

# Deuteronomy

# LAW II

THE NEXT GENERATION  
(DEUTERONOMY)

GOD'S GOAL = Loving Fellowship with humans  
GOD'S METHOD = Loving Discipline of a Father

ch. 1-3  
How IT WAS  
The history of God's fatherhood

ch. 4-26  
How IT SHOULD BE  
The covenant (contract) to command - universal  
The rest - contextual

ch. 27-34  
How IT COULD BE  
Blessings or curses - you choose!  
Think children with liberty

PREPARE!  
REMEMBER!

2nd generation  
of FREED SLAVES

circumcise  
your  
HEART  
Deut 10:16

VALLEY OF CURSES

(The way of the Canaanites)  
Promised Land is not a REWARD FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS  
IT IS A VEHICLE OF JUDGEMENT ON GRAYM  
(Israel could be here if not careful!)

YAHWEH

- one God -
- without form -
- He is
- a being all -
- near -

LIVING IN FATHER'S FELLOWSHIP ETERNALLY

Dr. Scott 20 John 10:10 JOHN 17:3

Monday: Deuteronomy 5-9

Tuesday: Deuteronomy 10-14

Wednesday: Deut. 15-20

Thursday: Deuteronomy 21-25

Friday: Deuteronomy 26-28

## Introduction

### Deuteronomy: A Matter of Heart and Soul

The book of Deuteronomy is Moses' final sermon before he dies; his Swan song. As the scene fades up from black on the opening page of Deuteronomy we see a 120 year old Moses standing in front of the children of the freed slaves. It has been 40 years since the people who had been miraculously delivered from Pharaoh's hand had rebelled for the last time against God at Kadesh-Barnea. When the 10 spies said that they did not think the Israelites could defeat the "Anakites" (the giants) God punished their disbelief and made them wander in the desert for 40 years until every last adult of that generation had died off.

Moses himself had dishonored God and had been denied access to the Promised Land. Beside him, now, stood his successor, Joshua, standing ready to lead the next generation into the land that God had promised to Abraham so many centuries earlier.

Imagine what Moses must have been feeling and thinking as he looked out over that vast crowd. Before him stood the future of God's people. He remembered the mistakes their parents had made and the terrible consequences they had suffered. He knew the temptations that lay ahead of these kids. This second generation had never known anything other than the manna of God for food. They had never known any life other than the barren desert soil crunching under their perpetually nomadic existence. Moses knew that as soon as they crossed over the Jordan they would be exposed to potential distractions that could derail their lives. They would own fertile farmland with fresh water that could cause them to forget the true supplier of their needs. They would be exposed to cultures that were saturated with a pulsating, sensuous, mysterious pagan worship that enticed the eye, the flesh, and the ego.

It must have been like a father who is driving his child to college for the first time. What do you say in the final moments of that drive? You know that both in the classroom and in the dorm room that precious child will be exposed to ideas and situations that they had never dreamed of before. What words of wisdom and words of warning can you give to that innocent child? Moses was faced with the same situation. He had one last chance to give his words of wisdom and warning to his children before they crossed over to the land of Canaan.

As you read this book, try to hear it through the ears of this young generation, and also try to see it through the eyes of the soon-departing Moses.

One of the best ways to summarize Deuteronomy is to focus on its key words.

## Heart and Soul:

9 times throughout Moses' sermon, in key points, he reminds the people to love God with their heart and soul. The word "heart" is the Hebrew word *leb* which is translated both "heart" and "mind" in different places. The *leb* was the human center of the person. It was the mind, the will, the place from which all behavior is directed. The word "soul" is the Hebrew word *nephesh* and refers to the deep inner, spiritual core of the person. Here is where the emotional, non-rational center of the person dwells. As 21st century students of psychological types we may translate this phrase, "Love God with the full Thinking/Logic and the Feeling/Intuitive aspects of your inner self." More simply put, we can translate it, "Love God with your whole self, inside and out, not just a feeling, and not just in following the rules."

## Remember (Don't Forget)

The human tendency is to forget. No matter how difficult times may be in a person's life, a few months of prosperity can make the pain and suffering disappear into a foggy, distant, unreal dream. Part of the purpose for the strictness of the Law and the rituals in it was to force the people to not forget their history and the one who is their deliverer.

## Love

The law of God, as Jesus later taught us, can be summed up in the word love. We are to love God and love others. In the midst of all the details regarding boundary stones, infectious skin diseases, and sacrificial festivals, don't forget that the heart

of the law is love. God does not want our external behavior, He wants our heart. When the heart is surrendered to God's kind of love, then the behavior will naturally flow.

## Serve

We are called to serve God. The only way we can love is to remove ourselves from the throne of our self-made kingdom and acknowledge that there is only one King and only one Kingdom. We exist to bring honor and glory to the King. That King loves us, and as soon as we submit to Him He will fill us with meaning and will overflow in our lives with joy.

## Obey

The love of God is a very abstract concept. The Kingdom of God -- living in relational unity with God in a spiritual reality -- is a very abstract concept that is perpetually drowned out by the distractions of the physical world in which we live. God has created a path of law and the spiritual disciplines that we can follow that will open the gate to the Kingdom of God. However, this path is counter-intuitive to our physical, fleshly nature and is very difficult to begin.

In the movie, *The Karate Kid*, the young man sought the mentorship of the karate master, Mr. Miagi. The boy wanted to learn karate, but Mr. Miagi told him to wax cars. Mr. Miagi looked him in the eye and said, "Do you want to learn? Then you obey. Now, wax car." The boy did not know why he was waxing cars and sanding decks, he only knew that he wanted to learn karate, that his master told him to do this, and that, if he did not obey, he would no longer be under the mentoring of the master. In the moment of waxing he was frustrated, but he had to simply obey.

That is how it is with God. He has given us principles of truth and love. It is not ours to question, but to obey.

## Blessings and Curses:

The language of blessings and curses in Deuteronomy are very foreign to our ears. It makes it seem like God's Kingdom is based on a system of good works wherein one must work hard in order to earn passage into the Kingdom. The following clip deals with this nicely.

*Typical of ancient Near Eastern covenant documents, Deuteronomy contains...blessings and curses promised on the basis of Israel's response of obedience. This ...furnishes the basis on which the prophets preached repentance to later generations of Israel (e.g., Amos 4:6-13). As testified by the arguments of Job's friends, however (cf. Job 8:3-7, 20-22; 11:13-20; 15:20-35), the corporate and national focus of these promises was often missed, even in biblical times. The blessings and curses came to be removed from their covenant context and were applied contractually to individuals, so that wealth was regarded as symptomatic of righteousness, and suffering as consequential of sin. Jesus flatly declared this to be false (John 9:3; cf. Matt. 19:23-25). Although immeasurable blessings of every kind were (and are) promised to men and women of faith, receipt of material blessings was not necessarily assured in this life (unless they were specifically promised to an individual, as they were to Abraham). Material as well as spiritual blessings in this life were being promised in Deut. 28 only to the righteous nation of Israel.<sup>1</sup>*

### (Footnotes)

<sup>1</sup> New Geneva study Bible. 1997, c1995 (electronic ed.) (Dt 28:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

# Monday: Don't Forget: Generational Covenant

Deuteronomy 6:1-12

Why are the commands being given to the people?  
(hint: the phrase "so that" is the indicator that the  
"why" question is being addressed.)

How are the people supposed to love God?

What is the role of the parent in the communication of  
God's commands to the nation?

What "distractions" await the people in the new land?  
(vv. 10-11)

What effect might these distractions have on the  
people? (v. 12)

## Food for thought:

Recently Mel Gibson's movie The Passion of Christ came out in theatres. It was a brutal film to watch as the stark reality of Jesus' torturous execution was painfully and realistically portrayed in a vivid, front-row seat perspective. Why did Mel make this movie?

As I watched The Passion I was immediately reminded of my emotional reaction to another film made by Steven Spielberg, called Saving Private Ryan. This film depicted the brutal reality of World War II as it took you into the first-person perspective of a soldier storming Normandy beach. The grisly reality of that film left me sick to my stomach and somber for days.

Why did these men make these movies? Were they sensationalists out to entice the consumer's blood thirst and rack up a box office jackpot? I don't think so. I believe these movies were made for a simple reason...so we would not forget. As a post Viet Nam, Gen Xr, I have never known war. War for me was Desert Storm where we watched from the comfort of our living rooms as smart missiles methodically wipe out cities from a distance. From our perspective, it was no different than watching any other type of TV.

I believe Spielberg made Saving Private Ryan so that my generation would know the truth and would have a greater respect for those men who gave their lives, and their youth to fight for freedom.

In the same way, and at an infinitely deeper level of intensity, Gibson made The Passion. We, as comfortable Americans, have woefully sanitized and intellectualized the crucifixion of Jesus. We can tend to forget the truth of the pain that Jesus suffered. So,

a film like The Passion, as difficult as it is to watch, is a helpful reminder of the truth about Jesus.

Moses knew that the people who stood on the east side of the Jordan were no different than you and I. It didn't matter that they had eaten miracle bread their entire life or had seen the water miraculously gush forth from the rock, or had been following a supernatural pillar of cloud and fire through the wilderness. Those things would fade into a misty memory as soon as the juice of a newly harvested cluster of grapes gushed between their toes in their very own winepress. It would not take long before the prosperity of a land flowing with milk and honey would tempt them to forget the source of their abundance and slip into pride, arrogance, and the pursuit of self-gratification.

Notice where the focus of Moses' instruction was targeted. The weight of responsibility for the proper instruction in God's Law for God's people lay with the parent. The priests were not called to teach the people about the Law. The priests were only to manage the sacrifices. There were no religious schools established to teach children how to "do it right." Those came much later. God's original plan for the transmission of His Law and the preservation of the purity of the nation was to that of parental life education.

Parents, every moment of your life you are teaching your children about God, whether you know it or not. If you are always gone and are working three jobs to "provide for your family" then you are teaching them that God is an absent God. If you are bitter and angry towards others, then you are teaching them that God is a bitter and angry God. If you are humble,

compassionate, and willing to seek forgiveness and extend forgiveness, then you are teaching them that God is a compassionate and forgiving God.

You've probably heard the old cliché that more is caught than taught. That is very true. It doesn't matter what you say *about* God, or what the Bible lesson is in Sunday School. The message the children hear about God is what they see in the adults around them. In our church communities we have a very precious and important opportunity and responsibility. Even if you don't have a child of your own, you may be in the presence of children in the church. They are watching you. They watch how you interact with the group. They watch what you do when you think no one is looking.

As adults it is our job to teach the children about the Kingdom of God through our lifestyle. Why? So that they don't forget. As is usually the case, this comes back to the overflow principle. If *you* are living in the Kingdom, and *you* are not forgetting, then your behavior will teach the children about the truth of the Kingdom of God.

So, as we participate in the spiritual disciplines of daily scripture reading, prayer, weekly gathering, seasonal celebrations, let's realize that these things are in our lives to keep the reality of God's Kingdom in the forefront of our minds and hearts and to spill over into our children. Don't forget.

## Tuesday: A Circumcised Heart

Deuteronomy 10:14-22

What part of the person is to be circumcised in this passage? Why?

How is God's character described in this passage?

What is important to God?

What is expected of His people?

## Food for thought:

When you hear the word “circumcised” what comes to your mind? If you are a man, you may think, “Ouch!” If you are a woman you may think, “here is another example of the male exclusivity of the Bible. I’m a woman, therefore I cannot be circumcised, and therefore I must not count.” These reactions are natural, for the term circumcision is a very physical reality that can only happen to males. It was an external symbol of God’s covenant to Abraham.

When Jesus walked the streets of Jerusalem, the reactions mentioned above were the predominant view of circumcision among the Jews of His day. To be circumcised meant that you were part of an elite class of humanity that were the “chosen ones.” It was believed that God loved the circumcised, but He hated the non-circumcised. Only men could be circumcised, so women, must be nothing. Women were only good for doing men’s dirty work and bringing a male heir into the world to carry on the “blessing” of the covenant and the family name into the next generation. The problem is that the people had externalized the Law and made it all about the physical realities of cutting off a foreskin, killing an animal, washing your hands before a meal, and not walking too far on the Sabbath day. Jesus’ message turned that upside down.

The question has been asked, “why did Jesus condemn the teachers of the Law for following the Law when it was God that gave them the Law? It seemed as if God is punishing them for doing the very thing that He told them to do.” This is one of the biggest criticisms that non-Christians have about Christianity, and one confusion that many Christians have about the Bible. At first glance this seems like

a legitimate concern about the nature of God and the continuity of the Bible. As we have been reading through the Old Testament Law, it is easy to see how the people could get caught up in the minutia of the Law, because there is a great deal of minutia!

That is why today's passage is so important. Although God did establish a multitude of external rules and regulations upon His people, this passage give us a glimpse of the eternal, spiritual truth behind the external Law of Moses. God doesn't care about the state of your foreskin (or lack thereof). He cares about the state of your heart. (Guess what ladies, you've got one of those.) To have a circumcised heart is to have a heart that has had the distractions of the physicality of life -- pride, greed, indulgence, shame, and blame -- cut away in a spirit of consecration and devotion to the eternal kingdom of God. A circumcised heart is one that has taken its focus off of the circumstances of life and has placed it on the creator and sustainer of life.

If our circumcision were limited to that of a male organ then, yes, it is an exclusive, male-Jew only club where nobody else can get in. Praise God, that in the center of Moses' Law itself, God reveals to us the intent of the Law. God loves the whole world and longs for the "alien" to enter into His covenant of love and freedom, to have their hearts circumcised -- male and female, rich and poor, old and young, black white or green. All are welcome to come and lay their whole heart before the knife of truth, be cut free from the bondage of the flesh, and enter into the life-giving presence of God.

## Wednesday: Destroy Them!

Deuteronomy 20:16-18

What attitudes and actions were the people to take towards the nations of Canaan?

Why were the people to do this?

## Food for thought:

Verses 16-18 are a reiteration of the command Moses gave earlier in Deuteronomy 7. In both passages, God commands His people to utterly destroy the Canaanite people. That means that the men of Israel were to swoop into the land of Canaan and mercilessly kill all men, women, and children that were living in that region. How does that make you feel about God?

If you have not already encountered this in your dealings with skeptics, you will discover that these passages are one of the biggest turn-offs for people in regard to God and the Bible. "How could God order the murder of children?" "My God would never annihilate a whole race. Isn't that genocide? Isn't that what Hitler did?" Are you prepared to answer these very real objections to the validity of the scripture and the God that it represents?

Here are some things to keep in mind:

1. This was God's war, not the Israelites. God was using Israel as His physical device to go to war against the Canaanites.
2. The annihilation of the Canaanites was a punishment from God for sin, not a cultural preference on the part of the Israelites.
3. The Canaanites had had 400 years to repent from their sin. 400 years seems like a very gracious waiting period and window of opportunity. This was the day of reckoning.
4. God wiped out all people in the flood. It is part of God's nature to destroy sin.

5. This “holy war” was a one-time-only mandate, and not a justification for any country to annihilate their enemies for their own selfish gain. In other words, there are no real “holy wars” today.
6. God was protecting His people because He knew that if the Canaanites, being thoroughly given over to paganism, were spared and allowed to infiltrate the ranks of the Israelites, then their idolatry would spread like a cancer and destroy the nation.

As Christians we can learn a very important lesson from these two passages on war. As we have discussed before, Israel’s journey from Egypt to the Promised Land can be easily seen as an allegory for every person’s spiritual journey to the heart of God. The Promised Land represents our heart. In our natural self we are infected with the sin, shame, blame, greed, lust, etc. that was the result of our separation from God. God’s desire for us is to be set free from all that garbage and to live in an undistracted, focused existence in His Presence. God’s instructions to the Israelites on how to wage war on Canaan will be helpful for us on how to wage war on the strongholds of sin that are in our heart.

1. Don’t think you can do the fighting. The Canaanites are giants and, if you are operating in your own strength, will clean your clock. Let God go ahead of you. It is His battle not yours.
2. Obedience to God’s plan is the key to your successful victory. Don’t focus on your enemy (don’t fixate on your addiction or chant “I will break this habit, I will break this habit”). Focus

on the life-giving truth of God's word, love Him and obey His word, and that will insure your victory.

3. Don't leave any survivors. As we will see with Israel, they did not obey God and allowed some of the nations to remain. As Moses predicted, this mistake came back to bite them in the behind. In our hearts it is easy to allow God to come in and wipe out the really ugly sins. Who wants those anyway? But there are some sins that are very beautiful. We like them. They make us feel special and bring us comfort when things get difficult. As difficult as it is, we must allow God to utterly destroy those "cherished sins" because, if we do not, they will wrap their spidery roots around the depths of our heart and completely short-circuit our relationship with God. It is better to let God wipe it out now than to have to go through the intense open-heart, root-canalish surgery of getting it out later.

What is your cherished sin that is begging you to stay in the land of your heart? Don't let it fool you. It doesn't love you, it only wants to devour your soul. Let God flush it out with the truth of his grace.

## Thursday: The Poor

Deuteronomy 24:17-22

What are the three kinds of people that are identified as in need of special care in these verses?

What is the reason given for why the Israelites were to treat these people this way?

How were these people to be taken care of?  
(vv. 19-22)

## Food for thought:

Most Christians would acknowledge, in word at least, that helping the poor is an important thing to do. Yet, very few are involved in the endeavor. Why is this?

Perhaps one reason there seems to be a general sense of apathy in the church toward the poor is because there is a confusion about who the poor really are. Many kind-hearted people have become cynical and skeptical of those who are in need and asking for help. They ask, "How can we know if a person is in need or is just looking for a free ride?" When we look at the issue from one perspective we can observe that, compared to 2/3 of the world's population, there are very few really poor people in our country. Even the most destitute of our citizens have more than the poor of those impoverished nations. Then there is the issue of the pan-handler. In the past decade the average urban commuter has become familiar with, and even jaded to the person standing on the street corner with a sign inscribed, "will work for food." Is this legitimate need? Are we supposed to shell out cash to every person we see that is begging for money? How can we know? How can we truly help the poor?

One key to understanding this issue is to understand the truth of what the Bible says about the poor. Today's passage is representative of the many passages that deal with helping the poor, both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. In these passages there are typically three kinds of people identified as those in need: The alien, the fatherless, and the widow. What do these three types of people have in common? They don't have any rights, because they don't own land. Only Jewish men could own land at that time in history. The father of the house was the centerpiece of the culture. The woman

and child was protected under the man's estate, but if the man died, the woman and child were left in the cold. In the event of the man's death, the wife and children would be transferred to a relative's estate and would be cared for by that relative. If there were no relatives, then that woman and child would fall under the definition of today's passage and be considered true widows and orphans.

The Alien "is one whose permanent residence is in another nation, in contrast with the foreigner whose stay is only temporary...The Israelites themselves were sojourners in Egypt (Gn. 15:13; Ex. 22:21; Dt 10:19; 23:7). Indeed, this fact was to govern their attitude to the sojourners in Israel." <sup>1</sup>

The key here is that the poor and needy that fell under the protection of the Law were those people who, in that culture, were not able to help themselves. The community of Israel was to always keep these people in mind. When they harvested their fields, they were to go through only once and leave the pieces they missed behind so that the needy could come and harvest the rest for themselves. What would that look like in our non-agricultural society? How are we to help those in need?

In our culture everyone has the opportunity to work. If a person can work, then they should. One way that the church can help is for business owners to provide opportunities to employ people and to train them in employable skills.

A church should set aside a majority of its financial resources to help those who are truly in need to have food and find shelter.

The biggest aspect of the Old Testament Law, and the indictment against Israel throughout its history was regarding justice for the needy. Society tends to look down upon the needy and abuse them or take advantage of them. One important way that the church can be involved is to be aware of the programs in the city that provide holistic care for the needy and to partner with those programs.

Christian lawyers can donate their time to be an advocate for the rights of the poor.

Within the church, there should be no one who is poor. Everyone who can work, should work. Everyone who can't work, should be cared for by the community with food and shelter.

Poverty is a big issue in our world. Today, ask God to search your heart and expose to you a way that you could be more involved in providing care for the alien, the widow, and the orphan.

## Friday: Blessings and Curses

Deuteronomy 27-28

Which tribes were supposed to stand on Mt. Ebal?

What were they supposed to do?

Which tribes were supposed to stand on Mt. Gerazim?

What were they supposed to do?

## Food for thought:

The term “blessing” is one that gets thrown around quite a bit in our Christian culture. When is it most often used? When we get a big raise, or the loan for a new house comes through, we say that God really “blessed” us. Does that mean that if the job had not gone through that you were cursed by God? Is physical and financial prosperity the evidence of God’s blessing on our lives and painful suffering or disappointment the evidence of His curse?

Where does this kind of thinking come from? Honestly, it comes from the book of Deuteronomy. Throughout Moses’ sermon, he continually reminds the nation that if they will obey God they will be blessed and if they disobey God, they will be cursed.

If you are a “good evangelical protestant” the language of blessings and cursings may seem anti-biblical to you. You have been well-versed on the evils of a “works based” salvation. You have been taught that God is not standing in Heaven with a scale on which hangs a basket on one side labeled “good works” and a basket on the other labeled “evil deeds.” The criteria for entrance into Heaven is not based on which basket is heaviest--good heavier=you’re in; bad heavier= you’re out. It doesn’t work like that. You have been taught that Paul told us that it is by grace that we have been saved, through faith, not of works, so that no one can boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Rest assured, you have been taught well. It *is* by grace that we have been saved. That being said, however, how do we then deal with passages like Deuteronomy 27-28? In these passages, and truly, in the very heart of the message of Deuteronomy, it

seems as if God is saying, "Do good and live, do evil and die." How do we deal with this paradigm?

The blessings and curses can seem a somewhat crude way to motivate the people to keep the covenant. They do affirm important things, however. The nations around Israel believed in an unpredictable universe, in which many gods exerted influence on events, and could do so arbitrarily, without moral principle. Israel, in covenant with God, knew that He alone controlled events, and that He would always act in accordance with His revealed character. The curses show a knowledge, perhaps a fear, of the worst things that can happen to human societies. But the fact that it is God who rules over all eventualities in human life allows for a kind of hope which was impossible for those who did not know Him.

The motivating use of reward and punishment is not confined to the OT, but rooted also in the teaching of Jesus (Mt. 5:17-30; 25:31-46).<sup>2</sup>

Also, as was already cited in the introduction, the blessings and curses of Deuteronomy were spoken to the nation as a whole. They were not individual contracts of direct cause and effect relationships between each man's "righteous acts" and God's "fiscal blessing." The stories of Joseph, Job, Ecclesiastes, Jesus, and the apostles reaffirm that righteousness does not automatically insure physical/material prosperity.

The blessings and curses were more general truisms that needed to be driven home into the hearts of the people. If the nation will follow God, it will go

well for them. (of course it will, because God's Law was designed to keep them safe and healthy and protected from corruption). If they did not obey God's Law then they would open themselves up to the very infectious diseases (both physical and spiritual) against which the Law was designed to defend. The blessings and curses can be thought of more as a natural law of cause and effect as opposed to the arbitrary acts of a vindictive God sending down lightning bolts to punish the disobedient.

If God were all about cursing the sinner, then the human story would have been over with Adam and Eve. They would have been destroyed at the crunch of the fruit and it would have been lights out. Instead, God has established an everlasting covenant with Abraham which He will fulfill no matter how wicked the covenant people become.

Let's remember that God loves us and that His laws have been established for our benefit, to create space in our lives in which the Kingdom of God can flourish. They are not oppressive, rather they are truly liberating. Let's also remember that the true blessing of God is a relationship with Him. It is in the spirit of this blessing that James could say, *"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, when you suffer various trials."* Let us live in the blessing of obedience today.