

**GOD WITH US**  
**Part 1: The Great Blessing**  
**Genesis – Deuteronomy**

**Message 12 – The Law Restated for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Generation**  
**Deuteronomy 1-26**

**Introduction**

While the title “Deuteronomy” means “second Law,” or a “repetition of the Law,” this final book of the Pentateuch is much more than what that title implies. The second generation of Israelites was poised to enter the Promised Land. They were camped in the territory just east of the Jordan River and would soon be led by Joshua into the land. Moses, who would soon die, gave a final, passionate sermon to this new generation. He was calling them back to covenant faithfulness, so that they could enjoy a future richly blessed by God’s presence, provision and protection. He reviews their history and their great privilege of being called to be God’s chosen nation . . . he calls them to a posture of loving devotion and obedience to God . . . and, finally, he extensively lists the blessings and disciplines that will come based on their choice to obey, or not. The following excerpt from ch.6 captures well the tone of the entire book of Deuteronomy:

*“These are the commands, decrees and laws the Lord your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the Lord your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life. Hear, Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the Lord, the God of your ancestors, promised you” (6:1-3).*

**A Review of Israel’s history: 1:1-3:29**

Chapters 1-3 are a historical review. Moses begins by recounting how the 1<sup>st</sup> generation made it to Kadesh-barnea, where they rebelled against the Lord. Then, they were confined to wandering in the desert for the next 40 years, until that generation died off. The opening lines of the book cause us to soberly consider *what could have been*:

***“It takes eleven days to go from Horeb to Kadesh Barnea by the Mount Seir road. In the fortieth year, on the first day of the eleventh month, Moses proclaimed to the Israelites all that the Lord had commanded him concerning them” (1:2,3).***

What could have been an 11-day journey turned into a 40-year nightmare . . . because the 1<sup>st</sup> generation failed to trust God and obey His words. Will the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation make the same mistake?

Moses continues his historical review all the way up to their present setting, in the 40<sup>th</sup> year, as the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation sits poised on the east side of the Promised Land. Moses recounts God’s appointment of Joshua as the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation leader of Israel, and his own failure to obey God fully and loss of the right to lead them in. This review served to remind the people of 1) God’s faithfulness to His covenant with Israel, and 2) the cost the 1<sup>st</sup> generation paid for failure to live within the terms of the covenant.

### **The Appeal for Covenant Faithfulness: 4:1-11:32**

As stated in the Introduction above, the heart of Deuteronomy contains a review of the Laws given to Israel at Mt. Sinai, Laws which formed the basis for their covenant relationship with Yahweh. These Laws will be reviewed from chs.12-26, and then covenant renewal ceremonies will be outlined afterwards. Preceding all of this, however, is the impassioned appeal of Moses to the nation Israel – that they might wholeheartedly love and obey their God, who has loved them, so that their future might be blessed by Him. There is *no other portion of Scripture* that so strongly appeals for God’s people to *obey Him for their own good*. Meditate carefully and thoughtfully through these chapters, as they are the *soul* of Deuteronomy.

#### **- The first appeal for obedience: 4:1-49**

Chapter 4 is the opening appeal for covenant loyalty. In this section, several key themes are introduced that will appear over and over again in Moses’ farewell speech to the nation.

1. Moses reiterates that the purpose of obedience is so that the nation Israel will bring forth a strong, clear witness to the world as to the nature of their God. Recall that this was the primary reason God called the descendants of Abraham to Himself in the first place . . . that they might be a blessing to all other nations (Gen.12:3) by being a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exodus 19:5,6). Moses is calling the nation back to their original reason-for-being. (See N.T. application in 1Peter 2:9.)

***“See, I have taught you decrees and laws as the Lord my God commanded me, so that you may follow them in the land you are entering to take possession of it. Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, “Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.” What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the Lord our God is near us whenever we pray to him? And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today? (4:5-8).***

2. “Remembering” is another major theme. If future generations do not remember God’s past faithfulness, they will surely become consumed by fear in the face of oncoming challenges.

***‘Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them. Remember the day you stood before the Lord your God at Horeb, when he said to me, “Assemble the people before me to hear my words so that they may learn to revere me as long as they live in the land and may teach them to their children” (4:9,10).***

Remembering is the antidote to paralyzing fear.

Throughout Deuteronomy, Moses implores the people to use ‘story-telling’ to cultivate a deep faith (trust) in each new generation. Parents need to experience the mighty hand of God for themselves, and then they need to recite the faithful acts of God to their children, so that they also may learn to trust God with the issues of life. How are you “remembering” the mighty deeds of God in the hearing of the next generation? (See also 6:4-9 and 11:18-21.)

3. The danger of idolatry is stressed, as this sin would cause Israel to be disciplined by God and driven from the Promised Land. (The Canaanites were being driven out for similar reasons; see p.156):

***“Be careful not to forget the covenant of the Lord your God that he made with you; do not make for yourselves an idol in the form of anything the Lord your God has forbidden. For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God” (4:23,24).***

Clearly, God is a perfectly jealous lover, desiring that which is rightfully His – the pure-hearted devotion of those He has redeemed and called to Himself. In the New Testament, James warns against spiritual infidelity against our God (James 4:1-10).

The adulterous rejection of divine intimacy incenses God: It provokes profound jealousy. Even more, it draws forth in God deep anguish. When we offer our exclusive devotion to another, jealousy torments His heart.” Allender and Longman, *The Cry of the Soul*, p.131.

4. Moses stresses their great privilege as those who have been chosen by God to represent Him to the world.

*Ask now about the former days, long before your time, from the day God created human beings on the earth; ask from one end of the heavens to the other. Has anything so great as this ever happened, or has anything like it ever been heard of? Has any other people heard the voice of God speaking out of fire, as you have, and lived? Has any god ever tried to take for himself one nation out of another nation, by testings, by signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, or by great and awesome deeds, like all the things the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes? (4:32-34).*

#### **- The Ten Commandments restated: 5:1-33**

Chapter 5 is a review of The Ten Commandments, as they were given to Moses at Mt. Sinai. Moses reminds this generation that their forefathers made a commitment at that time to obey the voice of God (although they sadly failed to follow through on their vow). Toward the end of this section, we hear a stirring cry from the heart of God to the hearts of His children:

***“Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear Me and keep all My commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!” (5:29).***

When God asks us to obey Him, it is for our own good. All throughout Deuteronomy we hear the refrain: “Obey Me so that...”. God does not command our obedience simply because He wants to be a dictator over us; rather, He is a loving Father who seeks what is best for His children. He tenderly “carries His son” (see 1:31). So, whenever you hear the phrase, “Obey God,” make sure you finish the sentence with, “so that it might go well for us.” God loves you and wants the very best for your life!

#### **- The second appeal for obedience: 6:1-25**

Chapter 6 contains “the great Shema,” the most important prayer in Judaism. Shema is the Hebrew verb “to hear.” The nation was being called to *hear and heed* God’s voice, above all other voices.

***“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 (4-9).***

**- Warning against intermarriage and idolatry: 7:1-26**

The primary reason for the strong warnings against intermarriage was that it would inevitably lead to the adoption of pagan religious practices, including idolatry. This, in turn, would invite the judgment of God upon His people:

***“ . . . for they will turn your children away from following Me to serve other gods, and the Lord’s anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy you” (7:4).***

Yet, if Israel remained loyal to Yahweh, then He would drive out the inhabitants of the land for them. Even those kingdoms that were immensely stronger than Israel would not be able to stand against the power of Yahweh . . . IF His people remained faithful to the covenant.

Sadly, it was precisely the problem of intermarriage/idolatry that later led Israel into tragic breaches of the covenant, eventually resulting in their gradual expulsion from the Promised Land and captivity first in Assyria and later in Babylon (722 – 586 B.C.).

**- The third appeal for obedience: 8:1-20**

Moses continued to plead for the nation to love God with all of their hearts. Here, he reveals something quite interesting about God’s ways with the 1<sup>st</sup> generation that came out of Egypt:

***“Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. Your clothes did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these forty years. Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the Lord your God disciplines you” (8:2-4).***

Remember all of those situations back in Exodus/Numbers where Israel ran out of water or food and they grumbled against God? Well, we now learn *that it was God who was humbling them and testing them, to FIND OUT WHAT WAS IN THEIR HEART.* He wanted to see if they would trust Him, or not. Sadly, it became apparent that the first generation would not trust the goodness of their God.

*How many of the situations that cause us to grumble are actually God testing us to find out what is in our hearts??? Did you notice above that it was God who “caused them to hunger.” Why? Certainly not because He wanted His children to die of hunger; rather, He wanted to see His children faithfully look to Him as their provider and protector. Perhaps you are currently facing a very trying circumstance, and you are tempted to complain against God for allowing you to go through this. Could it be that God is testing your heart to see how you will respond in this trial? Will you trust Him with a heart of confidence and hope; or will you grumble against Him with a heart of unbelief and fear?*

Moses also warned against the kind of *pride* that forgets God, while attributing all success to human ingenuity:

***‘When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord your God for the good land he has given you. Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery . . . You may say to yourself, ‘My power and the strength of My hands have produced this wealth for Me.’ But remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today” (8:10-14,17-18).***

Pride is one of the great sins of humanity: attributing to ourselves that which really comes to us as a gift from God. We take pride in our accomplishments, our education, our possessions, our income, our position, our friends, etc. In fact, it is GOD who has given us the abilities and opportunities to become who we are. Psalm 49 strongly warns against this kind of human arrogance: “Do not be afraid when a man becomes rich, when the glory of his house is increased; for when he dies he will carry nothing away; his glory will not descend after him. Though while he lives he congratulates himself - and though men praise you when you do well for yourself - he shall go to the generation of his fathers; they will never see the light. Man in his pomp, yet without understanding, is like the beasts that perish” (Ps.49:16-20; see also Psalm 73 on this same theme.

### - The Lord will drive out the Canaanites: 9:1-10:11

Moses says two very important things in this section. First, he assures the people that GOD will drive out the Canaanites from the Promised Land, so that Israel need not fear them. Second, he gives the rationale behind God’s expulsion of the Canaanites from their land . . . and it has *nothing* to do with Israel’s righteousness! In fact, Moses goes into great detail recalling all the ways that Israel has *disobeyed God* in previous years. So . . . if it is not because of Israel’s goodness, then WHY is God giving them the land of Canaan and driving out the current residents?

***“Do not say in your heart when the Lord your God has driven them out before you, ‘Because of my righteousness the Lord has brought me in to possess this land,’ but it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord is dispossessing them before you. It is not for your righteousness or for the uprightness of your heart that you are going to possess their land, but it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord your God is driving them out before you, in order to confirm the oath which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” (9:4,5).***

God was not expelling good people from Canaan to give the land to even better people. He was expelling excessively wicked people to give their land to ‘less unrighteous’ people. Let us never imagine that we can turn God into our debtor – thinking that He “owes” us something because of who we are, or what we have done. “Grace” is “unmerited favor. God gives us what we don’t deserve and can’t earn – His love!

Many people struggle with the Old Testament concept of “holy war,” and the seeming depiction of Yahweh as a God-of-war. This misconception, however, rests upon an inadequate understanding of the evil practices within Canaan, prior to Israel’s invasion (child sacrifice, etc. See 12:31f). Let me draw a modern parallel with “Just War Theory” (the position that war, while terrible, is not always the worst option. There may be responsibilities so important, atrocities that can be prevented or outcomes so undesirable they justify war). Was there any question that the Allied Forces should invade German occupied territories in World War II, and bring to an end the Hitler-inspired atrocities? Is there any question that a country with sufficient force should step in to stop the massacre of innocent victims by the likes of an Idi Amin, ISIS, or Boko Haram? Similarly, it is only when we begin to grasp the level of wickedness among the Canaanites that we can understand God’s justification for wiping them out.

#### **- The fourth appeal for obedience: 10:12-11:32**

The preamble to Moses’ farewell speech was now coming to an end. His passion grew ever stronger as he attempted to call forth the whole-hearted devotion of the people to Yahweh their God. It would be good if you stopped and read for yourself the entire section, 10:12-11:32, as this is a very heartfelt appeal. Let Moses’ words to Israel speak to your heart today. Here is an excerpt:

***“Now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require from you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the Lord’s commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good? Behold, to the Lord your God belong heaven and the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it. Yet on your fathers did the Lord set His affection to love them, and He chose their descendants after them, even you above all peoples, as it is this day. So circumcise your heart, and stiffen your neck no longer. For the Lord your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality nor take a bribe. He executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and shows His love for the alien by giving him food and clothing. So show your love for the alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt. You shall fear the Lord your God; you shall serve Him and cling to Him, and you shall swear by His name. He is your praise and He is your God, who has done these great and awesome things for you which your eyes have seen. Your fathers went down to Egypt seventy persons in all, and***

***now the Lord your God has made you as numerous as the stars of heaven” (Deuteronomy 10:12-22).***

### **Review of Key Covenant Stipulations: 12:1-26:19**

The long, central section of Deuteronomy is a repeat, review and, at times, expansion of the Laws previously given to Israel at Mt. Sinai. The opening verse of ch.12 summarizes this whole section:

***“These are the decrees and laws you must be careful to follow in the land that the Lord, the God of your ancestors, has given you to possess - as long as you live in the land” (12:1).***

Our commentary will not cover these chapters in detail. Following is an outline of the laws reviewed by Moses:

- Worshipping God only at His altar: 12:1-32
- The grave dangers of idolatry: 13:1-18
- Clean and unclean foods: 14:1-21
- Laws governing tithing: 14:2-29 (Read it! Surprising!)
- Cancellation of debts every 7<sup>th</sup> year: 15:1-11
- Freeing servants every 7<sup>th</sup> year: 15:12-18
- Firstborn animals given to the Lord: 15:19-23
- The three major annual feasts: 16:1-17
- Appointment of judges and courage to be fair: 16:18-20
- No idolatry allowed: 16:21-17:7
- Submission to judges and priests: 17:8-13
- Laws for future kings: 17:14-20 (Esp. about multiple wives!)
- Providing for the priests and Levites: 18:1-8
- Occult practices forbidden: 18:9-13
- Testing future prophets: 18:14-22
- Cities of refuge: 19:1-14
- Evaluating the testimony of witnesses: 19:15-21
- Laws governing warfare: 20:1-20
- Atonement for unresolved murder: 21:1-9
- Marrying a captive woman: 21:10-14
- Right of the firstborn son: 21:15-17
- Dealing with a rebellious son: 21:18-21
- Cursed is anyone who hangs on a pole: 21:22,23
- Various laws: 22:1-12
- Laws governing marriage: 22:13-30
- Those excluded from the assembly: 23:1-8
- Uncleanliness in the camp: 23:9-14
- Various laws: 23:15-25:19
- First fruits and tithes: 26:1-15

The section concludes with an expression of commitment from both Israel and Yahweh:

***“The Lord your God commands you this day to follow these decrees and laws; carefully observe them with all your heart and with all your soul. You have declared this day that the Lord is your God and that you will walk in obedience to him, that you will keep his decrees, commands and laws - that you will listen to him. And the Lord has declared this day that you are his people, his treasured possession as he promised, and that you are to keep all his commands. He has declared that he will set you in praise, fame and honor high above all the nations he has made and that you will be a people holy to the Lord your God, as he promised” (26:16-19).***

God is always looking for a relationship of mutual love and commitment from His people. He is willing to do His part to establish, protect and bless our relationship with Him. At the same time, He invites us to respond in love by heeding His voice, walking in His ways, and loving Him above all others. As with any human relationship, there is no pleasure for God in one-sided love. Whether we are studying the Old Testament or the New, the “greatest commandment” will always remain the same: “You shall LOVE the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength” (Deuteronomy 6:5 and Matthew 22:37). Living by that commandment brings great pleasure to God . . . and immense blessing to you!

Think about your own ability to freely trust God and love Him. If you struggle to “love Him back” or believe that His ways are good towards you, then you need to explore your deeper heart. Our hearts are “deceived” (Jer.17:9). We question God through our wounds and lies. Then we pull back and question His love and goodness. Ask God: Why do I have trouble trusting You?