

Deuteronomy
November 2, 2008
Curses and Blessings
Chapters 27-28, Emphasis 27

I. What Is the Purpose of Rituals or Monuments to Our Spiritual Being?

The renewal of the covenant in Moab has two main objectives:

1. Remembrance of the past, especially the events at Horeb
2. Anticipation of the future

II. Chapter 27:1-10: Reminder of the Law

- Verse 1: Moses will not be going into Canaan, but the elders will be doing so. It is they who will have to organize the people to accomplish the task given to them by God via Moses.
- Verse 2: We do not see the fulfillment of setting up these monuments (NOTE: One option is the stones of Jos. 8:29), although the monument of Joshua 2 appears somewhat similar. Perhaps, many of these monuments were set up.
- Verse 3: On the stones, the law will be written. It is not clear whether it is all the laws of the last dozen chapters, or if it is only the Ten Commandments.
- Verse 4: It is not clear if this is a second coating of plaster or when the first one is to be applied. Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim were two mountains located about 40 miles from Jerusalem. Shechem is located at the east end of the path between the two mountains; Jesus stopped at this place, then called Sychar, in Samaria to speak with the woman at the well. (NOTE: The Samaritan Pentateuch has Mount Gerizim here. This becomes an important point in John 4 and the account of Jesus with the Samaritan woman.)
- Verse 5: This altar is similar to this earlier one:

Ex 20:25-26

25 If you make an altar of stones for me, do not build it with dressed stones, for you will defile it if you use a tool on it. 26 And do not go up to my altar on steps, lest your nakedness be exposed on it.'
NIV

Reasons given for not using iron is probably that the LORD did not want anything too fancy or that the Israelites did not work iron and therefore be dependent on others if they were to use them or that Canaanites used iron to build their altars making their use inappropriate for the LORD's altar.

- Verse 9: They need to be quiet so that they can hear all that Moses has to say. They were already the people of the LORD, but have now renewed this status, therefore once becoming the people of the LORD.
- Verse 10: Being a person of the LORD means that we must follow Him.

III. Chapter 27:11-25: Curses

11 On the same day Moses commanded the people: 12 When you have crossed the Jordan, these tribes shall stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph and Benjamin. 13 And these tribes shall stand on Mount Ebal to pronounce curses: Reuben, Gad,

Asher, Zebulun, Dan and Naphtali. 14 The Levites shall recite to all the people of Israel in a loud voice:

The tribes are split into two groups, apparently by the way in which they will populate the Promise Land (NOTE: Dan is an interesting discussion point) The tribes are split into two groups. They go onto different mountains. They go onto different mountains. Joshua 8:30ff is the fulfillment of this act.

15 "Cursed is the man who carves an image or casts an idol — a thing detestable to the LORD, the work of the craftsman's hands — and sets it up in secret." Then all the people shall say, "Amen!"

The Levites will shout the curse, and then the Israelites will say "Amen," indicating that they are in agreement with it. Making an idol would be a breach of the first and/or the second commandment; the curses are often compared to the Ten Commandments. Idols could potentially lead the people in the wrong direction.

16 "Cursed is the man who dishonors his father or his mother." Then all the people shall say, "Amen!"

This one covers the fifth commandment. It is important that the next generation follow the LORD in obedience. Without that, the Israelites would no longer be obeying the LORD.

17 "Cursed is the man who moves his neighbor's boundary stone." Then all the people shall say, "Amen!"

Some suggest that this is more than moving a boundary stone, but a stone which lists the ownership of a property, thereby stealing all of the land, not just some of it. If so, this one breaks the seventh commandment.

18 "Cursed is the man who leads the blind astray on the road." Then all the people shall say, "Amen!"

A similar command is offered in Lev 19:14

14' You shall not curse a deaf man, nor place a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall revere your God; I am the LORD. NASU

19 "Cursed is the man who withholds justice from the alien, the fatherless or the widow." Then all the people shall say, "Amen!"

Again these people are disadvantaged.

20 "Cursed is the man who sleeps with his father's wife, for he dishonors his father's bed." Then all the people shall say, "Amen!"

21 "Cursed is the man who has sexual relations with any animal." Then all the people shall say, "Amen!"

22 "Cursed is the man who sleeps with his sister, the daughter of his father or the daughter of his mother." Then all the people shall say, "Amen!"

23 "Cursed is the man who sleeps with his mother-in-law." Then all the people shall say, "Amen!"
Verses 20-23 deal with sexual sin. **Why is this type of sin mentioned more than the other types of sin.**

24 "Cursed is the man who kills his neighbor secretly." Then all the people shall say, "Amen!"
25 "Cursed is the man who accepts a bribe to kill an innocent person." Then all the people shall say, "Amen!"

Verses 24 and 25 deal with way to commit secret murder.

26 "Cursed is the man who does not uphold the words of this law by carrying them out." Then all the people shall say, "Amen!"

What does this verse mean? Paul uses this verse to show the shortfalls of the law:

Gal 3:10-14

10 All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law." 11 Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith." 12 The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, "The man who does these things will live by them." 13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." 14 He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

NIV

IV. Chapter 28:1-14: Blessings

Notice how perfect the world would be if the Lord blesses everything that we do. Why does He not bless everything that we do?

Verse 13: Israel would be the lead nation with the LORD's help. On their own, they would be the tail, the least of nations that follow other nations.

Verse 14: We must follow the Lord without diversion. Turning to the left or the right is one description of sin in the OT.

V. Chapters 28:15-68 Even More Warnings

Have you ever noticed how much more extensive are the warnings in the Bible than the promises of blessing, particularly in the OT? Why is this?

Discussion Point: The LORD can bless us in many ways. Yet, we can go wrong in many ways, to the left or the right, by wide degrees or small. There are many ways that the LORD can curse us all in ways that are appropriate to the type of sin against Him that we have committed. So, why do we sin?

Verse 19: This is a poetic way of saying that you will be cursed all the time.

Verse 22: Unbelievably there are seven different curses in this verse only:

1. Wasting disease
2. Fever
3. Inflammation
4. Scorching heat
5. Drought
6. Blight
7. Mildew

Verse 29: The end result is total destruction, By being disobedient, they become so lost as to lose everything. They are like a blind man groping. Rather than being blessed, they will go their own separate way, failing totally in their own strength.

Verses 30-34 These verses show the results of losing a war. While the Israelites are not to allow any of the people to live, the other parts sound much as to what happened to the LORD.

Verses 36-37 These verses envision the Diaspora.

Verse 45 There is a cause for the curses, not obeying the LORD. The cure is the blessing which is received by following the LORD.

VI. Why?

Thought: There are so many ways that we can be punished. The LORD mentions many of them in this chapter. The OT repeats over and over again the punishment that the disobedient will receive. Yet, people continue to ignore His teaching, even those who should know better.

The equation is simply. Obey the Lord and be blessed. Disobey the Lord and be punished. The same equation is in effect today for the Christian.

So, again, why do we sin?