

## **Deut 26:16–27:10 The People of the Lord Your God**

The constitution for Israel was the law that God gave to Moses on Mt. Sinai. Until that point, Israel was an ethnic group, a large group of tribes, an extended family, but not really a nation. But when God gave Moses the law, Israel became a nation.

Sometimes we call the Mosaic law a covenant. A covenant is an agreement or a contract. In this contract/covenant between God and Israel, God promises to do some things and Israel promises to do some things.

This passage is a call to covenant commitment and obedience. Israel is about to enter the PL, and Moses leads them in a re-affirmation that Israel is God's people and that they promise to obey God's commands. Israel accepts her responsibilities under the covenant, and God affirms that he will bless the nation for its loyalty and obedience.

Throughout the Bible, we find a statement made repeatedly: "I will be their God, and they shall be my people." We find these same statements in this passage. This seems to be the overall theme of the entire Bible. God recognizes a certain group of people as his people, and they respond by believing in him and keeping his commandments.

The "people of the Lord your God" in the OT was Israel. God had made a covenant with Israel; they were his people. The NT shows us that we become the people of the Lord through faith. We are covered by a new covenant when we confess Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Gal 3:26 *For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.*

So Christians are the NT people of God. We are not the nation of Israel, but we are the sons of Abraham by faith.

In this covenant ratification statement, we find out who the people of God are and what they are supposed to be doing. If we are the people of God, we should know who we are and what we are supposed to be doing.

I. Who are the people of God? 26:16-19

A. .17 The people of God are those who confess the Lord to be their God.

1. "proclaimed" – the word (אָמַר) is literally "to say, to speak, to think, to promise."
2. Israel accepted this covenant; they proclaimed/confessed the that the Lord is their God.

3. Note the use of the covenant name for God—"the LORD," i.e., Yahweh. He is their God, as opposed to any of the gods of the Canaanites.
4. They are pledging loyalty to God as their sovereign. They accept the terms of the covenant; the LORD is our God. That was their confession.

**App:** The most basic confession of the Christian faith is, "Jesus is Lord." The NT tells us that "if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus..."

The main marker of the people of God is that they confess that God is their God.

- B. .18 The people of God are those who the Lord confesses to be his people.

1. The same word—"proclaimed."

In the ANE, when a people accept the terms of a covenant, they used this word to acknowledge their responsibility. This is how you agreed to the covenant.

2. The people had re-affirmed their promise to follow the Lord faithfully. And now the Lord promises that Israel is his "special people."

"special" people (הַקָּדוֹשׁ) – a valued, personal property; a treasure; something of great value owned by the Lord alone. Israel is God's special people—his chosen people, a treasured possession, like no others; his own people.

This is the third time in Deut that Moses uses this word to describe Israel as a special, treasured people (cf. 7:6, 14:2).

Deuteronomy 14:2 *For you are a holy people to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.*

Note 27:9 – "This day you have become the people of the Lord your God." Of course, Israel had been the people of God for a long time. Since the time of Abraham, Israel had been God's chosen/special people. But this is a covenant renewal. Moses is leading the people to renew and reaffirm this covenant.

Because they were God's people, they must be loyal to God and obey his commandments, especially as they enter the PL. They must not squander their special position by becoming like the pagans.

**App:** That's still true for us today. If we are saved, then we are God's special treasure, a "peculiar people." And we are obligated to obey God's law and maintain our commitments to God.

Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice and they follow me..." God identifies you as one of his people when you follow Jesus. It's not ethnicity or family connections; it's not good works. You become one of the children of God by faith in Christ. When you do that, God confesses/proclaims you to be his child.

C. .19a The people of God are those who enjoy the blessings of God on their lives

1. God promised health, wealth, and prosperity for the Israelites if they would fulfill their covenantal responsibilities. If they would obey God's commands, God promised to lift them up above all the other nations. Loyalty and obedience to God would result in both power and prosperity.
2. But all of this was conditional—if they obeyed, God would bless them. Disobedience would lead to cursing, not blessing.

**App:** In spite of what Benny Hinn and his friends claim, under the NT system, we do *not* have any promises of health, wealth, or prosperity. The NT church has no interest in land, wealth, or military power. We are not conquering physical territory.

The blessings we enjoy are primarily spiritual blessings—salvation, peace with God and others, purpose in life, treasures in heaven.

D. .19b The people of God are a holy people to the Lord their God.

1. The word "holy" (קֹדֶשׁ) means "consecrated, set apart for sacred use, sanctified."
2. God's people are set apart from sin. We are no longer servants of sin. We fight against our enemies—the world, flesh, devil.
3. God's people are set apart unto God. We are seeking those things that are above. We are seeking first the kingdom of God.

**App:** Holiness is still God's expectation for his people. The Bible still says, "Be ye holy...." You cannot claim to be one of the people of God if you have no concern for holiness. We must be a "holy people" – holiness must characterize our lives.

**Trans:** Who are the people of God? Those who confess the Lord as their God and those whom God confesses as his people. They are a blessed people and a holy people.

**Are you among the people of God?** You become a child of God through repentance and faith. Have you confessed God to be your God?

II. What do the people of God do? 26:16-19; 27:1-10

A. .16 God's people obey God's commandments.

Moses' emphasis here is clearly on Israel's obligation of obey God's law. Israel's special status with God was conditional; it depended on the nation's obedience. They would prosper in the PL if they obeyed God's commands.

1. The people of God demonstrate that they are the people of God through obedience to God's commands.

Note .17 – along with proclaiming themselves to be the people of God, they also proclaim/confess/promise "that you will walk in his ways and keep his statutes, his commands, and his judgments, and that you will obey his voice." That's what is expected of the people of God—obedience to God's commands, commitment to God's standards of behavior.

Those who proclaim that the Lord is their God are identified by their obedience to God's commands. You cannot have one without the other.

**App:** As James tells us, faith without works is dead. A genuine faith is an obedient faith. A confession of faith without subsequent obedience is not genuine faith.

Heb 12:14 *Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord:*

So many Christians these days claim to have faith, but they live flagrantly disobedient lives. They live in open rebellion against God and still claim to be Christians.

One of the marks of a genuine Christian is that he is obedient. He is striving to walk in God's way, keep his statutes, commands, and judgments. He is actively obeying the voice of the Lord.

If you are not doing that, then your confession of faith comes into question. If you have no interest in obeying God's commands, then you are confessing that you are *not* one of God's people.

Of course, we do not become the people of God through obedience; we become the people of God through repentance of sin and faith in the person and work of Christ. But what is the result of that faith? The result is obedience. The life of the believer will be marked by obedient living—not perfection, but a life characterized by obedience.

2. .17 God's commandments consist of

- a) "statutes" (חֻקִּים) – the ordinances, the laws, the conditions commanded by God
- b) "judgments" (מִשְׁפָּטִים) – God's expressions of justice, decisions God has made, laws stating what is right
- c) "commandments" (מִצְוֹת) – charges, orders, commissions

These words are largely synonymous; they all refer to God's commands or laws.

3. God's people must observe these statutes, judgments, and commandments

- a) .16 Carefully – the word means "to guard, to keep watch." Thus, strictly, rigorously.
- b) .16 Sincerely – "with all your heart and with all your soul," not merely formally or externally. God's people should personally value these laws, not just externally conforming to them.
- c) .17 Practically – "walk in his ways," "obey his voice"
- d) .18b Completely – "all his commandments"; 27:1 "all the commandments which I command you today."

**App:** Thankfully, under the NT system, we are not under the burden of the commands, statutes, and judgments of the OT law. We are not Israel; we are the church. The regulations of the OT law are a burden that we do not have to bear; Jesus bore it for us. Now we are under the law of Christ. Our primary concern is obeying the commands of the NT.

4. God's people identify themselves through their obedience.

**27:9b-10** Note the connection: "you have become the people of the Lord your God. Therefore, you shall obey the voice...and observe his commandments..."

Israel had been God's people for a long time, but at this point in their history, they stand on the brink of the Jordan, ready to conquer the PL. Moses led the people in a fresh commitment to God, a reaffirmation of the covenant that bound them to God and God to them. Israel must identify itself as a people who obey God's law.

What do the people of God do? They obey God's commands.

**App:** There simply is no avoiding the fact that God's people recognize the authority of God's commands. We are obligated to obey the voice of the Lord. We willingly submit to God's authority as expressed in the Word of God.

Like Israel, we identify ourselves and differentiate ourselves from others by our obedience to God's commands. Other people don't do that; most other people in the world are not interested in obeying God's commands. But Christians are interested in that. We identify ourselves by obeying God's commandments.

- B. **27:2-4** God's people establish memorials.

Moses directs the people to have a covenant renewal ceremony when they get into the PL. This ceremony would include building a monument, sacrificial worship, a fellowship meal, and then a public statement of cursings and blessings.

The first part of this ceremony required setting up memorial stones.

1. **27:2** Once you get into the PL, set up large stones, whitewash them with lime plaster, and write all the words of the law on these stones. They are supposed to do this on Mt. Ebal—probably near Shechem, about 35 miles north of Jerusalem.

Shechem was where God originally appeared to Abraham and promised to give him the land of Canaan. Jacob bought land there and his bones were buried there. Now, about 430 years later, the nation was about to conquer that land and occupy it, exactly as God had promised.

.8 Write “all the words of this law” plainly on these stones. I.e., Deut or part of it; perhaps only the 10 Commandments.

Writing laws on stones or even on the side of a mountain was quite common among the nations of the ANE. Archaeologists have found numerous examples of this in Egypt.

Setting up a memorial like this was a way of demonstrating the authority of God’s word over the PL. This memorial was like a sign saying that these laws apply in this land.

And we find that Joshua did this very thing some years later (8:30-35). He built an altar and he wrote a copy of the law on stones.

2. The intent of this is that Israel would see these stones and be reminded of a couple things:
  - a) .1b, 10 their obligation to keep this *law*; when people read this memorial, it reminded them about the law.
  - b) .3end God had given them the *land*; God had fulfilled his promises to give the PL to Israel. The nation now occupied the land God had promised centuries ago to Abraham.

**App:** Today we have the Word of God in our hands, not written on stones; we have God’s law in a very handy book form. We have in on our phones and on our computers.

It’s beneficial to have the word of God visible to us regularly. We should see it and read it regularly. We don’t even have to visit a rock structure to do this; we just open our Bibles or tap our devices.

It used to be quite common to have the 10 Commandments prominently displayed in various public locations, including public schools. These displays served to remind people that God had a set of laws to direct human behavior. Public behavior has become much worse as those monuments have been removed from public places.

**App:** God has established a couple of memorials for the NT church – baptism and the LS.

Baptism identifies the believer with the people of God. We are identifying with Jesus in his death, burial, and resurrection through baptism. Under the NT system, the people of God get baptized *after* they confess that Jesus is Lord.

And the LS is another way that the people of God identify themselves. Jesus commands us to do the LS “in remembrance of me.” The LS is, in certain respects, a covenant renewal ceremony. Those in the new covenant through faith in Jesus remember the sacrifice of Christ, and then we eat a memorial meal—the bread and the cup.

Baptism we do only once for each believer, but the LS we do repeatedly for the whole church. These memorials help us remember who we are—we are “a holy people to the LORD your God.”

Established memorials are still part of the Christian faith today. Memorials give us the opportunity to re-commit ourselves to God, to re-commit ourselves to obey God’s commands. Memorials help us continue walking with the Lord and persevering in the faith.

C. 27:5-8 God’s people worship God.

Part of this covenant renewal process involved making sacrifices.

1. .5 Moses tells them to build an altar.
  - a) This altar was not the same one used at the tabernacle. This was a temporary, special altar, that was intended for a single use—just for this covenant renewal ceremony.
  - b) .5b-6 Build it with whole stones. I.e., rough field stones, not cut stones. Using a tool on these altar stones would defile them.
  - c) .6b Offer burnt offerings on it to the Lord. Burnt offerings would be completely consumed on the altar, which was a picture of total commitment to the Lord.
  - d) .7 Offer peace/fellowship offerings on it. Only parts of the animals would be burned in sacrifice. The rest of the animal would be shared among the worshippers. This was an offering symbolizing fellowship with God.
2. .7b Eat there at the location of the altar with your family.



- a) Eating a meal was usually included in the OT sacrificial system. Only part of the animals used for the sacrificial system were burned on the altar. The people who brought the sacrifice would keep most of the meat for themselves and eat it as part of the sacrifice.
  - b) Eating that meal was part of their worship. They were eating this meal in God's presence. The fellowship meal showed that they were in covenant with God.
3. .7end Rejoice before the Lord your God. This should be a joyous occasion for everyone involved.

All of these commandments pertain directly to Israel as a nation. Obedience to God's commands was the key to success in the PL. If they obeyed, God would bless them. If they disobeyed, God would curse them (as we find in the next section of ch. 27).

We are not Israel, but we are the people of God through faith in Christ. If you are a Christian, you are one of the people of God. And as such, you are obligated to behave like the people of God.

The people of God confess that the Lord is God. The NT confession is that Jesus is Lord.

When we confess that Jesus is Lord, God confesses us as his people.

The people of God obey God's commandments. We identify ourselves by obedience to God's commands. Cf. 27:9-10

God's people establish memorials. We regularly read the Word of God, we participate in the ordinances of the church—baptism and the LS. These memorials help us persevere in faith and in good works.

God's people worship the Lord in spirit and in truth. Our sacrifices are spiritual—praise, worship, service, fellowship, instruction.

That's who the people of God are, and that's what they do.

Are you among the people of God? When you put your faith in Christ, you become one of God's children; you identify as one of the people of God. As God's people, we are obligated to obey God's commands, worship him rightly, and persevere in the faith.