

March 6

## Leviticus 26

Well, today is my last day with you all (at least for a while) and we will explore Leviticus 26. It should come as no surprise at this point that Leviticus simply beats the same drum over and over again.

- 1) God is Holy and desires for his people to be holy.
- 2) God delivered Israel from bondage in Egypt and their response should be faithful obedience to his generous, sovereign reign in their lives.
- 3) The consequences for disobedience are severe because the natural consequence of walking contrary to God is to be in active rebellion against God. To literally be fighting against God. It is a no win situation for those who would chose to fight against God.

But there a couple of interesting things about today's reading that I thought I would share with you today:

- 1) The list of curses in 26:14-39 are a characteristic that is present in nearly all ancient Near Eastern treaties. That's right, treaties. As in a treaty between two nations that were once at war and have made an agreement to live peaceably with one another.
- 2) However, the difference is here is that God holds out hope for his people even if they rebel and experience the worst of the punishments listed, i.e. exile from their land. If they repent, he will take receive them back again. (26:40-42)
- 3) Additionally, God affirms Israel by letting them know that even if and when they rebel and have to suffer through God's discipline in exile, he will not forget the promises he made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He would fulfill his promises because he is a faithful and loving God. (26:43-45).

Now, let's consider two things today: Why God responds with curses for breaking treaty with him and what is the current status of God's people today.

Why God responds with curses. I want to draw your attention to Leviticus 26:14-17 at the bottom of page 293. Notice the word "abhor"? Well, the Hebrew word 'abhor' literally means to hate, or loathe, or have disdain for. To reject God's laws is to reject God. To reject God is to abhor, or loathe or hate God.

But this is not why he responds with these curses. They are not God "getting back" at Israel for hurting his feelings. Rather they are God's attempt at wooing his people toward repentance. The natural consequence of fighting against God is that you will get hit by God. And when God hits you with a God sized blow it hurts. He is God and there is nothing that is out of his reach: crops, weather, animals, foreign armies invading and carrying Israel away, etc. But God is using these 'natural' and super natural consequences to remind his people of how generous and gracious he is. When they compare life in God's favor and life apart from it, it should be a simple response to repent. But, as you continue to read through the bible in a year, you will see that Israel is stubborn and eventually experiences the great discipline of being in exile. Yet God does not give up and continues to call them to repentance.

I count at least 5 separate times where God calls them to repentance, meaning to literally turn and return to him.

And if they repent he “remembers” the covenant he made with their forefathers. Now this word remember may bring up the question, “did God forget?” No, rather this is meant to convey action on God’s part. That now he will act on the promises of the treaty or covenant and bring the blessing.

Notice how, though his people may “abhor” God, bringing about righteous discipline; God does not “abhor” his people (26:43-45 on page 295). God’s discipline of his people is never to destroy but to bring about repentance.

But what of his people today?

Romans 8:7 says that the mind set on the flesh is “hostile to God”. In other words it abhors God. But the reality is that Jesus is reconciled us back to God and there is now no hostility between those who trust in Jesus’ saving work and God. Col 1:21-22 says it this way:

<sup>21</sup> And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, <sup>22</sup> he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, Colossians 1:21–22 (ESV)<sup>1</sup>

Also, consider this truth:

<sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. <sup>14</sup> For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility <sup>15</sup> by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, <sup>16</sup> and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. <sup>17</sup> And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. <sup>18</sup> For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. <sup>19</sup> So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, Ephesians 2:13–19 (ESV)

The application for today is simple:

- 1) To live as though this were true? As though you have been reconciled to God and are no longer in hostility toward him?
  - a. If so, rejoice and thank him today all day for his great mercies in your life.
  - b. If not, repent today. Remember that you have been cleansed and rejoice once again (1 Peter 1:18).

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<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Col 1:21–22.