

Session 2

The Forerunner Message in Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26

I. PROMISED BLESSINGS AND CURSES ON ISRAEL (DEUT. 28 & LEV. 26)

- A. Leviticus 26 (46 verses) is one of the clearest presentations of God's promise to bless and curse Israel according to their response to Him. Moses elaborated on it in Deuteronomy 28 (68 verses). In Leviticus 26, Moses highlighted 5 waves of judgment and the number seven (26:18, 21, 24, 28). The divine promises to bless and curse Israel give us insight into Israel's history and future. Many biblical end-time events are best understood in context to the covenants that God made with Israel.
- B. The covenant that God made with Israel at Mt. Sinai in the days of Moses helps us to understand the story of Israel and God's end-time plan to fulfill His covenant promises to them (Deut. 4:33-34).

³³***Did any people ever hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire...and live?***

³⁴***Or did God ever...take for Himself a nation from the midst of another nation [Egypt], by trials, by signs, by wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm...? (Deut. 4:33-34)***

- C. Deuteronomy places Israel's national existence under the promises, warnings, and obligations of the Mosaic Covenant. It addresses each generation of Jewish people as if they stood with Israel's ancestors at Mt. Sinai and sees them as bound to the terms of the covenant (Deut. 29:14-15).

¹⁴***I make this covenant...not with you alone, ¹⁵but with him who stands here with us today before the LORD our God, as well as with him who is not here with us today. (Deut. 29:14-15)***

D. Outline of Deuteronomy 28

28:1-14 Covenant blessings that follow obedience

28:15-68 Covenant curses that follow disobedience

28:15-19 Six categories of curses

28:20-22 The plague, consumption, fever, the sword, and scorching heat

28:23-24 Drought, barren fields, and food shortage

28:25-35 Military invasions, sickness, loss of wife, children, crops, and properties

28:36-46 Deportation, destruction of crops, and being subservient to foreigners

28:47-57 Military sieges and cannibalism

28:58-68 Disease, disaster, and deportation

E. Outline of Leviticus 26

26:3-13 Covenant blessings that follow obedience

26:14-39 Covenant curses that follow disobedience

26:14-17 The first wave of judgment—disease, food shortage, and military defeat

26:18-20 The second wave of judgment—drought, barren land, and food shortage

26:21-22 The third wave of judgment—loss of children and livestock

26:23-26 The fourth wave of judgment—war, pestilence, and famine

26:27-39 The fifth wave of judgment—cannibalism, destroyed cities, and deportation

26:40-46 Israel will repent and God will remember His covenant.

II. COVENANT BLESSINGS THAT FOLLOW OBEDIENCE (DEUT. 28:1-14)

- A. Moses emphasized the necessity of obedience (28:1-2). These promises will ultimately be fulfilled in the Millennium as Israel enjoys preeminence in being set high above all nations (28:1; Isa 2:2-4).
¹...if you diligently obey...your God, to observe carefully all His commandments... the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. ²And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the LORD... (Deut. 28:1-2)
- B. Moses highlighted 6 categories of blessing related to being set high above all the nations (28:3-6).
³Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the country. ⁴Blessed shall be the fruit of your body, the produce of your ground, and the increase of your herds...and the offspring of your flocks. ⁵Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. (Deut. 28:3-5)
- C. Moses highlighted Israel's national security, economic prosperity, and abundant rain (28:7-14). Leviticus 26 identifies covenant blessings that follow obedience (Lev. 26:3-13). These blessings include rain, fruitful crops, national safety, the removal of harmful beasts, and God's temple.
⁷The LORD will cause your enemies...to be defeated...⁸The LORD will command the blessing on you in your storehouses and...He will bless you in the land...⁹The LORD will establish you as a holy people to Himself...¹⁰Then all peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they shall be afraid of you. ¹¹And the LORD will grant you plenty of goods, in the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your ground...¹²The LORD will open to you His good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land... you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. ¹³And the LORD will make you the head and not the tail; you shall be above only and not be beneath... (Deut. 28:7-13)

III. COVENANT CURSES THAT FOLLOW DISOBEDIENCE (DEUT. 28:15-68; LEV. 26:14-39)

- A. Moses identified 3 times as many curses (44 verses in 28:15-68) as blessings (14 verses in 28:1-14) to emphasize to Israel how important it is to honor the national covenant that God made with them.
- B. Moses highlighted 6 categories of curses (28:15-19) that correspond to the 6 blessings in 28:3-6.
¹⁵...if you do not obey...all these curses will come upon you...¹⁶Cursed shall you be in the city, and...in the country. ¹⁷Cursed shall be your basket...¹⁸Cursed shall be the fruit of your body and the produce of your land...and the offspring of your flocks. (Deut. 28:15-18)
- C. Moses warned of the plague, consumption, fever, the sword, and scorching heat (28:20-22).
²¹The LORD will make the plague cling to you...²²The LORD will strike you with consumption... with severe burning fever, with the sword, with scorching [blight ESV]... (Deut. 28:20-22)
1. The first wave of judgment—disease, food shortage, and military defeat (Lev. 26:14-17).
¹⁵“...if you despise My statutes, or if your soul abhors [them]...¹⁶I will appoint terror over you, wasting disease...¹⁷You shall be defeated by your enemies...” (Lev. 26:15-17)
 2. Israel “abhorred” God’s commands—this is similar to what David prophesied in Psalm 2:2-3.

- D. Moses warned about drought and barren fields (28:23-24). A bronzed heaven speaks of drought. Soil that is hardened like iron is unable to receive the seed that a farmer plants (28:23-24).

²³And your heavens...shall be bronze, and the earth...shall be iron. ²⁴The LORD will change the rain of your land to powder and dust...it shall come down on you until you are destroyed. (Deut. 28:23-24)

***³...My two witnesses...will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days [1,260 days]...
⁶These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy. (Rev. 11:3-6)***

1. The second wave of judgment—drought, barren land, and food shortage (Lev. 26:18-20). If Israel continued to rebel, a second wave of judgment would break their national pride in their power. God would send drought resulting in barren fields (Lev. 26:18). Leviticus 26:19b uses the same imagery as Deut. 28:23 but compares the sky to iron and the earth to bronze.

***¹⁸“...seven times more...¹⁹I will break the pride of your power; I will make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze ²⁰...your land shall not yield its produce...”
(Lev. 26:18-20)***

⁷...the [angel]...swore by Him...it shall be for...[3½ years]; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished. (Dan. 12:7)

2. **Seven times:** God’s “seven times more” judgment speaks of the completeness of judgment which will increase in intensity as Israel’s sin continues (Lev. 26:18, 21, 24, 28).

***¹⁸After this, if you do not obey Me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins...
²¹Then, if you walk contrary to Me...I will bring on you seven times more plagues...²⁴then I also will...punish you yet seven times for your sins. ²⁸then I also will walk contrary to you in fury, and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins. (Lev. 26:18, 21, 24, 28)***

IV. MILITARY INVASIONS, SICKNESS, LOSS OF WIFE, CHILDREN, CROPS, & PROPERTIES (DEUT. 28:25-35)

- A. Israel would be defeated in military conflicts—fleeing after being shattered into 7 parts (28:25).

***²⁵The LORD will cause you to be defeated before your enemies...you shall become troublesome to all the kingdoms of the earth. ²⁶Your carcasses shall be food for the birds...and the beasts...
(Deut. 28:25-26)***

1. The third wave of judgment— loss of children and livestock (Lev. 26:21-22).

²¹“Then, if you...are not willing to obey Me, I will bring on you seven times more plagues ...²²I will send wild beasts...which shall rob you of your children, destroy your livestock, and make you few in number; your highways shall be desolate.” (Lev. 26:21-22)

2. The Lord will send wild beasts in Great Tribulation (Rev. 6:8).

⁸...behold, a pale horse...and power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth. (Rev. 6:8)

- B. Israel would receive boils, tumors, scabs, the itch, madness, blindness, and confusion (28:27-29).
²⁷The LORD will strike you with the boils of Egypt, with tumors, with the scab, and with the itch, from which you cannot be healed. ²⁸The LORD will strike you with madness and blindness and confusion of heart. ²⁹And you shall...be oppressed and plundered continually... (Deut. 28:27-29)
- C. The men of Israel would suffer the loss of their wives, children, crops, and property (28:30-35). Their children would be taken as captives to other nations (28:32, 41).
³⁰You shall betroth a wife, but another man shall lie with her; you shall build a house, but you shall not dwell in it...³¹Your ox [and]...your sheep shall be given to your enemies...³²Your sons and your daughters shall be given to another people...³³A nation whom you have not known... and you shall be only oppressed and crushed continually. (Deut. 28:30-33)
1. If Israel continues in sin, a fourth wave of judgment comes—war, pestilence, and famine (Lev. 26:23-26). God’s judgments are called the “*vengeance of the covenant*” (Lev. 26:25). This “*vengeance*” expresses His loving commitment that Israel walk in her full destiny.
²³“If by these things you are not reformed...²⁴I will punish you seven times for your sins. ²⁵And I will bring a sword against you that will execute the vengeance of the covenant... I will send pestilence among you; you shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy. ²⁶When I have cut off your supply of bread...you shall eat and not be satisfied.” (Lev. 26:23-26)
 2. The *vengeance of the covenant* has two expressions—it is poured out on Israel and on the nations who resist His covenant purposes for Israel (Isa. 34:1-8; Joel 3:1-16; Zech. 14:1-15).
²The indignation of the LORD is against all nations, and His fury against all their armies... He has given them to the slaughter...⁸It is the day of the LORD’s vengeance... (Isa. 34:2, 8)
 3. We understand the biblical story better when we understand God’s covenant disciplines. If we don’t understand God’s covenant discipline, His judgments in Deuteronomy 28 will shock us. They seem contradictory for a loving father, but they are expressions of His love for Israel.
 4. Ultimately the story of God’s covenants becomes, not only Israel’s story, but also our story. The covenants also help us to understand our own relationship with God and how He relates to us. God’s dealings with Israel are intended to reveal how He deals with all of His people.

V. DEPORTATION, DESTRUCTION OF CROPS, AND BEING SUBSERVIENT (DEUT. 28:36-46)

- A. Israel and their political leaders would be deported as captives to other nations (28:36-41). This will provoke “horror” in the nations who observe this (28:37; Jer. 29:18).
³⁶The LORD will bring you and the king whom you set over you to a nation which neither you nor your fathers have known, and there you shall serve other gods...³⁷You shall become an astonishment [a horror, ESV]...and a byword among all nations where the LORD will drive you...⁴¹You shall beget sons and daughters...they shall go into captivity...⁴³The alien who is among you shall rise above you...⁴⁴He shall lend to you...he shall be the head, and you shall be the tail. (Deut. 28:36-44)

- B. Moses' prophecy of Israel going into captivity has been fulfilled in part throughout history (by Assyria in 721 BC, Babylon in 586 BC, and Rome in AD 70) and will see its ultimate fulfillment in the end times (Ps. 102:20; Isa. 11:11-14, 16; 14:1-3; 19:23; 27:12-13; 40:11; 42:7, 16, 22; 45:14; 49:9-12, 21, 24-26; 60:10, 12, 14; 61:1, 5; Jer. 30:3, 8, 10, 17; 31:16, 23; Ezek. 39:23-29; Joel 3:1-2, 8; Amos 9:14; Mic. 2:12-13; 4:6-7; 5:6; 7:12; Zeph. 3:19-20; Zech. 9:11-12; 10:10-11; 13:8; 14:2; Lk. 21:24). When Jesus returns, He will free Jewish captives from Egypt and Assyria (parts of Iraq, Syria, and Jordan; Isa. 11:11-12, 16; 27:13; Hos. 11:11; Mic. 5:6; 7:12; Zech. 10:10-11).
- C. The Lord intends these judgments to be a "sign" with a message to Israel forever (28:46). They will be stamped in Israel's memories as a witness that God's covenant is holy and cannot be dismissed.
- ⁴⁵...all these curses shall...pursue and overtake you [Israel], until you are destroyed...⁴⁶They shall be upon you for a sign and a wonder, and on your descendants forever. (Deut. 28:45-46)*

VI. MILITARY SIEGES AND CANNIBALISM (DEUT. 28:47-57)

- A. Israel would be attacked and brutalized by Gentile armies in military sieges (28:47-57). The "fierce nation" is not identified, making room for multiple applications including the empires of Assyria (721 BC), Babylon (586 BC), Rome (70 AD), and the Antichrist (Zech. 12:2-3; 14:2).
- ⁴⁷Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joy and gladness of heart, for the abundance of everything, ⁴⁸therefore you shall serve your enemies, whom the LORD will send against you ...⁴⁹The LORD will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth... ⁵⁰a nation of fierce countenance... ⁵²shall besiege you at all your gates until your high and fortified walls... come down throughout all your land... ⁵³You shall eat...the flesh of your sons and daughters... ⁵⁴The sensitive and very refined man...will be hostile toward his brother...and toward the rest of his children...⁵⁵so that he will not give any of them the flesh of his children whom he will eat, because he has nothing left in the siege... (Deut. 28:47-55)*
- B. **Siege:** Zechariah prophesied the end-time siege of Jerusalem (Zech. 12:2-3; 14:2).
- ²...when [nations] lay siege against...Jerusalem... ³all nations...are gathered against it. (Zech. 12:2-3)*
- ¹The day of the Lord is coming... ²I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken [captured]...half of the city shall go into captivity. (Zech. 14:1-2)*
- C. **Cannibalism:** Moses prophesied cannibalism would occur in sieges in Israel (28:53-57). Their desperation is described as parents eating their children to avoid dying of starvation (28:53-55).
1. The fifth wave of judgment—cannibalism, destroyed cities, and deportation (Lev. 26:27-39).
- ²⁷“And after all this, if you do not obey Me...²⁸I also will walk contrary to you in fury, and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins. ²⁹You shall eat the flesh of your sons and...daughters... ³¹I will lay your cities waste and bring your sanctuaries to desolation... ³²I will bring the land to desolation, and your enemies who dwell in it shall be astonished at it. ³³I will scatter you among the nations and draw out a sword after you...” (Lev. 26:27-33)*
2. There is only one example of cannibalism in the Old Testament. In 2 Kings 6:26-29, we read of a mother eating her son with another woman during the siege in the time of Hezekiah.

VII. DISEASE, DISASTER, AND DEPORTATION (DEUT. 28:58-68)

- A. Israel was warned of being destroyed by disease and disasters (28:58-63). During the Antichrist's reign of terror, Israel's population will be reduced (28:62)—2/3 of Israel will be killed (Zech. 13:8).

⁵⁸*If you do not carefully observe [His law]...that you may fear this glorious and awesome name, ...⁵⁹*the LORD will bring upon you...extraordinary plagues...serious and prolonged sicknesses...*
⁶²*You shall be left few in number ⁶³... you shall be plucked from off the land... (Deut. 28:58-63)**

- B. Israel would be deported to other nations (28:64-68). This was partially fulfilled by Assyria (721 BC), Babylon (586 BC), Rome (AD 70), in the Middle Ages, the Russian pogroms, and the Nazis. When Jesus returns, He will free Jewish captives from Egypt and Assyria (parts of Iraq, Syria, and Jordan; Isa. 11:11-12, 16; 27:13; Hos. 11:11; Mic. 5:6; 7:12; Zech. 10:10-11).

⁶⁴*Then the LORD will scatter you...from one end of the earth to the other...⁶⁶*Your life shall hang in doubt before you...⁶⁸*The LORD will take you back to Egypt in ships...you shall be offered for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves... (Deut. 28:64-68)***

VIII. ISRAEL WILL REPENT AND GOD WILL REMEMBER HIS COVENANT (LEV. 26:40-46)

- A. The Lord will remember His covenant promises and show great mercy to Israel (Lev. 26:40-46). The purpose of His discipline on Israel is to lead them to return to Him. The Lord will fully restore them after they confess their sin with repentance and recognize that their discipline was deserved (Lev. 26:41). Daniel confessed Israel's sin and declared that Israel deserved discipline (Dan 9:5-15).

⁴⁰*“But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers...⁴¹*and that...I have brought them into the land of their enemies; if their uncircumcised hearts are humbled, and they accept their guilt—⁴²*then I will remember My covenant...I will not cast them away...” (Lev. 26:40-46)***

- B. God's discipline of Israel is that of a loving Father (Prov. 3:12). The serious consequences of disobedience emphasize the danger of sin and the Father's passion for Israel's covenant destiny. Thus, the severity of His discipline in Deuteronomy 28 springs from His redemptive love for them.
- C. If there are no negative consequences for disloyalty to the covenant and for disregarding God's law, then His covenant and law are not important. Children learn what values in their family are real based on which ones their parents enforce. When limits are not enforced, sin grows worse.
- D. God's judgments warned Israel of the ultimate result of sin—eternal separation from Him. God would not be kind if He did not warn Israel of the eternal repercussions of their rebellion against Him. Thus, His temporal corrections are an expression of His kindness. The pain of sin in this life warns us of the pain of sin in eternity. God does not wait for eternity to reveal the results of sin.
- E. Art Katz draws heavily from Deuteronomy 28 in his book, *The Holocaust: Where Was God?* We cannot understand the judgments in Deuteronomy 28 apart from God's eternal perspective. Art Katz wrote, “*To omit eternity from our consideration is to disfigure reality itself.*” God's judgments can only be understood as they point to a greater reality—eternity with God. The Lord views eternity to be worth so much that He sometimes sends intense seasons of divine discipline to save people from the eternal loss in the fire that shall not be extinguished.