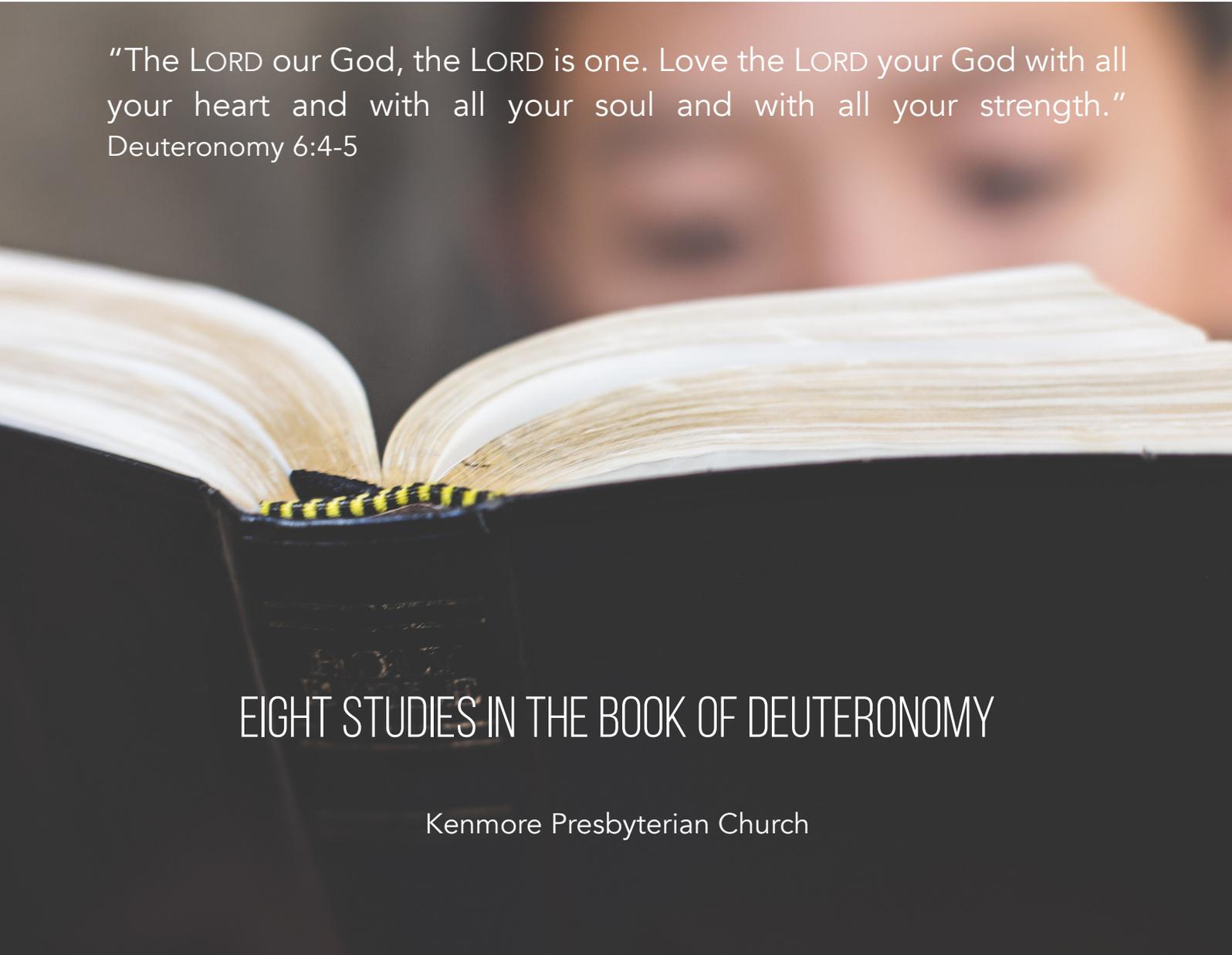


LEARNING TO TRUST AND OBEY OUR GRACIOUS GOD

"The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength."
Deuteronomy 6:4-5



EIGHT STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY

Kenmore Presbyterian Church

AN INTRODUCTION TO DEUTERONOMY

The book of Deuteronomy is a record of three speeches given by Moses to the nation of Israel while waiting to enter Canaan, followed by Moses' final words (including two prophetic poems or songs).

The name Deuteronomy comes from the Greek title 'second law'. However Deuteronomy is not a second or new law, but a new preaching of the law given at Sinai forty years earlier. **We learn much about the love and grace of God** as He recounts His past dealings with His people, and His future plans for them.

Deuteronomy is important in the Old Testament - it pulls together the 'story so far' from Genesis to Numbers and sets the backdrop for understanding what follows. Deuteronomy is frequently quoted in the New Testament, as it points forward to promises fulfilled in Jesus.

In reading Deuteronomy we are reminded of God's unchanging faithfulness. Like Israel, we need God's grace to deal with sin, and we need God to enable obedience to him.

The story so far...

We are stepping into the fifth book of the Old Testament, the final book of the Pentateuch.

Genesis opens with creation, the entrance of sin into the world, and the beginning of God's judgment. God punishes sin but shows grace and mercy as he works to a bigger plan to deal with sin - a plan that is completed in Jesus. God's plans begin to take shape around **the nation of Israel** - descendants of Abraham. God promised Abraham he would become a nation, that they would have a land, and through Abraham all nations would be blessed (Genesis 12). At the end of Genesis Abraham's descendants are numerous, but they are not living in the promised land - because they moved to Egypt to escape famine.

Exodus tells how the Israelites were enslaved by Pharaoh, and how God uses Moses to lead his people out of Egypt and gather them around Mt Sinai. At Sinai God instructed them how to live as His people. At the end of Exodus God's people have built a Tabernacle where God will dwell among his people.

Leviticus explains the laws and the sacrificial system which God set in place for his people.

Numbers begins with a census of Israel then tells how they failed to enter the land of Canaan. They failed to trust and obey God. So they spent forty years wandering in the desert.

We pick up the story of God's grace in **Deuteronomy**.

(As you read you will continually see "LORD" in small-caps. This is the translator's way of rendering God's name - which is obscured in the Hebrew out of reverence and a desire not to use God's name).

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- Study 6: Ch. 12-26 Separated and Consecrated
- Study 7: Ch. 27-30 God Blesses and Curses
- Study 8: Ch. 31-34 What does your future hold?

STUDY 1 - AN OVERVIEW

A BOOK OF OLD LAWS?

Pray Together

Pray about the things you've discussed since arriving. Share any other concerns, and pray through a couple of pages of the Church Directory.

The Big Picture

Deuteronomy can be daunting. It's large and full of old laws. But Deuteronomy isn't just laws. Let's take a step back and hopefully gain some perspective.

Break into 3 smaller groups and look at **one** of Moses's three speeches. The third group can also look at Moses's final words. Scan (don't read) through your allocated chapters (use section headings in your Bible to help) and summarise in the **briefest possible** way the contents (spend 5 minutes on this – some general ideas is all we're after). Share your thoughts with the group.

	Content
First Address Deut. 1:1-4:43	
Second Address Deut. 4:44-28:68	
Third Address Deut. 29:1-30:20	
Moses' final words Deut. 31-34	

Now, let's take a fast tour of Deuteronomy

The first Address (Deut. 1:1-4:43)

Read 1:1-3

1. Whose words are recorded? To whom were they originally spoken? Where? At whose command?

Chapters 1-4 recount events which brought Israel to the north-east of the land God promised to Abraham's decedents - Canaan. Israel are gathered east of the Jordan poised to enter (map page 6). Forty years earlier Israel failed to enter Canaan from Kadesh Barnea in the south-west. The journey from Horeb/Sanai to Kadesh Barnea takes eleven days, but Israel have travelled for forty more years before being ready to enter Canaan again.

Read 1:26-35

2. Why has it taken 40 years for Israel to be ready to enter Canaan?

The Second Address (Deut. 4:44-28:68)

Read 4:44-45, and 5:1

3. How would you describe what follows the history lesson in the first address?
4. What does Moses command Israel to do?

Read 8:19-20

5. What will be the consequence of disobeying God's Law?

We know Israel don't have a history of obeying God. But God has **graciously** continued to love them even as he judges. And God remains **faithful** to promises he has made.

Read 10:12-22

6. What reasons do Israel have to obey God? What is the God of Israel like?

Chapter 12 begins a long section on specific laws. Read 26:16-19.

7. What is the purpose of the laws God has given Israel? (18-19)

Read 28:1-6

8. What does God's **gracious** provision in the future depend upon?

The Third Address (Deut. 29:1-30:20)

God demonstrated **grace** to Israel in the **past**, and the laws he gives demonstrate his **gracious** provision for the **present**. The final section of Deuteronomy has much to say about **grace** God promises in the **future**.

Read 30:1-6

9. Does God think the people are capable of obedience? (v.1)
10. What does he promise, despite the inevitable future of Israel? (v.4-6)

Discuss

11. Having taken a brief tour, what would you say are the major themes of the book of Deuteronomy?
12. How might Deuteronomy be relevant to us as Christians?

Pray

Have one or two people pray, thanking God for his faithfulness, justice, mercy and grace.

STUDY 2 – DEUTERONOMY 1-3

GIANTS AND HIGH WALLS

Pray Together

Pray about the things you've discussed since arriving. Share any other concerns, and pray through a couple of pages of the Church Directory.

Deuteronomy opens with Israel on the doorstep of the Promised Land and Moses speaking God's word. Much of what Moses says to the Israelites is a reminder of things their parents could have told them. We'll be looking at **three journeys** Moses reminds them about. We'll see how these journeys help prepare Israel to enter the Promised Land.

The First Journey – forty years earlier

Read 1:1-8

1. Look again at Deuteronomy verses 6-8. Where were Israel to set out from and to?
2. How could they be confident or arriving?

Read 1:19-33

3. Look again at v20-21 and v29-31. How were the Israelites to enter the land?
4. What do they do? (v22-28) How does Moses sum up? (v32-33)

Think about it

5. Why do the Israelites struggle to trust God?
6. What is the relationship between obedience and trust?

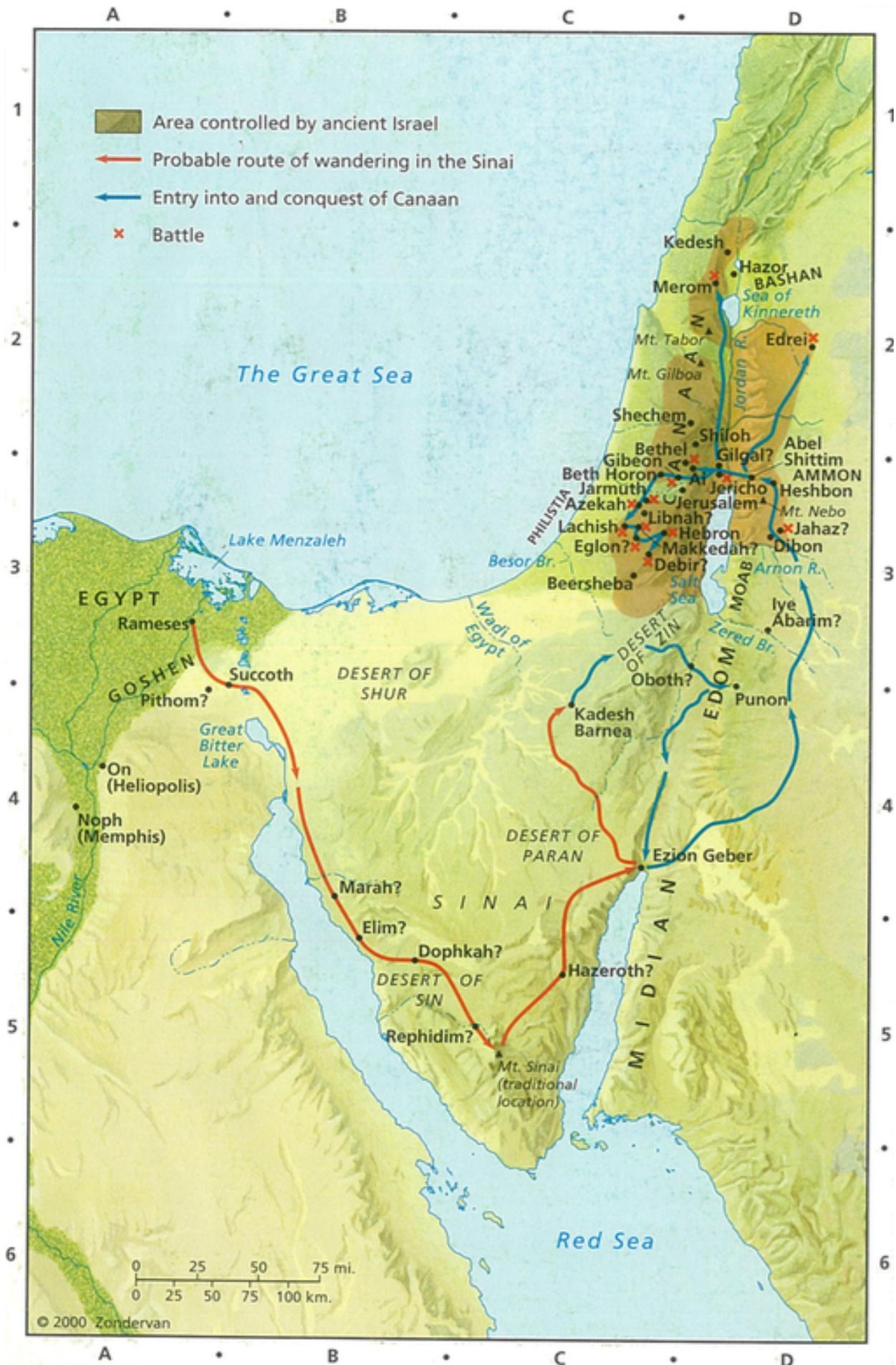
The Second Journey – a forty year epic!

Read 1:34-40

7. What is the consequence of Israel's lack of faith?
8. Where did their lack of trust lead them? (1:40, 2:1)

Think about it

9. What would Moses want the current generation of Israelites to learn from the reminder he gives them?



The Third Journey – into the land of Canaan

After a 40 year journey Israel is preparing to set out again - into the Promised Land. In preparation Moses reminds the people where they have been. Divide into pairs and look at some of the places Israel have been. See if you can work out why Moses mentions each. Share with the rest of the group.

Passage	Place	What's of interest	Why mention it...
2:4-5, 12	Seir		
2:9-11	Moab		
2:19-22	Ammon		
2:24-25, 32-36	Heshbon		
3:1-5, 11	Bashan		

Think about it

- At the end of the first journey the Israelites were afraid because spies reported seeing giants (Anakites) and cities with walls. Anakites and fortified cities are mentioned more than once. Why might Moses mention them when he does?

Read 3:21-22

- Moses will not enter the land, **Joshua** will lead Israel in. How is Israel to enter the land, and how can they be confident they *will* get there?

Think about it

In Deuteronomy, Israel is still on this third journey - they haven't reached their destination. They're on the doorstep *again*, a point of decision *again*. Moses has shown God *can* be trusted to bring Israel into the land. God promised the land to Abraham. He has defeated Egypt and freed Israel. He provided land for Esau, Moab and Ammon. He defeated Sihon and Og (a giant!). Israel *should* trust God, obey him and enter the land - because God can be trusted.

- What basis do we have for trusting God, as Christians?
- The Israelites had to live-out their trust by entering the land in obedience to God. How do you think our trust in God should be lived out and exhibited?

Pray

Thank God that he can be trusted, and ask him to help us trust him and obey him.

STUDY 3 – DEUTERONOMY 4

GOD SPEAKS

Pray Together

Pray about the things you've discussed since arriving. Share any other concerns, and pray through a couple of pages of the Church Directory.

Discuss – How do we know what we know about God, today?

Last week we considered Israel's travels. They journeyed **toward** the promised land, but did not enter because of their lack of trust. So God directed them to journey **away from** the land because of their disobedience. Once that generation died they again journeyed **toward** the land. Now Moses teaches the people how to journey **into** the land and how to **stay** in it.

Read 4:1-8

1. What does Moses instruct the people to do?
2. What will be the result?

Think about it

3. Would you describe the laws as a blessing or burden for Israel?

Next, Moses talks about Israel's experience at Horeb (another name for Mt Sinai - where Israel gathered and received the law back in Exodus 19). What happened back there will be of great importance to this generation as they *now* stand in Moab.

Read 4:9-20

4. List the verses which contain words and phrases associated with speech (hear, spoke, teach, declare, listen etc.)
5. What might the prominence of these words tell us about how God wants to be known by his people?
6. What is the great problem with idolatry?

Think about it

7. The invisible God spoke to Israel in an amazing way. So what might they possibly find attractive in mute idols?

Read 4:25-31

8. What is the danger for Israel in the land?
9. What is Israel's only hope of return - if God scatters them?

Think about it

10. What do these verses reveal about the character of God?

Read 4:32-40

11. What does Moses want the people to marvel at?
12. What is the appropriate response from Israel? (4:39-40)

The nation of Israel are unique and special – God chose to speak to them (Deut. 4:33). They have heard the voice of the creator God. God wants his people to **listen** and **obey**.

Read Hebrews 1:1-3 and 2:1-4

13. How has God spoken to us now?
14. What is the appropriate response from us?

Think about it

Israel was privileged to have God speak to them. Yet the temptation was to worship mute idols. We have had God speak to us. How might we be tempted to ignore him?

Pray

Thank God that we have been privileged to hear him speak to us in his Son. Pray we would not neglect his word of salvation.



STUDY 4 – DEUTERONOMY 5-6

OBEDIENCE

Pray Together

Pray about the things you've discussed since arriving. Share other concerns, and pray through a couple of pages of the Church Directory.

We saw in chapter 4 that God revealed himself to Israel by speaking. He is a speaking God. Israel was called to respond by hearing and obeying. Obeying the God who has spoken is the key for Israel remaining in the land. Now we will see more of what God spoke and why.

Discuss - Which comes first: Our obedience or God's grace?

Read 5:1-6

1. Who did God make a covenant with, at Horeb (Mt Sinai)?
2. The generation Moses is speaking to were not at Horeb. It was their parents. Why do you think Moses says what He says in 5:1-5?
3. What did God do for Israel before the commandments were given? (5:6)
4. Have a look through the commandments from verse 6 to 21. What reasons are given for the laws and for Israel's obedience?

Think about it

5. What would you say was the purpose of these commands?

Read 6:1-9

6. What will be the results if Israel keeps the commands and laws? (6:1-3)
7. How is Israel called to love God and what does this have to do with the Law? (6:4-9)

Think about it

8. According to 6:1-9, how is God's Law to be taught and dwelt on at home? Is that how we should treat God's Word in *our* homes?

Read 6:10-19

9. What will the land be like when Israel enters? (6:10-11)

10. What will be the danger for Israel in the land? (6:12-16)

11. The prosperity of the land and the temptation of idolatry could lead Israel away from God. What does Moses instruct them to do in order to stay faithful? (6:17-19)

Think about it

12. Israel was moving into a situation much like ours. They would live in a rich and prosperous land surrounded by people who worship other gods. Given our context is similar, how might we learn from what Moses instructed Israel?

Read 6:20-25

13. Moses summarises with instructions on how to explain the purpose of the Law. Try to paraphrase the purpose of the Law in your own words (be sure to include ideas in verses 21-25).

Think about it

14. What is the relationship between God's gracious undeserved salvation, and obedience to him?

Read Titus 2:11-14

15. How do we see the same relationship between God's grace and obedience in the gospel?

16. How is our situation similar to that of Israel?

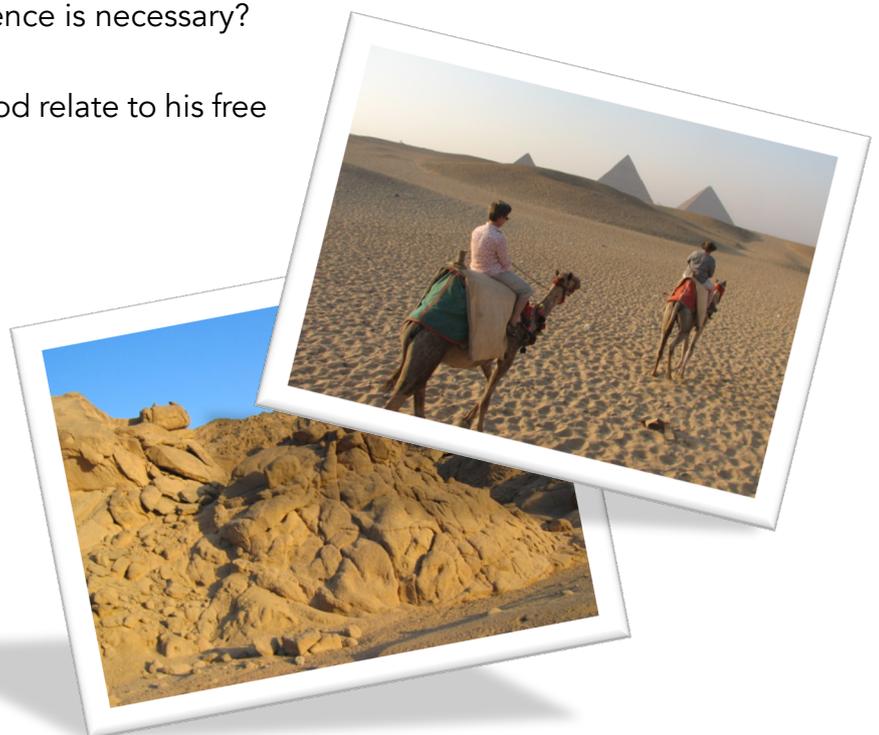
Think about it

17. We are used to hearing that faith and repentance are necessary responses to the Gospel. Would you say obedience is necessary?

18. How does our obedience to God relate to his free gift in the Gospel?

Pray

Thank God for his grace to us in Jesus. Pray that we would respond by obeying him as his people, and that we would live godly lives in an ungodly world.



STUDY 5 – DEUTERONOMY 7-11

GOD GIVES SECOND CHANCES

Pray Together

Pray about the things you've discussed since arriving. Share other concerns, and pray through a couple of pages of the Church Directory.

Last week we saw Moses re-deliver ten commandments to Israel along with a command for obedience - in response to God's gracious love. As we continue reading we see what happens when Israel test God's gracious love by their continual disobedience.

Discuss - What do you think of what atheist Richard Dawkins said:

"The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a *vindictive, blood-thirsty ethnic cleanser*; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully."¹

The first passage we'll read is the kind of passage that prompts quotes like the one above, particularly the words in italics.

Read 7:1-16

1. What does God say must happen to the nations in the land?
2. What impression does this give you about God?
3. How does God promise to treat Israel?
4. In chapter 8, Moses reminds Israel of God's patience even as he disciplined them. What will happen to Israel if they fail to obey God in the Land? (8:19-20)

Read 9:4-6

5. Moses gives the reason the nations will be driven out. What is the reason? What is *not* the reason?
6. The people of Israel have a history of rebelling against God. In the rest of chapter 9, Moses recounts two occasions when Israel rebelled against God, and were spared. On each occasion, why were they spared? (9:18-21, 9:25-29, 10:10-11)

¹ Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2006), 51.

Think about it

7. What picture of God do we have so far, judging by his treatment of Israel?

Having reminded the Israelites of how patient God has been with them, Moses looks forward to how they should behave when they enter the land.

Read 10:12-22

8. How are Israel to behave? Why?

Read 11:11-15

9. What does God have in store for Israel?

Read 11:26-32

10. It seems Israel aren't so different from the nations they are going to drive out. God has given Israel more than one second chance. **Now** what choice are they faced with?

11. What will be the consequence of obeying God?

12. What will be the consequence of disobeying God?

Think about it

13. Based on what we've read, do you think God treats Israel fairly? Why?

14. God has been incredibly patient with Israel. If we think of our own experience of God, has he treated *us* with patience?

Read 2 Peter 3:8-13

15. How is God's treatment of all people, similar to his treatment of Israel?

16. What do we have to look forward to, and how should we live?

17. What will be the consequences for us if we obey/disobey God?

In this study we've seen God's grace and patience with Israel in the past, and glanced forward to his gracious plans for them in the future. We've seen that God's patience and grace is not just for Israel. God's gracious plan to bless his people will ultimately extend to all who accept him in repentance.

Pray

Thank God for his patience and the opportunity we have been given to repent. Pray that we would live for him as we look forward to our heavenly home.

SEPARATED AND CONSECRATED

Pray Together

Pray about the things you've discussed since arriving. Share other concerns, and pray through a couple of pages of the Church Directory.

After reminding Israel of God's patience, despite their rebellion, and of His plan to continue to bless them in the land of Canaan - Moses spends the next 14 chapters outlining the decrees and laws that are **to govern life in the land**. Obedience will mean blessing, but disobedience will bring curses. Having to sit through Moses' recitation of the laws may have seemed like a curse in itself! But God's provision of the law is actually meant as a blessing.

Discuss - How might the provision of law be an act of grace?

Read 12:1-7

Verse 1 clearly shows that what follows are laws and rules which are to govern the life of Israel in the land God is about to give them.

1. What are Israel to do to idols and altars? Why? (v.4)
2. Where and how are Israel to worship God? (v.5-7)

Israel are to be separate from the inhabitants of the land they are entering. The theme of separation continues as Moses details the laws of God. But the first item on the agenda is to ensure God's people worship God at the place and in the way that he has instructed.

Read 13:6-18

3. What is the penalty for enticing someone to worship an idol? What is the reason for this penalty?

God is serious about keeping his people devoted to him alone. If Israel follow other gods they will suffer the fate of the inhabitants of the land that they're driving out. However, it's not just relationship with God that the laws deal with, but also relationships with people.

4. Glance over chapters 14-26. Make a list of the categories of laws.

Let's focus on two sections that deal with how people are to treat each other.

Read 15:12-18

5. How are the Israelites to treat each other? Why?

Read 24:17-22

6. How are Israelites to treat foreigners (aliens)? Why?

Think about it

7. How do the laws concerning idol worship, and human relationships mark out the Israelites as God's people?

Let's move ahead to Moses' summary statement - Read 26:16-19

8. What is God's command to his people?
9. And what is God's declaration regarding his people?

The law God gives to Israel is both a reminder of the grace they've received from God in the past, and an act of grace toward them in their present situation. God sets Israel apart, separated from the nations, and gives them his law to obey. The law which separates and distinguishes Israel demonstrates God's love and grace toward his people.

Read 1 Peter 2:4-10

10. Israel were set apart by their obedience to the law. What is it that shows we are set apart for God? (4-5)

Think about it

11. How do we show we are God's people?

Pray

Thank God for his grace in setting us apart as his chosen people. Pray that we would live in a way that shows we are his people.



STUDY 7 – DEUTERONOMY 27-30

GOD BLESSES, AND CURSES

Pray Together

Pray about the things you've discussed since arriving. Share other concerns, and pray through a couple of pages of the Church Directory.

Back in study 5 we were introduced to the blessings and the curses, for obedience or disobedience in the land (11:26). In chapters 27 to 30, Moses spells them out in detail.

Discuss - Is it God's desire to bless his people or to curse his people?

Moses instructs Israel to carry out a massive production, a Middle Eastern theatre - the recitation of the blessings and the curses. It's a production which involves all the tribes of Israel facing each other across a valley and speaking blessings and curses.

Read 27:9-26

1. Describe the stage – who stands where? Who is to speak, and when?
2. Is there any way to summarise the curses?

Look at the section headings in Chapter 28.

3. How many verses are spent on the blessings, and how many on the curses?
4. Fill out the table below, writing out the blessings or curses pronounced in each.

Blessing	Curse
28:3	28:16
28:4	28:18
28:5	28:17
28:6	28:19
28:7	28:25
28:12-13	28:38-44

5. Who will carry-out either the blessings or the curses (28:1,20)?

Read 28:58-68

6. In what ways are the curses a reversal of the grace God has shown Israel and which he promises to continue to show them in the land?

Think about it

7. Why do you think there is such a strong emphasis on the curses?

Chapter 29-30 is Moses' third address to the nation. He renews the covenant made at Mt Sinai, for the new generation at Moab (29:12-15). Moses places a clear choice before Israel.

Read 29:25-28

8. If the curses come upon Israel, why will this be?

Read 30:15-20

9. Summarise these verses in your own words.

Read 30:1-6

10. How likely is it that Israel will rebel and suffer the curses? And if they rebel, how likely is it that Israel will return to God in obedience?

11. What is it that will ultimately enable Israel to obey God and live?

Think about it

12. Is it God's desire to bless Israel, or to curse?

Read Colossians 2:11-14

13. Who finally performs the circumcision promised in Deuteronomy 30:6?

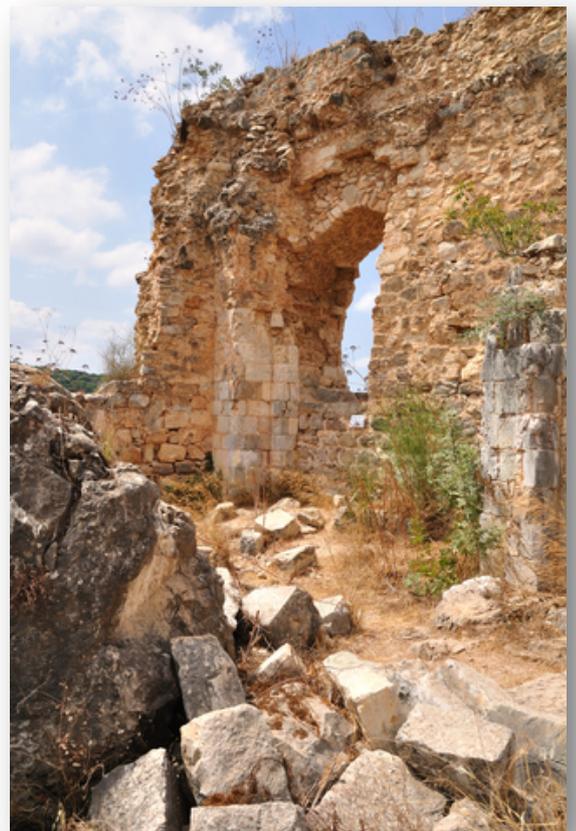
14. What was required to effect this circumcision? (v.14)

Think about it

15. How does the circumcision done by Christ allow God's people to love him with all their heart and soul?

Pray

Thank God for his desire to bless through Jesus. Pray that we would love God with all our heart and soul.



STUDY 8 – DEUTERONOMY 31-34

WHAT DOES YOUR FUTURE HOLD?

Pray Together

Pray about the things you've discussed since arriving. Share other concerns, and pray through a couple of pages of the Church Directory.

The last four chapters of Deuteronomy are a mixed bag. There is a change in leadership for Israel, and Moses dies - but not before he delivers his final words. Israel stand on the cusp of a new era, yet they face profound uncertainty about their future.

Discuss - After forty years wandering in the desert, Moses is the only leader the current generation have known, yet God forbids him from entering the promised land. How do you think this might make Israel feel?

Read 31:9-13

1. How often is the law to be read?
2. Why will this be important?

Split into two groups. Each group take one of the following passages, discuss the questions, and report back to the whole group:

First group - Read 31:15-22

3. What is God's assessment of Israel's future?
4. Why does God command Moses to write and teach Israel the song?

Second group - Read 31:24-29

5. What is Moses' assessment of Israel's future?
6. Why does Moses write down the law and place it in the ark? What is its purpose?
7. It seems Israel are doomed to failure. Is there any hope? Read the following highlights from the song God commanded Moses to give Israel as a witness against them (if you have time, you could read the whole thing).

Read 31:30-32:6, 32:15-23, 32:36-43

8. What is the vibe of this song?
9. How is God depicted?
10. How is Israel depicted? (Jeshurun is a reference to Israel)
11. What seems to be the final outcome for Israel?
12. How might this song make Israel feel?

On the one hand Israel's future seems bleak. God and Moses foretell rebellion and idolatry. On the other hand Moses' Song could also leave Israel with hope about the future.

13. What does the future hold?

One thing the immediate future holds is the death of Moses, recorded in chapter 34.

Read 34:9-12

14. What was so special about Moses?

Moses was the greatest leader Israel had known. Israel are expecting a prophet like Moses to come again in the future (Deut. 18:15-19). Although Israel have many prophets after Moses, none match him for his relationship with God and his miraculous deeds. For that, Israel would have to wait a bit longer, until that future time when God would reveal his grace to *all* people.

Read Acts 3:17-26

15. Who is the prophet like Moses that God has finally raised up for his people?

Think about it

16. Do you think Israel could have imagined that their future held the blessing of all nations?
17. How do you feel about being part of that future blessing?

Pray

Thank God for his grace to us in sending Jesus as promised. Thank God that because of Jesus we know what the future holds. Pray that we would respond with gratitude at being part of God's blessing to all nations.

Do Not Enter!

Chapter 31 begins with Moses installing Joshua as the new leader, because God has forbidden Moses from entering the promised land (Deut 32:48-52).

Moses and Aaron disobeyed God at Kadesh. God commanded that they *speak* to the rock, and God would provide water for the people. Instead Moses *struck* the rock with his staff, and took credit for the miracle himself.

Moses not only disobeyed God, but dishonoured him in front of the people. Moses had a great responsibility as Israel's leader, and he was severely punished for this act of disobedience (Numbers 20:11-13).