

## Deuteronomy Study

This study is designed to help you understand Deuteronomy's themes and its relationship to the rest of the Old Testament. You will read the entire book, parceled out in sections. The *New International Version Study Bible* is the recommended Bible as its notes are extremely helpful.

### Part 1 – Preamble and Historical Prologue

Read chapters 1-4:43.

- a. What do you learn about Israel's faithlessness?
- b. What do you learn about God's faithfulness?
- c. How does this historical review prepare the Israelites to take possession of the land be faithful to God, their protector, provider, shepherd?
- d. If you have maps, study the geographical features to understand the physical context of Deuteronomy.

### Part 2 – The Ten Commandments and God's Grace

Read chapters 4: 44-11:32

- a. Find verses that contain any of the three following themes:
  1. "Because of who God is"... (What does God say about himself?)
  2. "We love and obey him"... (Commands God issues to the Israelites)
  3. "For our own good." (Promised blessings if Israelites obey)

For example, Deut. 7:9 – "Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God. (#1)

Deut. 7:11 – "Therefore, take care to follow the commands, decrees and laws I give you today." (#2)

Deut. 7:13 – "He will love and bless you and increase your numbers..." (#3)

- b. What do you learn about God's character?
- c. What do you see as logical responses to God's character?
- d. How does this pattern of God's initiation, Israel's response of obedience, and the subsequent blessings parallel in the life of the New Testament Christian?

### Part 3 – Covenant Stipulations

Read chapters 12-26: As you read, try not to get stuck in understanding every law. Remember that these laws were written for another era and nation. You will not understand it all, but reflect on what seems to be God's priorities: What or who is being protected or restricted, encouraged or discouraged? What rights or responsibilities are embedded? What moral principles or values did this law embody? What seems to be close to God's heart?

- a. Choose one or two priorities or values God is concerned about and write a summary with examples. Find corollary principles in the New Testament for the Christian and meditate on potential current applications.
- b. Read the book of Ruth, focusing on Boaz. How did he follow the laws? How did God bless Boaz?

#### Part 4 – Blessings and Cursings /Moses’ Song

Read chapters 27-34

- a. Blessings and Cursings – While chapter 28 might be the most difficult chapter in Deuteronomy for us modern readers, a list of explicit curses is what is *expected* by the vassal. Many of the curses recorded in Deuteronomy are identical to those in secular treaties.<sup>1</sup>
  1. Summarize the curses and blessings.
  2. vs. 30:11—what does God mean? (Hint: this verse is not about salvation.)
  3. Read 1 Kings 17:1, 1 Chronicles 21:12, Jeremiah 14:12, Jeremiah 24:10. See the pattern of how the curses come to pass when Israel rebels against God’s loving rulership. The entire book of Judges chronicles cycles of rebellion, curses, and redemption. (The book of Ruth is the narrative of Messianic hope set in the time of Judges.)
- b. Chapter 32: Moses’ Song—The first part of the song (vs. 1-25) is in the form of a *riv*, a structured lawsuit, which was used in the Ancient Near East when a vassal is accused of disloyalty. This structure is found in other Old Testament passages, such as in Isaiah and Hosea. This structure, however, is expanded by God for divine reflection and deliberation. As you read Moses’ Song, put in your own words what God is saying in each of the following suggested sections.<sup>2</sup>
  1. 1-6            Introduction, summoning of witnesses, case stated
  2. 7-14          The prosecutor’s speech; historical review
  3. 15-18        The specific indictment
  4. 19-26        The sentence
  5. 27-33        An act of lamentation
  6. 34            The judge’s deliberation
  7. 35-42        The decision following deliberation (note vs. 36’s grace)
  8. 43            Concluding doxology

<sup>1</sup> Wright, Christopher W. *Deuteronomy*, New International Commentary Series, Peabody: Hendrickson Publishing, 1996, pg. 280.

<sup>2</sup> These sections were created by Wiebe, J.M., “The Form, Setting and Meaning of the Song of Moses.” *Studia Biblica et Theologica* 17 (1988), pp. 119-63.