

Deuteronomy

This is the fifth and final book in the Torah

- It is somewhat of a summary statement on the Law

The name Deuteronomy simply means “second law”

- deuterios – second
- nomos – law

Moses wasn't giving a new, “second” law

- Rather, the book is simply retelling and recounting the Law that God had already given to Israel

Why did God choose to have the Law retold?

- Because the first generation who heard the Law is now dead (except for Joshua and Caleb)
- The second generation needed to be reminded of the Law and what God expected from them

This review and summary of the Law is set in a series of sermons given by Moses

- Of course, these sermons were written down for the sake of future generations
 - o 1st speech (1:1-4:43)
 - o 2nd speech (4:44-28:68)
 - o 3rd speech (29:1-30:20)

The book of Deuteronomy is broken down into two (2) main sections

- Looking back in the past (1-11)
- Looking ahead to the future (12-34)¹⁷

The theme that continues to emerge over and over is obedience

- God blesses obedience
- God disciplines for disobedience

Deuteronomy 6:4-5 – “Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! ⁵ And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”

- We know from Jesus Himself, “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments” (John 14:15)

¹⁷ Stringfellow, 26.

Deuteronomy 10:12-13 – “And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul,¹³ *and* to keep the LORD's commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good?”

- Israel is required to do five (5) things:
 - o Fear God
 - o Walk in all His ways
 - o Love Him
 - o Serve Him
 - o Keep His commandments

You could summarize all of these in one word – obedience

- Simply doing what God has instructed in His Word

Let's keep in mind the primary difference between the two covenants we have seen thus far

- Abrahamic – unconditional (God alone)
- Mosaic – conditional on man's obedience (not God alone)

Over and over, Israel broken the Mosaic covenant through disobedience, unfaithfulness, and idolatry

- However, God continues to display covenantal faithfulness, because the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant as in no way contingent upon man's obedience
- This is a demonstration of God's mercy and grace

It is interesting that in Genesis through Numbers, the love of God is not mentioned

- But in Deuteronomy, the love of God is mentioned as a reminder of God's faithful, covenantal dealings with His people¹⁸

Deuteronomy 4:37– “Because He loved your fathers, therefore He chose their descendants after them. And He personally brought you from Egypt by His great power”

Deuteronomy 7:7-8 – “The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples,⁸ but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt”

¹⁸ These helpful verses are referenced in Stringfellow, 25.

Deuteronomy 10:15 – “Yet on your fathers did the LORD set His affection to love them, and He chose their descendants after them, *even you above all peoples, as it is this day.*”

Deuteronomy 23:5 – “Nevertheless, the LORD your God was not willing to listen to Balaam, but the LORD your God turned the curse into a blessing for you because the LORD your God loves you.”

As we consider the unfaithfulness of Israel, we stand in amazement of God’s love

- How could God continue to love such a sinful people?
- How could God choose to show compassion to a people so unlovable?
- The answer can only be found in His promise to covenant with a sinful people
 - o *Which takes us back to the purpose of Genesis*
 - o *Which is a reminder of the Abrahamic Covenant*

As we think of ourselves in the New Covenant, we are also reminded of God’s faithfulness to us despite our sinfulness and unfaithfulness

- Our response should be one of gratitude and worship

We also know that Deuteronomy is referred to many times throughout the rest of the Scriptures

- It is directly quoted over 40 times in the NT
- Only Psalms and Isaiah are referenced more

Jesus Himself referred to the book of Deuteronomy on many occasions

- It is interesting that Jesus refers to the book of Deuteronomy when Satan tempted Him

Matthew 4:4 – But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God’”

- **Deuteronomy 8:3** – “And He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD.”

Matthew 4:7 – Jesus said to him, “On the other hand, it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

- **Deuteronomy 6:16** – “You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested *Him* at Massah.”

Matthew 4:10 – Then Jesus said to him, “Begone, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.’”

- **Deuteronomy 10:20** – “You shall fear the LORD your God; you shall serve Him and cling to Him, and you shall swear by His name.”

Of the four books discussed so far, which one recorded no physical movement on the part of Israel?

- Leviticus!

Like Leviticus, Deuteronomy has Israel sitting still¹⁹

- We have already discussed that this book is basically three sermons by Moses

Deuteronomy takes place on the plains of Moab, due east of Jericho

- The entire book takes place in 30 days (Deut 1:3; 34:8; Joshua 5:6-12)
- It was written toward the end of the 40 years of wandering

This means that it has been around 40 years since Israel was delivered out of Egypt

We have seen much of Moses, the servant-leader, throughout the Pentateuch

- We first read of him in Exodus 2 as a little baby in danger of being killed
- We have seen him leading Israel from Exodus through Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy

But we see Moses' death in the book of Deuteronomy

- Remember, he was not permitted to enter the Promised Land due to his disobedience in striking the rock when told to speak to it (cf. Num 20:11-12)
- He allowed to see the Promised Land, but not to enter

What are some common themes or principles that emerge from the book of Deuteronomy?²⁰

- The character of God (see below)
- God's relationship to His people is one of love
- Israel was called to obey and trust God
- Israel's tendency to forget, which leads to arrogance and disobedience²¹

The character of God as seen in Deuteronomy:²²

- Accessible (4:7)
- Eternal (33:27)
- Faithful (7:9)
- Glorious (5:24; 28:58)
- Jealous (4:24)
- Just (10:17; 32:4)
- Loving (7:7, 8, 13; 10:15, 18; 23:5)
- Merciful (4:31; 32:43)
- Powerful (3:24; 32:39)
- Righteous (4:8)

¹⁹ Wilkinson & Boa, 38.

²⁰ Archer, 272-73.

²¹ Wilkinson & Boa, 38.

²² MacArthur, 51.

- True (32:4)
- Wise (2:7)
- Wrathful (29:20, 27, 28; 32:19-22)

The call to “hear” is repeated numerous occasions in the book

- As a matter of fact, it is repeated at least 15 times in reference to Israel hearing God

We define “hear” as simply collecting info

- Israel would define hear as obedience (hearing + responding rightly)

Listen to these texts:

- **Deuteronomy 4:10**, “Remember the day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, when the LORD said to me, ‘Assemble the people to Me, that I may let them hear My words so they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children.’”
- **Deuteronomy 5:1**, “Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the ordinances which I am speaking today in your hearing, that you may learn them and observe them carefully.”
- **Deuteronomy 5:27**, “Go near and hear all that the LORD our God says; then speak to us all that the LORD our God will speak to you, and we will hear and do it.”
- **Deuteronomy 6:4**, “Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!”
- **Deuteronomy 9:1**, “Hear, O Israel! You are crossing over the Jordan today to go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than you, great cities fortified to heaven”
- **Deuteronomy 20:3-4**, “Hear, O Israel, you are approaching the battle against your enemies today. Do not be fainthearted. Do not be afraid, or panic, or tremble before them, ⁴ for the LORD your God is the one who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.”
- **Deuteronomy 31:12-13**, “Assemble the people, the men and the women and children and the alien who is in your town, in order that they may hear and learn and fear the LORD your God, and be careful to observe all the words of this law. ¹³ And their children, who have not known, will hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as you live on the land which you are about to cross the Jordan to possess.”
- **Deuteronomy 33:7**, “Hear, O LORD, the voice of Judah, And bring him to his people. With his hands he contended for them; and may You be a help against his adversaries.”

Also, the warning is given not to “forget” the LORD nine times (Deut 4:9, 23, 31; 6:12; 8:11, 14, 19; 9:7; 25:19)

- Over and over again, the people were told to remember what God had taught them

As Israel was about to enter the Promised Land, they were exhorted to live by the Law that God had given

- The Land was theirs by means of the Abrahamic Covenant
- But they needed to realize that the blessings of obedience came through the Law

I try to listen through the books that we will be discussing prior to the class

- For my own awareness and familiarity

As I was listening to much of Deuteronomy, the overall tone was definitely pastoral

- This makes sense, because Moses will soon die
- He is writing with a sense of urgency and passion, exhorting the Israelites to obey and trust God

If you knew that you were going to die soon, your words would be much more serious

- You would focus on things that really matter

We have to see Moses with this perspective in the book of Deuteronomy

- He has seen an entire generation of Israelites die because of their lack of trust in the Lord
- He writes to this 2nd generation, urging them not to repeat in the steps of their forefathers

Again, my goal isn't to cover the entire book in great detail

- I will focus on certain chapters more than others
- I may skip some chapters due to time

I. Looking back in the past (1-11)

Look down with me at Deut 1:10-11

- **“The LORD your God has multiplied you, and behold, you are this day like the stars of heaven in number. 11 May the LORD, the God of your fathers, increase you a thousand-fold more than you are and bless you, just as He has promised you!”**
- This is a fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant that God made back in Genesis 26:4

The first two chapters are really a review of Israel's history

- He discusses how the majority of the spies didn't trust the Lord about entering the land
- He discusses how God disciplined that generation, killing them off (with the exception of Joshua and Caleb)
- He discusses the wilderness wanderings of Israel for their disobedience

Chapter 5 is a retelling of the Ten Commandments

- These would be a pivotal part of Israel's history

We have to keep in mind a few things about this 2nd generation

- Joshua and Caleb would have been fairly old during this time
- But everyone else would have been under 40 years of age

They would have heard about God's commandments secondhand through their parents and others

- But God wants them to hear His commandments firsthand through Moses
- Just like their parents had heard them

Moses pleads and urges Israel to obey God in chapter 6

- Again, the 1st generation failed in this very step

Look with me at Deuteronomy 6:4-9

- Some very familiar verses, commonly known as the Shema
- Actually the Hebrew word "shema" (hear) is used 92 times in the book of Deuteronomy

"Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! 5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. 6 These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. 8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. 9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."

- Let's make a few observations from this Text

First, verse 4 speaks of a monotheistic worship

- "The LORD is our God, the LORD is one"
- Israel didn't serve many gods

Second, verse 5 expresses how Israel was to love the Lord

- They had a personal, special relationship with God – unlike any other nation in the world

Third, Israel was to think and meditate on these truths (vs. 6)

- Obedience wasn't to be a ritualistic, formal process
- Rather, obedience should flow from a heart of understanding

Fourth, Israel was to teach their children these truths (vs. 7)

- Parents would talk about these truths both inside and outside of the home
- In the normal conversation of life, children were to be taught and reminded about God

Verses 8-9 were meant to a symbolic way of indicating that the Israelites should constantly be thinking of the Lord and teaching their children

- But later in Jewish history, they took these words literally
- Some would attach phylacteries (boxes containing these verses) onto their foreheads and hands²³

²³ MacArthur, 207,

Look with me at chapter 8

- I want us to read some of these verses
- They were a reminder of God's grace toward Israel

8:1-10, "All the commandments that I am commanding you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD swore to give to your forefathers.² You shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. ³ He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD. ⁴ Your clothing did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years. ⁵ Thus you are to know in your heart that the LORD your God was disciplining you just as a man disciplines his son. ⁶ Therefore, you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him. ⁷ For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing forth in valleys and hills; ⁸ a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey; ⁹ a land where you will eat food without scarcity, in which you will not lack anything; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper. ¹⁰ When you have eaten and are satisfied, you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you."

- Vs. 2; God was testing Israel, to see what was in their heart!
- Vs 3; God fed Israel with manna, a supernatural provision!
- Vs 3; "man does not live by bread alone" (quoted in the NT about the importance of the Word of God)
- Vs 4; supernatural provision of clothing that didn't wear out!
- Vs. 7ff; God's provision of a land that was fruitful

In the second half of chapter 8, Moses warns Israel about the sin of forgetting what God has done (8:11)

- This would lead to pride in their hearts (8:14)
- The key word was to "remember" (8:18)

Chapter 9 is a rehearsal of Israel's rebellion against God

- Moses mentions the idolatry and sexual nature of sin while he was receiving the Ten Commandments (9:12-21)
- He mentions other instances of Israel's sin

Why do you think Moses was reminding Israel of their past sin?

- What is the value in this?

Some people remember their sin more than their obedience

- Others remember their obedience more than their sin

Moses reminds Israel of their prior rebellion for a few reasons

- It keeps the Israelites humble instead of arrogant
- It reminds Israel of their past tendencies
- It also reminds them that God disciplined His people for their past sins, and He will do the same for their future sins

Chapter 10 is a retelling of how God was gracious in rewriting the Ten Commandments

- Remember, Moses shattered them when he came down from the mountain and saw the sin of the Israelites

Chapter 11 is another plea and exhortation from Moses for Israel to obey the Lord

- Moses stresses the rewards of obedience

The first 11 chapters are a look in the past

- A reminder of God's faithfulness
- But also a reminder of their own shortcomings

II. Looking ahead to the future (12-34)

Thankfully, the book of Deuteronomy doesn't end with merely looking at the past

- Moses wants this 2nd generation of Israelites to look forward

After all, the Israelites are literally on the verge of stepping into the Promised Land

- That is something to look forward to!

Moses repeats much of what we have seen in previous books of the Bible

- Tearing down altars lest they become a sinful influence (12:3)
- Presenting burnt offerings in the appropriate manner (12:14)
- Avoiding idolatry (chpt 13)
- Learning what animals are clean and unclean (chpt 14)
- Celebrating the Sabbatical year, as well as the feasts of Passover, Weeks, and Booths (chpt 15-16)

Practical matters are also repeated

- God wants the people to live with justice in mind (chpt 17)
- Providing cities of refuge when there was unintentional murder (chpt 19)
- How to deal with the spoils of battle (chpt 20)
- How to deal with foreign women and rebellious children (chpt 21)

Deuteronomy 24 must have been a favorite chapter for the men in the Israelite army

- Look at 24:5, "When a man takes a new wife, he shall not go out with the army nor be charged with any duty; he shall be free at home one year and shall give happiness to his wife whom he has taken."

A newlywed man was exempt from military service

- He was encouraged to spend that first year at home with his new wife

I want us to spend some time looking at chapters 27-28

- These chapters highlight both the curses for disobedience and blessings for obedience

A quick summary shows 22 mentions of “curse” or “cursing”

- And only 8 references to “bless” or “blessing”
- This shows that the focus of these two chapters is on Israel’s disobedience

Two different mountains are mentioned

- Ebal
- Gerizim

Ebal was near the center of the Promised Land

- It was just north of Shechem

Does anyone remember the significance of Shechem?

- It was where the Lord first appeared to a man named Abram
- It was also where Abram built his first altar to the Lord²⁴

Isn’t that amazing?

- The first Jew was a Gentile named Abram
- When Israel goes to possess the Promised Land, God takes them back to where it all began

According to 27:12-13, the twelve tribes were to be split between the two mountains

- 6 tribes on Mt. Ebal
- 6 tribes on Mt. Gerizim

We aren’t told, but it could be that the priests, along with the ark of the covenant, were in the valley between the two mountains

The various offenses listed in chapter 27 may be representative of the sins of the people

- Idolatry
- Failing to honor parents
- Injustice
- Sexual sin
- Murder
- Summary statement in verse 26

²⁴ MacArthur, 229.

Notice that after each one of these curses, the people say, “Amen”

- The people were agreeing to Moses as he read these curses
- They were claiming to understand the significance of what was taking place

Chapter 28 lists the blessings of obedience

- Look at 28:1, “Now it shall be, if you diligently obey the LORD your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth.”

If Israel obeyed, God would elevate their standing “above all the nations of the earth”

- Others would know that God was with Israel

28:10 even says that other nations would be afraid of Israel

- God would literally put fear into the hearts of other nations
- If Israel obeyed

Notice in the chapter 28 that more curses are mentioned

- Again, the emphasis in these two chapters is on the curses
- Moses knew that Israel would not receive these blessings due to their disobedience

Several aspects of God’s cursing are worth noting

- God would send confusion and a rebuke upon the nation (28:20)
- God would allow Israel to be defeated in battle (28:25)
- No rain would fall from heaven (28:24)
- God would smite the nation with the boils of Egypt (28:27)
- Israel would be a proverb among the nations (28:37)

It is also interesting how God allows Moses to speak to the future in these verses

- There is a mention of a king in verse 36
- Israel didn’t have an earthly king at this time

Also in verse 36, Moses predicted that Israel would be taken captive to another nation

- This was fulfilled first by Assyria and then by Babylon²⁵

Clearly, these are significant warnings to the nation Israel

- They clearly understood what Moses was telling them

Chapters 29-30 reference a different covenant than the one that occurred at Sinai

- Moses says that specifically in 29:1

²⁵ Ibid., 232.

Listen to what Moses says about Israel

- 29:4, “Yet to this day the LORD has not given you a heart to know, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear”
- 30:6, “Moreover the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live.”

Moses is anticipating the days of the New Covenant

- When God will change the heart of His people (Jer 31:31-34; Ezek 36:26-27)

In their current condition, Israel could not obey God the way that He intended

- But Moses holds out hope for the future

Moses leaves Israel with a choice to make: obedience or disobedience

- **Deuteronomy 30:19-20** – “I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, ²⁰ by loving the LORD your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him; for this is your life and the length of your days, that you may live in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them.”

In chapter 31, Moses gives one more word of exhortation to Israel

- He tells them to be strong and courageous (31:6)
- He reminds them that it is God who will go before them (31:8)

God then tells Moses that he is about to die

- God commissions Joshua as Israel’s leader

Joshua hears the Lord speak of how Israel will be unfaithful (31:16)

- When they enter the Promised Land, Israel will turn to other gods (31:20)

Put yourselves in the sandals of Joshua

- As you step into leadership, God Himself promised you that the people will be unfaithful!
- At the very beginning of your ministry, you are told that this people will not be an easy people to lead!

In Deuteronomy 32, we have the song of Moses

- This song is different from the song of Moses in Exodus 15 after the miracle of crossing the Red Sea
- That song is referred to as the song of Moses and the sons of Israel

This song has two major components

- God’s faithfulness, grace, and kindness to Israel
- Israel’s unfaithfulness, apostasy, and future judgment

The end of the chapter even records God's discipline of Moses himself

- Because Moses struck the rock instead of speaking to the rock (Num 20:11), he would not be allowed to enter the Promised Land

Chapters 33-34 were written by someone other than Moses

- They reference events that occurred shortly after Moses' death

Chapter 33 includes a blessing from Moses

- Every tribe but Simeon is mentioned

It was customary for a father to bless his children before his death

- We saw this with Jacob in Genesis 49

In this chapter, Moses blesses the children of Israel

- He had been their leader for many years
- He had been the human instrument through whom the Lord delivered Israel from Egypt

Look with me at chapter 34

- It seems he went up to Mount Nebo by himself

God shows Moses the Promised Land

- Remember, he wasn't allowed to enter it

Look at 34:5-7, "So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD. ⁶ And He buried him in the valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor; but no man knows his burial place to this day. ⁷ Although Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died, his eye was not dim, nor his vigor abated."

- He dies on Mt. Nebo
- He was buried by God Himself
- Even at his death, Moses was in good physical health (sight and vigor)
- He didn't die of natural causes

We read in Jude 9 that "Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you.'"

Why did God bury Moses?

- What do you think?

Moses was such an icon and respected leader of Israel, that they would have probably been tempted to idolize the body of Moses

- Israel carried the bones of Joseph with them (Ex 13:19)
- They may have done the same with Moses' bones

34:10 says that “no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses”

- Moses cast a very wide shadow over the Old Testament

Moses is the only other Biblical character (other than Christ) to fill the three offices of prophet (Deut 34:10-12), priest (Ex 32:31-35), and king (he functioned as the ruler of Israel; Deut 34:4-5)

- Both were in danger during childhood
- Both were deliverers
- Both were intercessors
- Both were rejected by their own brethren²⁶

Moses shows back up in the New Testament

- When Jesus was transfigured, Moses and Elijah were with Him (Mt 17:3)

Time and time again, God had demonstrated His faithfulness to Israel

- God’s faithfulness was in spite of Israel, not because of her

But Israel is not left alone

- God is with them
- And He provides another leader by the name of Joshua

So as we finish the Torah, we leave behind a significant portion of the Old Testament

- But don’t think for a second that we won’t come back to the Law for the other 34 OT books

Our journey through the OT has just begun

- I trust that you are growing through this study
- I trust that you are encouraged through this study

²⁶ Wilkinson & Boa, 39.