

DID THEY ALL DIE IN VAIN? **Deuteronomy 28**

There has never been but one chosen nation in all of history in the strict biblical sense of the word, and that nation is Israel. Speaking of Israel, Moses wrote in Deut. 7:6: "For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth". And contrary to what many people believe, the Jews are still God's chosen people. God told Abraham in Genesis 13:15 – "For all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever". And God said in Jeremiah 31:35-36:

"Thus says the Lord, Who gives the sun for a light by day, the ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night, Who disturbs the sea, and its waves roar (The Lord of hosts is His name): 'If those ordinances depart from before Me, says the Lord, then the seed of Israel shall also cease from being a nation before Me forever.'"

God says that if the sun quits shining and the moon fails and all the stars burn out and if the seas cease to be tossed by the winds, then Israel will cease to be My people, but not before. And one day in the future Jesus will come again and deliver them from their enemies and they will finally acknowledge Him as their long-awaited Messiah. But God's choice of Israel as His own in no way means that He will not bless other nations as well. God says in Psalm 67:1-2:

Psalm 67:1-2 – "God be merciful to us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us, that Your way may be known on earth, Your salvation among **all nations**."

Psalm 86:9 – "**All nations** whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name".

Psalm 117:1 – "O praise the Lord, **all ye nations**: praise him, **all ye people**."

Isaiah 45:22 – "Look unto me, and be ye saved, **all the ends of the earth**: for I am God, and there is none else".

And "all the ends of the earth" would certainly include America. And so as American Christians we cannot claim the Old Testament promises that God

made specifically to Israel, like the promise of being a nation before Him forever, but we can claim His promises that He made to Gentile nations like the ones we've just read, and also like the one He made in Jeremiah 12. Listen to what God said to the nations surrounding Israel, who worshipped Baal: "And it shall be, if they will learn carefully the ways of My people, to swear by My name, 'As the Lord lives,' as they taught My people to swear by Baal, then they shall be established in the midst of My people" (Jeremiah 12:18). God says that if the Gentile nations would follow Jehovah that He would establish them, that He would bless them. And those who know their history know that this is what our founding fathers did. They had a faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and they led our fledgling country to worship and serve Him. I want you to listen to the quotes of just a few. The first is from Christopher Columbus:

"It was the Lord who put into my mind (I could feel His hand upon me) the fact that it would be possible to sail from here to the Indies". And when Columbus set first set foot on that little island in the Caribbean he named it San Salvador, which means "Holy Savior". And listen to the prayer that he prayed, "Oh Lord, almighty and everlasting God, by Thy Holy Word Thou has created the heaven and the earth, and the sea; blessed and glorified be Thy Name, and praised be Thy Majesty, which has deigned to use us, Thy humble servants, that Thy Holy Name may be proclaimed in this second part of the earth".

Patrick Henry - "It cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often that this great nation was founded not by religionists, but by Christians; not on religions, but on the gospel of Jesus Christ. For that reason alone, people of other faiths have been afforded freedom of worship here."

Woodrow Wilson – "America was born a Christian nation – America was born to exemplify that devotion to the elements of righteousness which are derived from the revelations of Holy Scripture".

Richard Nixon was certainly less than a spiritual role model, but listen to his words: "Let us remember that as a Christian nation...we have a charge and a destiny".

Beloved, in light of these quotes, how can anyone not say that we were founded as one nation under God? And can anyone deny that other than Israel God has blessed America as much or more than any nation on earth? But this

morning I have a sobering question to propose to you. All of these men and women whom we've recognized today, who made the ultimate sacrifice to allow us to continue to live in freedom and serve God, did they all die in vain? Is it possible that the freedom they died for will one day be snatched away by a power outside us mightier than we? Or perhaps even worse, could we see that freedom slowly melt away before our very eyes by the insidious evils that are growing within?

Well, beloved, the answer to that question is YES. Yes, we could lose our freedom as a sovereign nation. Yes, we could go the way of the great world powers of history who are now dead and buried – Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. But here's the deal – it is all up to us. We can obey God and He will bless us, or we can disobey God and He will curse us. And today I want us to be convicted and challenged to obey Him that He may truly bless America with every blessing He desires to give.

Turn in your Bibles, please, to Deuteronomy 28 verses 1-10, 14 and 15 as I read. In the text we've just read we see at least five specific ways that God promised to bless Israel if she would obey His commands. And I want to point them out to you briefly. First of all, God said that Israel would enjoy **global supremacy** (verses 1, 13, 10). And as you continue to read the Old Testament you see that is exactly what happened. Joshua led Israel back to the Promised Land, where she became the most powerful nation on earth under the reigns of David and Solomon. She truly was the head and not the tail, and she was the dread and fear of all the nations surrounding her. Listen to what Rahab the harlot told the spies that came to Jericho just a short time after God's promises to Israel:

Joshua 2:9: "I know that the Lord has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you".

So God promised to Israel global supremacy if she would obey His commands. But He promised her something else. He also promised her **family prosperity** (verse 4a). Their offspring would be abundant, just like God had promised Abraham hundreds of years earlier that his seed would become as the sand on the seashore and as the stars in the sky (Genesis 22:17). But in addition to family prosperity, God promised Israel **material prosperity** (verse 4b-5). And look at the last part of verse 12 ("You shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow"). Do you recall how rich Israel became under the reign of

Solomon? 2 Samuel 10:23 says, "So King Solomon surpassed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom."

But there were yet other blessings that God promised to Israel. He also promised to bless them with **personal safety**. Verse 6 says that they would be blessed when they went out and when they went in. In all of their goings and doings of life God's hand would be on them, blessing them and protecting them. And finally, if Israel obeyed God He would bless them with **national security**. Look at verse 7. The enemies of Israel would come to battle against them united and flee scattered. And as you know, seven is the number of perfection in Scripture. And here it symbolizes utter destruction of those who would come against the children of God.

So, all of these blessings God promised to His people if they would walk in His ways. And can't you see so many parallels between Israel and America? From just a small little band of pilgrims 232 years ago we have become the third largest nation in the world with over 300 million people. God has blessed America with staggering material blessings. Last year our gross national product was over double the second ranking nation in the world, which was China, and China has over four times as many people as we do. Up until 9-11 we would all have said that our personal safety was the best, but we still move about our country with little or no fear of harm. We've won every major war we've ever fought, and we've never had a serious threat of invasion. And for scores and scores of years we have been at the forefront of world leadership.

But why have we been elevated to this lofty position? Only by God's grace. God has said, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord... (Psalm 33:12), and we have been a nation who has declared that the majority of us claim the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as our God. We have done it through statements by our leadership, as we've already heard. We done it by declaring a national day of thanksgiving to God for His blessings in 1863, by declaring a national day of prayer in 1952, and by inserting the phrase "under God" in our pledge of allegiance in 1954. And up until that point practically no one in America would ever say that that those who gave their lives to maintain our freedom died in vain.

But not long after 1954 times began to swiftly change. First came the Supreme Court's decisions in 1962 and 1963 to ban prayer and Bible reading in public schools. Then came the infamous Roe vs. Wade decision legalizing abortion in 1973. And in the same year the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from its list of mental disorders. Following that in 1980

the Supreme Court ruled that posting the 10 Commandments in schools was illegal. Now fast forward to 2004 when Massachusetts became the first state in the country to legalize gay marriage. And fast forward another eight years when President Obama recently took a stand against the moral law of God in support of gay marriage, but what was most appalling was that he appealed to his faith in Christ to support his thinking.

But something that I saw on vacation last week puts the capstone on it all. We were watching one of those channels that play reruns of old comedy shows, and at that particular time "Leave it to Beaver" was on, which ranks probably in the top five for laughs behind Andy Griffith. A clean, wholesome family show. So I was naturally caught off guard by what I saw at the commercial break. For during that break the network was promoting a newer show. They probably considered it a family show too, because on the screen were a man and a woman with beaming smiles on their faces. But it was the name of the show that startled me. It was "Happily Divorced". Friends, that's an oxymoron. There is no such thing as a happy divorce. But I thought when I saw that, what a moral free fall our country has experienced, from Leave it to Beaver to Happily Divorced!

Beloved, we have lost our way morally and spiritually. We are like those whom Isaiah prophesied against, saying, "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness..." (Isaiah 5:20). Almost weekly we will read of some horrific moral collapse by an individual or a group of individuals in high places – places where you expect a higher standard from those who are there. We all know about the recent Secret Service scandal in Colombia. And when the newscasters express their shock that such a thing could happen I'm thinking, "What do you expect?" What do you expect from people who've grown up in a generation where they've been in a spiritual vacuum, where God has been x-ed out of every part of their lives and replaced by a deluge of media filth, and by the humanistic doctrines of evolution and atheism? But friends if America doesn't turn back to the God of our fathers, it is only going to get worse.

But here's the question. What will happen to America if we don't repent and it does get worse? What will God do? Well, let's take a look at what God told Israel would happen to them if they would not obey His commands. Look at verses 15-19. God tells Israel that if they did not obey His commandments that He would curse them in the very things He promised to bless them if they obeyed Him. And He goes on with the details for 49 more verses. God gives fourteen verses promising blessings for obedience and fifty-four promising

curses for disobedience. Does this mean that God is more punitive than He is merciful? A thousand times no! God's mercy is as high as the heavens are above the earth and from everlasting to everlasting upon those that fear Him (Psalm 107: 11, 17). Ezekiel says that God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live (Ezekiel 33:11). And in His great desire that His children obey Him and be blessed instead of be cursed, God takes an extended amount of time to warn them just how serious would be the consequence of their sin.

Now, we certainly don't have time to review all of the judgments that God warned Israel about. But I do want us to mention just a few. Look at verse 32. God told Israel that because of their disobedience they would **suffer much family heartache**. Earlier we saw that one blessing of Israel would be multiplication of children, and now we see that one of their punishments would be those children would be taken away, and there would be nothing that they could do to get them back. And this is no doubt what happened to some of them when the Babylonians stormed Israel around 600 BC and took back to Babylon young people like Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego.

There is a second punishment for Israel's disobedience I want you to see. Do you remember that one of God's blessings for obedience was economic prosperity? Well, if Israel chose not to obey God's laws, He told them the result would be **economic slavery**. Look at verses 33, 43-44. And down in verse 53 God said that times would get so bad that parents would eat the flesh of their own children! Talk about an economic meltdown! From the richest nation on earth to cannibalism. But that's exactly what happened, and you can read about it in 2 Kings 6. But there is a third plague that Israel would endure for their disobedience. Look at verses 49-50. Israel would be overrun by a nation that **had no regard for the lives** of the very young or the very old, in other words, those who really are not productive members of society.

Now, it should be very clear to everyone who will do a present day comparison of America to Israel to see history almost rewriting itself. Take for instance the matter of family heartache. Children being taken away from their parents. We live in an age where this happens all around us. Now, let me say that if it were not for state agencies like the Department of Human Resources many children would be living in abusive and ungodly situations, and DHR meets a critical need for those children. But it is also true that Christian parents can have their children yanked right out of their home because a neighbor calls DHR when they perceive a child is being spanked too hard.

But there is another way that parents are deprived of their children, which in ways is worse. And that is not physical separation, but spiritual separation. Beloved, when parents send their children off to most public schools every morning it is like sending them into a den of hungry wolves. When your children go to their friend's homes or they go out with their friends, unless those friends or their parents or both have strong Christian values, you pray for God's protection upon your children's minds and hold your breath. Because 1 John 5: 19 tells us that the whole world lies under the sway of the devil. And that means every system out there except the church. Politics, education, entertainment, business – there's not a vocation or an avocation where the majority of those involved are Christian. The majority are children of darkness, spreading darkness. Your office may be different, your child's school may be different, but it will be rare. And our children are prime targets of Satan's sniper fire. And the numbers of Christian parents who've lost their children to the enemy is legion.

What about **economic slavery**? What are the comparisons there? Plenty; God said in verse 33 that foreign nations would eat the fruit of Israel's labor. Did you hear the news about what happened in the business world this week? AMC, the second largest film making company in the United States, was sold to the Chinese for \$2.6 billion dollars. It is China's largest corporate takeover to date, and it means megabucks flowing out of our hands to a foreign power, and one who is not our friend.

God said that when Israel's judgment comes, they would cease to be the lender and become the borrower. Well, beloved, we Americans have become such a nation of greed that no one has the willpower to put the clamps on our voracious appetite for stuff. Individual bankruptcies are at an all time high. I read recently that even churches are defaulting on loans more than ever. Churches who could not live within their means.

But individuals and churches are but mirrors of government. Five years ago our national debt was 62% of our gross national product, almost 2/3rds. But last year, four years later, our national debt was 100% of all of the goods and services we produced. Our debt is so staggering and is so perilous to the global economy that the Russian president recently called us a "parasite". And get this, the Chinese government, which espouses atheism, called our government's reckless spending immoral. What do they know about morals? Nothing. They are one of the most immoral nations on earth. But to them we are more immoral than they are. But our spending is so out of control that some nations are now calling for an alternative currency other than the dollar for international monetary exchanges. They just don't trust the dollar anymore. And recently the UN

suggested that it might be about time to consider a one world currency. That's totally another sermon, but shades of the Antichrist!

But the point is, beloved, just about every competent economic guru you will ever hear will tell you that the United States is barreling straight forward to an economic Armageddon. But the reason is simple. God said we would, unless we obey His commands, and we have not.

Well, we could go on to talk at length about how we parallel Israel's judgment in our disregard for the young and the old. But let me just say this. Think about the number of lives that have been sacrificed to give us our freedom and to keep us free since 1776. The number is over 1.3 million in 35 wars, including the Civil War. Well, every 18 months we kill more of our babies inside their mothers' wombs than that. And more and more we are seeing legislation pushed through in various states that make it easier for us to kill our old as well. But eventually all of these things are going to catch up with us. We are going to become a minor league player in world affairs as time goes on and who knows what other hardships that will bring.

But the question that we must all answer is, what about right now? What can I do right now for myself, my family, and my country in spite of the direction the rest of America is headed? Well, the first thing that you must do is to make sure that your curse of sin has been removed. You see, we were all born with the curse of sin hanging over our heads, and that curse will lead to our eternal doom unless it is removed. And praise God, He has made provision for our curse to be removed. Galatians 3:13 says, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, for it is written, cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree".

Do you know for sure that your curse has been removed? Are you certain that you are saved? Then friend, God simply wants you to claim verse 2 of Deuteronomy 28 as your own. "And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the Lord your God". Expend yourself for Jesus. Receive all of His blessings, and as you do you will bring great glory to Him!