

Exodus Study and Discussion Questions

Lesson Twelve: Moses' Last Words and Death – Deuteronomy 27-34

Skim Deuteronomy 27-28. In Deuteronomy 27-30, Moses gave instructions for the formal ratification of Israel's covenant with the Lord (the ceremony itself did not take place until after the new generation of Israelites crossed the Jordan into the Promised Land).

- 1) Describe the preparations that were to be made for the ceremony (see Deuteronomy 27:1-13). **Moses instructed the Israelites to set up some large stones on Mount Ebal, coat them with plaster, and write all the words of the Law on them. Next to the large stones, they were to build an altar out of fieldstones, using no iron tools, and offer burnt and fellowship offerings, eating them and rejoicing in the Lord. Six tribes were to stand on Mount Gerizim and pronounce blessings and six on Mount Ebal to pronounce curses.**
- 2) Consider why it would have been important to have an altar in close proximity to the plaster-coated stones and record your thoughts. **After the ceremony, the Law, written on the stones, would have always been available for the people to consult. The Law was good (1 Timothy 1:8) in that it taught the people to be loving and holy. However, its standard was one no one could keep. The altar's presence seems to imply God's foreknowledge of Israel's inability to keep the Law. Furthermore, the stones and the altar were on Mount Ebal, the Mount upon which the curses were pronounced. The Law was there, present for them, but so too was the provision for lawbreakers (those under the curse).**
- 3) Skim through the blessings and curses in Deuteronomy 27:15-28:68. The results of the curses (chapter 28) are frightening and utterly devastating. Have you ever warned someone by detailing possible outcomes of negative behavior? If so, what motivated you to do this? How does this influence your thinking about the passage detailing curses – a passage that, according to some people, portrays God as harsh and unloving? See the train of thought contained in Leviticus 26:14-19, 21, 23-24, 27-28, and 40-42 with Proverbs 3:11-12. **We usually warn those we care about out of loving concern. Because God is just and holy, He must punish sin. He disciplines those He loves. However, He does not delight in this and He always provides an opportunity for reconciliation to those who truly repent. We must learn to fear Him, for the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 1:7). Personal sharing**

Skim Deuteronomy 29-30.

- 4) According to Deuteronomy 29:16-18, what was the nature of the “root” (verse 18) Israel carried with them out of Egypt – a root that was fertilized by their exposure to foreign nations during their years of desert wandering? Attempt to explain verse 19 in light of this. **Israel had 400 years of exposure to idolatry in Egypt. During the forty years they wandered in the desert, neighboring nations continued to expose them (Numbers 25:1-3). Moses warned about this deadly root they carried with them. It would produce poison! “Hearing the oath” and “invoking a blessing on oneself” could mean hearing the oath (of loyalty to God alone) and immediately rejecting it, foolishly believing one can bless one's self apart from God. Or it may mean speaking the words of the oath (of loyalty) without any accompanying transformation of the heart. The warnings in Deuteronomy don't seem to refer to the disobedience of the truly repentant (for whom the altar made provision) but to the apostate who “took the oath,” believing it would protect him, with no real intention of exclusively serving the God of the Covenant. Deuteronomy 29:19 says, “The Lord will never be willing to forgive him” (this is the apostasy spoken of in Hebrews 6:4-8 and 2 Peter 2, 3:16-17). In the end, rejecting the oath outright or speaking the oath insincerely are both equally perilous.**
- 5) What opportunity did the Lord present in Deuteronomy 30:1-10 (see also Psalm 32:5 and 1 John 1:9)? **Sincere repentance would lead to full restoration.**

- 6) Read Deuteronomy 30:11-20 carefully. Moses stated that two paths are available – one leading to life and prosperity, another to death and destruction.
- In what sense was the Law life-giving? *All God’s ways are life giving, because He is life (verse 20). The Law was instructive for right living. It encouraged the people to live loving and holy lives, with the promise of prosperity if obeyed. Complete obedience to the Law, were that possible, would have brought eternal life, but only Christ was able to live such a perfect life.*
 - Was the Law itself what would ultimately bring life and prosperity (see also Galatians 3:21)? *Although the Law was good, in itself it could not offer life.*
 - If not, how would the Israelites find life (give references from the passage)? *The Lord is the Author and Giver of Life. In fact, He is life (verse 20)! The Israelites found life by loving the Lord, first and foremost (verse 16, 20). Obedience to His commands should flow from that love (verse 16).*
 - For prayerful reflection: Would people who know you say they are drawn to you because you are full of life? How does one find, and then reflect, true life to others (see Deuteronomy 30:20 with Matthew 22:36-38)? Write a brief prayer expressing your need in this regard. *True life is found in the Lord. We experience His life as we “love the Lord our God, listen to His voice and hold fast to Him” (Deuteronomy 30:20). Our greatest need is to love Him more completely. We reflect His life to others by loving them. Personal sharing*

Skim Deuteronomy 31-32.

- Why do you think Deuteronomy 31:1-8 and 23 emphasize the need to be “strong and courageous”? For what task do you need to be strong and courageous right now? *The Israelites and Joshua were facing war. Since people often adopt the attitude of their leader, it was especially important for Joshua to be strong, courageous, and demonstrate full confidence in the Lord. The Lord understands that we are naturally given to fears and need this warning. He wants us to trust Him and be at peace. Personal sharing*
- According to Deuteronomy 31:9-13, what provision was made to ensure each succeeding generation would know the full Law? *Every seven years, during the Feast of Tabernacles, when all the families were gathered in Jerusalem, the Law was to be read in its entirety.*
- If you are familiar enough with Biblical history to do so, tell how the Song of Moses (Deuteronomy 32) was prophetic (cite particular verses in the chapter). *Deuteronomy 32:15 foretells Israel’s wealth under Solomon; 32:16 foretells Israel’s idolatry; verses 19-25 speaks of the Lord’s rejection of Israel; verse 26 speaks of Israel’s scattering, which occurred when God sent them into captivity; verse 35 says, “in due time their foot will slip,” speaking either of Israel’s downfall or of God avenging Israel against the instruments of their discipline: Assyria, Babylon, and possibly subsequent peoples who oppress God’s own, as in verses 41-43.*
- In Deuteronomy 32:15, “Jeshurun” is probably righteous Israel. What warning does this verse contain for the righteous (believers) in the country where you live? *Personal sharing*
- Read Deuteronomy 32:34-35, 41-42 together with Isaiah 34:1-2, 66:15-16 and Revelation 19:11-16, 20:11-15. What is God’s righteous response to those in every age who disregard Him? *The Bible depicts God as wielding a sword of judgment. Those who disregard Him face total destruction (not annihilation, but an existence completely devoid of God or any of His good, life-giving gifts).*

Skim Deuteronomy 33-34.

- Moses’ blessing of the tribes contains timeless truths about the Lord’s relationship to His people. Which verse in chapter 33 is especially meaningful to you and why? *Personal sharing*

- 13)** Deuteronomy 34 tells of Moses’ death. Read Psalm 90 (the affixed title suggests that Moses wrote it).
- a)** How would you describe the two different perspectives on life the Psalm reflects? **Psalm 90 reflects the brevity and trouble of life, but also the gladness and satisfaction of experiencing God’s unfailing love.**
 - b)** Has one of these perspectives characterized your thinking recently? **Personal sharing**
 - c)** Consider the glowing eulogy in Deuteronomy 34:10-12, in light of the struggles Moses poured out in Psalm 90. In what specific struggle does this encourage you and how? **Moses was a great and unique prophet of God, yet he still felt the burden of life’s trials. Personal sharing**

Reflection

- 14)** The Law of Moses became the standard by which righteousness was measured in Judaism. According to Romans 3:19-20, 5:20-21, Galatians 3:19, 23-25 and 1 Timothy 1:8-11, what was the real purpose of the Law? **The Law served as a guardian, given to restrain evil. However, the Law was also given to lead us to Christ. The standard of the Law should have caused people to recognize their sinful, rebellious nature, and seek a Savior.**
- 15)** Read Deuteronomy 30:1 and 32:46. What will be required of you today if you choose to take the word of God to heart? If you’re not sure, will you ask God to show you? **Personal sharing**