

Title: The Book of Deuteronomy

Text: Selected

Main Point: The nature and ways of God in Deuteronomy.

Date: 3/29/2026

Series: The Beginning of the Book

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of our series, “The Beginning of the Book,” is to provide you with an overview of the first five books of the Bible. I finish the series with Deuteronomy. I often refer to these first five books as the Pentateuch. The word “Pentateuch” comes from two Greek words: one, *pente*, meaning “five” and *teuchos*, meaning “vessel” or “case.” Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy were considered collectively as a book or “case.”

By way of reminder, Genesis contains two major sections: The world’s beginning (Genesis 1-11) and the second section, detailing the life of the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and his twelve sons (Genesis 12-50). Exodus 1-19 details the deliverance of God’s people and their journey to Sinai, while 20-40 establishes God’s expectations for worship and entering the land promised. Leviticus explains how sinful people enter the presence of a holy God. Numbers focus on time spent at Sinai and the surrounding desert. Because of their lack of faith, instead of progressing to the land God promised, they spent 40 years in the desert in the region of Sinai. The last chapters include instructions and preparation for entering the land, along with an itinerary of the stages of the wilderness journey. Deuteronomy is a restatement of the Mosaic law originally received at Mount Sinai. The book restates and clarifies the Law first given in Exodus and explains the end of Moses’ strong leadership.

Similar to my outline for Exodus and Leviticus, I will use the following outline for the book of Deuteronomy:

- First, I will cover the historical and biographical details regarding the book.
- Next, I address major themes in the book.
- Finally, I want to offer reasons Christians should invest time in Deuteronomy.

Historical and Biographical Details

“Deuteronomy, the last book of the Torah, is mostly made up of three speeches by Moses to the Israelites. In the first speech (Deut 1:6–4:40), Moses recounts the story of the Israelites’ wilderness wanderings and exhorts them to obey God. In the second speech (Deut 5:1–28:68), Moses repeats the Ten Commandments and elaborates on the commandments of God more fully. In the third speech (Deut 29:2–30:20), Moses sets out a renewed covenant with the Lord and exhorts the Israelites to obey it. The final chapters recount the writing down of ‘this law (torah)’; Joshua succeeding Moses as leader of the Israelites (Deut 31); two poems by Moses, a song (Deut 31:30–32:43) and a blessing (Deut 33); and the death of Moses (Deut 34).” (Rachel Klippenstein and Bernie Hodkins, “Torah,” in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016)).

Along with Psalms and Isaiah, Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy most often. “Deuteronomy is quoted or alluded to almost 200 times elsewhere in the New Testament.” (Rachel Klippenstein and Bernie Hodkins, “Torah,” in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016)).

Deuteronomy claims its author is Moses (Deuteronomy 31:9, 22, 24), and I know of no reason to contest this. I find the *Lexham Bible Dictionary*’s explanation of the Ten Commandments insightful.

Commandment	Exposition in Deuteronomy	Theme in Deuteronomy
I: Yahweh is God	6:1–11:32	Worship of Yahweh
II: No Other Gods	12:1–13:18	Idolatry
III: Misuse of Yahweh’s Name	14:1–29	Holiness
IV: Sabbath Observance	15:1–16:17	Sabbath and Sacred Time
V: Honor Father and Mother	16:18–18:22	Just Leadership
VI: Murder	19:1–22:8	Bloodguilt and Death
VII: Adultery	22:9–23:14	Marriage and Sexuality
VIII: Theft	23:15–24:7	Property
IX: Lying	24:8–25:4	Just Dealings
X: Coveting	25:5–26:19	Honesty and Duty

Themes and Doctrines in the Book

1. One theme is the idea of “forgetting.” Seven times in the ESV, Moses challenges the people not to forget God and His ways (Deuteronomy 4:9, 23; 6:12; 8:11, 14, 19; 9:7).

- 1.1. The theme of forgetting God begins in the Old Testament, continues in the New (James 1:24-25; the idea of “remembrance” closely connects with the prominence of “forgetting” in the Old Testament, Luke 17:32; Romans 11:18; Galatians 2:10; Ephesians 1:16; 2 Timothy 2:8; Hebrews 13:3; 2 Peter 3:2; Revelation 3:3).
2. Deuteronomy 6:4 provides a major doctrinal statement for both Jews and Christians about the nature of God.
 - 2.1. Jews understand who they are and to whom they belong from this verse. Christians learn that God is one and simple, not having parts or divided. He is not dependent on components for who He is.
3. Deuteronomy 9:4 reminds Christians that “righteousness” does not reside in them.
4. Deuteronomy 30:19 reminds Christians that life is a choice: “Therefore choose life.”

The Christian and the book of Deuteronomy

1. Whenever Christians study and reflect on the Old Testament, it is important to view it from a New Testament perspective. “But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second” (Hebrews 8:5-7). I subscribe to the idea that if the New Testament agrees with the Old, I incorporate the Old Testament principle. If the New Testament supersedes the Old, I may gain wisdom from the Old, but I am not responsible for following it. Any principle in the Old that speaks to the nature of God and a moral law, Christians should carefully consider its meaning in relation to the New Testament.
2. Deuteronomy is rich with principles that guide and protect the Christian. Christians learn from Deuteronomy the dangers of “forgetting” and some causes that lead to it.
 - 2.1. Deuteronomy 4:9, when God is not first in your thinking and acting, idols take His place, and you “forget” your life-satisfaction is in Him before all other things.
 - 2.2. Deuteronomy 8:7-20, God’s prosperity may lead someone to forget God because of selfish pride. In general, Deuteronomy describes this pattern: God prospers, pride grows; pride leads to forgetting God; forgetting God leads to moral decay; moral decay leads to the loss of freedom.
 - 2.3. Historical leaders have stressed the importance of not forgetting God.
 - 2.3.1. George Washington (1796 Farewell Address), “Let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.”
 - 2.3.2. Thomas Jefferson (Notes on the State of Virginia, Query XVII), “God who gave us life gave us liberty. Can the liberties of a nation be secure when we have removed a conviction that these liberties are the gift of God?”
 - 2.3.3. Abraham Lincoln announced to the nation: (March 30, 1863, in a proclamation Appointing a National Fast Day), “We have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which

preserved us in peace and enriched and strengthened us. We have vainly imagined that all things were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us.”

2.3.4. Dwight D. Eisenhower (Remarks for the Back-to-God Program, February 20, 1955), “Without God there could be no American form of government, nor an American way of life.”

2.3.5. Ronald Reagan (Address at the Dallas Reunion Arena, August 23, 1984), “If we ever forget that we’re one nation under God, then we will be a nation gone under.”

3. Deuteronomy 6:4, in part, informs Christians how to understand God.

3.1. Christians learn the simplicity of God. He does not have parts, is not divided, or dependent on anything else to be God. Christians must understand the simplicity of God from a trinitarian perspective. Our God is one God in three beings: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

4. Deuteronomy provides a good foundation for understanding righteousness (see Deuteronomy 6:25; 9:4-6).

4.1. Romans 3:10, “None is righteous, no, not one.” The only hope people have is that God will “count” them righteous (see Romans 4). When anyone surrenders to follow Jesus and acts on this surrender throughout life, righteousness is “counted” to him or her. The person is not righteous because of some merit, but because God has declared it so by the finished work of Jesus.

5. Deuteronomy reminds Christians to choose life.

5.1. I point out that choosing life in the Old Testament is different than the New. However, “choice” is consistent in both the Old and New Testaments.

5.2. Christians “choose” Jesus and then continue to “choose” Him each day of life: “And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister” (Colossians 1:21-23).