



Wednesday Bible Education
Biblical Theology
Lesson 6: Deuteronomy

REVIEW

Questions from last week's lesson:

1. What is in the book of Numbers?
2. What does Numbers say to modern readers?

Answers:

1. Numbers has the forty years of wilderness wandering where the pillar of cloud by day and fire by night leads the nation of Israel. Number is a book about complaining and doubts. Numbers has the record of the manna and quail in the wilderness, as well as the water from the rock. Miriam is stricken with leprosy for complaining against Moses and God. Numbers also has the odd account with the pagan prophet Balaam and the brazen serpent in the wilderness. Numbers tells of the death of the first generation of Israelites who came out of Egypt and various laws of offerings and feasts. Numbers is about the unfailing faithfulness of God to keep his promises to Abraham that he would make his seed a great nation, give them the land he showed Abraham, and that he would bless all nations through him.
2. Considering God's provision for Israel and their ingratitude should provoke us to thankfulness and glad service for the gracious provisions God has given us. Understanding the murmuring and complaining of Israel prompts us to check our own hearts for discontent. Numbers illustrates God's faithfulness and when we understand we are of the nations blessed through God's covenant with Abraham, we understand his faithfulness to his promises is also for us. We should the negative examples in Numbers as clear warnings not to do what Israel did. We also realize we hear God's voice every time his Scripture is read or preached and we must not harden our hearts against God like Israel did in provoking him to anger.

INTRODUCTION

What is the book of Deuteronomy about? Deuteronomy contains Moses' rehearsal of the law to the second generation of Israel. As expected, the book has various laws for how Israel is to live in the land of promise. Deuteronomy has the famous

covenant curses and blessings sections. We read of Moses view the land of Canaan because he was not allowed to enter it. The book tells of Joshua being the new leader to begin the conquest of Canaan and tells of Moses' death. Deuteronomy is about the one, true God, who made Heaven and earth, and who chose Israel to be his own special people. He gave them a land to be possessed, revealing himself through his law, covenant, and his sovereign acts in history to fulfill the promises he made to their fathers to bring them to the land and to bless the nations through them.

We will look at the book of Deuteronomy in this lesson. We will consider the contents of the book, along with major themes and practical applications to modern readers. We will focus on what the book reveals about Christ and his kingdom and how it fits into the Bible's main story.

OBSERVATION

Deuteronomy is the fifth, and final, book of the law. The name means "second law," and is like a second giving of the law with Moses' rehearsal of the law to the second generation of Israelites who will enter the promised land. Deuteronomy continues where Numbers ended with Israel in the plains of Moab and able to see the promised land. The events of the book take place over the course of about a month in that same location. The book is primarily Moses speaking to the children of Israel. The bookending verses in Deuteronomy 1:1, 5 & 32:46-47, tell us the book is an explanation, or exposition, of the law, particularly Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers.

By the end of Numbers, all the adult generation that came out of Egypt have died, except Joshua and Caleb. Deuteronomy is a covenant renewal with the second generation who will enter the land. Moses has a copy of the law put in the ark of the covenant. Joshua is commissioned as the new leader. Moses did see the promised land, fulfilling God's words to him (Numbers 20:12; Deuteronomy 32:51-52; 34:4-5). Moses died and was buried.

A brief outline of Deuteronomy:

1. Chapters 1:1-4:43 are an introduction and the first speech of Moses, which is mainly a review of Israel's history
2. Chapters 4:44-28:68 are the second speech, which is an exposition of the ten commandments
3. Chapters 29-30 are the third speech, which give further laws for the people in the land
4. Chapters 31-32 are preparations to enter the land of Canaan
5. Chapters 33-34 are Moses blessing the tribes of Israel and his death

INTERPRETATION

Deuteronomy is the third most quoted Old Testament book in the New Testament and the book reveals many attributes of God. The book reveals there is one God (Deuteronomy 4:39; 6:4) and he is: holy (Deuteronomy 7:6-11; 8:6, 11, 18; 10:10, 16-17; 11:13; 13:3-4; 14:1-2), jealous (Deuteronomy 4:24), faithful (Deuteronomy 7:9), loving (Deuteronomy 7:7-8, 13; 10:15, 18; 23:5), merciful (Deuteronomy 4:31; 32:43), angered by sin (Deuteronomy 6:15), accessible (Deuteronomy 4:7), eternal (Deuteronomy 33:27), glorious (Deuteronomy 5:24; 28:58), just (Deuteronomy 10:17; 32:4), powerful (Deuteronomy 3:24; 32:39), true (Deuteronomy 32:4), without equal (Deuteronomy 4:35; 33:26), and wise (Deuteronomy 2:7).

Deuteronomy makes it plain that Israel's biggest problem is not giants in the land or the armies of the nations in the land. Their biggest problem is a heart problem and having uncircumcised hearts that cannot obey God. This has been man's problem from the fall in Eden (Genesis 6:5; 8:21). Jesus referred to this heart problem when addressing Pharisees in Mark 7:14-23. The heart is defiled and defiling and no law or practice outside the man can cleanse the defiled heart. Deuteronomy applies this to Israel (Deuteronomy 5:29; 10:16; 13:3; 15:7-10; 29:4; 30:6).

Deuteronomy contributes to the expectation of the Messiah and his kingdom. The book reveals that God will raise up a greater-than-Moses prophet to Israel (Deuteronomy 18:15; 34:10). Peter refers to this prophecy as having been fulfilled in Jesus Christ (Acts 3:22-26). Stephen also referred to this prophecy in his sermon (Acts 7:37). We can sketch the image of the Messiah from Deuteronomy. He is the Chosen One who loved God with all his heart, obeyed all the words of God, and kept Yahweh's covenant that the blessings of Abraham might come upon Israel in the latter days.

Deuteronomy provides several key texts pertaining to the Messianic kingdom to come. The law prepared the people for a king, though it would be a long time before they had one (Deuteronomy 17:14-20). This hearkens back to Jacob's prophesy over Judah (Genesis 49:10). Having God, a people, and a law, Israel was to go in and possess the land to have a kingdom (Deuteronomy 26:15-19). Though it seems the kingdom was before them within their grasp, Moses had already prophesied their failure that would lose the land God had given them (Deuteronomy 4:25-28). Moses goes on to prophesy that kingdom will come, but not to this generation of Israelites (Deuteronomy 4:29-31; 30:1-10). In the future, God will restore Israel with the heart circumcision of the New Covenant, which means the kingdom comes with the Messiah, Jesus Christ, the mediator of the New Covenant (Hebrews 8:6; 9:15; 12:24).

APPLICATION

What does Deuteronomy have to say to readers today who thousands of years, and perhaps thousands of miles, removed from the plains of Moab. Deuteronomy is more than a rehashing of Leviticus for another generation of Israelites. Deuteronomy is theologically rich and will reward the time and effort of modern attention with at least four applications.

1. Understanding Deuteronomy helps us see the unconditional election and love of God (Deuteronomy 4:37-38; 7:6-8; 9:4-6). God acts of his own will and loves and chooses whom he will. His faithfulness to his own choice is for his own name's sake.
2. Understanding Deuteronomy points us away from idolatry and making images of God. If we want to see what God looks like, we don't look to wood, stone, or gold, we look at his law. Therefore, his people should live in such obedience to God they reflect his holy and glorious character.
3. Understanding Deuteronomy should help us see our own hearts are depraved just like Israel's and that we rebel just like they did. The problem for us is the same as the problem for them. Our hearts are depraved and bound in folly. Our need is the same as their need for a new heart given by God.
4. Understanding Deuteronomy gives us hope. Moses foretold Israel's rebellion and scattering from the land. He also revealed God's promise to gather and restore them. We have hope also knowing the prophet greater than Moses did arise. Jesus Christ is the Chosen One who kept God's covenant perfectly and took on himself the curses of disobedience in order to bring the blessings of the covenant upon all who repent of their sin and believe in him.

CONCLUSION

Deuteronomy prepares the second generation Israelites to enter and live in the land of promise. They are instructed in what it means to live with God, for God, and as God's people.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

This series is a study in biblical theology going book by book through the entire Bible. Each lesson typically covers one book of the Bible, though occasionally covers more than one book when the books are short. This PDF is provided for personal study, small group study, or use in a church class. Unless otherwise noted, all lessons have been prepared by Jeff Short, the pastor of Harmony Baptist Church.

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