

Deuteronomy

Vineland Park Baptist Church
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Tonight we begin a series of perhaps 10 to 12 lessons on the book of Deuteronomy.

One of my passions for many years is to show how important it is for Christians to study the Old Testament. It is sad but true that many Christians have not read the Old Testament; and some people who say that they are believers have never read the Bible completely through even one time.

This is not meant to scold anyone but rather to encourage you to find the richness in reading the entire Bible, both OT and NT.

You simply cannot correctly understand the New Testament without being well grounded in the OT.

That is why in my personal daily devotional Bible reading I read about three chapters in the OT and then about three chapters in the NT. It continues to amaze me how often I will read something in the NT that refers to what I just read that morning in the OT.

The reason for that is that about two-thirds of the NT is commentary on the OT. So when a NT writer, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, makes a reference to an OT Scripture, you will have no clue as to its true meaning and significance unless you know the context of the OT passage being called upon.

And another thing, when a NT writer makes an application of an OT passage to the church that is what the OT passage meant no matter what the OT writer, or you, might have thought it meant.

**“In the Old Testament God meant what He said;
in the New Testament God says what He meant.”** John Wilmot

Take this as an example:

Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. 18 For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer is worthy of his wages."
1 Timothy 5:17-18

It is important for you to understand that when a NT writer refers to the “Scripture” {over 20 NT references} it is almost always refers to the OT. One exception is where Peter is referring to Paul’s NT writings.

2 Peter 3:14-16

¹⁴Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; ¹⁵and consider *that* the longsuffering of our Lord *is* salvation – as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, ¹⁶as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable *people* twist to their own destruction,

as they do also the rest of the Scriptures. NKJV

The OT was the only Scripture that the church had at its beginning as the NT was still being written. Dr. Timothy George once said, “Paul ran a pretty good New Testament church with only the Old Testament.”

Now look closely at our NT example of First Timothy 5:17-18.

Here the Apostle Paul, writing to Timothy, quotes Deuteronomy 25:4.

In the context of the Old Testament, the law provided for humane treatment for brute beasts.

But then the Apostle Paul makes a spiritual application of an Old Testament law to show the appropriateness of supporting the elders of the church by quoting from Luke 10:7 as the spiritual interpretation of Deuteronomy 25:4.

Paul wrote to Timothy in about 60 AD so Paul now has some NT Scripture in addition to the OT. The last book of the NT was written in about 90 AD.

Ponder this!

Paul quotes Luke's Gospel and Luke quotes Moses in Deuteronomy.

You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain... is from Deuteronomy; but *The laborer is worthy of his wages...* is only in the NT!

Luke 10:1-12

After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go. ² Then He said to them, "The harvest truly *is* great, but the laborers *are* few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. ³ Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves. ⁴ Carry neither money bag, knapsack, nor sandals; and greet no one along the road. ⁵ But whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house.' ⁶ And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest on it; if not, it will return to you. ⁷ And remain in the same house, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not go from house to house. ⁸ Whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you. ⁹ And heal the sick there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'

¹⁰ But whatever city you enter, and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, ¹¹ 'The very dust of your city which clings to us we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near you.' ¹² But I say to you that it will be more tolerable in that Day for Sodom than for that city.

Now what do you think Paul and Luke thought about what we call the Old Testament?

It is really difficult to get into some parts of the OT. Personally I struggle every time I read through the details of the construction on the tabernacle. But that too is God's Word and what we can learn is that God is very particular about how He is to be worshipped.

The "way of Cain" {Jude 11} was Cain refusing to worship God with a blood sacrifice, as did Abel, and trying to worship God in his own way.

That is Part One of my introduction, viz. the importance of studying the OT.

In Part Two of this introduction to Deuteronomy we will briefly consider the writings of Moses. They are called the Pentateuch. They are Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

PENTATEUCH

[PIN tuh tuke] – a Greek term meaning "five-volumed" which refers to the first five books of the Old Testament. The Jews traditionally refer to this collection as "the Book of the Law," or simply "the Law."

(from Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright © 1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers)

Well Genesis is very interesting!

Genesis is the book of beginnings; the book of firsts. We read about Creation, sin in mankind, the dramatic history of Adam and Eve, of Cain and Abel, the first murder and the first man to go to heaven, of Noah and the Great Flood, of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Esau, of Joseph and his brothers.

We read about why and how Joseph's brothers intended to kill him but how Joseph was providentially moved from a pit in the desert where he was supposed to die, to be promoted to be the second in command on the throne of Egypt.

Exodus too, is exciting to read as we find how Moses {drawn out} was providentially saved from being killed as a baby boy and winding up as prince of Egypt. But when Moses is 40 years old he kills an Egyptian and flees into Midian.

Moses spends the next 40 years of his life in the Midian desert as a shepherd. One day while Moses was tending his sheep he saw a strange sight. A bush was burning on the side of a mountain and the fire did not consume the bush.

That got Moses' attention and so he climbs up Mount Horeb to investigate this strange thing.

It is God! God speaks to Moses from the burning bush:

"Go tell Pharaoh, 'Let My people go!'"

Exodus tells how God used Moses to bring the plagues on Egypt and Pharaoh and how the Hebrew people were delivered from the fiery furnace of Egyptian slavery.

Moses lived 120 years. Someone has observed that he spent 40 years in Egypt learning how to be a somebody; 40 years in a desert learning how to be a nobody; and 40 years learning how God can use a nobody.

Leviticus is about the Levitical priesthood and the sacrificial system of worship. In the time of the OT the worship of God focused on the sacrifice. Of course the

sacrifices were only symbolic of Christ and had no efficacy apart from what they pointed to in Christ.

Lev 17:10-12

¹⁰ 'And whatever man of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell among you, who eats any blood, I will set My face against that person who eats blood, and will cut him off from among his people. ¹¹ For the life of the flesh *is* in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.' ¹² Therefore I said to the children of Israel, 'No one among you shall eat blood, nor shall any stranger who dwells among you eat blood.'

Hebrews 10:1-10

For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. ² For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. ³ But in those *sacrifices there is* a reminder of sins every year.

⁴ For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.

⁵ Therefore, when He came into the world, He said:

*"Sacrifice and offering You did not desire,
But a body You have prepared for Me.*

⁶ *In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin
You had no pleasure.*

⁷ *Then I said, 'Behold, I have come –
In the volume of the book it is written of Me –
To do Your will, O God.'"*

⁸ Previously saying, "Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them"(which are offered according to the law), ⁹ then He said, "Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God." He takes away the first that He may establish the second. ¹⁰ By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Numbers is about the wanderings in the wilderness and takes its title from two numberings of the Israelites. There are some very interesting stories in Numbers.

The event recorded in Numbers that bears heavily on Deuteronomy is how the Israelites refused to obey God to enter into the Land of Canaan and the “provocation” of Moses that prevented him from going into the Land of Promise.

Deuteronomy

The fifth book of the Pentateuch is Deuteronomy and that is where we will spend the next several Wednesday nights. Please read Deuteronomy and even without much explanation or preaching you should find it interesting.

“Deuteronomy” means “second law.” The word itself is a mistranslation of the Greek translation of the OT, the Septuagint, meaning “a copy of this law.”

The Hebrew title is “The Words,” referring to the appeal Moses made to the second generation of covenant people. The titles of the books in the Hebrew bible are usually taken from the first words in the book.

Deut 1:1

These *are* the words which Moses spoke to all Israel on this side of the Jordan in the wilderness,

This book is at the heart of the Bible. Deuteronomy is quoted in all but six New Testament books, almost 200 times altogether.

Let's look at a few "teasers" in Deuteronomy:

1) When was the last time you met a Zamzummim?

It was people like the Zamzummim who scared the willies out of the twelve spies and caused the people to rebel at Kadesh-barnia.

Num 13:30-33

³⁰ Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, "Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it."

³¹ But the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they *are* stronger than we." ³² And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, "The land through which we have gone as spies *is* a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it *are* men of *great* stature. ³³ There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight."

Turn to Deut 2:

Deut 2:16-21

¹⁶ "So it was, when all the men of war had finally perished from among the people, ¹⁷ that the LORD spoke to me, saying: ¹⁸ 'This day you are to cross over at Ar, the boundary of Moab. ¹⁹ And *when* you come near the people of Ammon, do not harass them or meddle with them, for I will not give you *any* of the land of the people of Ammon *as* a possession, because I have given it to the descendants of Lot *as* a possession.'"

²⁰ (That was also regarded as a land of giants; giants formerly dwelt there. But the Ammonites call them Zamzummim, ²¹ a people as great and numerous and tall as the Anakim.

2) You have heard the expression, “Rules of Warfare.”

Deut 20:19-20

¹⁹ "When you besiege a city for a long time, while making war against it to take it, you shall not destroy its trees by wielding an ax against them; if you can eat of them, do not cut them down to use in the siege, for the tree of the field *is* man's food. ²⁰ Only the trees which you know *are* not trees for food you may destroy and cut down, to build siegeworks against the city that makes war with you, until it is subdued.

When fighting a prolonged battle against a city the Hebrews were not allowed to cut down fruit-bearing trees. They could use other trees to build siege ramps and they could eat the fruit, but they could not destroy the trees that were for food.

3) The Bible is consistent in how we are supposed to treat animals. I am convinced that a person who is cruel to brute beasts does not know God.

It was forbidden to completely destroy a family of birds by taking the mother and the young birds.

Deut 22:6-8

⁶ "If a bird's nest happens to be before you along the way, in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs, with the mother sitting on the young or on the eggs, you shall not take the mother with the young; ⁷ you shall surely let the mother go, and take the young for yourself, that it may be well with you and *that* you may prolong *your* days.

4) And one more; when you built a new house it was required that you build a fence around the roof of the house. Houses had flat roofs and were used for various activities so without a barrier someone might fall off the roof.

Deut 22:8 "When you build a new house, then you shall make a parapet for your roof, that you may not bring guilt of bloodshed on your household if anyone falls from it.

Some houses today have little fences on the roof that serve no real purpose except as decoration; but that is where the idea comes from.

As mentioned Deuteronomy is often quoted in the NT so if you haven't read it and if you do read it you may be pleased when you find many familiar phrases that are found in the NT.

Take these two examples:

Matt 4:1-4

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. ³ Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."

⁴ But He answered and said, "It is written, '*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.*'" {Deut 8:3}

Matt 22:34-40

³⁴ But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. ³⁵ Then one of them, a lawyer, asked *Him a question*, testing Him, and saying, ³⁶ "Teacher, which *is* the great commandment in the law?"

³⁷ Jesus said to him, "*You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.*" {Deut 6:5} ³⁸ This is *the* first and great commandment. ³⁹ And *the* second *is* like it: '*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*' {Lev 19:18} ⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

That was a fairly long two-part introduction but I thought it was necessary because my suspicion is that some of my hearers are just now becoming aware of the value of studying the OT generally and Deuteronomy in particular.

There are several ways to teach a book of the Bible. My usual method is to go verse-by-verse and that process would take a very long time since Deuteronomy has 34 chapters. It took me three years to go through the Gospel of John and Romans went on for 100 sermons.

One excellent commentary on Deuteronomy by John D. Currid is 600 pages. Another study guide that I have is only 150 pages.

Since we are going to limit this series of study to 10 to 12 lessons we will take fairly large sections at a time.