

ABIDE

DISCOVERING YOUR OLD TESTAMENT



THE SECOND LAW

DEUTERONOMY

If “Numbers” was an odd name for a book, “Deuteronomy” might be considered a name from another planet, as far as comparisons are concerned. The name is of Greek origin and is made up of two Greek words. The first word is “Deuterous” which means, “Two” and the second is the word “nomos” which means “law”. If you put those two words together, you have the name “Deuteronomy” and it literally means “second law.” Now, understand, this is not an altogether different law. Instead, this book is one where information is being given again. It is a deeper interpretation of the law that had already been given.

The book of Deuteronomy is a series of messages given by Moses to God’s people before entering into the land of Canaan, and each sermon highlights new challenges the people would face. Deuteronomy was a final word from a loving leader before the official transitions took place.

The purpose of here was to encourage and equip a new generation to continue in the truth that they had to been taught, and to avoid the failures that caused a tremendous amount of problems for their parents and grandparents.

Furthermore, Moses, in this address gave an admonition to these people to make sure to pass on those things that they had learned to their children.

How to Think About Deuteronomy

In refreshing our minds a bit, in Numbers 20, in an outburst of anger, Moses disobeyed God before the people. And because of this massive public failure, God denied Moses entry into the Promised Land. Although, Moses asked, and Moses pleaded, in the end, God’s decision stood— Moses would not be the leader to take this nation into the land of promise.

That said, by the time we reach Deuteronomy, Moses had taken these people as far as he could go. So with his time soon running out, Moses thought and Moses prayed. No doubt the idea of abruptly ending a 40-year ministry of caring for an entire nation was troubling to him. What would he do? Should he just slip off into the night? Would a simple goodbye do? What was the best way to end this kind of ministry? Well, our answers to that question are found in this book. God led Moses to write and deliver a set of sermons that would forever stand as a testament to God’s standard and God’s blessing. In other words, Moses gave the people a few final words that would solidify the transition.

And this is a good way to think about this book. When you think of Deuteronomy, think of the word, “Transition” because this is what Deuteronomy is, it’s a book of transition— the leadership of Moses would soon be transitioned, and we’ve already seen how an entire generation has been transitioned.

Therefore, we need to look at this book through this lens and study these final instructions that this generation would take with them into the Promised Land.

A Series of Sermons—

Sermon One- Look at Your Past in Light of God's Grace (1:1-4:40): This sermon is broken up into two different sections. The purpose here is to cause God's people to focus on how the people came to be where they are in the first place. In times of blessing from their past successes, in times of judgment from their past failings, and in times where they just simply needed help, it was always God's grace that kept them then, and keeps them still. And to prove his point, Moses highlights eight events within the first four chapters that illustrate exactly this.

- 1) 1:9-18— Moses recalls the selection of leaders to help judge the people (Exodus 18:13; Numbers 10:1)
- 2) 1:19-46— Moses retells the story of the 12 spies sent out to gather intelligence in the land of Canaan (Numbers 13-14)
- 3) 2:1-8a— Moses reminds the people of their passage through the territory of Edom (Numbers 20:14-21)
- 4) 2:8b- 25— Moses reminds the people of their journey through the territory of Moab (Numbers 21:4-20)
- 5) 2:26-7— Moses explains their victory over Sihon of Heshbon (Numbers 21:21-32)
- 6) 3:1-7—Moses explains their victory over Og of Bashan (Numbers 21:33-35)
- 7) 3:8-22— Moses re-explains the divisions of the land by each tribe after they pass over Jordan (Numbers 32)
- 8) 3:23-29— Moses tells of his request to God to allow him to enter into the land of Canaan with the people, and the denial God gave him (Numbers 27:12-14)

The second division in this sermon is found in chapter 4 and the purpose is to explain what to do in light of that history. In other words, Moses thought that history should mean something. You see, there is always a danger of forgetting, and Moses knew that. So in chapter 4, you have one overarching message, "Don't forget!"

Sermon Two— Look at Your Heart in Light of God's Heart (4:41—26:19): In this section, Moses provides additional insight into the law. In Deuteronomy 4:44- 11:32 there is an explanation regarding the Ten Commandments, in Deuteronomy 12:1-16:17 there is a further explanation of the Ceremonial Laws, in Deuteronomy 16:18-20:20 additional insight is given regarding the Civil Laws, and in Deuteronomy 21:1-26 information is given regarding the Social Laws.

However, before you get to the bulk of these instructions, you find in Deuteronomy 6 the intended motivation that binds it all together:

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." — Deuteronomy 6:4-7

This is the first time you read the word "love" in the Bible. What is important to recognize in this sermon is that God's people do not (nor have they ever) simply followed a set of rules just to follow a set of rules. Instead, they are to obey God because they love God and desire to become a reflection of who He is. Then, they were to teach this same love to their children, and their children to their children.

What we learn in this sermon is that in everything God's people do, they are to examine their hearts in light of God's heart

because it is by God's heart that we received the law in the first place.

Sermon 3 Part 1—Look at Your Future in Light of God's Faithfulness (27:1-30:12): The most prominent portions of this sermon occur in two different sections. The first of these major events happen in 27:1-30:20 with the blessing and cursing. This is when one group of people assembled on Mt. Ebal to repeat the 'cursings' found in the Law, and in chapter 28, we read of a second group that assembled on Mt. Gerizim to pronounce the blessings. Now, to give a little context as to where this occurred, take your mind over to John 4 and to the conversation between Jesus and the woman at the well. Well, where that conversation was taking place was directly in between these two mountain areas.

This section is dedicated to binding the nation to God's law so that everyone completely understood that their continued success as a nation depended upon their faithfulness to God.

A Final Farewell—

Sermon 3 Part 2— Look at Your Future in Light of God's Faithfulness (31:1-34:2): Moses gives a final word of encouragement about what God would do for them. And the reason he speaks so confidently here about God's blessing is that God had been completely faithful to them in the past. Over and over again in this section, you will see phrases that say, "God will go..." "He will destroy..." "He will do..." Moses had no doubt that God keeps His promises.

Then in Chapter 32, Moses gives them a beautiful song, after this, in chapter 33, Moses gives a final blessing, and in chapter 34, Moses is allowed to see the Promised land, and then is taken up by God in death.

What to Look for In Deuteronomy

There are several themes and challenging messages that can make a study of Deuteronomy very exciting. Just remember all the changes that are happening:

A New People: This is a portion of the Bible, once again, when there is a change from the old generation to a new generation. And as you are reading this book, there is a little anxious anticipation as you are watching all of this unfold, in wanting these people to succeed. No matter if you know the outcome or not, there is still a sense in which you want them to do well after God had been so gracious, and the people had been through so much to get to this point.

A New Challenge: Unlike their parents, this generation would actually get to enter and experience the Promised Land. There would be failings, there would be victories, there would be losses, and there would be gains. Any new change in your life always brings with it a new set of temptations and a new set of challenges.

A New Leader: The leadership of this nation was transferred over from Moses to Joshua— and every leader is different— different likes, dislikes, skill sets, and abilities. And there is no doubt that this transition of leadership made many worry for the future...especially since this leader had to follow directly after a leader like Moses.

So understanding all of this then, you can see why Deuteronomy would be particularly compelling. But is there anything to focus on that would help to provide additional insight for our understanding of this book? There most certainly is!

Look for Key Words—

Land: The word "Land" occurs 153 times in this book. It is an indication that God will do what He said that He would do. Along these lines, you also see the word "possess" 65 times and the word "inherit" 36 times.

Hear: You'll see this word 44 times during the course of your reading of Deuteronomy. It is a word to remind God's people

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that God's Word is worth listening to and building their life around.

Love: Once again, this is the first book in the Bible in which the word love appears, and after it is mentioned, it becomes a prominent one as it is used a total of 20 times to describe what God's feeling is toward His people, and what He expects in return from His people.

Worship: This word is mentioned 5 times, but its meaning is great. This word has to do with bowing oneself down both physically and by the bending of the will. Worship is the primary expression of love that God's people display toward Him. Whenever God gives a statute or a command, because we recognize Him as our great Provider and Creator, we bow ourselves down, both physically and spiritually, bending our will toward His because He is worthy. You cannot love God without worship.

Look for Key Promises—

There are many promises in Deuteronomy and much of what could be applied physically to Israel can be applied spiritually to us today. Let's look at just a couple of examples:

1) God Gives Our Daily Strength: Deuteronomy 33:25 says, "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be." This means that whatever you face in the day, God will give you the specific strength you need to endure it.

2) God is Your Continual Refuge: Deuteronomy 33:27 says, "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them." Do you know what this means? It means you can trust God because He wins in the end.

Look for Key Attributes—

Several attributes of God are highlighted in the book of Deuteronomy. Here are a few attributes you should look for:

God is Approachable— 4:7

God is Eternal— 33:27

God is Just— 10:17; 32:4

God is Glorious— 5:24; 28:58

God is Merciful— 4:31; 32:43

God is Loving— 7:7; 10:15

God is Wrathful— 29:20, 27-28; 32:19-22

God is Righteous— 4:8

God is a Promise Keeper— 1:11

God is One— 4:32; 6:4-5; 32:39

What to Gain from Deuteronomy

If you understand what the Pentateuch is— that it is a five-part book— and then you try to put all of these books together in a way that makes sense as far as having a beginning, middle, and end, you are going to be very disappointed. This just isn't the purpose of why these books were written. But once again, if we stop and just take a closer look, it is possible to bring a little

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closure to our understanding.

At the beginning of this chapter, we spoke briefly about the name “Deuteronomy” and why this title was given. That the name means “second law” and that the purpose of this title was not to bring about an entirely new set of laws, but to expand and explain those laws which were originally given.

But then we spoke about the introduction of the word “love”. Well, if you put the other four books of the Pentateuch together alongside this one, we find that the first four books are dedicated to giving us the information that explains why we **need the law**, but the book of Deuteronomy gives the spiritual significance of why we **have the law**.

The reason why we need the law is that in our natural state, we are diametrically opposed to God and all of His ways. And so we need the law to that we know both “Who” to worship (we are only to worship God) and “how” to worship (we are only to worship God, God’s way). This is the dominant theme of Genesis through Numbers.

However, the reason why we even **have** the law is that God loved us and wanted to have a relationship with us. And it is in Deuteronomy that displays this significance and tells us that the foundation upon which the law is built, is a foundation of love.

Furthermore, in the book of Deuteronomy, another spiritual theme emerges as we consider Moses and Joshua. As the New Testament progresses, it is very clear that Moses was the representative figure of the law. We know also that he was not allowed to take God’s people into the land of Promise. But Moses’ predecessor Joshua was able to.

Now, what is interesting is that the Hebrew name for Jesus is Joshua. That said, when you’re putting all of this together, John 1:17 becomes very significant, “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.”

What we learn from Deuteronomy is that grace did what the law could never do.



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