

Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy presents the renewal of the covenant, impressing God's Word on the hearts of Israel. The book is sermonic in nature and is not truly a "second giving of the law" as the English title indicates (deutero – two/2nd nomos – law). It is a record of Moses' sermons concerning the Law. There are almost 200 references to the land in the book, which the people were encouraged to claim as their inheritance. Thus the book was written so that the people would unreservedly commit themselves to the Lord (and His Law) as they were about to enter the promised land.

Things to think about in each chapter/scene (sermonic material):

1. Identify limits of section
 2. Subject – Complement
 3. Key verse / Focal point
 4. What does it say?
- Why is it in the Bible?
 - Why here (how does it relate to the other sections/sermons)?
 - Significant issues, questions, etc.

Outline

¹Moses gives three sermons that move from a retrospective, to an introspective, and finally to a prospective look at God's dealings with Israel.

- 1) Historical Review – 1:1–4:43: Moses reaches into the past to remind the people of two undeniable facts in their history: ¹the moral judgment of God upon Israel's unbelief, and ²the deliverance and provision of God during times of obedience. The simple lesson is that obedience brings blessing, and disobedience brings punishment.
- 2) Covenant Review – 4:44–26:19: This moral and legal section is the longest in the book because Israel's future as a nation in Canaan will depend upon a right relationship with God. These chapters review the three categories of the Law: ¹The testimonies, or principles (5–11). These are the moral duties—a restatement and expansion of the Ten Commandments plus an exhortation not to forget God's gracious deliverance. ²The statutes (12:1–16:17). These are the ceremonial duties—sacrifices, tithes, and feasts. ³The ordinances (16:18–26:19). These are the civil (16:18–20:20) and social (21–26) duties—the system of justice, criminal laws, laws of warfare, rules of property, personal and family morality, and social justice.
- 3) Cause/Effect Review – 27–34: In these chapters Moses writes history in advance. He predicts what will befall Israel in the near future (blessings and cursings) and in the distant future (dispersion among the nations and eventual return). Moses lists the terms of the covenant soon to be ratified by the people. The book ends with Moses not being allowed to enter the land; he, therefore, appoints Joshua as his successor and delivers a farewell address to the multitude. The last three verses of the Pentateuch (34:10–12) are an appropriate epitaph for this great man.

Conclusion

Deuteronomy is much more practical and more enjoyable to read than many of the other portions of the Law. The book is Moses' series of farewell messages to Israel, and he focuses in on the practical ramifications of the Law while he recapitulates many of its stipulations. There are portions that are very reminiscent of other Law-giving sections (almost verbatim in some cases) and in these sections one is almost lulled back to the mundane, "how does this apply to me," attitude. However, the sections were given to remind the people of their duty as they were about to enter the land. Furthermore, the reader is immediately roused into a sense of understanding and alertness as he reads the conclusion to the book. The purpose of these sections and the entire book is brought to light as we enter chapter 28 up through the final chapter.

¹Taken from *Talk Thru the Bible* by Wilkinson and Boa, pp. 39–40.

Chapter 28 forms the nexus of Israel's past to its future, and it is the key to the entire book.² Yahweh must be, indeed, deserves to be obeyed. The chapter captures Yahweh's emphasis on obedience; and emphasis stemming from His past work on behalf of His people. Yahweh will continue to be a protecting, providing, and blessing God in the future, if His people will but to do the simple task of cherishing and obeying Him (via the terms of His covenant).

The theme of chs 28–33 cause us to recall the same things laid out in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. We, therefore, see the unity of the giving of the Law and the sermons on the Law (as Deuteronomy should be understood). In effect, Deuteronomy truly “completes the Law” through its remembrance, adaptation, and expansion of the words previously given.

Application: This is not out of the ordinary and should strike us as the most basic and easy thing to do since Yahweh is both deserving and loving. However, *we* have been given an abundant revelation and the blessings of adoption as sons, and yet we too falter as the Israelites did. We may be tempted to be harsh on them as we observe their disobedience, yet we must remember that we do the same thing every day. In both cases we have a benevolent, merciful, and forgiving God who welcomes us back (cf. Deut. 30:2–3), though we are undeserving.

Yahweh is a personal, sovereign, loving, and holy God who has rescued His people from sin and slavery and therefore commands and deserves respect, love, and obedience.

²Some would argue that chapter 27 is the key because in it is the formal ratification of the covenant (cf. 27:9) and “covenant” is the key to the book. However, chapter 28 forms both the reason for the covenant and the necessity of conformity to it.