

DEUTERONOMY

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Deuteronomy chapter 27 as we continue our study through the Word of God. Tonight we will begin the third and really final sermon or lecture that Moses gave to the children of Israel as they prepared to enter the Promise Land under the leadership of Joshua. This covers a section from Deuteronomy chapter 27 really through the end of the book, chapter 34. Although, if you want to be technical about it, the rest of the book can really be broken down as follows. We see in chapter 31 Moses usher Joshua as the new leader in Israel. Chapter 32 is the song of Moses. Chapter 33 is the final blessings of Moses. And in chapter 34 we see the death of Moses. But a loose outline for us will be Moses final address to the people, from Deuteronomy chapter 27 through 34. So with that said, let's begin reading in Deuteronomy chapter 27 and see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word!

DEUTERONOMY 27

VERSES 1-8

1. During this one-month period of time Moses has been instructing them on what the Lord requires of them as they enter the Promise Land. But it is not just hearing these things but Moses wants them to do them, that is what is important and that is what Moses is admonishing them to do. To apply these truths to their lives and God desires that of us. It is as James 1:22 tells us, “**But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.**”

2. When they enter the Land they are to take some large stones and whitewash them and then write the words of the Law on them. Now some say it is speaking of a summation of all that Moses said here in Deuteronomy but I tend to think it is all He said in this book. They were large stones! I think there is a lesson for us out of this. You see, by writing God's Word on whitewashed stones it made them easy to read. Folks, as we share God's Word we should do the same and not decorate it with so much other stuff that people can't see what God is saying or we destroy the integrity of God's Word by mixing it up with other things!

3. Also, on Mount Ebal they were to set up an altar. Mount Ebal is about 35 miles north of Jerusalem, in the middle part of the land. This is the area known as Shechem and that is interesting to me because the Lord appeared to Abraham at Shechem according to Genesis 12:6-7. Now God wants the children of Israel to gather here, when they go into the Land, and write His Words on these large stones and set up an altar for sacrifice. And thus, God is also meeting with the children of Israel here as they are ratifying the covenant, this next generation. Today, this area of Shechem including Jericho is known as the West Bank and has been given over to the Palestinians.

4. Now what is interesting to me about this altar is that it was not to be ornate, but just whole stones and upon the altar the sacrifices would be made. Why is that? Because God does not want the children of Israel to focus on the altar or even the one who built the altar. He wants them to focus upon the sacrifice. Today, once again we see ornate churches where you tend to focus on the beauty of the altar you might say or the picturesque view instead of the sacrifice, instead of Jesus Christ!

5. At this altar there was the burnt offering, spoken of in Leviticus chapter 1, which speaks of dedication. There was the peace offering, spoken of in Leviticus chapter 3, which spoke of peace, of celebration. Think about this. They are at Mount Ebal where the cursings were spoken. It is here the altar is at, the sacrifice made, the shedding of the blood. For us, as we apply the blood of Christ to our lives by faith, we then dedicate our lives to Him and out of this we have peace with God, there is great joy, a great celebration, at least there should be!

6. As the children of Israel enter the land we see Joshua fulfill these words that Moses spoke of here in Deuteronomy. In Joshua 8:30-35 we are told, **“Now Joshua built an altar to the Lord God of Israel in Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the Book of the Law of Moses: ‘an altar of whole stones over which no man has wielded an iron tool.’ And they offered on it burnt offerings to the Lord, and sacrificed peace offerings. And there, in the presence of the children of Israel, he wrote on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written. Then all Israel, with their elders and officers and judges, stood on either side of the ark before the priests, the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, the stranger as well as he who was born among them. Half of them were in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded before, that they should bless the people of Israel. And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and the cursings, according to all that is written in the Book of the Law. There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded which Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel, with the women, the little ones, and the strangers who were living among them.”** We will deal with the blessings and the cursings as we move on, but again, Joshua fulfilled what Moses told them to do!

VERSES 9-10

1. This is not saying that prior to this they were not the people of God. It was more of re-commitment of their lives to the Lord as they prepare to enter into the Promise Land.

God, through Moses told them what He expected of them and they were willing to submit to what God had said. And here's the thing. If God is our King, if our lives are submitted to Him, then we need to obey His Words to us. I think we are all in agreement on that until we don't like what God is telling us. Folks, if He is Lord, and He is, then we need to listen and obey, even if we don't like it or agree with it!

VERSES 11-13

1. After their defeat at Ai in Joshua chapter 7, they repented of their sin, and as we have read in Joshua chapter 8, they fulfilled the words of Moses. Now keep in mind that it was some 25 miles from Ai to this area by Shechem and it was not easy for a few million people to travel that distance but they obeyed the Lord no matter how difficult it would be. Now Mount Gerizim was lush, it was fertile, it had springs and was filled with life, with color. This is where the blessings flowed for obedience. On the other side was Mount Ebal, which was barren, rocky, no life on it. This is where the cursings flowed for disobedience. These two mountains, if you can call them mountains, rose only some 2,000 feet in the air. And right between them was this valley, and this is where the Levites, the priests were located as six of the twelve tribes were stationed by Mount Gerizim and six by Mount Ebal. The Tribe of Levi was located on Mount Gerizim, but again, the priests were in the middle.

VERSE 14

1. For whatever reason, I use to think that the blessings were called down from Mount Gerizim and the cursings from Mount Ebal, but that is not what we are told here. As I have said, the priests, with the Ark of the Covenant stood in the middle and would call out the blessings towards Mount Gerizim and the cursings toward Mount Ebal. That is what Joshua 8:33 tells us, **“Then all Israel, with their elders and officers and judges, stood on either side of the ark before the priests, the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, the stranger as well as he who was born among them. Half of them were in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded before, that they should bless the people of Israel.”**

VERSES 15-26

1. Here we see the curses being spoken of and the people were in agreement with what God tells them as they say, **“Amen.”** Or literally, “So be it.” Look at what the Lord is saying will bring a curse upon them:

- Curse upon idolaters – Deuteronomy 27:15.
- Curse upon those who disobey their parents – Deuteronomy 27:16.
- Curse upon those who steal – Deuteronomy 27:17.
- Curse upon those who are cruel to others – Deuteronomy 27:18.
- Curse upon the person who perverts justice – Deuteronomy 27:19.
- Curse upon the sexually immoral – Deuteronomy 27:20.
- Curse upon the sexually perverted – Deuteronomy 27:21.

- Curse upon incest – Deuteronomy 27:22-23.
- Curse upon the violent – Deuteronomy 27:24.
- Curse upon those who cheat the courts – Deuteronomy 27:25.

And Moses ends with a summation you might say in Deuteronomy 27:26. If you think you have done good, forget about it! You have to keep all the Words of the Law, everyone perfectly and no one could do that. It is as Paul said in Romans 3:23, “**for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.**” Thus, on Mount Ebal where there were the cursings, there is the blood sacrifice; the shedding of blood and out of that there is forgiveness of sin. Jesus is our sacrifice and His shed blood has cleansed us as white as snow. Now we can dedicate our lives to Him and rejoice that we have peace with God through Jesus Christ! On Mount Gerizim, where the blessings were called out to, there was no need for an altar or sacrifices, but there was on Mount Ebal and that is where we all came from folks!

DEUTERONOMY 28

VERSES 1-2

1. Here is the choice, to obey the Lord and be blessed and we just saw what happens if they disobeyed the Lord, the cursings. What I like here is that God's blessings will overtake us. You can't outrun the blessings of God! It is as Paul said in Ephesians 3:20-21, **"Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen."** I think we miss out on the many blessings that God bestows upon us because we are not looking for them. We tend to focus on that which we don't have instead of seeing all that God is doing, even if it is during difficult situations we face. Remember, God is still working and He is still blessing!

VERSES 3-14

1. Here are the blessings that God promised to Israel if they obeyed Him:
 - Blessings everywhere they went – Deuteronomy 28:3.
 - Blessings for a fruitful life – Deuteronomy 28:4.
 - Blessings upon their provisions, their necessities – Deuteronomy 28:5.
 - Blessings upon their daily activities – Deuteronomy 28:6.
 - Blessings against their enemies, the children of Israel will be victorious – Deuteronomy 28:7.
 - Blessings in their work – Deuteronomy 28:8.

And the key is found in Deuteronomy 28:9, they will be God's people, set apart for His use. He saves the best for last you might say. Now keep in mind that these blessings were conditional, based upon their obedience. There are those blessings that are unconditional, based upon the faithfulness of God alone and God will save His people, the Jews, they will receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior one day because God is faithful and what He has promised to Abraham, He will bring to pass! The same is true for us, our salvation is based upon the finished work of Jesus and not some standard we must attain to go to Heaven. And I think the conclusion here is very important. In Deuteronomy 28:14 Moses said, **“So you shall not turn aside from any of the words which I command you this day, to the right or the left, to go after other gods to serve them.”** In other words, keep your eyes upon the lord and don't let other things distract you from following Him!

VERSE 15

1. Here we see the curses for disobedience and this continues through the rest of the chapter, verses 16-68, some 52 verses dealing with the curses that will come upon them if they do not follow what the Lord has said! Not a very encouraging section, but God wanted His people to know what they would face if they disobeyed Him.

VERSE 16-68

1. Not a pretty picture nor is it intended to be. There are consequences to disobedience. Now we have just read through all these and we don't need to expound much on them, they are pretty self-explanatory. But let me just make a few points.

2. First, in verses 49-57 we see this come to pass in both the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judea, in the life of the nation of Israel! In II Kings 6:24-30 we see Syria come down against the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the famine became so bad that two women are fighting over eating their children! Also, as the Babylonians came against the Southern Kingdom of Judah, once again we see starvation lead to cannibalism! And in 70 AD the Romans came in and besieged Jerusalem, burning the temple and 600,000 died from starvation and over 1 million Jews lost their lives and 97,000 were captured. And most of those that were captured were shipped as slaves to Egypt just as God said. In fact, there were so many Jewish slaves that they glutted the slave market and no one could buy all the available slaves! God says what He means and means what He says!

3. So in these curses we see:

- DESTRUCTION
- DISEASES
- DROUGHT
- DEFEAT IN BATTLE
- PHYSICAL AND MENTAL DISEASES
- OPPRESSION
- EXILE
- CROP FAILURE
- ECONOMIC RUIN

And the reason for all this is their disobedience to what the Lord has said. Now please understand that God did not want to destroy them with these things but to restore them back to Him. Sadly folks, it often takes difficult times for us to go through before we return to Him! But God's desire for us is what is best for us and even in those difficult situations we have brought upon ourselves, He is there with His arms open wide for us to come to Him! That is our God, His love for us!

DEUTERONOMY 29

VERSE 1

1. Back in Exodus 24:7-8, at Mount Sinai, some 40 years earlier, we are told, **“Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, ‘All that the Lord has said we will do, and be obedient.’ And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, ‘This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you according to all these words.’”** The people back then said they would keep the covenant and it was sealed with the blood being sprinkled upon them. But that generation died in the wilderness because of their lack of faith and now, this next generation is called to keep this covenant, to walk by faith!

VERSES 2-4

1. All the miracles they saw did not cause them to believe, why? Because it truly is a matter of the heart and unless God's Spirit is allowed to soften your heart, all the miracles in the world won't matter! I do realize that some would disagree with this but think about it. Jesus healed the sick, raised the dead, opened the mouth of the mute, opened the ears of the deaf, opened the eyes of the blind, delivered those possessed by demons and-so-on. For most, Jesus became their meal ticket you might say; they were interested in their bodily appetites being fed instead of their spirit. For many of the religious people, they could not deny the miracles, but they said the miracles were not from God but from the Devil!

You see, it truly is a matter of the heart as God's Spirit opens up His Word to people's lives. I again understand that some would disagree; they feel that miracles are needed to have people come to Jesus. The only problem with that line of reasoning is it is not Scriptural. Peter reminds us in I Peter 1:22-25, **"Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, because 'All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away, But the word of the Lord endures forever.'** Now **this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you."**

The Amplified Bible puts these verses like this; **“Since by your obedience to the Truth through the [Holy] Spirit you have purified your hearts for the sincere affection of the brethren, [see that you] love one another fervently from a pure heart. You have been regenerated (born again), not from a mortal origin (seed, sperm), but from one that is immortal by the ever living and lasting Word of God. For all flesh (mankind) is like grass, and all its glory (honor) like [the] flower of grass. The grass withers and the flower drops off, But the Word of the Lord (divine instruction, the Gospel) endures forever. And this Word is the good news which was preached to you. [Isa 40:6-9.]”** Did you see that? Not miracles or anything else, but the Word of God and the Spirit of God that brings people to saving faith!

VERSES 5-9

1. God wants them to remember His love, how He provided for them, how He sustained them, how He gave them the victory and thus, they should keep the Words that God has spoken to them because what God has done He wants to continue to do in their lives. That is a great lesson for us. Remember all that God has done so that as God speaks to you about something, you will obey Him knowing He has what is best for you!

VERSES 10-15

1. This covenant was not just for those that Moses was speaking to but also for future generations who would serve the Lord. The same is true for us. In John chapter 17 Jesus is praying for His men, the disciples of His day, those who walked with Him and then starting in verse 20 we are told, **“I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”** John 17:20-26. Did you see that! Jesus is praying for us, those who have come to Him by faith, that we would be one with God! That is our God, that is His love for us!

VERSES 16-20

1. They saw the things their pagan neighbors worshiped, their grotesque idols, and their immoral activity in the worship of these gods. And God is warning them not to go down that path. And if you do, don't come to the faulty conclusion that you are at peace with God, you are not. In fact, you are at enmity or you are warring against Him! In Proverbs 14:12 we are told, **“There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.”** You see, it is not what seems right to you, but what God has said that is true! And if you really think you can have peace in your life apart from God, think again. In Isaiah 48:22 we are told, **“There is no peace,’ says the Lord, ‘for the wicked.”** The reality is this. You can't forsake the Lord and escape the consequences of your actions!

VERSES 21-28

1. If this generation would turn from the Lord then God would judge them and it would be a warning to future generations to learn the lesson and don't go down that path. That it is better to obey the Lord and be blessed than disobey and be cursed. And we just finished reading what the cursings were like back in chapter 28, and it was not good!

2. Not only future generations, but for all nations. They would not only see the destruction that was from the Lord upon the children of Israel but they would know that is was for their disobedience that this has come upon them. That they turned from the Lord and turned to idols instead, worshiping false gods instead of the true and living God!

VERSE 29

1. Listen to what we are told from Barnes' Notes on this verse here in Deuteronomy:

“This verse seems to be added as a solemn admonition on the part of Moses, in order to close the series of blessings and curses which he has delivered. The sense seems to be this: ‘The future, when and how these good and evil things will take effect, it lies with the Lord our God to determine; it pertains not to man's sphere and duty. God's revealed will is that which we must carry out.’”

And this is from the Pulpit Commentary, again on this verse here in Deuteronomy. We are told:

“‘Secret things belong unto the Lord our God.’ So says the great lawgiver. On a not dissimilar topic, Bishop Butler says, ‘We do not know the whole of anything.’ Is it not so? Who can tell all about a stone or about a blade of grass? Who can aver [declare] that the furthest star has been yet discovered, or tell us what lies beyond it? There are secrets among the minute; there are secrets among the vast.

2. Isn't it interesting how people try to seek out things of God that He has not revealed to them and yet they do not obey what God has clearly spoken to them! What a warning this is to us, that God has given to us His Word, and we may not understand everything, but the things we do understand, we are responsible to keep them. Now some may say that it is better then not to know anything. Think about that for a minute. In our own lives, is it better for us that we don't learn anything and then we would be accountable for nothing? That is not a good thing. The more we know of God and what He desires of us the more we grow, the more we mature, the more we grow in His nature as we apply these things to our lives.

3. Folks, there is no way we can know everything about an infinite God! Think about this. How well do you do when you watch Jeopardy? I don't do too well, my wife does a lot better but she too falls far short of knowing every answer as well as do the contestants. And since that is true, how can we expect to know everything about an infinite God, we can't! In Isaiah 55:8-9 we are told, **“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” says the Lord. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.’**”

Thus, the call for us is to listen to the voice of God, be obedient to His Word, the things that He is showing us. Jesus reminds us in Revelation 2:29, “**He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.**” May we not only hear but may we also obey what the Lord is telling us, not out of the Law or compulsion but out of love for Him! Again in Revelation 1:3 we are told, “**Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.**” The blessing is not only for hearing but also for keeping what is written in the Word of God. God has what is best for us, may we listen and obey!