

Adult Bible Class

The Book of Deuteronomy - Chapters 9 - 12

The Book of Deuteronomy is a collection of speeches given by Moses to the Israelites shortly before he died - and shortly before the Israelites entered the Promised Land led by Joshua. In Deuteronomy, Moses speaks to the people - most of which were born in the wilderness during the forty years of wandering.

The first time Israel approached the edge of the Promised Land nearly forty years ago, they sent out twelve spies. Ten came back with an evil report which caused the people to complain, murmur, and demand that they go back to Egypt. Because they did not believe the promises of God, the Lord commanded them to turn toward the wilderness to wander for forty years until the older generation (those age twenty and over) died.

Now, they were at the edge of the Promised Land once again - and Moses was speaking to those who remained and those who were born in the wilderness. Israel now had a second chance because of the mercies of God.

In Deuteronomy, Moses tells the history of these past forty years. It is a history of failure to believe and obey God. Moses tells them:

Deuteronomy Chapter 9

Deuteronomy 9:1 (NLT) "Listen, O Israel! Today you are about to cross the Jordan River to take over the land belonging to nations much greater and more powerful than you. They live in cities with walls that reach to the sky! **2** The people are strong and tall—descendants of the famous Anakite giants . . . **3** But recognize today that the Lord your God is the one who will cross over ahead of you like a devouring fire to destroy them. He will subdue them so that you will quickly conquer them and drive them out, just as the Lord has promised.

4 "After the Lord your God has done this for you, don't say in your hearts, 'The Lord has given us this land because we are such good people!' No, it is because of the wickedness of the other nations that he is pushing them out of your way. **5** It is not because you are so good or have such integrity that you are about to occupy their land. The Lord your God will drive these nations out ahead of you only because of their wickedness, and to fulfill the oath he swore to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. **6** You must recognize that the Lord your God is not giving you this good land because you are good, for you are not—you are a stubborn people.

The Israelites had established a reputation for being stubborn, complaining, and disobedient to God's commands. We have read over and over about their complaining and disobedience. God had to discipline them many times.

In the future, the Israelites must never think that they were given the land of Canaan because of their own righteousness. They must never think that they conquered it because of their own might.

Remembering the Gold Calf

7 "Remember and never forget how angry you made the Lord your God out in the wilderness. From the day you left Egypt until now, you have been constantly rebelling against him.

Moses reminded the Israelites that they had constantly rebelled against God. He didn't do this to make them feel discouraged or defeated, but he did this so they would recognize their own weaknesses and trust in the Lord.

When Paul was teaching about the failures of the Israelites under Moses, he said, *Therefore, let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall* (1 Corinthians 10:12, ESV). Our foundation is the Lord Jesus Christ and what He has done for us. We are nothing without Him.

Deuteronomy 9:8 Even at Mount Sinai you made the Lord so angry he was ready to destroy you. **9** This happened when I was on the mountain receiving the tablets of stone inscribed with the words of the covenant that the Lord had made with you. I was there for forty days and forty nights, and all that time I ate no food and drank no water. **10** The Lord gave me the two tablets on which God had written with his own finger all the words he had spoken to you from the heart of the fire when you were assembled at the mountain.

11 "At the end of the forty days and nights, the Lord handed me the two stone tablets inscribed with the words of the covenant. **12** Then the Lord said to me, 'Get up! Go down immediately, for the people you brought out of Egypt have corrupted themselves. How quickly they have turned away from the way I commanded them to live! They have melted gold and made an idol for themselves!'

13 "The Lord also said to me, 'I have seen how stubborn and rebellious these people are. **14** Leave me alone so I may destroy them and erase their name from under heaven. Then I will make a mighty nation of your descendants, a nation larger and more powerful than they are.'

The golden calf incident made God so angry that He was ready to wipe out Israel in judgment and start over again with a new nation, one descended from Moses.

15 "So while the mountain was blazing with fire I turned and came down, holding in my hands the two stone tablets inscribed with the terms of the covenant. **16** There below me I could see that you had sinned against the Lord your God. You had melted gold and made a calf idol for yourselves. How quickly you had turned away from the path the Lord had commanded you to follow! **17** So I took the stone tablets and threw them to the ground, smashing them before your eyes.

Though the fire of God (which was a physical manifestation of the glory of God and his holy presence) burned on Mount Sinai, the children of Israel below worshiped an idol god. No wonder Moses threw down the tablets containing the Ten Commandments! Moses was showing that these people had broken their covenant with God that was written on those stone tables - and in the shadow of His fiery presence!

18 "Then, as before, I threw myself down before the Lord for forty days and nights. I ate no bread and drank no water because of the great sin you had committed by doing what the Lord hated, provoking him to anger. **19** I feared that the furious anger of the Lord, which turned him against you, would drive him to destroy you. But again he listened to me. **20** The Lord was so angry with Aaron that he wanted to destroy him, too. But I prayed for Aaron, and the Lord spared him. **21** I took your sin—the calf you had made—and I melted it down in the fire and ground it into fine dust. Then I threw the dust into the stream that flows down the mountain.

This was a terrible moment in Israel's history. Moses was afraid (the Hebrew word means "stricken with terror"). He was terrified because he saw the great sin of Israel, and He knew the holiness of God. Moses interceded for the people and for Aaron. They would have been destroyed but for Moses' prayers.

Deuteronomy 9:22 “You also made the Lord angry at Taberah, Massah, and Kibroth-hattaavah.

Taberah means “burning,” and in Numbers 11 when the people first left Mount Sinai they immediately complained. God sent fires of judgment against them.

Massah means “tempted” (this place was also called *Meribah*). There, Israel thirsted for water and complained saying, “*Is the Lord among us or not?*” Exodus 17:1-7)

Kibroth Hattaavah means “graves of gluttony.” There, Israel asked for meat instead of manna. God gave them quail, but it became a plague to them because of their complaining and discontented hearts (Numbers 11:31-35).

23 And at Kadesh-barnea the Lord sent you out with this command: ‘Go up and take over the land I have given you.’ But you rebelled against the command of the Lord your God and refused to put your trust in him or obey him. **24** Yes, you have been rebelling against the Lord as long as I have known you.

When we hear the name of Kadesh-barnea, we think of the place at the edge of Canaan where Israel sent out the twelve spies. Ten came back with an evil report and caused the nation to panic and distrust the Lord, saying they would rather go back to Egypt.

25 “That is why I threw myself down before the Lord for forty days and nights—for the Lord said he would destroy you. **26** I prayed to the Lord and said, ‘O Sovereign Lord, do not destroy them. They are your own people. They are your special possession, whom you redeemed from Egypt by your mighty power and your strong hand. **27** Please overlook the stubbornness and the awful sin of these people, and remember instead your servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. **28** If you destroy these people, the Egyptians will say, “The Israelites died because the Lord wasn’t able to bring them to the land he had promised to give them.” Or they might say, “He destroyed them because he hated them; he deliberately took them into the wilderness to slaughter them.” **29** But they are your people and your special possession, whom you brought out of Egypt by your great strength and powerful arm.’

Moses gave several good reasons in his prayer why God should have mercy on the people of Israel. These were God’s people and God had a history with them of His past faithfulness to them. God was faithful to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and these were their descendants.

When God delivered them from Egypt, the news spread around the then known world. God’s reputation was a stake. Because these were God’s people and for His own reputation in the world, Moses asked God to have mercy and to give Israel another chance.

Deuteronomy Chapter 10

Exodus 32 tells the story of the golden calf incident. While impatiently waiting for Moses to return from the mountain where he was meeting with God, the people instructed Aaron to build them a god to lead them onward to the Promised Land. Aaron, instead of rebuking the people and leading them to have patience and wait for Moses, bowed down to their request and fashioned a calf made out of gold. The people then proclaimed it to be their god that brought them out of Egypt. Aaron built an altar to worship the image, and the people worshipped in shameful revelry. It was blatant idolatry which God has just commanded them not to do:

Exodus 20:22 . . . 'You have seen that I have talked with you from heaven. **23** You shall not make *anything to be* with Me—gods of silver or gods of gold you shall not make for yourselves.

Exodus 22:20 "Anyone who sacrifices to any god other than the Lord must be destroyed.

God, meanwhile, informed Moses what the people had done while Moses was communing with Him on the mountain. Moses went down to them, carrying the stone tablets with the Ten Commandments - written with the finger of God. When Moses arrived at the scene, he threw down the stone tablets, and they broke into pieces.

A New Copy of the Covenant

Deuteronomy 10:1 (NLT) "At that time the Lord said to me, 'Chisel out two stone tablets like the first ones. Also make a wooden Ark—a sacred chest to store them in. Come up to me on the mountain, **2** and I will write on the tablets the same words that were on the ones you smashed. Then place the tablets in the Ark.'

3 "So I made an Ark of acacia wood and cut two stone tablets like the first two. Then I went up the mountain with the tablets in my hand. **4** Once again the Lord wrote the Ten Commandments on the tablets and gave them to me. They were the same words the Lord had spoken to you from the heart of the fire on the day you were assembled at the foot of the mountain. **5** Then I turned and came down the mountain and placed the tablets in the Ark of the Covenant, which I had made, just as the Lord commanded me. And the tablets are still there in the Ark."

Moses broke the first set of stone tablets - tablets that were written with the finger of God. He broke them when he came down from the mountain and found the Israelites worshipping the golden calf. He broke the tablets because Israel had broken their covenant with God - it was a highly symbolic thing to do, although it was done in anger and frustration. Then God gave Israel new, replacement tablets of the covenant, because they had repented of their great sin.

This time, Moses had a hand in creating the stone tablets. This time, Moses cut the stone for the tablets himself. Once again, God wrote the law on them, but Moses prepared the stone for God's hand. This time, after the work and preparation of readying the tablets, Moses would be less likely to throw them down in anger and break them.

Moses continues the history:

Deuteronomy 10:6 (The people of Israel set out from the wells of the people of Jaakan and traveled to Moserah, where Aaron died and was buried. His son Eleazar ministered as high priest in his place. . . . **8** At that time the Lord set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the Ark of the Lord's Covenant, and to stand before the Lord as his ministers, and to pronounce blessings in his name. These are their duties to this day. **9** That is why the Levites have no share of property or possession of land among the other Israelite tribes. The Lord himself is their special possession, as the Lord your God told them.)

Israel needed the tribe of Levi and the priesthood to be their mediators in approaching God. Likewise, Jesus is our high priest who mediates between God and man.

Hebrews 4:14 (NKJV) Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* confession. **15** For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin. **16** Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Deuteronomy 10:10 "As for me, I stayed on the mountain in the Lord's presence for forty days and nights, as I had done the first time. And once again the Lord listened to my pleas and agreed not to destroy you. **11** Then the Lord said to me, 'Get up and resume the journey, and lead the people to the land I swore to give to their ancestors, so they may take possession of it.

God was going to destroy the Israelites for their horrible sin and start all over again with Moses to build a new nation. Moses pleaded for the people (as an intercessor) and God relented. He did not destroy the whole nation of Israel, but He did bring judgment on the worst of the lot by destroying about 3000 that day (this was done through the Levites who went about the camp slaying them at God's instruction).

It was one of the worst days in the history of the nation of Israel. God called the Israelites, "your people," speaking to Moses and separating Himself from them. He said He would send His angel to lead them forward, but He would not be in their midst. But Moses wasn't finished pleading for the people. He continued his work of intercession until God was back in their midst and called the people, "My people."

A Call to Love and Obedience

Deuteronomy 10:12 "And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you? He requires only that you fear the Lord your God, and live in a way that pleases him, and love him and serve him with all your heart and soul. **13** And you must always obey the Lord's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good.

14 "Look, the highest heavens and the earth and everything in it all belong to the Lord your God. **15** Yet the Lord chose your ancestors as the objects of his love. And he chose you, their descendants, above all other nations, as is evident today. **16** Therefore, change your hearts and stop being stubborn.

17 "For the Lord your God is the God of gods and Lord of lords. He is the great God, the mighty and awesome God, who shows no partiality and cannot be bribed. **18** He ensures that orphans and widows receive justice. He shows love to the foreigners living among you and gives them food and clothing. **19** So you, too, must show love to foreigners, for you yourselves were once foreigners in the land of Egypt. **20** You must fear the Lord your God and worship him and cling to him. Your oaths must be in his name alone. **21** He alone is your God, the only one who is worthy of your praise, the one who has done these mighty miracles that you have seen with your own eyes. **22** When your ancestors went down into Egypt, there were only seventy of them. But now the Lord your God has made you as numerous as the stars in the sky!

Israel was commanded to love the Lord their God with all of their heart and soul. They were to love Him because He had chosen them and brought them out of Egypt to be their God alone. God had delivered them and blessed them until they were now "*as numerous as the stars in the sky.*"

It was a great privilege to be chosen by God - but great responsibility was placed upon them as God's people. They had been stubborn, unbelieving, and rebellious. God said, "*change your hearts and stop being stubborn.*"

Deuteronomy Chapter 11

Deuteronomy 11:1 (NLT) “You must love the Lord your God and always obey his requirements, decrees, regulations, and commands. **2** Keep in mind that I am not talking now to your children, who have never experienced the discipline of the Lord your God or seen his greatness and his strong hand and powerful arm. **3** They didn’t see the miraculous signs and wonders he performed in Egypt against Pharaoh and all his land. **4** They didn’t see what the Lord did to the armies of Egypt and to their horses and chariots—how he drowned them in the Red Sea as they were chasing you. He destroyed them, and they have not recovered to this very day!

5 “Your children didn’t see how the Lord cared for you in the wilderness until you arrived here. **6** They didn’t see what he did to Dathan and Abiram (the sons of Eliab, a descendant of Reuben) when the earth opened its mouth in the Israelite camp and swallowed them, along with their households and tents and every living thing that belonged to them. **7** But you have seen the Lord perform all these mighty deeds with your own eyes!

There were two groups of people traveling in the camp now. The first group were those who were children and youth when the Lord delivered them from Egypt. As young people, they experienced the great deliverance from Egypt and the miracles in the desert. They saw the hand of the Lord against their parents who rebelled and complained. The second group are those who were born and grew up in the wilderness and who did not see the great deliverance from Egypt.

The older generation perished in the wilderness because of their unbelief and lack of faith and trust. Now, God commands His people to love Him. Love is a decision - not merely emotion. We can love the Lord because He has proven Himself to us.

John 14:15 says, *“If you love Me, keep My commandments.”* Real love for the Lord results in obedience.

The Blessings of Obedience

8 “Therefore, be careful to obey every command I am giving you today, so you may have strength to go in and take over the land you are about to enter. **9** If you obey, you will enjoy a long life in the land the Lord swore to give to your ancestors and to you, their descendants—a land flowing with milk and honey! **10** For the land you are about to enter and take over is not like the land of Egypt from which you came, where you planted your seed and made irrigation ditches with your foot as in a vegetable garden. **11** Rather, the land you will soon take over is a land of hills and valleys with plenty of rain— **12** a land that the Lord your God cares for. He watches over it through each season of the year!

13 “If you carefully obey the commands I am giving you today, and if you love the Lord your God and serve him with all your heart and soul, **14** then he will send the rains in their proper seasons—the early and late rains—so you can bring in your harvests of grain, new wine, and olive oil. **15** He will give you lush pastureland for your livestock, and you yourselves will have all you want to eat.

The Promised Land will be a blessed land. It is blessed and watched over by God Himself. In Egypt, the land was watered by irrigation ditches that man devised. In the Promised Land, the fruitfulness of the land was dependent on the rains from heaven.

A blessed land is the result of the obedience of God’s people - which is the result of loving the Lord. When God’s people are in the land loving the Lord and obeying His commands, then the land receives rain from the Lord and is productive.

The early rains prepare the soil for the seed. The late rains, or “the latter rains” fall when the crops are getting ready to ripen for the harvest.

Deuteronomy 11:16 “But be careful. Don’t let your heart be deceived so that you turn away from the Lord and serve and worship other gods. **17** If you do, the Lord’s anger will burn against you. He will shut up the sky and hold back the rain, and the ground will fail to produce its harvests. Then you will quickly die in that good land the Lord is giving you. . .

26 “Look, today I am giving you the choice between a blessing and a curse! **27** You will be blessed if you obey the commands of the Lord your God that I am giving you today. **28** But you will be cursed if you reject the commands of the Lord your God and turn away from him and worship gods you have not known before.

29 “When the Lord your God brings you into the land and helps you take possession of it, you must pronounce the blessing at Mount Gerizim and the curse at Mount Ebal. **30** (These two mountains are west of the Jordan River in the land of the Canaanites who live in the Jordan Valley, near the town of Gilgal, not far from the oaks of Moreh.) **31** For you are about to cross the Jordan River to take over the land the Lord your God is giving you. When you take that land and are living in it, **32** you must be careful to obey all the decrees and regulations I am giving you today.

Israel had a choice - between blessing and cursing. Blessing was theirs if they obeyed God’s commands. Cursing was theirs if they disobeyed and worshiped other gods. There was no “in-between.” It was either blessing or cursing.

In the near future, when they conquer the land, they are to proclaim on Mount Gerizim God’s blessings for obedience, and on Mount Ebal cursing for disobedience. They did exactly that under the leadership of Joshua (see Joshua 8:30-35).

Deuteronomy Chapter 12

The Lord’s Chosen Place for Worship

Deuteronomy 12:1 (NLT) “These are the decrees and regulations you must be careful to obey when you live in the land that the Lord, the God of your ancestors, is giving you. You must obey them as long as you live.

2 “When you drive out the nations that live there, you must destroy all the places where they worship their gods—high on the mountains, up on the hills, and under every green tree. **3** Break down their altars and smash their sacred pillars. Burn their Asherah poles and cut down their carved idols. Completely erase the names of their gods!

In order to worship the Lord, places of idol worship must be destroyed - or they will tempt the Israelites to worship pagan gods. In worshiping the idol gods of Canaan, the Canaanites desired fertility for themselves and their land. Therefore, the worship of these idols occurred in outdoor settings and involved lewd sexual practices - totally contrary to the worship of the one true God. The “high places” and “the groves” were places of idol worship.

4 “Do not worship the Lord your God in the way these pagan peoples worship their gods. **5** Rather, you must seek the Lord your God at the place of worship he himself will choose from among all the tribes—the place where his name will be honored. **6** There you will bring your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, your sacred offerings, your offerings to fulfill a vow, your voluntary offerings, and your offerings of the firstborn animals of your herds and flocks. **7** There you and your families will feast in the presence of the Lord your God, and you will rejoice in all you have accomplished because the Lord your God has blessed you.

The place of worship was not their choice. God will put His name on a certain place - and there they will worship. At this designated place they were to offer burnt offerings and other sacrifices. At this place they were to bring their tithes. This place was the place of atonement and vows and all of the devotion to the Lord their God. This place was the place for peace offerings (fellowship offerings) to be brought and then shared with family and friends in feasting and rejoicing.

Deuteronomy 12:8 "Your pattern of worship will change. Today all of you are doing as you please, **9** because you have not yet arrived at the place of rest, the land the Lord your God is giving you as your special possession. **10** But you will soon cross the Jordan River and live in the land the Lord your God is giving you. When he gives you rest from all your enemies and you're living safely in the land, **11** you must bring everything I command you—your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, your sacred offerings, and your offerings to fulfill a vow—to the designated place of worship, the place the Lord your God chooses for his name to be honored.

While wandering in the wilderness, the Israelites were not fully worshiping the way God wanted them to worship. This was because their worship was tied to the land. They were to bring offerings that were produced by the land. They were going to be blessed by God with abundant crops, flocks, and herds - and they were supposed to bring their tithe to the Lord's place of worship.

12 "You must celebrate there in the presence of the Lord your God with your sons and daughters and all your servants. And remember to include the Levites who live in your towns, for they will receive no allotment of land among you. **13** Be careful not to sacrifice your burnt offerings just anywhere you like. **14** You may do so only at the place the Lord will choose within one of your tribal territories. There you must offer your burnt offerings and do everything I command you.

15 "But you may butcher your animals and eat their meat in any town whenever you want. You may freely eat the animals with which the Lord your God blesses you. All of you, whether ceremonially clean or unclean, may eat that meat, just as you now eat gazelle and deer. **16** But you must not consume the blood. You must pour it out on the ground like water.

God makes a difference between animals that are offerings to the Lord and animals that are eaten for supper. Offerings must be brought to the place that the Lord chooses. Animals for supper may be eaten anywhere in the land.

17 "But you may not eat your offerings in your hometown—neither the tithe of your grain and new wine and olive oil, nor the firstborn of your flocks and herds, nor any offering to fulfill a vow, nor your voluntary offerings, nor your sacred offerings. **18** You must eat these in the presence of the Lord your God at the place he will choose. Eat them there with your children, your servants, and the Levites who live in your towns, celebrating in the presence of the Lord your God in all you do. **19** And be very careful never to neglect the Levites as long as you live in your land.

20 "When the Lord your God expands your territory as he has promised, and you have the urge to eat meat, you may freely eat meat whenever you want. **21** It might happen that the designated place of worship—the place the Lord your God chooses for his name to be honored—is a long way from your home. If so, you may butcher any of the cattle, sheep, or goats the Lord has given you, and you may freely eat the meat in your hometown, as I have commanded you. **22** Anyone, whether ceremonially clean or unclean, may eat that meat, just as you do now with gazelle and deer. **23** But never consume the blood, for the blood is the life, and you must not consume the lifeblood with the meat. **24** Instead, pour out the blood on the ground like water. **25** Do not consume the blood, so that all may go well with you and your children after you, because you will be doing what pleases the Lord.

The theme of respect for the blood, and the prohibition against eating blood began in Genesis and continues throughout God's word. It is not just a theme of the Law of Moses, but it is a continuing theme throughout Scripture. God told Noah:

Genesis 9:4 (NLT) But you must never eat any meat that still has the lifeblood in it.

In ancient times, the shedding of *animal blood* on an altar in sacrificial atonement for human sin was a temporary means of showing faith in God's promised redemption. This was necessary until the coming of Christ, the "*Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*" (John 1:29). The substitutionary taking of the "life" (that is, the blood) of an innocent, blemish-free animal symbolized the great price of salvation, forgiveness and reconciliation that would one day be paid by the Creator Himself, becoming man and willingly taking all our sins upon Himself.

Because life is in the blood, the Israelite was not to eat blood.

Deuteronomy 12:26 "Take your sacred gifts and your offerings given to fulfill a vow to the place the Lord chooses. **27** You must offer the meat and blood of your burnt offerings on the altar of the Lord your God. The blood of your other sacrifices must be poured out on the altar of the Lord your God, but you may eat the meat. **28** Be careful to obey all my commands, so that all will go well with you and your children after you, because you will be doing what is good and pleasing to the Lord your God.

29 "When the Lord your God goes ahead of you and destroys the nations and you drive them out and live in their land, **30** do not fall into the trap of following their customs and worshiping their gods. Do not inquire about their gods, saying, 'How do these nations worship their gods? I want to follow their example.' **31** You must not worship the Lord your God the way the other nations worship their gods, for they perform for their gods every detestable act that the Lord hates. They even burn their sons and daughters as sacrifices to their gods.

32 "So be careful to obey all the commands I give you. You must not add anything to them or subtract anything from them.

It is said that "curiosity killed the cat." The people of Israel were to have nothing to do with idol worship, and they were not to be curious about it. The people of Canaan who were about to be removed from the land committed detestable acts - the worst of which was child sacrifice. The god, Molech, required child sacrifice.

Unfortunately, in the future, Israel's kings would participate in the worship of Molech. King Solomon allowed a temple to be built to Molech. King Ahaz offered his own son to Molech. Later, King Manasseh offered his son to Molech. The worship of Molech occurred in both Israel and Judah.