



DEUTERONOMY
BRAVE NEW WORLD
VILLAGE CHURCH
STUDIES



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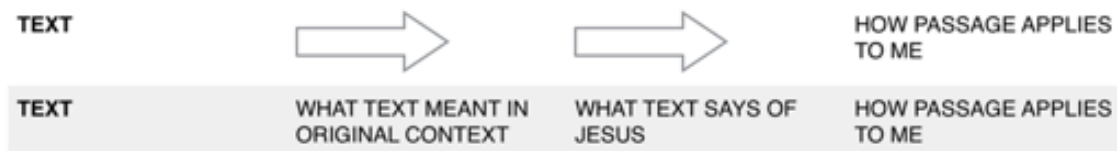
READING THE BIBLE

Because Jesus is the centre of the Bible, we read everything through the lens of his life, death and resurrection. If all God's words point to Jesus then we have to see Christ before we can see ourselves.

UNDERSTANDING

Because "everything written... in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms" (Luke 24:44) is about Jesus, we can't expect that the Bible would speak primarily to us.

Because the Bible was written to an original audience, we need to understand what it was saying to them. And because all of scripture is speaking of Jesus, we need to understand why, and in that we can see how the passage speaks to us.



What is this passage saying to its original readers? How is this passage speaking of Jesus? What is this passage saying to Christians today?

KNOWING IT, FEELING IT

Because we might want to connect with God and know Him better we could want everything He says to be immediately relevant to our lives. But the Bible is about God. The wonder of the gospel is that, by grace through faith, we are "in Christ," as the New Testament often puts it. And if we are "in Christ" we have received every spiritual blessing that Jesus received (Eph.1:3).

Because the Bible is all about Jesus, and because those who believe in him are "in Christ," the most powerful truths of reading the Bible come from seeing how the words are speaking of Jesus.

A LITTLE HELP FROM YOUR FRIENDS

There are many confronting, many culturally-offensive and many confusing parts in the Bible. Even Peter, one of the writers of the Bible, considers Paul, another writer of the Bible to be "hard to understand" (2 Peter 3:16). That's why God gives us His Spirit and a community. Asking God and asking those who have been around the Bible for a bit longer, and have maybe thought through and wrestled with these questions as well, is invaluable when trying to grow in your understanding. As well as that, Village will be running a How to Read the Bible course starting on the second Sunday of this month, and every odd-numbered month.

BACKGROUND

WHO WROTE DEUTERONOMY?

Deuteronomy is the fifth book in the Old Testament and comes at the end of the section known as 'the Pentateuch', or, 'five books' of Moses. Clearly, though, Moses didn't write about his own death at the end of the book – throughout Deuteronomy we have some help from an editor who would have added little comments or markers here and there to help assist the reader.

WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE AND WHY ARE THEY HERE?

In Genesis 12, God promised Abraham that he would make his descendants into a great nation, with their own land. He would be their God, and they would be his people ... And he would use them to bring blessing to all the nations. But as his family grew, the following generations found themselves in slavery in Egypt. Under God's hand, Moses led them to freedom, and into the desert, where God gave them his law and declared them to be a nation – Israel.

WHAT'S JUST HAPPENED?

When they first got to the edge of the Promised Land, instead of trusting God to give them victory, the Israelites sent spies, who came back with the report that there were giants in the land. Afraid, the people refused to enter the land. As a result, God left them to wander in the wilderness for 40 years until the whole generation died out. Now, they're about to try again ...

WHAT'S DEUTERONOMY ABOUT?

In his speech, Moses will look back over what went wrong, remind the Israelites of the importance of listening to God, give them detailed laws for living in God's land, and then warn them of the terrible consequences if they disobey. Throughout the Bible, Israel is presented as a paradigm for all humanity. In this sense, we learn a lot about ourselves, our fickle human hearts, and the awesome God we serve. In many ways, Deuteronomy sets the scene for everything that happens in the rest of the Bible.



A NOTE ON USING THESE STUDIES

We're privileged to have Gary Millar take us through the book of Deuteronomy. Whilst each week we'll be looking at the same chapters Gary will be preaching through on Sundays, the content of the study may differ from that of the talks. As such, questions for application will be uploaded weekly at vc.org.au/deuteronomy following the talk, so that these final questions can be most relevant to what we learn on Sundays.

Study One: Looking Back, Looking Forward

Setting the Scene

As Deuteronomy opens, Israel as a nation is poised on the bank of the Jordan River. Two months later, she'll cross the river into the Promised Land for the first time. However, this isn't the first time they've tried. The book of Numbers describes how Israel messed up their first attempt because of disobedience – which led to Israel's 40 years of wandering through the wilderness.

The first three verses of Deuteronomy 1 set the scene for most of the book. We're told that Israel has taken over 40 years to travel what could have taken 11 days. Obviously, something has gone horribly wrong.

Knowing It

Read Deuteronomy 1:1-8

1. When the Israelites first came to Mount Horeb, what did God tell them to do (vv.7-8)?
2. From verse 8, what is special about this land? (For more background significance, have a look at Genesis 12:1-9.)

Read Deuteronomy 1:19-40

3. In your own words, summarise what happened the first time Israel tried to enter the Promised Land. What went wrong for Israel?
4. How did the Israelites make things even worse (vv.41-45)?
5. What's at the heart of the problem with the Israelites (v.32)?

Throughout chapters 2 & 3, Moses gives two big reasons why the Israelites can be bold as they take over the Promised Land. First, the giants in the area have been beaten before by other nations. And second, Israel has already taken down giant King Og and Sihon. They have every reason to be confident ... As long as they remember their Lord.

6. Read the words Moses said to Joshua in 3:21-22. Why is there no reason to be frightened?

Deuteronomy 1-3

As Moses recounts for the people in 1:21, the Lord had already given them the land – all they had to do was walk in and take possession. The Lord had also proved his might and his faithfulness to his people by bringing them out of Egypt and providing their food and water in the wilderness (1:29-33). Yet the people were unnerved by the spies' reports of the war-like people in the land.

This speech of Moses is deigned to challenge and motivate God's people for the task ahead. Even though they're small, weak, and foolish, when God fights for them, they can tackle giants. The only question is, will they trust their God enough to obey him?

Speaking to the Heart

For application questions, please see the weekly updates at vc.org.au/deuteronomy

Speaking to the Lord

Pray that we would obey God out of a heart that is so overcome with love and gratitude over God's great grace and salvation toward us.

Pray that God would give us the faith to believe and trust him, even when faced with great trials or fear.

Pray that God would keep us from the temptation that fighting on our own is better than letting God fight for us on our behalf.

What else speaks to you from God's Word that you'd like to speak about with God?

Study Two: In God We Trust?

Setting the Scene

The first three chapters of Deuteronomy recall God's faithfulness and power. Now Moses begins to lay out the commandments that God calls Israel to obey in response to what he has already done. Moses wants to make sure that God's people treat God as God, and respond to him accordingly.

But compared to the other nations, Israel was quite odd. While other nations worshipped idols – that could be seen but were silent – Israel served a God who spoke to them but was unseen. This God was a God of Word, and that meant they needed to listen carefully.

Have you ever wished that you could actually see God? Why or why not?

Knowing It

Read Deuteronomy 4:1-8

1. What is Moses about to teach the Israelites and what must they do with it (v.1-2)?
2. In Numbers 25, the Israelites began to worship the idol Baal at Beth-Peor (now renamed Baal-Peor). What should the Israelites who remained have learned from what they 'saw with their own eye' (vv.3-4)?
3. What are the surrounding nations meant to think when they look at the nation of Israel (vv.5-8)?

Read Deuteronomy 4:9-14

4. What does Moses tell the Israelites to remember about their past encounter with God?
5. Describe their experience in verses 11-14.

The ten commandments and other laws that God gave the Israelites were meant to show them how to live life God's way in God's Promised Land. If they live this way, the nations around them will marvel at their wisdom and the righteousness of their laws – and also at the nearness of their God ... As long as they don't forget the powerful words of the Lord their God.

Deuteronomy 4

Read Deuteronomy 4:15-31

6. What dangerous temptation do the Israelites need to watch out for (vv.15-19)?
7. What's the big difference between the Israelites and everyone else (v.20)?
8. What will the consequence be if they or generations after start worshipping any kind of idol (vv.23-28)?
9. When worst comes to worst, what reassurance does Moses give in vv.29-31? What does that tell us about the character of our God?

Read Deuteronomy 4:32-49

10. From vv.32-40, what marvellous things has God all done for his people?
11. What one truth do they need to learn about God (vv.35, 39)?

Because God is a God of Word, his people are to be all ears. They are to pay attention to his word, be thankful of his promises, and obey his laws and commands. Most of all, they need to realise that he is the only God. There is no other. Idols made by human hands might be solid and visible – but they didn't bring Israel out of slavery, they didn't speak from the fire, they didn't perform awesome deeds in the wilderness ... And they won't keep Israel safe in the Promised Land.

Speaking to the Heart

For application questions, please see the weekly updates at vc.org.au/deuteronomy

Speaking to the Lord

Pray that God would open our ears to the words he is speaking to us.

Pray that God would reveal the idols in our own hearts – those things we cling to because we think they're better than God – and would begin to tear them down.

Pray that we would feel God's nearness, and that we wouldn't believe the lie that God doesn't care about us or our needs.

What else speaks to you from God's Word that you'd like to speak about with God?

Study Three: The Choice We All Face

Setting the Scene

In Moses' first sermon (Deut. 1-4) he pleaded with Israel to finally listen to God and take him at his word. Now, in chapter 5, Moses launches into his second sermon. Ignoring all the rules of good preaching, Moses' second talk spans the formidable length of chapter 5 through to chapter 28. Although it's long, the sermon has a simple structure: after telling us more about who God is, Moses focuses on how Israel should respond to God.

Moses is still working off the idea that you need to know who you're dealing with before you can behave appropriately. But the good news in all of this? God always takes the first step.

Knowing It

Read Deuteronomy 5:1-33

1. From this passage, list the initiatives that God has taken with his people (If you're stuck, check out vv.2, 4, 6, 15, 22, 31).
2. How do these affect the way we relate to God?
3. What are the terms of the covenant (or, contract) between God and Israel (vv.32-33)? Summarise in your own words.
4. The Ten Commandments can seem like just a list of 'dos and dont's'. How does it change our view of them when we know that they are part of God's covenant with Israel?

In the Exodus, God brought the nation Israel out of slavery in Egypt. It was at the Exodus that God dealt with Israel as a nation for the first time – up until then, God dealt mainly with individuals. In the Exodus, the nation Israel is born, bringing together Abraham's descendants into a holy nation, a people belonging to the Lord.

This point is critical if we're going to properly understand all the different commandments which occur in Deuteronomy, including the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments did not start Israel's relationship with God. Instead, they gave expression to a relationship that was already in existence. In other words, keeping the Ten Commandments is not what saved Israel. They were already saved! God had already brought them out of slavery.

Deuteronomy 5-11

Read Deuteronomy 7:6-9 & 9:4-6

5. Why did God choose Israel? What was his motivation?
6. What's Israel's real problem (9:6)?
7. What do these passages reveal about God's character?

Everything that happened in the history of Israel had been for the purpose of motivating the people to love God with their whole hearts (10:16). For this reason, as they are called to love God (11:1), they are to remember all that he has done for them (11:2). He rescued them (11:3-4), provided for them (11:5), and disciplined them (11:6-7) so that they would grow in their obedience to him. The call to love is grounded in the love that God had given to them.

8. Which one of these actions of God are you most prone to forget? That he a) rescued you from slavery to sin, b) provides for your daily needs, or c) disciplines you? How might fully understanding these acts of God motivate us to love him?

Speaking to the Heart

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Speaking to the Lord

Pray that we would resist the temptation to believe that obeying a list of rules makes God love us more.

Pray that we would have a deeper understanding of all that God has done for us in Christ.

Pray that God would continue to change our stubborn hearts so that we might grow in humility and gratitude.

What else speaks to you from God's Word that you'd like to speak about with God?

Study Four: A Gospel-Shaped Life

Setting the Scene

Chapter 12 now launches into the third section of Deuteronomy, stretching until 26:15. These chapters contain the specific stipulations, or legislation, of the covenant – covering important matters such as worship, or what to do if you find a bird's nest along the road ... (Deut. 22:6).

It can be a long (and sometimes dry) journey through the lists of laws for life in the Promised Land. At times, God gives no reason for keeping them; the Israelites must simply obey. But at other times, God is very clear about the motive and logic behind his regulations. Some of these reasons are:

- Because they need to be different to the nations they are driving out
- Because they need to know what 'clean' means
- Because they flow from the Ten Commandments
- Because they should remember their past redemption

This study will focus both on worshipping God's way (ch. 12-13) and how remembering our redemption affects our personal relationships (15:1-15).

Knowing It

Read Deuteronomy 12:1-7 & 12:29-31

1. What are the Israelites meant to do to the pagan 'worship places' when they take the land? What's the danger if they don't do this?

Read Deuteronomy 13

2. What's the situation being described in verses 1-3?
3. What's the sure sign that something's wrong?
4. What characteristics of God do the laws in Deut. 13 draw on (keep in mind what we've already learned about God in Deuteronomy)?

Deuteronomy 12-26

Read Deuteronomy 15:1-15

6. What guiding principle is there for the way Israel is to treat their poor (v.11)
7. Every seventh year was to be the 'year of release' (vv.1, 9). What might the temptation be when this year rolls around (vv.9-10)?
8. What should motivate the way Israelites treat their slaves (15:15), and what should motivate the way Israelites provide for those less fortunate (check out 24:17-22)?
9. How might these passages influence the way we treat our brothers and sisters, our neighbours, and the community around us?

Speaking to the Heart

For application questions, please see the weekly updates at vc.org.au/deuteronomy

Speaking to the Lord

Pray that we might 'recklessly' forgive one another, cancel other's debts, and care for the needs of others for no other reason than God's grace toward us demands a lavish response toward others.

Pray that God would keep us from wandering, and that we wouldn't be led astray by false promises of a better life outside of Christ.

Pray that when we do wander, Jesus would take us by the hand and lead us back to the truth and life that is found only in him.

What else speaks to you from God's Word that you'd like to speak about with God?

Study Five: Now Choose Life . . .

Setting the Scene

Deuteronomy 27 begins a new section in Moses' instruction to the nation of Israel. This chapter opens the section of blessings and curses that will result from keeping or breaking the covenant with the Lord. The curses section (28:15-68) is about four times longer than the blessings section (28:1-14). This underscores the importance of obedience.

In chapter 29, Moses gathers Israel together for one last pep-talk. First comes the bad news, followed by the good news. Moses begins by assuming the reality that Israel will fall into exile because of their tendency toward idolatry (bad news). Chapter 30, then, is the good news – God will not abandon his people. Even in the midst of their worst punishment, they will eventually be brought out of exile. Matter of fact, these final chapters in Deuteronomy are some of the most useful bits of the Bible – as Moses' final words to God's people urges them to 'now choose life!'

Knowing It

Read Deuteronomy 29:22-30:10

Continuing the theme of God's blessings and curses, Moses imagines a scene where the Promised Land is lying in ruins. In this painted picture, people will come from far away and ask, 'Why did this happen?' ...

1. What will the answer be (vv.25-28)?
2. In this imaginary picture, where have the people of Israel ended up (v.28)?
3. If things are going to be fixed, what will Israel have to do first (30:4)? What will they have to do second (v.2)?
4. What will God do for them when they repent with all their heart and soul (see verses 3, 4, and verse 5!)?

Deuteronomy 27-34

Moses is bringing his final speech to an end. Israel has before them a life and death decision – and Moses makes it plain to them.

Read Deuteronomy 30:11-20

5. What will bring life (v.16)? What will bring death (v.17)?
6. What does Moses want God's people to choose (vv.19-20)?
7. What does it mean to say that this choice is 'not too difficult for you or beyond your reach' (v.11-14)?

Sadly, as the story of Israel unfolds, it was too hard for Israel to keep God's law ... She chose death. For this reason, God himself will intervene and with tender compassion gather the nation and bring her back to her land. During this time, God will work a miracle that will change the fortunes for people forever. God is going to deal with their hearts – the very source of the problem. With this new heart they will experience the abundant blessing that comes from obedience. In fact, the ultimate goal of God's covenant with the Israelites is to bring about this new heart.

Speaking to the Heart

For application questions, please see the weekly updates at vc.org.au/deuteronomy

Speaking to the Lord

Pray that God would continue to work on our hearts to lead us to repent of our sin.

Pray that God would place his Word 'in our mouth and in our heart so we may obey it'.

Spend some time thanking God for sending us Jesus – the one who did obey God with all his heart and with all his soul. The one whom makes obedience possible for us. The one whose life has benefits which flow to all of humanity.

What else speaks to you from God's Word that you'd like to speak about with God?

