and make a carved image in the form of anything
And do evil in the sight of the LORD your God
-----to anger Him you provoke

I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day

That you will soon utterly perish from the land
-----which you have so enjoyed
Which you cross over the Jordan to possess
You will not prolong your days in it, but will be utterly destroyed

And the LORD will scatter you among the peoples
And you will be left – pay heed my word is true!
Few in number among the nations
Where the LORD will drive you

And there you will serve gods
The work of men's hands – if described in a nutshell
Wood and stone
Which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell

But from there you will seek the LORD your God
And you will find Him – the One written about in the scroll
If you seek Him with all your heart
And with all your soul

When you are in distress
And all these things come upon you in the latter days
When you turn to the LORD your God
And obey His voice – yes, obedience pays

(for the LORD your God is a merciful God)
He will not forsake you nor destroy you
Nor forget the covenant of your fathers
which He swore to them; this He will never do

Lord God, turn our hearts to be obedient to Your word
Give us wisdom to be ever faithful to You
May we carefully heed each thing we have heard
Yes, Lord God may our hearts be faithful and true

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to You for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

²⁵ “When you beget children and grandchildren and have grown old in the land, and act corruptly and make a carved image in the form of anything, and do evil in the sight of the LORD your God to provoke Him to anger, ²⁶ I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that you will soon utterly perish from the land which you cross over the Jordan to possess; you will not prolong *your* days in it, but will be utterly destroyed. ²⁷ And the LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the LORD will drive you. ²⁸ And there you will serve gods, the work of men’s hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell. ²⁹ But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find *Him* if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul. ³⁰ When you are in distress, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, when you turn to the LORD your God and obey His voice ³¹ (for the LORD your God *is* a merciful God), He will not forsake you nor destroy you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore to them.