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What's the Point....of Deuteronomy?

Mark Garner

After the long years in the desert, the Israelites are about to enter Canaan. The book of Deuteronomy takes both a look back and a look ahead, describing all that God has done and what God promises to do. In the Hebrew Bible, the book is titled "These are the words" referring to Moses' address to the community; for us, it is also words from God that can tell us about our Heavenly Father and about our walk with him.

The Lord Is God, & There Is No One Like Him (Overview Of Deuteronomy)

Deuteronomy ties together spiritual teaching, events, and the Levitical laws, to help the Israelites understand who God really is, and to teach them that God's call for them was much more than merely taking them to a physical land. Each of these teachings gives us also some things to consider, since each of them has parallels for us in our relationship with God.

Moses reminds the Israelites that God had carried them each step, just as our Father in heaven has always carried us too (Deuteronomy 1-4). God knows that they are prone to straying and wandering, so he assures them that whenever they seek him from the heart, they will find him (see Deuteronomy 4:29-33), and he asks them to acknowledge him alone as God.

The next section tells us about the heart of the covenant, the reasons behind God's words and his call to walk with him (Deuteronomy 5-11). This includes the call to love the Lord our God with all our hearts and all our souls, as well as his reminder to put his commandments on our hearts, which takes even deeper significance through Jesus (see Deuteronomy 6).

Likewise, the description of the good land that God is giving them has parallels for us too. For example, the images of flowing streams and springs remind us of the "living water" and the grace that flow to those who follow Jesus, and the images of fruit and crops remind us of the spiritual fruit that God gives us (see Deuteronomy 8). As Moses says, what does God ask of us, except to learn to walk with him, for his paths are good for our spirits (see Deuteronomy 10:12-14).

The following section describes a number of the aspects of the covenant God makes with them, a covenant that teaches us about God's holiness and his desire to keep us near (Deuteronomy 12-26). As we've seen in Leviticus, many of these laws at first may seem obscure, yet many of them have figurative parallels in our relationship with God today.

Then the Israelites renew the covenant, as Moses also describes many aspects of God's nature (Deuteronomy 27-34). The Lord's call for us is the same, the call to choose the path of life, the path of walking with our God, and he has brought his words near; he is our life, and he asks us to love him and hold fast to him (see Deuteronomy 30).

As God promises to guide, protect, and bless the Israelites, through Jesus he does so for us in even greater ways. The Lamb of God came from heaven to be the Way to our eternal home, he gives us his Spirit who lives in us, he has redeemed us; our Heavenly Father protects us from spiritual foes too strong for us, and he gives us spiritual blessings that will last forever.

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What's the Point....of Deuteronomy? **Caleb Dillinger**

Deuteronomy is so named because it is the second (deuteros) giving of the Law (nomos). Moses once again delivers all of God's instructions which in itself teaches us a lesson: it is helpful to hear messages from God more than once. Deuteronomy is an entire book of the Bible reminding all believers that listening to God once is not the pathway to spiritual maturity. You should come to God again and again and again, and if you are willing to do that, I believe you will consistently find new teachings and understandings from God.

This particular re-telling of the law occurs after the Israelites had been wandering in the desert for forty years, a punishment they incurred themselves because of their overall lack of faith. Even Moses, delivering this message, will not be entering the promised land after all this time because of his disobedience. The very end of this book tells of the death of Moses and the succession of Joshua as the new leader for Israel.

As you open the pages of Deuteronomy, do not expect to just find a list of rules like Leviticus. This book functions more like a story mixed with rules, coated with warnings and reminders. You find the history of the nation here, all their flaws and all of God's glory. It's a potent reminder of the power of history, and it reinforces the age-old teaching: learn from your mistakes!

While chapter five repeats the ten commandments, it is chapter six that holds the most well known and beloved passage in the book. Known as the Shema (Hebrew word for "Hear/Listen"), you might find yourself thinking these are the words of Jesus (which they are!) found in the New Testament. But the origin of the famous teachings of Jesus are found right here in Deuteronomy 6:4-5.

⁴"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ⁵You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

This is just one of many important teachings found in this book. Moses further instructs the people of Israel (and consequently, us) to pay attention to these words, thinking about them wherever we are and during whatever we do. God's words are important words to know well. Another emphasis found in the book is the teaching that God is the one who saved and led Israel, not their own righteousness or works. This is equally important to us as Christians as it was to Jews thousands of years ago.

If you are persistent and read through the instructions on tithes and sacrifices and Sabbath and cities of refuge, you'll arrive at Deuteronomy 18, a chapter that proclaims that one day a new prophet like Moses will come from God and bear God's words. We know today that this prophecy was about Jesus, our Lord and Savior. So what's the point of reading Deuteronomy? Because you will better understand God, his love, and yes, even his Son, Jesus.