

Bible Study # 18
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Mr. John Ogwyn

Old Testament Series—Deuteronomy

With the study this evening, we **are wrapping up the five books of the Law**. The first five books, the books of Moses, serve as a basis for understanding what comes after. We have spent quite a bit of time on Genesis because that is the basis; that is the beginning. “Deuteronomy” means “the second law.” It is derived from the Latin name of the book that in turn was derived from the Greek translation. It is called a second giving of the law. It was not entirely a second giving of the law; it was not some different law—it was a reiteration.

What you have to understand, the book of Deuteronomy focuses on Moses’ final instructions to the people as they were there in the plains of Jordan. This was just prior to Moses’ death, in the closing weeks, perhaps the last few months of Moses’ life. We have recorded several addresses Moses made to the people, particularly two or three lengthy sermons and several shorter admonitions. They were put together and recorded here.

We are looking at a generation that had been children at the coming out of Egypt. You might stop and think—if all of the older generation, the generation that came out of Egypt died, if all the adults died (except Joshua and Caleb—remember they were the only two), you know what that means? That means there wasn’t anybody in this crowd, other than Joshua and Caleb, who were sixty years of age or older. The adults were counted from twenty years of age and up. Everyone who was age twenty and up when they came out of Egypt, which had been forty years earlier, had died in the wilderness, except Joshua and Caleb.

The only ones that are there are those who were either teenagers or younger at the time of the Exodus. They simply did not have a clear recollection of many of the most momentous events. Many of them had not even been born. Anybody who was the age of forty or younger had not even been born at the time of the Exodus. You’re looking at only that group between ages fifty and sixty who would even have any memory or very much detailed memory of the most memorable events. Unless a child was up in age, close to ten years of age, their real understanding of the events going on would have been somewhat hazy. Obviously, if things were

dramatic enough, it would have made an impression upon them, but it would not be a generation with clear understanding and a really clear-cut memory of events. Understand that now we have a generation that is preparing to enter the Promised Land, but it is not primarily the generation that came out of Egypt. It is the children, the grandchildren and, in some cases, the great grandchildren of those who came out of Egypt. God has told Moses that he’s going to die.

The book of Numbers makes a couple of things plain as we focused on last Bible study. The book of Numbers has to do with the journeying through the wilderness, and it contains information that God’s people need to know because it parallels our journey in the Christian life.

One of the things it **focuses on is respect for God’s government**. That’s an important lesson that we have to learn. We must learn to trust God, to look to Him and to respect His government. God’s government in this age through human beings is imperfectly administered. If we can learn to respect God’s government, when it is imperfectly administered, we certainly won’t have any problem on out into eternity, when it is being perfectly administered. God could ensure that everything was done perfectly right, here and right now, if that was His primary aim, but God has chosen to work through human beings, human instruments.

We have to learn to see beyond the human instrument to see God. Those who dropped out in the wilderness didn’t see beyond Moses to see God. All they saw was one old man, and they said, ‘Who does he think he is?’ They began to nitpick and find fault with him. They didn’t like the way he said things or they didn’t like this or that.

Someone else comes along promising them a new deal, and you know how politicians are—they all promise a new deal. Generally, it turns out to be the same old deal, but people don’t pick up on that. They keep going back. Every so many years, they are going to elect a new reformed candidate, and he’s going to reform everything. Of course, if the reforms lasted, why do we have to keep going back and get a new reformer every few years? We will notice some admonitions to secular rulers a little bit later, and we will notice that God foresaw what the problems were going to be.

We saw in Numbers that there was an emphasis on government. While, on the one hand, God would not tolerate the people rebelling against

those He had set in charge, such as Moses, God also made plain another point—the fact that He would deal with those whom He had set in charge. If they made mistakes, God would correct them. God would deal with them.

Moses made a mistake. Moses handled something in a way that God felt it was necessary to make a point to Moses and to the people—no one is above the law. God is merciful; God loves and forgives. But Moses had to learn a lesson. Moses was not allowed to enter the Promised Land because he got carried away and made the mistake. He focused the people's attention on himself and not on God. 'Must we give you water to drink again?' —Whack—he struck the rock when God had told him to speak to the rock. Moses got upset, and even though he was the meekest man in all the earth, he lost his temper one time. As a result God said, 'You're not going to enter the Promised Land.' Moses accepted God's will in the subject. God deals with and corrects His servants. It's not that God's servants never make mistakes, but *God will correct*. That is also an important lesson in the book of Numbers.

I mention these things, brethren, because you know what we are going to see when we get to the book of Joshua? We are going to see that Israel served God all the days of Joshua and the elders that outlived him, but then they didn't serve God because the lesson of history is: people never learn the lesson of history, and they keep going back and making the same mistakes over and over.

It's important that we understand. I'm here to tell you, if we don't learn the lessons—the lessons that are recorded here, the lessons that some brethren who used to be among us didn't grasp and understand from the Bible—they wound up rewriting the same story. We are going to soon be approaching the time when a generation will have come that, at that time, simply never went through and experienced the things that we went through and experienced in the Church. And if you don't learn the lesson, brethren, the next generation will turn around and do the same things. People, every generation, keep thinking they can come up with a new idea. They have a new way of doing it. Brethren, *the devil's way has been around for a long time*, and he keeps selling people on the idea that there's something new under the sun. There's nothing new under the sun, not when it comes to human nature and the approaches that people have. So it's important, and I want to keep focusing on that because it's important that

we understand how relevant some of these things are to us.

What we have in Deuteronomy is Moses now reminding the generation that is getting ready to enter the Promised Land. He goes back and rehearses the story. In effect, he asked them the question, 'Why are we here?' Some of you who have been around for a while will remember how Mr. Herbert Armstrong used to always start out with and go back to 'Why are we here?' He would start at the beginning and come all the way back down. That's what Moses does right here. If you read the first few chapters, Moses goes back and rehearses the events of how it was they came to be where they were because he knew it was important. Here was a group who was getting ready to cross the Jordan. He knew it was important that they understand why they were there and how they got there—that they didn't somehow get there on their own. He rehearses certain of these events. It's kind of a review.

Most of Deuteronomy chapters 1-4 are a historical review. Then we have a second discourse that Moses gives beginning in the latter part of chapter 4 and continuing through chapter 26 that focuses on laws by which Israel was to live. It is a summation of many of the points that had been covered. It is summarized from a layman's standpoint, not in the technical way that certain of the instructions in Exodus and Leviticus were given, which was written primarily for the priests.

There are portions of Exodus and Leviticus that were written primarily for the priests, which gave a lot of technical detail because those were things the priests needed to understand. Why are all these technical things on the rituals set down? Well, there were priests that were supposed to perform those things, and if the details of it were not written down, right down to the last "jot" and "tittle," how would they know what they were supposed to do? Those things were more technical in nature and were written primarily focusing from a priestly standpoint.

But Deuteronomy is to summarize principles for the people, and this was something that was to be read and re-read by the people to summarize things for their information. It brings material up to date; it addresses some things that simply had not been issues in the forty years in the wilderness. But now they were getting ready to embark on another way of life. They had been wandering in the wilderness for forty years, and now they would have a settled lifestyle. There was a great job before them—the conquest of the

land. The stage needed to be set, and the heart of the book is a reiteration of many of these laws.

Deuteronomy chapters 27—30 are more in the line of warnings and predictions. As Moses begins to look down the road, he tells them what's going to happen when they do what they ought to do and when they don't do what they ought to do. He can already look down the road and knows that their human nature is not any different than that of their forebears who had not learned the lessons that they should have learned. Moses kind of sets the stage of warning them about what lies ahead.

Deuteronomy 32 contains a song, the song of Moses. It is interesting. Because when you read in Revelation 15, you find that we are going to learn the song of Moses. It talks about the fact of the firstfruits singing the song of Moses. We will note some things as we go through it—what it focuses on. There are a couple songs of Moses that are recorded here: one in Exodus right after the Exodus (Exodus 15) and then the song of Moses here in Deuteronomy 32.

Then in the latter part of chapter 32 and through chapter 33, we have Moses' final charge to the people and the leaders in his farewell.

Deuteronomy 34 is simply a summation of Moses' death—in effect, his obituary. It's kind of a postscript. Obviously, Moses didn't write this; it's the account of his death. This was added in by his successor Joshua who wrote a statement of the events surrounding Moses' death. The end of Deuteronomy was the logical place to conclude the story; then we go to the book of Joshua. It is important that we understand this.

Deuteronomy provides a summary of God's law and an overview of what Israel's relationship with God was to be. One of the things that some of the commentators have noted is the fact that Deuteronomy, in terms of its format, follows the style of the Covenant treaties that were extant back at this time in history, the second millennium B.C. There was a particular legal style just as we have a certain legal form that is used in documents today.

There was a particular legal form that was common in this Middle Eastern area during the second century B.C. It was a particular legal style that followed a treaty made by a great king or ruler with his vassal subjects. It was a particular style of writing where there was a preamble, basically a historical review of the relationship, the terms of the relationship and the warnings of what was going to happen if the relationship was not faithfully followed. This was a particular document style.

Many commentators have noticed that Deuteronomy follows that style and, in that sense, it is marked as a legal document, a restatement of the Covenant for the generation that was going to enter the Promised Land. That generation had not really been of age when the Covenant had been made. The Covenant was being rehearsed for the benefit of the next generation.

Deuteronomy 1:1-2, “These are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel on this side of the Jordan in the wilderness, in the plain opposite Suph, between Paran, Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Dizahab. It is eleven days' journey from Horeb by the way of Mount Seir unto Kadesh-Barnea.” Kadesh-Barnea is the area of Petra; there is a lot of historical detail that we can go into to prove it. The term “Kadesh-Barnea” literally means “the holy place of the children of wandering.” It is holy because God placed His presence there, and that's literally what “Kadesh-Barnea” means. “Kadesh” has to do with “holy”; “bar” means “son of”; “nea” comes from a term that means “to wander, wanderers.”

Verse 3, “Now it came to pass in the fortieth year, the eleventh month on the first day of the month that Moses spoke to the children of Israel according to all that the Lord had given him as commandments to them” Here we have the final days before Israel crossed the Jordan because we will note that they crossed the Jordan just prior to the Passover. It is made plain that they crossed the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month (Joshua 4:19), so here we are on the first day of the eleventh month. It was just a matter of two months and ten days before they crossed the Jordan, right within sight of entering the Promised Land.

Verse 3 (latter part), “...Moses spoke unto the children of Israel according to all that the Lord had given him as commandments to them.” Moses begins to rehearse.

Verse 5, “On this side of the Jordan in the land of Moab, Moses began to explain this law, saying.”

The first five verses are a kind of preamble that sets the stage; then the historical review begins.

Verses 6-9, “The Lord our God spoke to us in Horeb saying, “You have dwelt long enough at this mountain. Turn and take your journey, and go to the mountains of the Amorites, to all the neighboring places in the plain, in the mountains and in the lowland, in the South and on the seacoast, to the land of the Canaanites and to Lebanon, as far as the great river, the River Euphrates. See, I have set the land before you; go

in and possess the land which the Lord swore to your fathers—to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—to give to them and their descendants after them.” And I spoke to you at that time, saying, “I alone am not able to bear you.””

Here Moses begins to go back and rehearse the events at Mount Sinai giving the Law and explaining the fact that God told them to go in—it was now time to go in.

In vv. 12-18, he is rehearsing with them the background as to how the governmental structure came into existence, and how he wasn't able to handle it all by himself. God had given instructions as to how it was to be done. There was to be organization and structure set. There were to be captains, the captain system.

His charge to the judges at that time had been to, vv. 16-17, “...Hear the cases between your brethren, and judge righteously between a man and his brother or the stranger who is with him. You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small as well as the great...” There was to be one standard, and it certainly created disrespect when more than one standard was applied. So this is reiterated.

Verse 19, “So we departed from Horeb, and went through all that great and terrible wilderness which you saw on the way to the mountains of the Amorites, as the Lord our God had commanded us. Then we came to Kadesh-Barnea.”

Verses 22-29 rehearse the fact they sent the twelve spies in and how the people decided that they couldn't go up. He is rehearsing the story of how they came to wander in the wilderness. He is going back and telling the story.

Verse 30, notice what God had told the Israelites about fighting the inhabitants, “The Lord your God who goes before you, He will fight for you, according to all that He did for you in Egypt, before your eyes.” This is a point to understand: if Israel had been faithful to God, God would have fought their battles.

Verse 32, “Yet, for all that, you did not believe the Lord your God.” Because Israel didn't trust God, they wound up having to do many things that they would not otherwise have had to do. It would have been unnecessary for people to have fought and gone to war if Israel as a nation had trusted God. They did not trust God; they didn't really rely on God in faith. God then used them as His physical instrument to do those things. We will see later on what God had really proposed to do. He would have sent hornets in and things like that, and simply driven the people out. But many times Israel did things the hard

way. He reiterates that Joshua and Caleb were the only two who were faithful (vv. 35-38).

They stayed there in Kadesh-Barnea, the area of Petra, and they then turned and took their journey into the wilderness by way of the Red Sea (v. 40). It goes through and describes this wandering.

Deuteronomy 2:1-13 describes their encounters with the Edomites and the Amorites in the land of Bashan and Gilead.

Deuteronomy 2:14, “And the time we took to come from Kadesh-Barnea until we crossed over the Valley of the Zered was thirty-eight years...”

Deuteronomy 3:12-15, “And this land, which we possessed at that time, from Aroer, which is by the River Arnon, and half the mountains of Gilead and its cities, I have to the Reubenites and the Gadites. The rest of Gilead, and all Bashan, the kingdom of Og, I gave to the half tribe of Manasseh. (All the region of Argob, with all Bashan, was called the land of the giants. Jair the son of Manasseh took all the region of Argob, as far as the border of Geshurites and the Maachathites, and called Bashan after his own name, Havoth Jair, to this day.) And I gave Gilead to Machir.”

Machir was one of the sons of Manasseh. Manasseh had sons by a wife and by a concubine. His son by the concubine was Machir. There was a certain friction between the half tribes of Manasseh that has preserved itself down time. Manasseh was the tribe that didn't get along with itself. The ones that descended from Machir, those who came from the concubine, didn't want to cross the river with the other half. They stayed on the east side of the Jordan. They inherited the area of Gilead.

The tribes of Reuben and Gad shared the inheritance of the Trans-Jordan area. If you look on a map, you'll see it is actually the area of the modern day kingdom of Jordan. They are fighting with the Jews to give up the West Bank. What they don't realize, not only are the Jews not intending on giving up the West Bank, they figure the East Bank belongs to them, too. So there are problems in the Middle East. Now they agreed that these tribes were going to inherit the area on the east side of the Jordan, but instructions were that the men would cross over and they had to be in the forefront of the armies (v. 18) until God had given rest to all their brethren. They were not going to take the easy way out.

Verse 20, “until the Lord has given rest unto your brethren...” Notice that Israel's

inheritance of the Promised Land was called “entering into rest.” That was a physical type of our spiritual entrance into rest of the Kingdom of God.

Deuteronomy 4:1-2, “Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments, which I teach you to observe, that you may live, and go in and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers is giving you. You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take anything from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.” It reiterates that they were not to add to the words that God had commanded.

Verse 3, “Your eyes have seen what the Lord did at Baal Peor: for the Lord your God has destroyed from among you all the men who followed Baal of Peor” He reminds them of the events concerning Baal Peor—that was the events with Balaam.

Notice what would have been the impact on other nations if Israel had obeyed God’s law. Verses 6-8, “Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, “Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what great nation is there that has God so near to it, as the Lord our God is to us, for whatever reason we may call upon Him? And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law, which I set before you this day?””

God said, ‘Look, if you obey My law, you are going to stand out. People are going to be impressed with your wisdom and your understanding, which is really not yours, but it derives from obedience to My law.’ Notice that the nations around would notice. Israel would have been a light to the nations.

That is what is going to happen in the Millennium. We read in Isaiah 2 how the nations will send emissaries.

Isaiah 2:3, people will say, “Come... let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways...” When Jesus Christ comes back and regathers the lost tribes to the land of Israel and begins to establish Israel as the firstfruits of the nations, the surrounding nations are going to notice. Israel is going to be a light and an example. It is not going to be long before they will begin sending emissaries saying, ‘Would you please send somebody to teach us; we see the results, and we want those results.’ They are going to have a teachable attitude because they

are going to see those results. With some it may take a while to get the point, but God will deal with them as well. Israel’s example would have gone a long way of being a light to the nation if they would have followed God’s law.

What point regarding obedience to His law does God continually emphasize in the book of Deuteronomy? It is emphasized over and over, almost every chapter: the crucial importance of Israel obeying the law would result in blessings for them. The point is doing exactly as God said, not adding to it or taking away from it (Deuteronomy 4:2), that is stressed over and over.

You can see it in Deuteronomy 5:32, “...you shall not turn aside, to the right or to the left.” The point that is emphasized is that we are to serve God the way God said. The tendency of human beings is to think they have come up with a better idea. They get bored with doing it the same old way and begin to look around and see what the nations around them are doing. ‘Well, isn’t that a nice custom; look, they put trees up every winter and decorate them. That’s kind of cute, why don’t we do that?’ God said that He didn’t want us looking around seeing if we could improve on His way. He wants us to learn to be faithful to Him. As soon as we start copying the customs of the nations—the customs of the pagans—and trying to adapt them to the worship of the true God, we are headed for trouble. God reiterates over and over the importance of *serving Him the way He chooses to be served*.

As we come through Deuteronomy 5:2-3, Moses reminds them of the Covenant that God had made in Horeb or Sinai; then the Ten Commandments are restated (vv. 6-21).

Deuteronomy 5:22, “These words the Lord spoke to all your assembly, in the mountain from the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness, with a loud voice; and He added no more. And He wrote them in two tablets of stone and gave them to me.” Moses said, ‘Look, don’t come up with an amendment to the Ten Commandments.’ These are the words of God; He spoke them with His own mouth, He wrote them with His own finger, and He gave them to Moses. He didn’t add anything else to it. If somebody comes along and has an eleventh or a twelfth Commandment, or they have revised or amended the “majority of opinion”—the idea of give them what they want—the scripture says, Proverbs 14:12, “there is a way that seems right to a man, but the ends thereof are the ways of death.” It’s a very crucial lesson.

Notice in v. 29 (after the Ten Commandments) what Moses looks forward to, “‘Oh, that they had such an heart in them, that they would fear Me, and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!’” This is actually a prophecy of the time when God would give His Holy Spirit and would give them a heart to obey. You find this scripture quoted or referred to in Jeremiah 32:38-39 and also in Ezekiel 11:19-20, which are prophecies that look forward.

You can go then to Hebrews 8 and read these statements of how this is the New Covenant, that God would give them a new heart. God would “put His laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts”—a new heart. Even here, at the making of the Old Covenant, there was a looking forward to a New Covenant, which would change the heart of the people. God was making the point that *it takes more than human beings on their own*. Even given everything the way it ought to be, they simply didn’t keep it. We need something beyond that; we need conversion. But if there had never been the opportunity for the nation to prove that even with all of the advantages, there would have been the thought that God never gave anybody a chance. Well, He picked a nation, the descendants of Abraham, and He gave them that opportunity to illustrate that there had to be something on beyond.

Why did God tell us to obey His Law? Deuteronomy 6:24, “‘And the Lord commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as it is at this day.’”

Notice, God’s law is for our good. The world misses that point. The world’s concept of sin is that sin is all the things that are fun—a totally pagan concept. You see it every year, the concept that comes in at Mardi Gras. The idea is if you are going to have to be good for a while, you really get in one last fling and make it one that you will be able to remember for at least the forty-Lent days. It’s a matter that equates obedience to God with something that is not fun, something that’s not good for you. It is as though God arbitrarily looks at all the things that people like to do and makes a rule against it. The idea is, ‘We really would have a lot more fun if we could do what we wanted to do, but God is going to burn you if you do. He likes to throw you down and watch you hop around on hot coals, worse than a cat on a hot tin roof’—a totally pagan concept.

God’s law is for our good. And it shouldn’t be as though we are really giving up something by

having to obey God. What we are really giving up is a lot of pain and a lot of problems. We are giving up the headaches and the hangovers when we start obeying God. It’s not that we are giving up all the fun and the good times, and ‘Oh, woe is us, things are going to be so dull.’ God has things out in front of us that go way beyond anything that we could imagine.

Deuteronomy 6:4-5, “‘Hear O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul and with all your might.’” Do those words sound familiar? They ought to; that’s what Jesus answered when He was asked in the New Testament, what is the first and great Commandment of the law (Matthew 22:36-39). He quoted Deuteronomy 6:4 and then He also quoted a scripture from Leviticus which says “‘you shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

Some people say the Old Testament is done away and now it’s just the New Testament. Do you realize the book of Deuteronomy alone is quoted eighty times in the New Testament? This kind of thing is stated very clearly.

Matthew 22:39, “‘And the second is like unto it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” That is quoted from Leviticus 19:18. Christ quoted from the Old Testament. He quoted out of Deuteronomy and Leviticus. Most professing Christians, if they think anything is done away, they think Deuteronomy and Leviticus are done away.

In Matthew 22:40, Christ said, “‘On these two hang all the Law and the Prophets.’” –When they asked Him what everything was about. To love God with your whole heart and love your neighbor as yourself is not simply New Testament theology; it’s Old Testament theology, too, because this is where it comes from. Christ did not come to do away with the law. He expanded and amplified the law (Matthew 5, 6, 7).

Deuteronomy 6:7-8, “‘you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.’”

Some of you are old enough to remember back when people plowed with mules and horses; you remember they used to put blinders on the animal because they didn’t want the old mule to get kind of sidetracked, look off to the side and kind of wander off this way or that way. What did they want him to do? They wanted him to

plow a straight furrow. They didn't want that old mule veering off to the right hand or to the left. They had frontlets there, something that blocked its side vision.

God told Israel that His law was to be like frontlets. He doesn't want us to depart to the right hand or to the left. That's what He told them; they were not to veer off to the right hand or to the left. That is what He told them in Deuteronomy 5:32. The law is there as blinders; you don't look off because *the law directs your attention right down a straight narrow path*. If you keep your eyes fixed straight ahead, you will be able to plow a straight furrow, and it won't look like you kind of wandered or meandered all over the field, which of course is the way a lot of people live their life. This is what God's law was to be; it was to be frontlets.

You are to have the law there. It's always to be in front of your attention to control what you think and what you do. You teach this diligently to your children and talk about it. Take advantage of circumstances. It doesn't mean you just stand your kid up every day and preach at him for a while. It means you take advantage of every circumstance. When you are going about normal day-to-day activities, take advantage of circumstances to teach God's law because from the time they are tiny children, there are incidents that come up that you can direct them to what God says. You begin to use that to take advantage of circumstances to point out things that happen. You are helping your children to draw cause-and-effect relationships.

The immature mind does not normally make the connection between cause and effect. That's why a little kid will wander out in the street to play. He doesn't think in terms of cause and effect: if you get out in the street, a car comes by and you're smashed. He doesn't make that cause-and-effect connection. He just saw his ball roll out there; he's not thinking ahead. That is characteristic of the immature mind. That is why you see people talking about learning from experience because if you have experienced enough causes and effects, even with the densest of people, a few things will gradually begin to sink in. Experience is a teacher, but it is a very, very painful teacher.

God preserves a lot of causes and effects here, and we need to help our children draw the connection. When our children see someone having certain problems, when they see the problems and difficulties "so-and-so" is in, help them see cause and effect. Whether it has to do with matters of morality, people or things of that

nature that they become aware of, help them to see how it started. Point out how it happened. Point out that they didn't start off to get in that kind of shape, but this is where they made the wrong turn. Use day-to-day circumstances; this is the point God is making. God commands these things for our own good (6:24).

In Deuteronomy 7, God told Israel what to do when they came into the land of the Canaanites.

Verse 2, God wanted the Canaanites completely destroyed.

In v. 3, he did not want Israel to intermarry. Israel was to protect and preserve their identity, physically and spiritually. The two go hand in hand together.

The whole point of ethnic identity goes back to God's purpose and plan. Even at the tower of Babel He confused the languages to prevent the assimilation of those differences. By giving the different families different languages, they were forced to go out away from one another. God did not want Israel to lose its identity. If it lost its identity physically, it would lose its identity culturally and spiritually; so God forbade them to do that.

In v. 5, he told them that they were to destroy the altars. They were not to preserve all those quaint little artifacts and kind of set them around. They were not to do what another religion did when it came into Mexico with the Spaniards. They looked at all of the interesting things that the Aztecs were doing. They took the shrines and paraphernalia that the Aztecs had, and they simply changed the name—it became a shrine to some saint.

Deuteronomy 7:2, Israel was not to enter into alliances or treaties with the Canaanites.

Verse 16, they were not to allow them to remain in the land or to try to learn any of their pagan customs.

Deuteronomy 7:20, "Moreover the Lord your God will send the hornet among them, until those who are left, who hide themselves from you, are destroyed." God was going to drive them out.

Verse 25, God told them the idols were to be burned.

Verse 26, "Nor shall you bring an abomination into your house, lest you be doomed to destruction like it; but you shall utterly detest it and utterly abhor it; for it is an accursed thing."

All those little artifacts, the pagan insignias, the crucifixes—all those things—are just to be gone. You take a trip over to the Far East; you go to China or Japan. Don't bring back all these little Buddhas and think, 'Aren't they cute, I'll set

them up in there.’ God says don’t bring an abomination into your house. God does not like them. Don’t decorate your house with all kinds of paganism that you found that the Canaanites had and think, ‘Oh, isn’t this cute?’ Don’t do that. God says that His people are to be special, and these things have a completely wrong connotation. They are religious artifacts. They were instruments of religious worship; they were means by which those people worshipped false gods—and we’re not to have them around.

Verse 22, God told them He would drive the Canaanites out with hornets a little at a time, and the land would not become overpopulated and overrun with wild animals. God purposed to drive the Canaanites out, and Israel was not to entangle themselves with them. There is a lesson for us, a point that we need to learn spiritually. *We are not to get entangled with the world*, with a lot of worldly alliances and entanglements, or things that enmesh us into the religious and political affairs of this world.

We live in the world and conduct business in order to be good citizens on a business basis, but we are not to entangle ourselves and enmesh ourselves with a lot of religious, social and political entanglements. You have to keep your distance in those ways. We do business. We are in the world, but we are not to be of the world—part and parcel of this society—because it will start you out on *a road of compromise that begins to blur the distinctions of God’s law*.

We will notice a lot of that as we get into the book of Joshua next time. God told them that He would bless them and set them apart if they would do this. Was this because Israel was so good? Did God give the land to them because of their righteousness? Absolutely not!

It’s plain in Deuteronomy 9:5, “‘It is not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart that you go in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord your God drives them out from before you, and that He may fulfill the word which the Lord swore to your fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.’”

God says there were two reasons for going in. ‘It’s not because you were so good, so get that out of your mind. It’s because (1) you were so bad, and (2) I made a promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.’ At the time of Abraham, God told him, ‘I am going to give you this, but because the sins of the Canaanites are not yet full, things have not gotten to the point where I am prepared to visit this kind of punishment on them yet.’ They were bad, but they’re not that bad;

however, there came a point when they were better off simply wiped out. Things continued to degenerate and deteriorate in terms of morality and in the state of things, the state of just the way that people dealt with one another. It got to the point that God said, ‘It’s time.’

Notice Deuteronomy 8:2, “‘And you shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and to test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep My commandments or not.’” You know why God led them through the wilderness forty years? Two reasons: to humble them and to test (prove) them, to know what was in their heart whether they would keep the Commandments or not. He humbled them by putting them in a situation where they were unable to provide their own physical needs. He didn’t want them to trust in themselves, and He wanted to prove them.

Do you realize, brethren, this is why we go through what we go through. Do you realize why we go through the period in the wilderness? Do you know why you go through some of the trials you go through? The same reason Israel wandered forty years, to humble and to prove you.

God allows us all, at one time or another, to find ourselves in a situation that we are powerless to deliver ourselves out of. Israel was in a situation where they couldn’t even feed themselves or provide the most basic necessities of life, food, clothing and shelter. God allows us all, at one time or another, to find ourselves in a circumstance from which we are powerless to deliver ourselves. We have to come to a point where we recognize our powerlessness, in order to be properly humbled and to realize our relationship with God. As long as we are able to take care of ourselves, we don’t give thought to how much we need God. God allows us, by circumstances, to be humbled, to come into a situation of recognizing our powerlessness. And He also allows certain things to hang on sometimes, to prove us, to test us, what’s really inside. Are you going to obey Him come what may? It is interesting to read Deuteronomy 8 from that perspective and to realize that God is working with us just as He was working with them.

As we come down we note, God told them, Deuteronomy 9:6-7, “‘Therefore understand that the Lord your God is not giving this good land to possess because of your righteousness; for you are a stiff necked people. Remember and do not forget how you provoked the Lord your God to

wrath in the wilderness; from the day that you departed from the land of Egypt until you came to this place, you have been rebellious against the Lord.”

Verse 24, “You have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you.” That seems to be characteristic of the nations of Israel. They have not been a docile people and easily led. Frankly, some of the Gentile nations are more easily led. They have not invented democracy. That is something that is a peculiarly Israelite approach to life because they don’t like somebody telling them what to do; they wanted to put things to a vote, all the way through the book of Numbers. Every time something came up, they were ready to put it to a vote.

We notice, therefore, the problem God focuses on in Deuteronomy 10.

Deuteronomy 10:16, “Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff necked no longer.” *God looked toward to conversion.* Look forward in the New Testament where this scripture is actually quoted in Romans 2:28-29 and in Acts 15, where the apostles came to understand that the circumcision required under the New Covenant, of those who become converted, is a spiritual circumcision—not to be hardheaded any more.

Verses 12-13, “And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes which I command you today for your good?” We are to love God with all our heart and to keep His Commandments always.

Deuteronomy 11:16, “Take heed to yourselves, lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them.”

Verse 19, “You shall teach them [v. 18, “My word”] to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, when you lie down and when you rise up.”

Verses 26-28, “Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse; the blessing, if you obey the Commandments of the Lord your God which I command you today; and the curse, if you do not obey the Commandments of the Lord your God.”

He gave them the boundaries:

Verse 24, “Every place on which the soles of your foot shall tread shall be yours: from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the River Euphrates, even to the Western Sea shall be your territory.” The Jews read this and they

invade. It is one of the reasons that many of the Jews over there don’t have compunctions about going into Lebanon because they say that, ‘God gave that to us anyway.’ They simply view it that way. In this country, religion does not play that big a role in terms of making public decisions. We don’t understand the extent to which many of the Jews, particularly to that forty percent or so that are religious, are observant Jews—they read these things and take it literally—they say, ‘It is ours.’ So you see the reason why things are set in the Middle East in the way they are.

Deuteronomy 12 focuses on the place that God would designate. It is simply the fact that *God has a central place, a place where He chooses to place His name*, and that’s where things are to be focused.

Deuteronomy 12:5, “But you shall seek the place where the Lord your God chooses, out of all your tribes, to put His name for His habitation; and there you shall go.”

Verses 10-11, “But when you cross over the Jordan and dwell in the land which the Lord your God is giving you to inherit, and when He gives you rest from all your enemies round about, so that you dwell in safety, then there shall be a place which the Lord your God shall choose to cause His name to dwell there....”

Verses 13-14, “Take heed to yourself that you do not offer your burnt offerings in every place that you see, but in the place which the Lord chooses....”

Verses 17-18, “You may not eat [second tithe] within your gates...But you must eat them before the Lord your God in the place which the Lord your God shall choose....” The place that God chooses is emphasized.

Then we note that Israel is not to be ensnared by inquiring after the gods of other nations. Deuteronomy 12:30-33, “take heed to yourself that you be not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, ‘How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.’ You shall not worship the Lord your God in that way; for every abomination to the Lord which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods. Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.”

Deuteronomy 13:1-5, “If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, ‘Let us go after other gods which you

have not known, and let us serve them,” you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the Lord your God is testing you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice, and you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him. But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken in order to turn you away from the Lord you God....”

If there arises among you a prophet or dreamer, and it comes to pass, does that prove he represents God? No, not if he doesn't preach the truth. What really proves whether or not somebody is God's servant is whether he teaches God's message, regardless of what happens. This shows that *if somebody is not teaching obedience to God's law, he's not God's servant.*

Deuteronomy 14:2, “For you are a holy people to the Lord your God, and the Lord has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.” This focuses on being a holy people.

Next He reiterates the laws of clean and unclean (vv. 3-21). These needed to be reiterated; they had been living on manna for forty years. They needed to be reminded of what they could eat, and what they couldn't eat.

Verse 22, “You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain, that the field produces year by year.” The tithe to Levites is emphasized.

Verse 23, “And you shall eat before the Lord your God, in the place where He shall choose to make His name abide, the tithe of your grain and your new wine and your oil, of the firstlings of your herds and your flocks, that you may learn to fear the Lord your God always.”

This focuses on a different tithe, a second tithe, to be eaten individually. In the book of Numbers we saw that God had given the Levites the tithe for their inheritance, but here in Deuteronomy 14:23 there is a tithe that is to be eaten, that an individual is to consume before God. This is not the tithe that goes to the Levite. Therefore, it is called a second tithe because it is the second one mentioned. It is to be consumed in the place where God chooses that we might learn to fear God. You don't have to take the goods; you can turn it into money (v. 24). You buy what you want and you rejoice there, you and your household. This is to be utilized at the Festivals where God has set His name. The excess Festival tithe that the individual has is to be shared with the Levites, the widows and the needy (v. 29).

Then in v. 28, there is yet another tithe, a third tithe, but this is different than the other two because it is not one that the Israelites saved annually. At the end of three years they were to bring forth all the tithe of their increase of that particular year, and it was to be kept there within their gates—the Levite and the stranger and the fatherless and the widow were to eat. It was to be used for the needy.

Deuteronomy 15 goes into the seventh year of release; so technically, Israel kept this third tithe on the third and sixth year of every seven-year cycle. It was an agricultural cycle. If you just kept it every third year, then within a period of time, you would come out with a third-tithe year that would coincide with a seventh year of release—and there wouldn't be anything to tithe; the widow and fatherless would go hungry in the seventh year. So everything was on this seven-year cycle. The third and the sixth year of that cycle they set aside an extra tithe, one that was reserved for use by the needy (v. 28).

There are three distinct tithes mentioned:

(1) One we read of in Numbers 18:20-21 where God said He gave the Levites the tithe in Israel for an inheritance. The tithe was for wages because they were doing God's work. That was what God reserved to Himself, and He paid it to the Levites.

(2) God told Israel to save a second tithe and consume it themselves in the place where He chose (Deuteronomy 14:22-23). They were to utilize that tithe in celebrating God's Festivals and rejoicing before God. It was used by the individual himself and his family in observing God's festivals; the excess that he had over and above his needs was to be shared with those that had need (v. 27).

(3) Then on the third and sixth year of every seven-year cycle, an additional tithe was set aside for the use of the needy (v. 28).

In Deuteronomy 15, we have the matter of the Sabbatical year, the year of release. If debtors couldn't pay, the debt was forgiven. Few lenders would be willing to extend credit if they thought they would not get their money back before the seventh year of release. Society would quickly adopt a “cash-as-you-go” policy.

Deuteronomy 16 reiterates basic information on the Holy Days and emphasizes that three times (seasons) during the year we are to appear before God.

Deuteronomy 17 focuses on the establishment of a king, and that is what Israel would ultimately do—ask for a king. It contained instructions to kings.

Deuteronomy 17:14-20, “When you come to the land which the Lord your God is giving you, and possess it and dwell in it, and say, “I will set a king over me like all the nations that are around me,” you shall surely set a king over you whom the Lord your God chooses; one from among your brethren you shall set as king over you; you may not set a foreigner over you, who is not your brother. But he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, for the Lord has said to you, “You shall not return that way again.” Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away; nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself. Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall make for himself a copy of the law in a book, from the one before the priests, the Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God and be careful to observe all these words of this law and these statutes, that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, and that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel.”

There were three things a king was not to do: (1) to multiply horses, (2) to multiply wives and (3) to multiply for himself silver and gold.

God did not want the kings to become self-indulgent, to take advantage of their office, to do things that others couldn't do. But notice another aspect of it. He didn't want huge standing armies or great wealth in the hands of a central government because of the temptations and mischief that would result. The bigger government grows, the more problems there are going to be. He told the kings that they were not to concentrate wealth and power and great standing armies because it would be a temptation. What happens when kings get a lot of money and a big army? Well, they decide after awhile they had better go and make war with somebody. It's just too much of a temptation. That's what happens to nations today. They build up and get a little bit prosperous, and they decide they better go take something away from somebody or they get into a “scrap” with someone.

God had a job to keep the king busy. He wanted him to write out his own hand-written copy of the book of this law. ‘Look, just copy out the Bible by hand; that will keep you busy. You won't have time to do these other things.’ How much better off would we be if our leaders spent

their time copying the Bible. By the time they got through making their own copy, they wouldn't have had time to get into some of the trouble they got themselves into. What was it Will Rogers said about Congress? Comparing himself to Congress, ‘I am just an amateur. When I make a joke, people can laugh or not laugh depending on whether or not people think it is funny. But when they make a joke, it is a law, and when they make a law it is a joke.’ That was his opinion and, unfortunately, it has proven to be the case too many times.

Deuteronomy 18:15, “The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear.” That, of course, is a prophecy of Jesus Christ; you find it quoted in Acts 3:22 and Acts 7:37.

Deuteronomy 19—23 deal with civil matters and criminal justice Israel would have to deal with in the Promised Land. What happens in terms of crime and violence, exemptions from military service, etc.?

Deuteronomy 21:15 refers to the fact that if someone has been married twice, there can't be a preference to the second wife and children. It's a matter of inheritance; you can't disinherit the children of the previous wife.

Deuteronomy 22 has various laws dealing with relationships with individuals. Notice several of the things.

Verses 1-4, if your neighbor's animals were lost, you needed to return them to your neighbor. If you see something that is lost, you're to restore it to your neighbor.

God did not approve of the unisex look.

Deuteronomy 22:5, “A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment, for all who do so are abomination to the Lord your God.” God wants women to look feminine and men to look masculine. There are even laws relating to ecology, not to destroy wild life (vv. 6-7).

Notice the instructions just in terms of public safety regulations:

Verse 8, “When you build a new house, then you shall make a parapet [guard or rail] for the roof, that you may not bring bloodguiltiness on your house if anyone falls from it.” Houses normally had flat roofs, and people would go up there. God gives instructions. It was the original OSHA requirements. You have to build a rail about it. You don't build a house with a flat roof on it and not have a railing up around it. Someone, maybe a child, may get up there on the edge and fall off. It was a matter of law, certain

safety requirements and various things like that are mentioned.

Deuteronomy 23:18, ““You shall not bring the hire of a harlot or the price of a dog, to the house of the Lord your God for any vowed offering, for both these are an abomination to the Lord your God.”” Does that mean you shouldn’t tithe on the sale of a dog?

A few years ago a fellow who raised dogs for a living read this and got worried if maybe he was doing something bad and shouldn’t tithe on the sale of his dogs. It’s a matter of understanding what the term “dog” means. It was a slang term in the Hebrew that referred to “a male prostitute, a whore or a prostitute.” In English, there is a slang term that takes the name of a female dog and applies it to certain immoral women. Well in ancient Israel, the masculine form was used to refer to a homosexual, to a male prostitute. These were the kinds of things that were, frankly, common in many of the pagan religions. God said nothing of that was to be associated with worship of Him.

Deuteronomy 24 deals with the subject of divorce. This is what the Pharisees quizzed Jesus about and He expounded it in the New Testament (Matthew 19:3-9).

Deuteronomy 24:19 discusses gleaning of the fields.

Deuteronomy 25 deals with controversies and the way that the judges deal with it, the matters of justice (vv. 1-3).

In Deuteronomy 27—28, we have the blessings and curses. To impress upon the people the necessity of obeying God’s law, Moses told them to set up two huge stones, to plaster them and to inscribe the book of the law on them as a memorial marker (27:2-4). They were to also be divided up, half the people—six of the tribes—on Mount Ebal and six of them on Mount Gerizim. They were to read the blessings and the curses back and forth. They went through all of this to impress upon them the keeping of God’s laws as they were preparing to enter into the land.

Deuteronomy 28:43-44, ““The stranger [alien] who is among you shall rise higher and higher above you, and you shall come down lower and lower. He shall lend to you, but you shall not lend to him; he shall be the head and you shall be the tail.”” The upsurge of foreign investment in the U.S. and increasing foreign control of the U.S. economy is predicted. The U.S. has gone from the greatest lender nation to the greatest debtor nation. We are finding more and more of the wealth and resources of this nation are owned

by foreigners, the strangers. What the Arabs don’t own, the Japanese are buying. We are going to find that we have not looked to God and we will find ourselves very, very vulnerable. We’ve gone from a position of being the head of the nations, being chief of the nations because God set us so—but we didn’t give God the credit. We are going to find ourselves being the tail. It describes what was going to happen to Israel, that Israel would find itself in its own nation on the bottom of the heap. That was a part of the curse that God would bring because they didn’t appreciate the blessings that God had given. It describes here all of these various things and the various curses.

We might notice another matter as Moses reiterates these things.

Deuteronomy 31:9-11, ““So Moses wrote this law and delivered it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and to all the elders of Israel. And Moses commanded them, saying: ‘At the end of every seven years, at the appointed time in the year of release, at the Feast of Tabernacles, when all Israel comes to appear before the Lord your God in the place which He chooses, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing.’”” The law was to be read every seven years—to be reiterated at the Feast of Tabernacles.

Deuteronomy 31:24-26, ““So it was, when Moses had completed writing the words of this law in a book, when they were finished, that Moses commanded the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying: ‘Take this Book of the Law, and put it beside the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there as a witness against you.’”” This was written and given by Moses to the Levites. Moses told them to take the book and put it in the side of the ark as a witness.

Deuteronomy 32:7-9, ““Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations. Ask your father, and he will show you; your elders, and they will tell you: when the Most High divided their inheritance to the nations, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the children of Israel. For the Lord’s portion is His people; Jacob is the place of His inheritance.””

The geographical division of racial groupings and national groupings are not purely time and chance or a matter of accident. It was a matter of divine purpose and plan. This shows racial grouping goes all the way back to Adam. God had an organizational structure in mind from the

very beginning predicated on the twelve tribes. The twelve gates of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21) are an organizational structure God had in mind from the very beginning. It's part of the reason that He even built that diversity into the human race to produce different ethnic groupings. God built that. He designed the diversity and preserved it by giving different languages at the Tower of Babel to ensure this preservation. God divided the world; various bodies of water and natural boundaries of mountains and deserts and oceans served to divide the different branches of the human family. It is not simply that people evolved. God has set and established things. It's not just time and chance and coincidence. God emphasizes that He's the One that brought Israel into the Promised Land. He emphasizes that.

Deuteronomy 31:27, “For I know your rebellion and your stiff neck. If today, while I am yet alive with you, you have been rebellious against the Lord, then how much more after My death?”

Deuteronomy 33 is a reiteration of Moses' final words to each tribe, Moses' final blessing.

In Deuteronomy 34, Joshua writes of Moses' death. We see, of course, that the whole book of Deuteronomy was written down and placed by the side of the ark. Then in chapter 34, Moses died at one hundred twenty years of age. Joshua was the successor.

We have an overview. There is an awful lot of material in the book of Deuteronomy, an awful lot that we would do well to focus on.