

DEUTERONOMY

Things to not Forget



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I. Outline: The Book of Deuteronomy

You are going to see similar introduction for the lessons on Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

This lesson is meant to give an overall background to your own self-reading of the Book of Deuteronomy. As I have mentioned, three particular books (Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) is often skipped altogether by the Christian reader because it is indeed difficult to understand. This is for two main reasons:

- **It is dull and boring (but it is the very Word of God!).** This is especially a problem in today's society which appreciates instant gratification. We love instant results, and we are used to being stimulated by the media. So, let's face it. It is dull and boring, as it lists all the rules and regulations, some of which are not applicable to the modern society, and lists them in such detail. But it is the Word of God; and that should be reason enough for us to read it. I like Bob Deffinbaugh's explanation: "the greatest and most significant communications of history have not been particularly entertaining. The Magna Carta, the Declaration of Independence, or the Constitution of the United States are not written to entertain us. If we want to be entertained we turn to writings which begin, "once upon a time," and end "happily after." If we want to be informed about things vital to the present and to eternity, we most often must set aside our desire for entertainment. How many of you go to the Richardson Public Library and check out the city code book for entertaining reading? No one does, but they do read the city codes very carefully if they plan to build a house in Richardson. The Texas Driver's Manual is not great entertainment either, but anyone who wants to get their driver's license had better study it well."¹

And so, we must study these books, dull though they may seem, because these are the very words of God, an instruction for life and godliness that we must heed.

- **It seems inapplicable (but all Scripture is God-breathed!).** The varying laws which seem inapplicable to the modern societies are listed in detail; giving instructions to the minute details. However, we are told that *all* Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for our spiritual lives (**2 Tim 3:16-17**). So we may be missing something important if we disregard the Torah. As a short explanation, if we categorize the Law into the traditionally accepted moral-civil-ceremonial categories (though we must be careful because we are then putting our own judgment on the Word of God by deciding to categorize it ourselves), we will at least agree that the moral laws (such as the 10 commandments) are based on God's eternal character and therefore is not bound by time or culture. And that despite the fact that the civil laws are not to be taken literally, we will still need to extract and apply its essential principles of justice, goodness and holiness. We will also need to understand how the ceremonial laws are fulfilled in Christ (see for example **Heb 8:5-6**), and how that understanding should lead us to better appreciate His sacrifice.

Having said that, what I am trying to accomplish in these lessons of the Book of the Laws is not to give you an exhaustive lessons on the laws. I am, rather, trying to give you an outline of the book so as to give you the overall purpose of the books. I will attempt to show why certain laws are given: what were their contexts, purpose and audience. I hope that by doing this, you will do a reading of your own; and that this outline can be used as a guide in your reading.

Do note that you can find similar outlines in the various publications out there, even commentaries on the books. If you would like to attempt a further study of the books, it is highly recommended that you take a few of these outlines, because they may provide you with a different way of thinking; a different aspect which God reveals to different people, and be enriched as the Body of Christ.

Without further ado, let's dive in!

Chapter	Description	Highlight
1		Why are we here (reason), who you are (identity)
2	Why are we here, and who you are	
3		
4		The Law. Moral, Civil, Ceremonial
5	The giving of the Law	
6		
7		
8	What you are to do; and remember to glorify God	
9	Law given not because of righteousness, but because of sin	
10	Basis of Law: Fear of the Lord	
11	Accomplishment of of Law: Love and Obedience	
12	Ceremonial Law: Do not be conformed with the worship pattern of the world	
13	Do not be enticed into worshipping other gods, even when told by a prophet. Test everything, hold on to what is good.	
14	How to keep your purity	
15	14:22-15:23 Financial and material faithfulness	
16	Ceremonial Law: Observing the feasts and Festivals	
17	16:18-18:22 Laws for governments: Judges, Kings, Prophets, Priests	
18		
19	National Security	
20		
21		
22		
23	Social Justice	
24	Civil & Criminal Laws	
25		
26		
27		
28	Blessing and curses based on obedience or disobedience	Renewal of Covenant
29	Renewal of the Covenant	
30	Walking in the Covenant	
31	Joshua annouced as successor	Process of Sucession
32	Public reading of the Law. The leaders to administer the Word.	
33		
34	Moses' final blessing before he dies	

Table 1: The Outline of Deuteronomy

II. Purpose of the Book:

- First generation of Israelites who went out of Egypt have mostly died, and the second generation (plus Joshua and Caleb) will be the ones who will enter the Promised Land.
- Many of the second generation did not experience first hand the events in Egypt when God powerfully defeated the Superpower of that time.
- Thus, Deuteronomy, which literally means “Second Law” or a Copy of the Law. Therefore, Deuteronomy recounts all that has happened; and gives once again the Law of God which is to characterize His people in the new land they are possessing.

III. Structure of the Book

- **The Book starts by retelling how they got here in the first place (Chp 1-3).** How they rebelled against God by distrusting Him when He said that He will give them the Promised Land; and how as a result they were punished to wander the desert for 40 years until the first generation have all died.

Moses then tells of how, in the midst of punishment, that God was still with them; helping them to win battles against stronger and more powerful enemies who would otherwise have decimated them in the desert. They were fortified, well-armed, and capable in battle. The Israelites were in temporary settlements, were not trained for war, and were much smaller in size and number. Their very survival is owed to the providence of God.

By doing this, Moses gave the people their identity. They were not strong or capable or wise. But who they were was defined by the God they serve. And because they serve a mighty God, they were able to win battles that were not possible to win.

- **The major part of the Book was dedicated to re-stating the Law of God, and teaching them the ordinances they were to follow (Chps 4-27).** These regulations were to be binding upon them as they profess themselves as people belonging to God. They therefore had to reflect God’s character and be holy in their conduct. At the very start of this law-giving, the purposes were clearly stated:

See, I have taught you decrees and laws as the LORD my God commanded me, so that you may follow them in the land you are entering to take possession of it. Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, “Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.” What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the LORD our God is near us whenever we pray to him? And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today? (Deut 4:5-8)

See, they were to be different, to be set apart so that they can be living witnesses to other nations; showing how great our God is. And we are to show this difference by showing how we have wisdom and understanding. But this wisdom and understanding is derived from two things: (1) because our God is near us and hears when we pray, (2) because the Law of God that He has given gives us this wisdom and understanding. “*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow His precepts have good understanding. To Him belongs eternal praise” (Ps 111:10)* is summary of what this is trying to accomplish. Because the Israelites acknowledged God, and know that they are accountable to Him in the way they live, they are thus guided by His precepts, and therefore have wisdom and understanding. But this is so, so that eternal praise be returned unto God alone.

God, and God alone is to be absolutely obeyed because He is the One and Only True God. And He taught this during the events in Egypt, when He lifted with His mighty hands and defeated all of the gods of Egypt in the plagues (see article: “Pharaoh and Egypt”). And He reminds the second generation of this again in **4:32-39**:

...Has anything so great as this ever happened, or has anything like it ever been heard of? Has any other people heard the voice of God speaking out of fire, as you have, and lived? Has any god ever tried to take for himself one nation out of another nation, by testings, by signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, or by great and awesome deeds, like all things the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes? You were shown these things so that you might know that the Lord is God; besides Him there is no other. Acknowledge and take heart this day that the Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth below. There is no other. Keep His decrees, which I am giving you today, so that it may go well with you and your children after you and that you may live long in the land the Lord your God gives you for all time. (See [Deut 4:32-39](#))

The basis for obeying the Law is God Himself. It is never meant for self-righteousness. The commandment God has been giving always state this: That they were to be holy because God who called them is holy (in Leviticus alone: [Lev 11:44-45](#); [19:2](#), [20:7](#); [20:26](#); [12:8](#)).

In giving of the Law, Moses first presented the why's.

- That the Law must be obeyed especially when they have entered the Promised Land and lack nothing. They are to remember that it was never because of their own merit but because of God's grace ([Chp 8](#)).
- That the law was given not because the people were righteous, but because they were sinful and stiff-necked. Therefore, righteousness will not come from the Law ([Chp 9](#))
- That the basis of the Law was the fear of God. That with the fear of God, they will obey the Law not for its own sake, but because they knew they were accountable to their Creator ([Chp 10](#))
- But that the accomplishment of the Law is their *Love of God*. This is consistent to what Paul said, that "*love is the fulfillment of the law*" ([Rom 13:10](#)). If we love God with all their hearts and minds and strength, we will do what He commands.

And then, Moses sets out the Law in this order:

- **Ceremonial Laws:** How to worship God according to His attributes; so that our worship may not be tainted with the pattern of this world (see [Rom 12:1-2](#)) and so that we live out our status as those being set apart for God ([Chp 12](#))

So that we are not enticed into worshipping other gods, no matter how convincing they may seem; and no matter how many false prophets they send. ([Chp 13](#)). They are therefore not to hold prophecies with contempt, but to test everything and hold on to what is good and reject every evil; and they should do this so that they will be kept pure and blameless (See [1 Thess 5:20-24](#)). Purity must be maintained ([Chp 14](#)).

The first test of their faithfulness will be that of Financial and Material faithfulness. Financial and material stability tends to decrease our reliance upon God, and therefore is the first test, of whether they will seek God first and foremost (comp [Matt 6:25-33](#)). ([Chp 14](#)).

They are then to observe the Feasts and Festivals, which are symbols for the history of Salvation (See appendix 1). They are to remember that these blessing and comfort is not the final rest; that they should seek after the Final Sabbath to come (See [Heb 4:8-10](#)).

- **Laws for present and future governments:** How to administer justice. In [16:18-22](#), laws for judges, kings, prophets, priests are given so as to ensure that they will not abuse their power but rather use it to serve God (note that the fact that there will be kings is predicted). In [Chp 19-20](#) we are instructed on what to do with regards to matters of national security. In [Chp 21-27](#) we read the applications of social justice.

- **After stating the Laws, God then renews His covenant with the people (Chp 28-30).** Covenant is how God always deals with His people. He is to be their God, they are to be His people obeying His Law in the Land that He gives. This is the building of the Kingdom of God where God reigns and rule as King. Therefore, we see in **Chp 28** the blessings and curses which are directly tied to obedience. In **Chp 29**, the Covenant is renewed. In **Chp 30**, they are instructed on how to walk in the Covenant.
- **The rest of the Book gives a narration as to how Joshua is prepared to succeed Moses as the leader of the nation (Chp 31-34).** Joshua is announced as the successor in **Chp 31**, and the public reading of the Law immediately follows; showing what he must rule under (**Chp 32**). Joshua is told of what lies ahead; that the israelite will rebel against God (**31:14-29**). Therefore he is to rule not for his own personal ambitions, but according to the plans and ordinances of God, who works all things for the good of those who love Him and have been called according to His purpose (see **Rom 8:28**). If we do not fix our eyes on this God, the author and perfecter of our faith, we will grow weary and lose heart (**Heb 12:2**).

We are then shown the great character of Moses. I have mentioned in “The Story of Moses” how Moses’ life would be a great tragedy to us. He wasted the first 40 years of his life by making one mistake, lived in the wilderness for 40 years with no direction or vision. And then apparently wasted the remaining 40 living with stiff-necked people, and was barred from entry because of a very understandable temper of having heard the same complaints over and over again for 39 years. And he cannot even taste the Land of Promise!

But what we see in the end of the Book of Numbers is the character of a great man. After he had laid down all the laws for the good of the people, he faithfully handed over his role as leader to Joshua. And instead of sulking in complaint, Moses burst out in a song praising God (**Chp 32**) and then blessed the tribes of Israel one by one. No bitterness, only joy. And we have also learned in “The Story of Moses” how this was because Moses, like every other man of faith, knew that this was not the true goal of His life. That He was looking forward to another city far more beautiful than Canaan, where he will finally be united with his God (see **Heb 11:13-16**). Although at face value it seemed like they did not receive the things promised, they were in fact longing for a heavenly country, a city of God.

With these testimony, Moses died (**Chp 34**); leaving behind an example for us to follow in the ages to come (see **Heb 13:7-8; 6:12**).

IV. Conclusion

Deuteronomy, then, is about how God as King calls His people into His Kingdom to live reflecting His character by obeying His Law. This never changes. The prophecy states this about the New Covenant we are living under:

“For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit in you and move you to follow My decrees and be careful to keep My laws. Then you will live in the land I gave your ancestors; you will be My people, and I will be your God” (Ez 36:24-28)

God calls us to be His people, consecrated to Him. He gathers us to Himself and purifies us so we may live in such a way that we reflect His holiness. Deuteronomy teaches us of this desire; this initiative from God. That He alone dispenses grace and mercy so we are able to approach Him. Would we, then, live a life of total worship unto Him? This is the question we must have as we study the Book of Deuteronomy. Soli Deo Gloria!

ⁱ Deffinbaugh, B (2004) *Learning to Love Leviticus*. Taken from <https://bible.org/seriespage/learning-love-leviticus>