

Deuteronomy

Summary

The book of Deuteronomy is sometimes called the second giving of the law. This book is a series of speeches that were inspired by God and given by Moses to the people of Israel right before they were going to enter the Promised Land. It had been close to five hundred years since the people of God had left Canaan and moved to Egypt. While in Egypt, they became slaves. They finally left Egypt and headed back to Canaan. Sadly, they were sidetracked for four decades in the desert. Now they were about to make a second effort to follow God back to the land He had promised them. They needed instructions. They needed clarity about worship, faithfulness to God alone, and instructions on how to navigate the next chapter of their national and spiritual life. This book contains instructions for this time of important national transition.

The book of Deuteronomy is quoted close to one hundred times in the New Testament. The messages contained in this great Old Testament book clearly speak to every generation of people who want to follow God on their journey of faith.

Author

The book of Numbers, as well as the rest of the first five books of the Bible that form the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy), have been attributed to Moses.

Date

The most common date given for the writing of Deuteronomy is the middle of the second millennium B.C., most likely between c. 1446 and c. 1406, depending on the dates that Moses lived.

Primary Characters

God, who is with His people now and in the future (Deuteronomy 1-34)

Moses, God's leader, who is concluding his ministry and life (Deuteronomy 1-34)

The people of Israel, receiving final instruction before entering the land (Deuteronomy 1-34)

Joshua, the next leader of Israel (Deuteronomy 31-34)

Historical Moments

Retelling the Story of Israel's Past (Deuteronomy 1-4)

God's Covenant with Israel (Deuteronomy 4-26)

Ratification of the Covenant; Blessings and Curses (Deuteronomy 27-30)

Passing the Baton from Moses to Joshua (Deuteronomy 31-34)

Major Theological Themes

Worship Only God Because There Is Only One God - Deuteronomy gives a clear call to monotheism. There is only one God. Worship of any other being, person, or idol is absolutely intolerable. As the people prepared to enter the Promised Land, they had to realize that the idols and "gods" of that land were empty and vain.

God's Love for People and Our Call to Love God - Deuteronomy paints a picture of God's amazing and steadfast love for His people. It also calls us to love God back, with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. If we embrace the amazing love of God and respond back with a passionate love for Him, our faith will be built on a solid foundation.

The Call to Remember God's Faithfulness - This book of the Bible calls us to wisely look back and see the faithfulness of God in the past. When we do this, we can live with confidence that God will lead us and provide for us in the future. God had held on to His people, even in their decades of rebellion. With this in mind, they could trust Him as they moved forward.

Lessons Learned from Deuteronomy

We Need Reminders in Times of Transition - We all face times of transitions and new beginnings. In these critical moments on our pilgrimage of faith, we need to go back to the basics and be reminded of the core truths that undergird our beliefs. It is helpful and valuable to be reminded of what we have learned and even more so in times of transition.

God Graciously Offers Second Chances - The first time the people of Israel stood on the edge of the Promised Land, they were fearful and refused to follow God's call. The Lord could have rejected them or left them in the desert. Instead, He gave them another chance. When we mess up, fall short, or give in to fear, we can know that God is ready to give a second chance.

The Old Testament Speaks Today - So many people disregard parts of the Old Testament that seem so distant from the world we live in today. Deuteronomy is a great reminder that the Old Testament still speaks to us with power today. When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness by the devil, He quoted from the book of Deuteronomy three times.

Remember God's Past Faithfulness as You Press into the Future - Through Deuteronomy, we see the value of looking back and remembering how God was faithful in the past. Sometimes, this process of looking back means seeing our own sin, frailties, and rebellion. But, when we see God's goodness and commitment to us despite our sin, we are given confidence and hope as we press on into the future.

Hear God's Warnings for the Future - While the people prepared to enter the Promised Land, God gave them warnings. If they rejected Him and turned from Him, they would experience curses instead of the blessings. If they bowed to the idols of the nations around them, they would count the cost. If they turned their back on God and acted like the pagan people of the land, they would experience God's judgment. God made His warnings very clear. It is foolish to ignore the clear and loving warnings that God gives us in His Word. We are wise to heed the warnings and follow God's clear teaching and instructions.