



## Week Five Deuteronomy

### Place in the Pentateuch

The Pentateuch consists of the first five books of the Bible. In Jewish synagogues these books are called the Torah and are written on scrolls and are kept in an ornate cupboard. They are known by the first words you see as the scroll is unrolled. The whole Torah (meaning 'instruction') is read through aloud once a year. Deuteronomy is the fifth book/scroll and is known as 'The Words'. When the Hebrew Old Testament was translated into Greek the title was changed to 'Second Law' – as it is the place where Moses repeats all 613 laws to the people of Israel.

**Genesis** was written from a universal viewpoint and is all about beginnings – the whole of creation and how Israel becomes the people of God.

**Exodus** is about the nation and focuses on the Israelites going out from Egypt.

**Leviticus** is for a particular tribe (the Levites) and contains specific instructions for them.

**Numbers** is again looking at the nation and is exactly what it says on the tin – a book of statistics.

**Deuteronomy** is back to looking at Israel against the backcloth of the entire world and focuses on the second giving of the Law.

### Second Reading

Those who had heard the first reciting of God's Law 40 years earlier had all died. They had broken the law so quickly that God had said they would never get into the Promised Land. Their punishment was to wander around the wilderness for the 40 years until an entire generation had disappeared.

There was now a new generation – so Moses read and explained the law a second time. Each generation must renew the covenant with God.

Also, they were about to enter the Promised Land. They had been on their own for 40 years, but were now entering a land occupied by enemies. By hearing the Law they would know what God required of them. Moses wouldn't be with them and he wanted to ensure that they were informed of the past and ready for the future.

## Land

There are 2 phrases that appear nearly 40 times in Deuteronomy. '*The land the Lord your God gives you*' – reminds the Israelites that this, and all the earth, belongs to God. It is His to give as he pleases. '*Go in and possess the land*' – everything we receive from God is a gift, but we have to take it.

## Structure

**Past – Recollection** (1:1 – 4:43) Moses looks back to the days after Sinai when God had made the covenant with his listeners' parents. He reminds them of why they had to wander in the desert for 40 years. Although God was faithful to them they had been faithless. Chapter 4 says: 'Do not be like your parents. They lost their faith and they lost the land. If you keep yours, you can keep the land.'

**Present – Regulation** (4:44 – 26:19) The whole of Moses' second discourse outlines the way the Israelites must live if they are to remain in the land God is giving them.

The Ten Commandments are all about respect: God's name, his day, your parents, life, property.

There is a whole section on obedience. The word 'hear' comes 50 times and the words 'do', 'keep' and 'observe' 177 times.

There are religious and ceremonial laws. Laws about government, special crimes, personal rights and responsibilities, health and welfare and warfare.

These laws show that God is interested in the whole of our lives. Living right the whole time, God wants people to be right in every area of their lives. Why? '*That it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land your God is giving you.*' (4:40, 5:16, 6:3, 6:18, 12:25, 12:28, 19:13, 22:7)

## Future (27:1 – 34:12)

Covenant affirmed – the Israelites are to ratify the law for themselves. After crossing the Jordan they are to stand below Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. The leaders are to shout the blessings from Mount Gerizim and the curses from Mount Ebal. After each sentence they are to respond with an 'amen' - 'this is certain!' The rest of the history of the Old Testament hinges on Israel's response to these blessings and curses.

Continuity assured – Joshua is appointed as Moses' successor. Moses gives the written law to priests who place it beside the ark. He commands that the whole law be recited every seven years.

## Comparison

**Moses**, having been told by God that he would die, spent the last week of his life pouring out his heart to all the people he had looked after for 40 years. His theme is total commitment to the Lord.

*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. (6:4-9)*

**Jesus** spent the last night of his life before he died pouring out his heart to his disciples, talking with them and praying for them.

*If you love me, you will obey what I command.*

*Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me.*

*He who loves me will be loved by my Father and I too will love him and show myself to him.*

*My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.*

*All this I have told you so that you will not go astray.*

*I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father.*

*(John chapters 14 – 17)*

## Summary

Deuteronomy reminds of the past, teaches how to live in the present and urges to look ahead.

- Moses urges the people to “choose life” by following God’s commands.
- Jesus used Deuteronomy to quote from when tempted in the wilderness.
- Two verses from Deuteronomy and Leviticus are used to sum up the whole of the Law of Moses.
- Paul used Deuteronomy when he wrote about the importance of our hearts being changed.

## Choose Life

This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. (30: 19, 20)