

# SESSION 8: PUNCHLINE OF THE PENTATEUCH

## PREPARATION FOR THE SESSION

Read Deuteronomy 17:14-20, 18:15-22, chs. 29-34; Romans 10.

## Summary of the Video: Module 1, Episode 8

This last video on the Pentateuch draws out the importance of Deuteronomy 29-34 for understanding the Pentateuch and for Biblical Theology as a whole. It is these last six chapters of Deuteronomy that connect the Pentateuch to the rest of the biblical story and Biblical Theology. They point us ahead to the Messiah. A Jew who finished reading the Pentateuch would not have concluded that “this is how it will always be.” They would have seen a new reality coming; they would have expected God to intervene in the Messiah to change things.

In particular, Deuteronomy 30 envisions the return of God’s people from exile with purified hearts so that they can obey the covenant and receive its blessings. In light of this promised situation, God invites them to choose life (blessing) rather than death (curses). Many years on, Jesus and Paul announced the fulfillment of these promises.

## Terms You’ll Need to Know:

Punchline – the main point or purpose of something; the place where everything comes together.

Eschatological – having to do with the future, the end times, and/or God’s ideal for his people; it includes judgment and salvation and the wrapping up of all God’s promises.

Messianic – having to do with the Messiah, who he is and what he will do.

## Watch Video

Watch Module 1, Episode 8 (18 minutes).

## Pentateuch

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- I. Overview of the Pentateuch
- II. Primeval History (Gen 1-11)
- III. Patriarchal History (Gen 12-50)
- IV. Exodus Narrative (Ex 1-15)
- V. Wilderness Narrative (Ex 16-19, 24, 32-34; Num 11-25; Deut 1-4)
- VI. Laws, Lists & Land at Sinai (Ex 20-23, 25-31, 35-40; Lev 1-27; Num 1-10, 26-36; Deut 5-28)
- VII. The Punchline of the Pentateuch (Deut 29-34)**

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## The Punchline of the Pentateuch

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- Most people rattle through the final chapters of Deuteronomy at high speed. By the time people reach it in their Bible-in-a-year plans, they are just about done with laws, and are desperate to get back into the blood-and-thunder stories of Joshua
- But it is one of the most important passages in the whole of the Pentateuch (from a biblical-theological point of view, probably the most important passage since the Exodus), because it points forward to the new covenant
- It is also one of the most quoted OT passages in the NT, and forms the backdrop to Paul's famous argument in Romans 10
- Chapters 29-34 (following the blessings and curses of chapters 27-28) work like this:
  - A review of the story so far (29:1-29)
  - The promise of new hearts (30:1-20)
  - The commissioning of Joshua and the writing of the law (31:1-29)
  - The Song of Moses (31:30-32:47)
  - The blessing of Moses (32:48-33:29)
  - Moses dies (34:1-12)

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## The Circumcised Heart and the Return from Exile

- The key section, from the perspective of biblical theology, is chapter 30
  - The promise of a **return from exile**, as a result of repentance (30:1-5)
  - The promise of **circumcised hearts**, which will cause Israel to love Yahweh with all her heart (30:6)
  - The promise of **covenant blessings**, in response to Israel turning to Yahweh with all her heart (30:7-10)
  - The promise of **covenant achievability**, because it is in Israel's mouth and in her heart (30:11-14)
  - A renewed call to **choose life, not death** (30:15-20)
- This is the passage that is in the background throughout Romans 10:5-13, as Paul talks about the centrality of faith (as opposed to works) in identifying who is in God's people
  - 'For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them. But the righteousness based on faith says, "Do not say in your heart, "Who will ascend into heaven?"' (that is, to bring Christ down) "or "Who will descend into the abyss?"' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.'
  - Paul's argument is that even in the Torah, Moses had distinguished between the righteousness based on law (the Sinai/Horeb covenant, which was of works and could not be kept) and the righteousness based on faith (the circumcised heart promised at Moab)
  - This word would not be unattainably high or low, but rather it would be in Israel's mouths (which Paul sees as confession of Jesus as Lord) and hearts (that is, faith in the resurrection), so that they could do it
- The Torah then concludes with the song, blessing and death of Moses, and the succession of Joshua

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### GROUP MEETING:

#### Discussion Questions

Before getting into these specific questions, spend a few minutes discussing what struck you or stuck with you from the video. What were some of the main points? Did any of Andrew's comments or questions open up the Bible in a profound way to you? Also, ask if anything was confusing or needs clarification.

1. Why does Andrew Wilson call Deuteronomy 29-34 the "punchline" of the Pentateuch? What is the main message he thinks it communicates?

2. Why did God give his people a law that he knew they couldn't keep?

3. New Testament authors frequently talk about the law being “fulfilled” or “reaching its purpose” in Christ. Look at the following verses and note what they say about the “punchline” of the Pentateuch:

- Matthew 5:17
- Romans 10:4
- Romans 13:8
- Galatians 3:23-24

4. What are some of the things you’ve learned in the last several weeks of this course that have impacted you?

## Meditation on Scripture

Deuteronomy 30:1-3, 6

Deuteronomy 32:3-6

Deuteronomy 33:26-2

## Meditation on Scripture

Look for opportunities this week to share what you’ve been learning. Think of the truths that have breathed life into your faith or have blessed your soul. Consider who might benefit from those truths and pray for a chance to talk about it with them.