

THE BIBLE

in a nutshell

Deuteronomy



—by Peter Hammond



The Law and the Grace of God

Note that God delivered the children of Israel from slavery in Egypt and brought them through the Red Sea first, before giving them His Law and instructing them how to live. This is the pattern throughout the Bible. We are not saved by our good works, but unto good works. The Law does not save us, the Law is the schoolmaster that leads us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

Moses failed to enter the land; Joshua led God's people into the Promised Land. The Law (represented by Moses) can lead us to Christ, but only Christ (represented by Joshua leading the people into the Promise) can save us. Salvation is by the grace of God alone, received by faith alone. Only after we are saved can we, out of gratitude, and by the grace and power of God's Holy Spirit, live in accordance with God's Law.

The origin of Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy comes from two Greek words: 'Deutero', meaning 'second' and 'Nomos', meaning 'Law'. Deuteronomy is the second giving of the Law.

"...What does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul." Deut 10:12

Deuteronomy is the fifth book of Moses, the final book of the Pentateuch. After forty years of wilderness wanderings, with the exception of Moses, Joshua and Caleb, every adult over the age of twenty, who came out of Egypt and crossed the Red Sea, had died (because of their unbelief and disobedience).

to enter the Promised Land. Moses had forfeited his right to enter the land because he had disobeyed God concerning the provision of water from the Rock. This then is Moses' farewell address: He reminds them of their history, reiterates the Law of God, and warns them of the consequences of disobeying the Word of God.

A new generation of Israelites

Now a new generation had arisen, trained, by instruction and discipline. They were on the East bank of the Jordan River, poised

To love God is to obey Him

The word 'hear' is repeated fifty times in Deuteronomy. 'Do', 'keep' and 'observe', 177 times. Deuteronomy commands us to

hear God's Word and to **heed** His warnings. Love is mentioned 31 times. To love the Lord is to keep His Laws. Love is the fulfilment of the Law. To love God is to be loyal to God and to keep His Law.

The Law given through Moses is unique. It was the first time in history that a Common Law was given to people of all classes, including women and

What the Law stipulates

- Child sacrifice is condemned. All the high places, where the Canaanites sacrificed babies, were to be destroyed
- Idolatry, witchcraft, necromancy and consulting the dead, are forbidden
- Blasphemy, misusing the Name of the Lord and uttering false prophecy are capital offences

- During war, soldiers must not cut down fruit trees. The environment is to be protected
- Sanitation is to be strictly observed
- Animals are to be treated well. No one should muzzle an ox, while it is treading out the grain. A neighbour, whose animal has strayed, is to be assisted.

The character of Moses shines out with great dignity in Deuteronomy. We see him at the end of a long life, still vigorously leading the people, with no bitterness in his heart.

children. The same Law applies to everybody. The Lordship of God in all areas of life is applied.

The Law is for our own good. It protects and blesses us

A re-occurring phrase throughout the book is: "that it may be well with you, that you may live a long life in the land." God wants His people healthy and happy, and so He gave us the Laws that will protect and bless us.

- If a murder occurs and the perpetrator cannot be found, the elders are to come to the gates of the city and swear that they had nothing to do with this shedding of innocent blood
- Murder, kidnapping and rape must be punished with the death penalty. Stubborn, rebellious and violent youth commit capital crimes. There is no provision for imprisonment
- Property crimes are to be dealt with by restitution
- Inflation and usury are forbidden. Financial transactions are to be made in terms of honest weights and measures

What we learn from Moses

When Moses delivers his final address to the new generation of Israelites entering the Promised Land, he is reminding them not to forget what had preceded their final journey into Canaan. God's people are warned not to forget their history. They are to remember the lessons of history. Be warned of the severe consequences of breaking God's Laws. Be thankful for God's mercy and grace in provision, guidance and protection. The faithlessness of their parents is condemned. They lost their faith and therefore they lost the land. If you keep your faith, you will keep the land. Be faithful to God.



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Jesus in Deuteronomy

Jesus is the Prophet foretold by Moses. "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from...your fellow Israelites. You must listen to Him. The LORD said to me: "I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites, and I will put my words in His mouth..." Deut 18:15-18.

Moses was a type of Christ. The hand of God preserved his life as a baby, in his years of silent training, in his willingness to leave the palace of a king to deliver his people from bondage, in his meekness, his faithfulness, in his work as a mediator between God and the people, in his communion with God face to face; in completing the work God has sent him to do, in all these he was a picture of the Son of Man who was to come.

- Charity to the poor is commanded. Sheaves of corn are to be left in the corner of the fields for the poor
- Body piercing and transvestitism is detestable to God.
- When a king comes to the throne, he is to write out the Laws of God in his own handwriting and read them regularly
- Kings are instructed not to have multiple wives, nor to accumulate extravagant wealth.

The Lord is holy

- There is strict warning against syncretism. No mixing of seeds is allowed. A donkey and an ox may not be yoked together.

days were to be established, including Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles.

God is interested in the details

Deuteronomy makes it clear that God is interested in every aspect of our lives. There is a right way to do everything. God wants us to be right in every area of our lives. We are to respect God, His Name and His Word. We are to respect our parents, people and property. The sanctity of life and the sanctity of marriage are to be protected.



Deuteronomy is quoted ninety times in the New Testament showing its importance to the Early Church.

Clothes of wool and linen may not be mixed. God is a holy God

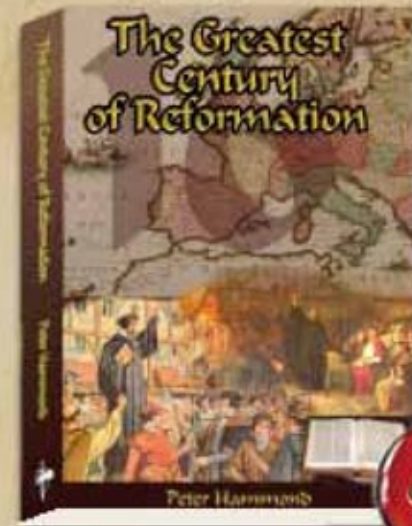
- There are strict laws against theft and moving of boundary markers
- A Sabbath Day rest is to be observed by all. Servants and animals are also to enjoy one day rest out of seven
- To help the people to remember the great works of God in history, feasts and holy

Blessings and curses

Obedience and righteousness will bring blessing. Disobedience and wickedness will bring a curse.

The whole history of Israel, and indeed every nation, can be seen in the light of the blessings of obedience and curses of disobedience recorded in Deuteronomy 28.

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EST. MAY 1995

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Oppression and exile

Their occupation of the Promised Land was conditional on whether they obeyed the Covenant required by God. When the children of Israel rebelled against God, and engaged in immorality, injustice, and idolatry, foreigners invaded and oppressed them and later they were exiled by the Assyrians and Babylonians.

The land to be possessed

Each generation must renew their Covenant with Almighty God. Moses ensured that the new generation were informed about their past and ready to face the future. A key phrase in Deuteronomy, which occurs forty times, is: "the land the Lord Your God gives you." Psalm 24 states that "the earth is the Lord's and everything in it." Ultimately God owns all the land. He gives it to whomever He wishes. In Acts 17, Paul, in Athens, explains that God determines how much space and how much time each nation is given on earth.

A second key phrase in Deuteronomy is: "go in and possess the land." Everything we receive from God is a gift, but we have to take it. Salvation is a free gift from God, but we must work out our Salvation with fear and trembling, to make our call and election sure.

Also notice that possessing the land required much hard work, struggle and warfare. In every way the Exodus from Egypt and the struggle for the Promised Land are spiritual lessons illustrating our adventure of Discipleship.

The summary of the Law

When our Lord was asked to summarise the Law of Moses, He used the Words from Deuteronomy: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength." And He quoted Leviticus: "Love your neighbour as yourself."

Choose this day

In the first four books of the Pentateuch, God chooses Israel. Now in Deuteronomy, He is commanding Israel to choose Him. ■

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