

LESSON 29: DEUTERONOMY 27 - 30
SEPTEMBER 5, 2012

OVERVIEW

- . Preparation for the renewal of the covenant – Deuteronomy 27:1-8
- . Covenant curses and covenant blessings – Deuteronomy 27:9-28:68
- . Encouragements to renew the covenant – Deuteronomy 29:1-30:10
- . A choice of life or death – Deuteronomy 30:11-20

PREPARATION FOR THE RENEWAL OF THE COVENANT
DEUTERONOMY 27:1-8

- . A specific place is designated for the formal, public ratification of the covenant, at Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim
 - . Located near Shechem (modern town of Nablus), 30 miles north of Jerusalem, fifteen miles west of Jordan River
 - . Why there?
 - . Where Abram built the first altar to the Lord – Genesis 12:6-7
 - . Area between Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim is beautiful, striking and forms a perfect amphitheater
 - . Biblical scholar F. B. Meyer describes it as a place where the mountains are hollowed out “and the limestone stratum is broken into a succession of ledges, so as to present the appearance of benches . . . a natural amphitheater . . . capable of holding a vast audience of people”
- . First preparatory act – provide a writing surface for inscribing God’s law Deuteronomy 27:2-4, 8
 - . Larger stones were to be erected next to each other, then covered with plaster to provide a writing surface
 - . This method was not unknown in Moses time and was used by other pagan cultures
 - . Stones were to contain text of “all the words of the law”
 - . “This law” may have been the basic restatement of the law covered by Moses in Deuteronomy
 - . The intent was to have a centralized place where the law was clearly stated and constantly before the people
 - . If there were ever any questions, all the people had to do was walk over and read it

- . Second preparatory act – erect an altar – Deuteronomy 27:5-7
 - . The altar was to be built on Mt. Ebal and made of rough, untouched fieldstone
 - . Was to be a place where whole burnt offerings and fellowship offerings could be sacrificed
 - . The written law and the altar with its sacrifices were to go together
- . The altar was God's solution to the sin problem
 - . The altar, with its sacrifices, was constructed as the solution to the problem of those who would hear the law, but be unable to keep it
 - . When God gave the law to the Israelites he also gave the sacrificial system of Atonement
 - . The ultimate punishment of sin is death
 - . In the sacrificial system an innocent victim dies in place of the sinner
 - . In Moses day the innocent animal bore the wrath of God and the sacrifice atoned for man's sin
 - . Altar was erected on Mt. Ebal from which curses for sin were to be uttered
 - . Mt. Gerizim was the mountain to be associated with blessings

COVENANT CURSES AND COVENANT BLESSINGS

DEUTERONOMY 27:9 – 28:68

- . The space devoted to the curses outweigh the blessings five to one and fall in to two parts; a list of sins for which the people will be cursed, and the curses themselves
- . Offenses for which curses will come – Deuteronomy 27:9-26
 - . The first offense relates to the first four of the Ten Commandments
 - . “Cursed is the man who carves an image or casts an idol . . .”
 - . The second offense heads up the list of the last six commandments
 - . “Cursed is the man who dishonors his father and mother”
 - . The next offense has to do with the land to which the people are entering
 - . “Cursed is the man who moves his neighbor's boundary stone”
 - . The next has to do with taking advantage of the poor and unfortunate
 - . Then there are four sexual offenses, with emphasis on incest
 - . Two types of murder are listed – murder in secret and murder for hire
 - . The last offense is broader in nature, somewhat like the prohibition against coveting, the last of the Ten Commandments
- . The curses themselves – Deuteronomy 28:15-68
 - . Verses 16-19 set the stage for the comprehensive scope of the curses
 - . It matters not where the people might go or what they do, if they choose not to obey God, their lives will be one of great continuous curses
 - . Moses then details the curses which include losing health, home, cattle, wives and children
 - . They will even be carried off in to exile away from the place God gave them

- . The most shocking part of this terrible exposition of the curses is the picture described in verses 53-57
 - . Cannibalism and even worse things will be practiced
 - . People will be dehumanized
- . Sadly, such things actually happened later on, just as Moses forewarned 2 Kings 6:24-31, Lamentations 2:20, 4:10
- . The blessings from Mt. Gerizim – Deuteronomy 28:1-14
 - . None of the curses need to happen if you obey God's commands
 - . Obedience will lead to a great scope of blessings
 - . Wherever you are, whatever you're doing, you will be blessed
 - . You will be set above all nations on Earth
 - . Your enemies will come at you from one direction but will flee from you in seven
 - . These verses (28:1-6) on blessings match and balance against the verses on curses (27:15-19)
 - . Moses wanted people to see the consequences of their choices very clearly with no ambiguity

ENCOURAGEMENTS TO RENEW THE COVENANT **DEUTERONOMY 29:1-30:10**

- . Moses begins final phase of his last address restating and highlighting four key points
- . First, remember where you come from and how God has provided for your needs Deuteronomy 29:1-8
 - . From bondage in Egypt to conquest on the Transjordanian plain, God has fed you, clothed you and protected you
- . Second, entering into the covenant – Deuteronomy 29:9-21
 - . He emphasizes that God's covenant is not something to be entered in to lightly or even something that's only for the moment
 - . Entering in to the covenant will not guarantee future spiritual safety
 - . Accepting God's covenant will bind not only themselves but also generations of their children after them
- . Third, a warning of specific disasters to come – Deuteronomy 29:22-29
 - . Moses looks beyond horrible conditions described in Ch. 28 and tells about how Israelites will be removed to other lands and their own land will be desolate
 - . Foreigners will ask why to which God will answer, "The Lord's anger burned against this land so that He brought upon it all the curses written in this book"
 - . Unfortunately, this is exactly what happened
 - . Prophets warned about this yet the people persisted in unbelief
 - . The last verse (29:29), an unusually important verse, means that the actual future of the people is known only to God and has not been revealed to them

- . What God wants us to focus on is what He has revealed to us, about Himself, through scripture
- . Fourth, prosperity to follow repentance – Deuteronomy 30:1-10
 - . Moses ends with a promise of hope and future blessings
 - . God will remain faithful to His covenant if people repent and turn back to Him

A CHOICE OF LIFE OR DEATH – DEUTERONOMY 30:11-20

- . At the heart of this covenant is a choice of life or death
 - . Obedience to the covenant maintains connection between the people and God
 - . God is the source of the very life of the people
 - . Disobedience separates the sinner from God, cutting off the very source of life
 - . This perspective emerges very clearly in the final section
 - . Moses moves from a discussion of obedience and disobedience to one of life and death
 - . To choose obedience is to choose life
 - . To choose disobedience is to choose to be separated from the source of eternal life

NEXT LESSON – SEPTEMBER 19, 2012: DEUTERONOMY 31 - 32