

Deuteronomy

Lesson #1, Introduction to Deuteronomy

1. Information about Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy is the last of the five books of the _____. The word *Deuteronomy* means _____. It comes from the Greek text known as the _____. The Hebrew name for Deuteronomy means _____, which comes from the first two Hebrew words of the book. Why is the Hebrew title a better description of the book than the Greek title? See Deuteronomy 1:1.

2. The purpose of Deuteronomy

What is the purpose of the book according to Deuteronomy 1:5? How does the following description aptly sum up the book of Deuteronomy? *New generation; new leader; new land.*

3. Background leading up to Deuteronomy gleaned from “Talk Through the Bible” by Kenneth Boa

Genesis: This book provides the foundation for the entire Bible in its history and theology. Its first eleven chapters give a sweeping survey of early history: God's work of creation, the fall of man, the judgment of the Flood, and the spread of the nations. There is a sudden shift in Chapter 12 as God singles out one man through whom He would bring salvation and bless all nations. The remainder of Genesis traces the story of Abraham and his descendants Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.

Exodus: Jacob's descendants have moved from Canaan to Egypt and are suffering under the bondage of a new pharaoh. After a period of four hundred thirty years they cry to GOD for deliverance. God raises up Moses to stand before Pharaoh and demand that he let the Israelites be set free. Finally, after God devastates Egypt with the 10 plagues, the Israelites leave Egypt, cross through the Red Sea, and journey to Mount Sinai. There God reveals His covenant law and gives them the pattern for the building of the tabernacle.

Leviticus: Now that the people have been redeemed and delivered, they must be set apart to God to live holy lives. God gives them instructions for the sacrificial system and the priesthood. The remainder of Leviticus teaches the people how to become ceremonially and morally pure. The emphasis is on sanctification, service, and obedience.

Numbers: Still at Mount Sinai, the people receive additional directions before proceeding to the promised land of Canaan. When they are on the verge of entering the land, their faith crumbles and God disciplines them by making them wander in the wilderness until the disbelieving generation dies out. The new generation then reaches Moab, the doorway to the land of Canaan. It is here that God begins to instruct the people who are about to inherit the land.

Deuteronomy: Moses is at the end of his life and Joshua has been appointed as his successor. In his farewell messages to the generation that grew up in the wilderness, Moses reminds them of God's dealings in the past, reviews the need for righteousness and integrity in the present, and reveals what will happen in the near and distant future. Moses then blesses the people and views the Promised Land from Mount Nebo before his death.

4. Covenants discussed in Deuteronomy

Abrahamic Covenant – see Gen. 12:2, 15:5. The covenant would stand regardless of the behavior of the recipient. Abraham's offspring would become a great nation. Through him God would bless all the families of the earth. He also promised the land as an eternal possession.

Sinaitic Covenant – see Ex. 19:5, 6. To be God's special nation required obedience to God who had freed them from slavery. Obedience results in blessings; disobedience results in chastisement.

Deuteronomy is a covenant renewal document. The covenant text itself is greatly expanded and more detailed than the covenant document given at Sinai. It follows a pattern known as a *suzerain-vassal* treaty in which God is the covenant initiator—the great king; while Israel is the covenant recipient—the vassal. Because God is the covenant initiator, He determined the parameters of acceptable behavior for the recipients – Israel. As recipients they are called to accept the covenant as God offers it, to keep it as God demands, and to receive what God decrees in accordance with their adhering to the covenant treaty.

The unilateral promise and covenant commitment made to the patriarchs was that they would sire a nation that would be a servant to the Sovereign God, a servant charged with the privilege and responsibility of bridging the gap between that transcendent Lord of creation and the creatures in His image whom He proposed to restore to the purposes for which He had brought them into existence. Roy B. Zuck, ed. "Biblical Theology of the Old Testament"

5. The purpose of the law

The law was not designed to regulate human behavior for the world at large, but to provide legal, moral, and religious guidelines for a *special people* chosen for a *special task*. The law is not a means of salvation, but contains instructions of how to live.

“At least four times in the New Testament it is clearly stated that the believer is not under the law (Rom. 6:14-15; Gal. 5:18; 1 Cor. 9:20). The means of salvation for men in all ages has been faith. The Old Testament saint was never saved by law nor can one be saved by law in this dispensation (Rom. 3:20). The Old Testament saint was regenerated and justified by faith as is the one who receives Christ today. *The difference then is not in salvation, but the means by which one’s conduct is governed.* In other words, in the Old Testament period fellowship with God was regulated by specific deeds and prohibitions accompanied with a series of checks and penalties. This was designed to protect Israel from the idolatry that surrounded her and provide the way for the appearance of Messiah. When Christ came He brought a new era of grace and truth (Jn. 1:17). *For the believer the law is nonetheless revealing and instructive. It gives insight into the mind of God and helps one to determine what standards of holiness He expects of those who follow Him.*” – John J. Davis, from his commentary on “Exodus, Moses and the Gods of Egypt”

6. Studying the Old Testament

What do the Scriptures themselves have to say about the usefulness of studying the Old Testament? See Rom. 15:4; I Cor.10:1-13; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17.

Understanding progressive revelation (that doctrines were slowly revealed as the Scriptures were written) and the dangers of *eisegesis* (placing a meaning upon the text which the original author never intended it to mean). *“One does not read the New Testament back into the Old Testament but recognize that they are parts of the same revelation by one God. Remember that nothing in the Old Testament can or will in any way contradict the New Testament.”*

- a. **Principles to apply when studying the Bible:**
 - i. *observation* - What does the passage say? You must ask: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? This step must always come first, anytime you study the Bible.
 - ii. *interpretation* - What did the original author intend for the original audience to understand by what he wrote?
 - iii. *application* - When studying the Old Testament, you must look to find principles that transcend time, culture, and circumstances. Once you discover the timeless principles, then you are ready to ask, “How do these principles apply to me personally?” What truths can I put into practice and how? What changes should I make in my life?

Deuteronomy is the clarion call of God to His children to live obediently before Him. The book reminds us that we must choose to do things God's way, not our own. Each moment of every day brings us to that crossroads of decision. Am I willing to obey God? Do I yearn to please God by obeying His word? Is my heart wholly devoted to Him?

YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL AND WITH ALL YOUR MIGHT. DEUTERONOMY 6:5