

Adult Bible Class

The Book of Deuteronomy - Chapters 1-3

Introduction to the Book of Deuteronomy

The Book of Deuteronomy is the fifth of the Five Books of Moses - the Pentateuch. It was written about 1400 B.C. and is a series of "farewell addresses" by Moses to the people of Israel as they are about to enter the Promised Land and as Moses is about to die. What God had promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob centuries before is about to come to pass.

Moses and the Israelites left Egypt about 1440 B.C. Verse 1:3 says, *But forty years after the Israelites left Egypt, on the first day of the eleventh month, Moses addressed the people of Israel, telling them everything the Lord had commanded him to say.* Moses would die less than a month later, and the people would mourn for him for a month before entering the Promised Land.

Deuteronomy states that there is a second chance for Israel. Israel's unbelief and their disloyalty to God prevented the conquest of Canaan nearly forty years earlier. Most of the people that were now camped on the plains of Moab had not witnessed the crossing of the Red Sea nor the fire of God at Mt. Sinai - they were born and grew up during the wilderness wanderings. Therefore, Moses exhorts them to go in and possess the land that the Lord has given them.

Moses reminds them of their history up to this point. He reminds them of their covenant with Jehovah God. Their greatest temptation ahead will be to worship the idol gods of Canaan. Obedience to the one, true God will result in life, blessing, health, and prosperity. Disobedience will result in death, cursing, disease, and poverty. The book of Deuteronomy is so powerful that it is quoted over 80 times in the New Testament.

The key message of Deuteronomy is obedience and loyalty.

Deut. 10:12 (NLT) "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.

The Book of Deuteronomy, Chapter 1

Introduction to Moses' First Address

Deuteronomy 1:1 (NLT) These are the words that Moses spoke to all the people of Israel while they were in the wilderness east of the Jordan River. They were camped in the Jordan Valley . . .

Israel was camped on the plains of Moab on the east side of the Jordan River. They could see the Promised Land on the other side. This was the land that was promised to Abraham 470 years previously (see Galatians 3:16-17).

The word *Deuteronomy* means “second law,” and this book was the second presentation of the Law of Moses (the first time it was given at Mount Sinai). The Law needed to be restated because the adult generation that came out of Egypt had perished in the wilderness. Many of those now ready to cross Jordan River were born in the wilderness. The Law needed to be given once again.

Deuteronomy 1:2 Normally it takes only eleven days to travel from Mount Sinai to Kadesh-barnea. . . **3** But forty years after the Israelites left Egypt, on the first day of the eleventh month, Moses addressed the people of Israel, telling them everything the Lord had commanded him to say. . . **5** While the Israelites were in the land of Moab east of the Jordan River, Moses carefully explained the Lord’s instructions as follows.

Kadesh-Barnea was the place on the edge of the Promised Land where Moses sent out the twelve spies (Numbers 13 - 14). When they returned, ten gave an evil report and the people - full of fear and unbelief - refused to go into the Promised Land. What should have been an eleven day journey became forty years of wandering and waiting for those age twenty and older to die. A new generation of faith was to take their place. Moses was ready to teach them the Law of God.

The Command to Leave Sinai

6 “When we were at Mount Sinai, the Lord our God said to us, ‘You have stayed at this mountain long enough. 7 It is time to break camp and move on. Go to the hill country of the Amorites and to all the neighboring regions. . . Go to the land of the Canaanites and to Lebanon, and all the way to the great Euphrates River. 8 Look, I am giving all this land to you! Go in and occupy it, for it is the land the Lord swore to give to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and to all their descendants.’”

The Israelites were camped at Mount Sinai for one year - and God said that was enough. They had received the law. They had built the Tabernacle. They had anointed the priests and Levites. They had numbered the fighting men. They had numbered the Levites. Now, they were ready to go and conquer the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Moses Appoints Leaders from Each Tribe

9 Moses continued, “At that time I told you, ‘You are too great a burden for me to carry all by myself. **10** The Lord your God has increased your population, making you as numerous as the stars!. . . **12** But you are such a heavy load to carry! How can I deal with all your problems and bickering? **13** Choose some well-respected men from each tribe who are known for their wisdom and understanding, and I will appoint them as your leaders.’

14 “Then you responded, ‘Your plan is a good one.’ **15** So I took the wise and respected men you had selected from your tribes and appointed them to serve as judges and officials over you. Some were responsible for a thousand people, some for a hundred, some for fifty, and some for ten.

16 “At that time I instructed the judges, ‘You must hear the cases of your fellow Israelites and the foreigners living among you. Be perfectly fair in your decisions **17** and impartial in your judgments. Hear the cases of those who are poor as well as those who are rich. Don’t be afraid of anyone’s anger, for the decision you make is God’s decision. Bring me any cases that are too difficult for you, and I will handle them.’

18 “At that time I gave you instructions about everything you were to do.

Moses appointed elders in Numbers 11, and here he is retelling the story. The people brought all of their problems to Moses. The elders stood with Moses and helped to bear the burden of the people.

Scouts Explore the Land

Deuteronomy 1:19 "Then. . .we left Mount Sinai and traveled through the great and terrifying wilderness. . .and headed toward the hill country of the Amorites. When we arrived at Kadesh-barnea, **20** I said to you. . . **21** Look! He has placed the land in front of you. Go and occupy it as the Lord, the God of your ancestors, has promised you. Don't be afraid! Don't be discouraged!

22 "But you all came to me and said, 'First, let's send out scouts to explore the land for us. They will advise us on the best route to take and which towns we should enter.'

23 "This seemed like a good idea to me, so I chose twelve scouts, one from each of your tribes. **24** They headed for the hill country. . .and explored it. **25** They picked some of its fruit and brought it back to us. And they reported, 'The land the Lord our God has given us is indeed a good land.'

After the people left Mount Sinai, they headed for Kadesh-Barnea where the twelve spies were sent out. Notice that it was the people's idea to send out the spies, and Moses agreed. There really was no reason to send out the spies. God said that the land was good and that they could conquer it.

Israel's Rebellion against the Lord

26 "But you rebelled against the command of the Lord your God and refused to go in. **27** You complained in your tents and said, 'The Lord must hate us. That's why he has brought us here from Egypt—to hand us over to the Amorites to be slaughtered. **28** Where can we go? Our brothers have demoralized us with their report. They tell us, "The people of the land are taller and more powerful than we are, and their towns are large, with walls rising high into the sky! We even saw giants there—the descendants of Anak!"'

29 "But I said to you, 'Don't be shocked or afraid of them! **30** The Lord your God is going ahead of you. He will fight for you, just as you saw him do in Egypt. **31** And you saw how the Lord your God cared for you all along the way as you traveled through the wilderness, just as a father cares for his child. Now he has brought you to this place.'

32 "But even after all he did, you refused to trust the Lord your God, **33** who goes before you looking for the best places to camp, guiding you with a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of cloud by day.

34 "When the Lord heard your complaining, he became very angry. So he solemnly swore, **35** 'Not one of you from this wicked generation will live to see the good land I swore to give your ancestors, **36** except Caleb son of Jephunneh. He will see this land because he has followed the Lord completely. I will give to him and his descendants some of the very land he explored during his scouting mission.'

37 "And the Lord was also angry with me because of you. He said to me, 'Moses, not even you will enter the Promised Land! **38** Instead, your assistant, Joshua son of Nun, will lead the people into the land. Encourage him, for he will lead Israel as they take possession of it. **39** I will give the land to your little ones—your innocent children. You were afraid they would be captured, but they will be the ones who occupy it. **40** As for you, turn around now and go on back through the wilderness toward the Red Sea.'

The Israelites themselves were their own enemy in this situation. They had a clear promise from God. They were right at the border of receiving it. God had provided every need so far. However, instead of looking forward in faith, they

looked at the obstacles ahead with doubt, murmuring, and unbelief. They looked backward to Egypt instead of forward to Canaan. They actually thought it would be easier and more advantageous to go back to Egypt than to go forward to Canaan. They said things that were wicked. We should be careful what words come out of our mouths regarding the promises of God. Our words can condemn us just as the words of the people of Israel condemned them.

It is an affront to God when we lift our difficulties higher than His ability. It is an affront to God when we deny His promises and view only potential problems.

Psalm 95:11 says concerning this moment, *“So I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter my rest.’”* Hebrews 3:18-19 says, *“And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.”*

Deuteronomy 1:41 “Then you confessed, ‘We have sinned against the Lord! We will go into the land and fight for it, as the Lord our God has commanded us.’ So your men strapped on their weapons, thinking it would be easy to attack the hill country.

42 “But the Lord told me to tell you, ‘Do not attack, for I am not with you. If you go ahead on your own, you will be crushed by your enemies.’

43 “This is what I told you, but you would not listen. Instead, you again rebelled against the Lord’s command and arrogantly went into the hill country to fight. **44** But the Amorites who lived there came out against you like a swarm of bees. They chased and battered you all the way from Seir to Hormah. **45** Then you returned and wept before the Lord, but he refused to listen. **46** So you stayed there at Kadesh for a long time.

God’s timing is important. The Israelites at first refused the promise of God for that moment. Then, when God disciplined them and told them to return to the wilderness, they decided to finally obey His previous command - but it was too late. The window of opportunity was lost. Israel went forth in the flesh, not in obedience, and their willfulness cost many of them their lives.

Chapter 2 - Remembering Israel’s Wanderings

Deuteronomy 2:1 (NLT) “Then we turned around and headed back across the wilderness toward the Red Sea, just as the Lord had instructed me, and we wandered around in the region of Mount Seir for a long time.

Nearly forty years passed. The generation of unbelief had to die in the wilderness, and a new generation would have their chance at Kadesh. The wilderness period was necessary before entering into that place of rest.

2 “Then at last the Lord said to me, **3** ‘You have been wandering around in this hill country long enough; turn to the north. **4** Give these orders to the people: “You will pass through the country belonging to your relatives the Edomites, the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir. The Edomites will feel threatened, so be careful. **5** Do not bother them, for I have given them all the hill country around Mount Seir as their property, and I will not give you even one square foot of their land. **6** If you need food to eat or water to drink, pay them for it. **7** For the Lord your God has blessed you in everything you have done. He has watched your every step through this great wilderness. During these forty years, the Lord your God has been with you, and you have lacked nothing.”

The Edomites were the descendants of Esau, Jacob's brother, and were therefore relatives of the Israelites. God gave the Edomites their land, and the Israelites were not to bother them.

Deuteronomy 2:8 "So we bypassed the territory of our relatives, the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir . . .

"Then as we turned north along the desert route through Moab, **9** the Lord warned us, 'Do not bother the Moabites, the descendants of Lot, or start a war with them. I have given them Ar as their property, and I will not give you any of their land.'"

10 (A race of giants called the Emites had once lived in the area of Ar . . .

The Moabites were also distant relatives of Israel. They were descended from Lot, Abraham's nephew. Again, Israel was commanded to leave them alone.

13 Moses continued, "Then the Lord said to us, 'Get moving. Cross the Zered Brook.' So we crossed the brook.

14 "Thirty-eight years passed from the time we first left Kadesh-barnea until we finally crossed the Zered Brook! By then, all the men old enough to fight in battle had died in the wilderness, as the Lord had vowed would happen. **15** The Lord struck them down until they had all been eliminated from the community.

16 "When all the men of fighting age had died, **17** the Lord said to me, **18** 'Today you will cross the border of Moab at Ar **19** and enter the land of the Ammonites, the descendants of Lot. But do not bother them or start a war with them. I have given the land of Ammon to them as their property, and I will not give you any of their land.'"

20 (That area was once considered the land of the Rephaites, who had lived there, though the Ammonites call them Zamzummites. **21** They were also as strong and numerous and tall as the Anakites. But the Lord destroyed them so the Ammonites could occupy their land. . . .

More relatives of Israel - the Ammonites - and Israel was again commanded to leave them alone. Several words describing giants are used above - Rephaites (or *rephaim*) which means "fearsome ones," Emites (or *Emim* from verse 10), Zamzummites (or Zamzummin), and Anakites (or Anakim).

24 Moses continued, "Then the Lord said, 'Now get moving! Cross the Arnon Gorge. Look, I will hand over to you Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and I will give you his land. Attack him and begin to occupy the land. **25** Beginning today I will make people throughout the earth terrified because of you. When they hear reports about you, they will tremble with dread and fear.'"

Victory over Sihon of Heshbon

26 Moses continued, "From the wilderness of Kedemoth I sent ambassadors to King Sihon of Heshbon with this proposal of peace:

27 'Let us travel through your land. We will stay on the main road and won't turn off into the fields on either side. **28** Sell us food to eat and water to drink, and we will pay for it. All we want is permission to pass through your land . . .

30 "But King Sihon of Heshbon refused to allow us to pass through, because the Lord your God made Sihon stubborn and defiant so he could help you defeat him, as he has now done.

Deuteronomy 2:31 "Then the Lord said to me, 'Look, I have begun to hand King Sihon and his land over to you. Begin now to conquer and occupy his land.'

32 "Then King Sihon declared war on us and mobilized his forces at Jahaz. **33** But the Lord our God handed him over to us, and we crushed him, his sons, and all his people . . .

Sihon, king of the Amorites would not allow Israel to pass. Therefore, God used this opportunity to judge the Amorites, and they were completely and totally defeated.

36 "The Lord our God also helped us conquer Aroer on the edge of the Arnon Gorge, and the town in the gorge, and the whole area as far as Gilead. No town had walls too strong for us. **37** However, we avoided the land of the Ammonites all along the Jabbok River and the towns in the hill country—all the places the Lord our God had commanded us to leave alone.

Nearly forty years ago when Israel sent out the spies, ten came back with an evil report of giants and walled cities. But now both giants and walled cities were no problem for Israel.

Chapter 3 - Victory Over Og of Bashan

Deuteronomy 3:1 (NLT) "Next we turned and headed for the land of Bashan, where King Og and his entire army attacked us at Edrei. **2** But the Lord told me, 'Do not be afraid of him, for I have given you victory over Og and his entire army, and I will give you all his land. Treat him just as you treated King Sihon of the Amorites, who ruled in Heshbon.'

3 "So the Lord our God handed King Og and all his people over to us. . . **4** We conquered all sixty of his towns. . . Not a single town escaped our conquest. **5** These towns were all fortified with high walls and barred gates. . . **6** We completely destroyed the kingdom of Bashan, just as we had destroyed King Sihon of Heshbon. . .

8 "So we took the land of the two Amorite kings east of the Jordan River—all the way from the Arnon Gorge to Mount Hermon . . . **10** We had now conquered all the cities on the plateau and all Gilead and Bashan. . . which were part of Og's kingdom in Bashan. **11** (King Og of Bashan was the last survivor of the giant Rephaites. His bed was made of iron and was more than thirteen feet long and six feet wide. It can still be seen in the Ammonite city of Rabbah.)

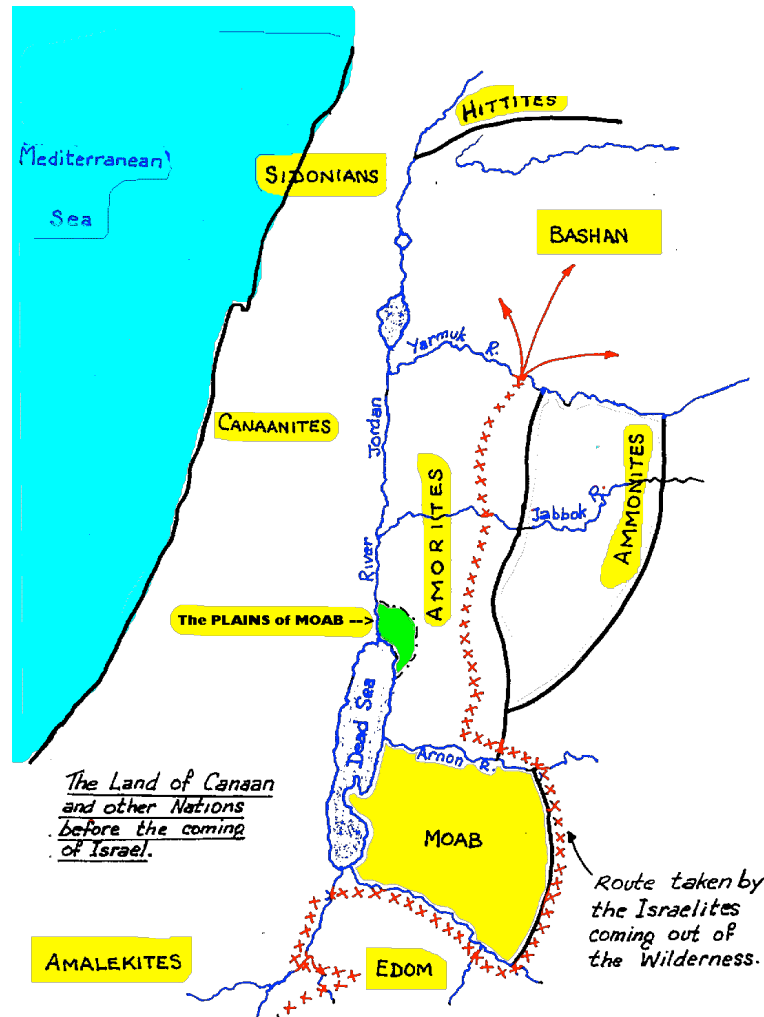
God gave these bordering nations a chance to let His people pass through. The Israelites offered to pay for any food or water used on the way. However, these nations attacked Israel, and Israel counter-attacked and completely destroyed them. We saw this happen with Amalek in the south and the Amorites and Bashan to the east.

When Israel finally crossed over into Canaan, they were to *attack* and completely destroy those nations living there. However, these nations that border Canaan were given a chance. When *they* attacked Israel, they lost their chance to live peacefully beside them.

Land Division East of the Jordan

12 "When we took possession of this land, I gave to the tribes of Reuben and Gad the territory beyond Aroer along the Arnon Gorge, plus half of the hill country of Gilead with its towns. **13** Then I gave the rest of Gilead and all of Bashan—Og's former kingdom—to the half-tribe of Manasseh. (This entire Argob region of Bashan used to be known as the land of the Rephaites.)

Deuteronomy 2:15 I gave Gilead to the clan of Makir. **16** But I also gave part of Gilead to the tribes of Reuben and Gad. The area I gave them extended from the middle of the Arnon Gorge in the south to the Jabbok River on the Ammonite frontier. **17** They also received the Jordan Valley, all the way from the Sea of Galilee down to the Dead Sea, with the Jordan River serving as the western boundary. To the east were the slopes of Pisgah.



18 "At that time I gave this command to the tribes that would live east of the Jordan: 'Although the Lord your God has given you this land as your property, all your fighting men must cross the Jordan ahead of your Israelite relatives, armed and ready to assist them. **19** Your wives, children, and numerous livestock, however, may stay behind in the towns I have given you. **20** When the Lord has given security to the rest of the Israelites, as he has to you, and when they occupy the land the Lord your God is giving them across the Jordan River, then you may all return here to the land I have given you.'

The two and a half tribes (Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh) saw that the land on the east side of the Jordan River was good for pasture. They asked to have this land for their own. God allowed it if they would help their brethren conquer the Promised Land on the other side of the Jordan.

Moses Forbidden to Enter the Land

21 "At that time I gave Joshua this charge: 'You have seen for yourself everything the Lord your God has done to these two kings. He will do the same to all the kingdoms on the west side of the Jordan. **22** Do not be afraid of the nations there, for the Lord your God will fight for you.'

When Israel conquered the two kings on the east side of the Jordan that had attacked them, they learned that God would give the victory if they obeyed Him. God would do the same after they entered the Promised Land.

Deuteronomy 2:23 "At that time I pleaded with the Lord and said, **24** 'O Sovereign Lord, you have only begun to show your greatness and the strength of your hand to me, your servant. Is there any god in heaven or on earth who can perform such great and mighty deeds as you do? **25** Please let me cross the Jordan to see the wonderful land on the other side, the beautiful hill country and the Lebanon mountains.'

God had been merciful. He had granted the request of the tribes of Reuben and Gad to remain on the east side of Jordan. Moses asked Him once again, "*Please let me cross Jordan to see the wonderful land.*" But it was not to be. Moses had disobeyed God at Meribah (Numbers 20) by striking the rock instead of speaking to it. God would not relent. Moses would not enter in.

26 "But the Lord was angry with me because of you, and he would not listen to me. 'That's enough!' he declared. 'Speak of it no more. **27** But go up to Pisgah Peak, and look over the land in every direction. Take a good look, but you may not cross the Jordan River. **28** Instead, commission Joshua and encourage and strengthen him, for he will lead the people across the Jordan. He will give them all the land you now see before you as their possession.' **29** So we stayed in the valley near Beth-peor.

Though it seems especially harsh that God would not allow Moses to enter in, yet we see a wonderful picture. The Law (Moses) could not do what Jesus Christ did. Joshua would lead the people to victorious living. Joshua's name is the same name as Jesus (*Joshua* is from Hebrew and *Jesus* is from Greek). Both names are the same and mean "Jehovah is salvation."

Jesus leads us to victorious Christian living and heaven. Yes, there will be battles to fight, but God has promised us the victory.

Romans 8:3 (NKJV) For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God *did* by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, **4** that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Galatians 2:16 (NKJV) knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. . . **19** For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. **20** I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. **21** I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness *comes* through the law, then Christ died in vain."