

DEUTERONOMY

Lesson 40 - Chapter 29

Last week we finished up examining the long list of threats in Deuteronomy 28 that God made on Israel should they violate the terms of the Mosaic Covenant. These threats are called curses and some are of the most extreme nature. In fact chapter 28 actually prophesied that Israel would take on these curses because inevitably in time they would break the covenant.

I went into some detail on the matter of separating the two different terms “curses” and “The Curse”; or as we better know it, “The Curse of the Law”. Curses refer to the individual penalties associated with various trespasses against God; some mild, some fatal. The Curse refers essentially to death and evil. The Curse is more or less the sum of all the curses that ends with personal and at times (as in the case of Israel) national destruction. But perhaps most terrifying is that being subject to The Curse means that one’s name will be blotted out. We’ll explore exactly what having your name blotted out means when we get to that verse.

I spent perhaps a little more time with the meaning of the “The Curse” than perhaps some might think necessary however it is a term that we find used in a handful of crucial verses in the New Testament; and almost universally within the Church its meaning has been terribly misconstrued. Probably one of the ten most quoted verses in the entire NT is Galatians 3:13:

^{NAS} Galatians 3:13 *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us-- for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree "--*

This verse is exhibit number one in most denominations’ doctrinal beliefs that revolve around the Law being inherently negative and a bad or faulty institution that, thankfully, the Lord has abolished. And the explanation is that Paul said the Law IS itself the curse. In other words the phrase “the curse of the law” is like saying “the curse of cancer”. Cancer is itself a cursed thing; the Law is itself a cursed thing. Nothing could be further from the truth. It should be clear to you by now that the Law (the Torah) consisted of 3 primary elements: the laws and commands, the list of blessings for being obedient to those laws and commands, and the list of curses for being disobedient to those laws and commands. The curses of the law are but one element of the Law; they represent the consequences, the penalties for violation.

But notice that Paul says “the curse”, singular, not “curses”, plural. Do not ever think that this

is a trivial matter; Paul even went into some detail in explaining the difference between the “seed” (singular) coming from Abraham, versus “the seeds” (plural) and why this was so important. Paul was an excellent communicator and did not carelessly mix up singulars and plurals. The Curse of the Law, condemnation, is what happens to a person when one chooses death and evil over goodness and blessing by intentionally falling away from God. The Curse of the Law was eternal death and separation from Yehoveh then and it remains the same today. What Paul is explaining is that Yeshua became the object of the Curse of the Law in our stead, and so a follower of Jesus will NOT have the possibility of eternal death hanging over his head for his misbehaviors.

However the individual penalties (the curses) that do NOT involve eternal separation from the Lord remain. It is a Dispensation theology teaching that the Lord has turned over administration of His justice system to human governments; and to a degree I agree with that. We steal, we are put in jail. We murder, we stand to be executed. We cheat someone, we have to provide reparations.

So this notion that there are no divine consequences for Believers for our earthly misbehaviors (except perhaps that we might get one less jewel in our crown in eternity) is simply manmade doctrine and not Scripture. The Lord will, either of direct divine intervention or by means of human government that He has permitted, discipline us when we violate His commands. BUT.....the thing that has been set-aside for Believers is THE CURSE of the Law, eternal damnation, because Christ became damned for us. On the other hand the Curse of the Law hovers like the Grim Reaper over those who do not trust Him. Non-Believers are already condemned by the Curse of the Law.

In very brief summary so that there can be no doubt about what I am saying to you: 1) The Law is **not** a curse and Paul never said that it was (or frankly Paul would have gone against Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and probably not survived under Jewish Law one more day), 2) the consequences (curses) of breaking God's laws remains up to a point, and 3) a Believer is indeed subject to facing consequences for sinning but those consequences do NOT (generally speaking) include eternal damnation.

What we are about to read in Deuteronomy 29 is usually called “Moses' Third Discourse” by Bible academics. In other words Deuteronomy is largely a 3-part message, a sermon by Moses, given prior to Israel actually entering the land of promise. In each part of the 3-part message Moses has repeated, expanded, and explained more in depth about the Torah, the Law as given at Mt. Sinai, and its intent and purpose.

As of the start of this chapter Israel is still in the border state of Moab, awaiting God's order to move forward and take the land. Moses has given the Law to the 2nd generation of the Exodus, the bulk of the 1st generation (but not all) having died out in the Wilderness as a divine

judgment of their refusal to go in and conquer Canaan 38 years earlier. Chapter 29 is essentially Moses asking this new generation to ratify the covenant just as their parents had.

It is quite enlightening when we see that Israel had covenant ratification ceremonies at 3 places: Mt. Sinai, in Moab, and then immediately upon crossing the Jordan and entering the Promised Land. Three places, three different territories, and three covenant ceremonies: Midian, Moab, and Canaan. Part of the reason for this lies in the ancient beliefs that each identifiable territory had its own identifiable set of gods. Midian had its gods, Moab its own, and Canaan yet another group of gods. Yehoveh was indigenous to none of these territories. The Hebrews fully believed this. They had no understanding whatsoever that there was but one God, Yehoveh, who was God of everything and everywhere. And we really don't even see the Lord press this issue too hard with the Israelites; in fact the Lord sort of went out of His way to work WITHIN those beliefs (no matter how off the mark they were) as He developed Israel as His people. Therefore (from the standpoint of the Hebrews) Yehoveh was establishing Himself as the highest God in each of these territories that the Israelites entered. After all, since Israel (up to now) had no territory of its own, Yehoveh had no territory to rule over; therefore God would (in their thinking) have to confiscate a territory from some other gods and make it His own.

Each time they held a covenant ceremony, the Hebrews saw the Lord as establishing Himself NOT as the ONLY god of that territory, but as the El (the HIGHEST god of that territory). Recall from much earlier Torah studies that it was the norm for Middle Eastern cultures to have a god hierarchy with one of their gods as the highest god and the rest more or less under his authority. The term used in Canaan for "highest god" was Il: "I" "L". The Canaanite word Il was adopted and adapted into the Hebrew religion and became the Hebrew word "El", such as in El Shaddai, El Roi, El Elyon and so on. But it still meant the same thing and brought with it the same mental picture: the highest god among the several gods OF THAT TERRITORY. It's just that for the Israelites, Yehoveh was their "EL" (or Il). The idea of monotheism hadn't fully taken hold in their minds as yet.

Let's read Deuteronomy 29.

READ DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 29 all

The first thing Moses does is to remind Israel of their redemption history. He reminds them that many in the crowd that stands before him were eyewitnesses to the awesome wonders that Yehoveh struck Egypt with in order to free and redeem His people.

Simple math tells us that the oldest living Hebrews at this time (outside of Joshua, Caleb, and Moses) were approaching 60 years old (although a few older ones might have survived but would die in a matter of a few more days). When Israel left Egypt the age of accountability was essentially the same as the youngest age a male could serve in the military, and that was about 20 years old. So when God condemned that accountable Exodus generation to die out in the Wilderness and never be allowed to enter Canaan, that only included people who were around 20 years of age and older at the time.

Therefore many thousands of young Israelites (who were well into their late teens) personally witnessed not only God's plagues upon Egypt, but also the covenant given to Moses at Mt. Sinai. However since there were NOT yet at an age of accountability they could not personally accept the terms of the covenant, but their parents could agree for them. That said, once each minor reached the age of accountability he or she had to personally agree (or not) to be a member of the covenant community.

Thus we see this God-pattern emerge: the parents of an Israelite child who was not yet at the age of accountability could include their child in the covenant provisions. In fact as we'll see, this concept plays forward in the sense that every future generation of Israelites that is born is considered to be automatically born under the covenant (with some caveats that we don't need to get into). However once that child reaches the age of accountability, he and she MUST declare for themselves their allegiance to the covenant or they are not considered as covenant members. In a broad sense that is the purpose of a Bar Mitzvah (and a Bas Mitzvah) ceremony and why reading from the Torah is a key element of it. We could call this event when a child reaches the age of accountability and declares allegiance to God for him or her self a covenant renewal ceremony; and that is exactly what we are seeing in Deuteronomy chapters 26 – 30.

This notion is probably familiar to all who are listening. Depending on your upbringing and whether you are a Jew or a gentile, and which denomination you are involved in, the matter of whether a child is under the covenant protection of God, and at what age is considered the age of accountability varies. But the concept remains the same and Deuteronomy is the source. If one goes strictly according to Scripture then the age of accountability is the age that military conscription can occur. At the same time until the age of accountability that child is under the same status as their parents. If the parents are under the covenant, then their child is under the covenant. If the parents are OUTSIDE the covenant, then their child is outside the covenant. It works the same way, of course, with the New Testament unless the child makes a profession of faith on their own.

Moses says that many of you personally witnessed the wonders of Egypt and Mt. Sinai, but then in verse 3 he says that despite that the Lord has not given you a mind to understand nor eyes to see nor ears to hear; meaning that they did not understand the meaning of it all. Let me tell you, **this** is a powerful statement.

There is an interesting play on words that we kind of miss because of the English translation. It essentially says you have “seen” but you don’t “see”. But it also says that even though you have ears, you don’t “hear”. What it actually says is that even though you have ears, you don’t **shema**. You may eventually get a little tired of me reminding you of this, but **shema** does NOT mean merely to hear. Inherent in the word is that you are to be obedient to what you have heard. It does NOT mean to hear or listen (as is the passive sense of it that we think of it today). Without DOING what you heard, then you have not **shema**. Anyone who has gone to church but for a few months knows that there are many who come and HEAR; the sound of the words and sentences goes into their ears and they understand the words and sentences and they register but then there is no response. This is what Moses is getting at: you have ears (your sensory organs are registering the sounds of the words that I am giving to you) but up to now you are not DOING what the words command you to do.

All together this verse that speaks of minds that do not understand, eyes that do not see and ears that do not hear are describing spiritual blindness. Do not misunderstand this verse though; this is not at all like a Rabbi or Pastor chastising his congregation by telling them that they are spiritually blind. Rather this is Moses saying that up to this point God had not given them the gift of spiritual awareness, but now He has, and so they are finally ready to accept the covenant and to perform its terms in a much fuller sense than by mere mechanical actions.

I told you as we entered chapter 26 (the first of this special 4-chapter section) that there were great mysteries, prophecies, and unrevealed things in it that have confounded Hebrew sages and Christian scholars alike. The statement about God having not given His Hebrew people the minds to understand nor the eyes to see and ears to hear is one of those mysteries. Let’s face it; taken in its plainest sense this means that God must give each of us spiritual awareness or we can’t begin to properly carry out His instructions. Or put another way, spiritual awareness can be WITHHELD by God until when (if ever) He deems that He wants you have it. And without this spiritual awareness there is no hope of comprehending the significance of God’s laws and commands and his redemption plan and process.

I can recall in a visit with Becky’s father (when Becky was witnessing to him) his insistence that try as he might he could make no sense out of the Bible. He reads it but it is just words that evade his ability to comprehend. This was an intelligent and educated man; a retired school teacher who was frustrated because he could see that the Bible was words, and sentences, paragraphs and chapters, but it had no meaning to his mind.

About 6 months before he passed away he accepted Yeshua as His Savior and he spent much of his remaining days reading and enjoying and finally comprehending the Holy Scriptures. There is only one reasonable conclusion I can come to: it takes divine intervention to give to us the perception necessary to understand the divine Word of God. Yet, here were His redeemed people, wandering out in the desert, armed with the Laws of Moses, but constantly finding themselves in trouble with God for their disobedience. The implication is that while the Lord

had given them the Law He had NOT given them the ability to understand its underlying meaning.

The highly acclaimed Jewish Torah scholar Jeffrey Tigay (who is not a Believer), comes to this conclusion from what we read here in Deuteronomy: "This seems to imply that God does give the heart the capacity for faith, but that He does so only for those who seek it.....man must have the desire to obey God and only then will God help him to do so."

Faith, trusting God, was the key. The Law was given to Israel NOT because they were seeking it or because they were faithful (they weren't), but because GOD was faithful. But even the giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai did not automatically relieve the Israelites of their spiritual blindness. Only those Hebrews who had faith and trusted Yehoveh were given the "unlock code" to God's Word. Only those who loved God and WANTED to be obedient were given minds to understand, eyes to see, and ears to hear.

Naturally this pattern is sent forward and is the basis for the New Testament and our modern lives.

^{CJB} Galatians 3:2 *I want to know from you just this one thing: did you receive the Spirit by legalistic observance of Torah commands or by trusting in what you heard and being faithful to it?*

As Tigay discovered for himself, Moses was saying that receiving the Law is a separate issue from receiving the ability to comprehend the Law. God has already given the gift of the Law even to those who were not looking to receive it. But the gift of understanding it as divinely intended only comes to those who personally SEEK Him in trust and desire to be obedient to Him. Paul is saying precisely the same thing. When we determine by our wills to seek God, and to be obedient to Him, and we understand sufficiently to accept the Jewish Messiah Yeshua as our needed Redeemer, then we are given the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit IS the church era's unlock code to the Word of God. Without the Holy Spirit we may certainly be able to read the words of the Bible, memorize and recite them, and to some extent even do them; but without the Holy Spirit we'll never be able to understand them and their intent. And doing the Law without trusting God is a hollow and meaningless endeavor that does NOT please the Lord. That is, in fact, the true definition of legalism.

Verse 5 makes the comment that while out in the Wilderness the Israelites did not eat bread nor drink wine nor strong drink (and this was so they might know the Lord). Look: this is not a diatribe against wine and "**shekar**" (strong drink) any more than it's a diatribe against bread. It is simply saying that rather than the staples of the Hebrew diet (bread and wine) they ate Manna, quail, and drank water; all things that were provided supernaturally. Bread, lechem, is

the product of human endeavor. Wine is the product of a human endeavor. Manna came ready to eat, and it poured out from Heaven. Quail was not raised and fed and bred and cared for; it came ready to eat and literally fell from the sky. The water didn't come from wells that were dug or canals that were dredged nor were cisterns to capture the flash flood waters constructed. Whenever naturally available water from a spring wasn't available God simply provided it from the most absurd and improbable source: rocks. And all of this was so no Israelite could take any credit for the provisions of life and sustenance during those 40 years out in the wilderness, most of which amounted to an exile. Now THAT is mercy.

A couple of things to take notice of: wine and strong drink is perfectly allowable according to the Scriptures. There is NOTHING wrong with alcoholic beverages. Wine is the Biblical symbol and metaphor of joy. Yeshua turned water into wine because weddings were to be joyful and the wedding he and his mother were attending was running short of wine and therefore joy. Why was wine associated with joy? Because the people got a little tipsy. They forgot some of their cares and felt less pain in their bodies; they laughed a little more and put some of their worldly burdens asides for a short time. Wine tasted good and smelled good. Even strong drink (what today we might call hard liquor and beer) was acceptable (but of course not to the point of drunkenness and irresponsibility).

Notice the 3 "spheres" of existence that the sustenance of life for Israel came from: Manna came from Heaven, quail from the sky (the heavens), and water from the earth. Heaven (the spiritual world), the sky (the heavens, what we see when we look out at the stars at night), and the earth we live on. God is sovereign and He is Lord of all these areas that represent not only our entire seen and knowable Universe but also the invisible and unknowable spiritual realm. He provides for our needs from every one of these areas. Our God is indeed an awesome God!!

From verses 9 through 20 we witness the actual covenant ratification ceremony. And the first words of this ceremony are: ".....you stand this day, all of you, before the Lord...." The word "stand" is significant. In Hebrew the word is *nitsav* and it means that you are "presenting" yourselves to the Lord. Recall that I mentioned that the Hebrew language does not employ tenses (past, present, future) per se. Rather they employ something called perfect and imperfect or complete and incomplete. The idea is that something has been established and is completed, or that something has been established and it is ongoing but has not yet been completed. Here nitsav is used in the perfect; it is not saying that at this moment you are NOW presenting yourselves to the Lord rather it means that you have been presenting yourself to the Lord and continue to. And the text goes to great lengths to include every last person traveling with and among Israel: leaders, men and women, children, even foreigners. Woodchopper and water drawers are the lowliest of tasks, so this means that no social group was left out; all of these people are present at the covenant ratification ceremony.

And the people were present to be given an opportunity to become a member of the covenant

community or to reaffirm their membership; a covenant that verse 12 says is “a covenant with its oaths”, or other versions say, “a covenant with its sanctions”. These are correct but it misses the point; what this verse MEANS is “a covenant with its curses”. The Hebrew is **berit ve-‘alah**, which most literally is, “a covenant guarded by curses”. In a sense this was a caution and a warning not to enter into this covenant lightly because the repercussions from breaking its terms could be fatal. Not surprisingly this same warning is found in the New Testament for those who would enter into the Israelite covenant by means of Yeshua’s sacrifice.

CJB 1 Corinthians 11:26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord, until he comes.²⁷ Therefore, whoever eats the Lord's bread or drinks the Lord's cup in an unworthy manner will be guilty of desecrating the body and blood of the Lord!

Yet “a covenant guarded by curses” was a rather common phrase used throughout the Middle East to describe treaties made between a powerful king and the vassal cities and states he ruled over. These treaties always had the purpose and the terms spelled out; the obligations both sides agreed to; and finally the curses that would happen to the vassal state if they should break the treaty. So the Israelites fully understood the sober and serious nature of what it was they were agreeing to. I wonder if we modern Believers take it as seriously?

Then the Lord makes it abundantly clear that Canaan was the land He had promised to Israel; it had always been the Promised Land. It was NOT any suitable territory that the Israelites wandered into and preferred. It was not left up to chance and serendipity or the vagaries of history or human politics. It is awfully easy to see the land of Israel as just a place where the Jews live. Why is it so necessary that it be that particular spot? In fact much of the world, today, is asking that question. Since the Muslims insist that the land the Jewish nation sits upon should be theirs, why not just move the Jews to some other place that won’t cause such trouble? And in fact about a century ago such a thing came within a hair’s breadth from happening.

The father of Zionism, Theodore Hertzl, about 100 years ago was approaching various governments around the world to try and acquire a place for a Jewish homeland. He wanted Palestine of course, but the Arabs were having none of it. Finally the British offered him a large colonial territory that they had lost interest in; today we know this place as the country of Uganda. The World Zionist Congress had heated debates as to whether to accept the British offer and in a very close vote they rejected Uganda as the new Jewish homeland. The rest, as they say, is history.

Even if they had voted to accept Uganda, it would not have represented their return from exile as promised by the Prophets. The land of Canaan is special to God for His own good reasons.

The Promised Land is not any land sufficient to house Israel; it is a very specific divinely ordained place. God was making that clear to the 2nd Exodus generation, He made it clear by His divine providence in the late 1800's, and He's making it clearer still today. But does the Church have eyes to see, and ears to hear? The world certainly doesn't, and many Jews don't either.

The Lord says He is not only making this covenant with those standing before Him today (in Moab), but with those "who are not here today". Since the previous verses make it clear that EVERY living Israelite was present to hear Moses this is referring to all the descendants of those present; the future generations. Interestingly the Midrash Tanhuma deals with this matter and says that the pre-incarnate souls of all future Hebrews were present at this covenant ceremony, and so they, too, heard Moses and became part of the covenant. We might want to call that fanciful thinking but modern Christianity in general accepts a very similar doctrine in that every soul that will ever live was created in the beginning and is with God until He creates that individual in a physical form and He puts that eternal soul within him or her.

Even if you do not accept that interpretation, at the least the covenant is being offered to all Hebrews of the future generations, just as the New Covenant was offered to all future generations of humanity and not only the one during which Yeshua came.

Starting in verse 15 Moses cautions that the covenant community must keep their wits about them and be on watch for anyone who has taken the oath of the Mosaic Covenant but then turns around and decides that now that they've declared that they are part of the covenant (safe and sound and protected) they can just go live as they please without regard to the terms of the covenant. This is illustrated as a man or women who would remember the nations that the horde of 3 million Israelites wandered through on their way to Canaan, and remember the gods of gold and silver that those nations worshipped, and choose to serve those false gods. Such a person is viewed as bitter poison and wormwood. In other words they are dangerous to the community at large because they might entice others to do as they have done.

Understand: as much as exactly this scenario happened in Israel's history (and we read about it at length in Judges and all the books of the Prophets), it was rare that a Hebrew would renounce Yehoveh and take up worshipping other gods in His place. Rather they would simply go on with what we talked about a few minutes ago: they would see Yehoveh as the El, the **highest** god in the territory, and they would keep Him but add a few of the "lesser" gods to their repertoire. This felt perfectly reasonable to them; they'd go to Temple, they'd attend the Biblical Feasts, they'd bring in their tithes and they would sacrifice at the Brazen Altar; but then they would also have little wooden and stone idols of other gods in their homes and pay homage to them as well (often in secret so that their neighbors didn't know). Needless to say they were shocked when God's curses fell upon them with their usual excuse being: but God, didn't we call on your Name? We read of this scenario over and over ad nauseum in the books of the Prophets.

Some of you know right where this is leading, don't you? This pattern naturally presents itself in the New Testament as well; and the falling away and worshipping other gods may just be as prevalent in the institutional church today as it was with the Hebrews in the days of the evil kings of Israel.

Who has not heard the often repeated phrase of Jesus who said, ^{CJB} **Matthew 7:22 *On that Day, many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord! Didn't we prophesy in your name? Didn't we expel demons in your name? Didn't we perform many miracles in your name?'*²³ Then I will tell them to their faces, 'I never knew you! Get away from me, you workers of lawlessness!'**

Here in Deuteronomy 29 Yehoveh was warning through Moses that while redemption and signing on to the covenant were good things that one had to continue in their trust and obedience to maintain their position within the covenant community. Do you think that's changed with Jesus? I'm afraid the vast bulk of especially the Evangelical wing of Christianity thinks so. But as with so many doctrines of this sort the Holy Scriptures tell us the opposite: ^{CJB} **Romans 11:19 *So you will say, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in."*²⁰ True, but so what? They were broken off because of their lack of trust. However, you keep your place only because of your trust. So don't be arrogant; on the contrary, be terrified!²¹ For if God did not spare the natural branches, he certainly won't spare you!²² So take a good look at God's kindness and his severity: on the one hand, severity toward those who fell off; but, on the other hand, God's kindness toward you—provided you maintain yourself in that kindness! Otherwise, you too will be cut off!**

You know it is very concerning to me that so many of us think we can get up from the pew and walk the aisle, say the words, pray the sinners prayer, and then figure we've completed our obligations to God. That now that we've joined the New Covenant community we have no duties, we have no rules, and there are no consequences for our actions. There is not ONE Scripture in the OT or NT that even implies such a thing. The only reason this kind of thought exists within far too many Christian doctrines is to deal with the supposed problem of legalism and works as a means to Salvation. That somehow or another to obey the written Scriptural commands of God is legalism; to do good and righteous deeds is to try to gain our salvation through self-justifying works. I believe it is time for the Church to repent of this and to re-examine these issues before it's too late for millions of Church goers who honestly think that they are safely within the congregation of the Lord, and yet have no interest in His Word or His ways.

Verse 19 is downright terrifying. It says that the Lord will not forgive those who fall away in this manner and that the sum total of every curse of the Law will be upon that person, and that Yehoveh will blot out his name from under heaven. I told you at the beginning of today's lesson that we would find out what "blot out his name" means. For most of you I think the meaning has already become clear: it is speaking of eternal death. It is speaking of The Curse

of the Law. It is absolute condemnation. One who signs onto the covenant and then falls away will suffer the same fate as those who worshipped the Golden Calf. He will suffer the same fate as God imposed on the Amelikitites: the permanent wrath of God and permanent separation from Him.

Verse 20 explains that the Lord will single people out for this fate and it will be done in accordance to the terms of the covenant. The would-be apostate person should not think that he could get “lost” and hide among the covenant community, and escape his fate by going undetected. Nor should he think that all divine punishments and disciplines occur only at the national level (experienced by the community as a whole). Rather the Lord will deal with covenant violators on a person-by-person basis and there is no hiding from God. And one of the purposes for Yehoveh condemning apostates individual by individual, and dealing with them in the most devastating and horrific way, is so others who come later will see what happened to them. The cursed will be a sign for future generations not to test the Lord.

I want to point out something interesting that is now said that sheds light on something of a puzzle that goes back to Genesis. These verses use the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, as well as the cities of Adamah and Zeboiim, as illustrations of the complete annihilation that apostizers can expect. And it says that these cities were so completely devastated by sulfur and salt that they were beyond any ability to produce crops or even pasture land for wild or domestic animals. These cities were essentially thrown into the Lake of Fire and abandoned by God and Man forever.

Recall that Lot and his family were rescued by an angel from the evil city of Sodom and that as they fled they were instructed not to look back; but Lot’s wife disobeyed and she was turned into a pillar of salt. Of itself salt is useful and good. It can preserve and it can season. Yet salt can also be destructive. The idea is that even though Lot’s wife was given the opportunity to escape destruction (and in fact HAD escaped) she still didn’t trust (she fell away from God) and wound up suffering the same fate as she would have had she simply stayed in Sodom with the pagans. She turned to salt; she became the same agent of soil destroying poison (salt) that made Sodom and Gomorrah uninhabitable and unusable.

You see it was usual for a powerful King who had treaties with many smaller vassal cities to come and utterly destroy that city should they rebel against him. It would be a warning sign to his other vassal cities NOT to follow their lead. In the process the king’s men would bring sulfur and salt and spread it all over the arable land. The two chemicals combined made the land utterly unusable for anything; the sulfur created a foul odor and the salt poisoned the soil and nothing would grow.

That Lot’s wife was a “pillar” of salt would be better translated as a “monument” of salt. That is she became a sign, a warning, a hazard marker to all who would turn back from their

redemption and from their Redeemer.

^{CJB} Jeremiah 17:6 *He will be like a tamarisk in the 'Aravah- when relief comes, it is unaffected; for it lives in the sun-baked desert, in salty, uninhabited land*

^{CJB} Matthew 5:13 *"You are salt for the Land. But if salt becomes tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything except being thrown out for people to trample on.*

We'll finish chapter 29 next week and then move into Deuteronomy 30.