

Expectation of the covenant: Disobedience, exile, restoration, new hearts

“The covenant that they have received is personal, understandable and accessible (29:9-15; 30:11-14). Moses’ constant use of ‘you’ accentuates this point” (House 193). Success is a matter of obedience, and no Israelite can ever claim that the Lord taunted him with impossible demands. Whatever the Lord requires, that he stands ready to supply.

Deut 30:1-6 “When all these blessings and curses I have set before you come upon you...and when you and your children return to the LORD your God and obey him with all your heart...then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you....He will bring you to the land that belonged to your fathers....The LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live.”

GOING FURTHER

Consider the relationship between faith and obedience in the following passages: Deut 4:31-40; 5:28-29; 6:24-25; 8:1-20; 10:12-22.

How does your study of Deut help you to better understand the following passages: Jer 11; 31:31-34; Matt 4:1-11; Rom 9:30-10:4?

If you were to memorize a portion of Deut, what would you choose?

PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT STUDY

For our study of salvation in the Old Testament, re-read Gen 3, 15; Exod 6:1-8; Deut 5-6, 10; 30. Read also Ps 34; Isa 12, 55; Joel 2.

Consider: How was one saved in the Old Testament? What role did obedience play in salvation? How is salvation different today?

SOURCES CITED

Jason DeRouchie, *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, forthcoming.
Paul House, *Old Testament Theology*, 1998.
Gordon J. Wenham, *Exploring the OT: A Guide to the Pentateuch*, 2003.

THE HEART OF THE COVENANT (DEUTERONOMY)

PREPARATION FOR THIS STUDY

In Numbers, read at least chapters 13-14, 22, 24. This book describes judgment on the first generation and the raising up of a new one.

In Deuteronomy, read at least chapters 1-13, 29-34. Jesus quoted this book so much, he probably had memorized it. Why would he do that? (Hint: this book is *amazing!*) How is it clear that God’s demand is first *faith* and then obedience? What does it mean to “circumcise your heart”?

OUTLINE

- I. Preamble: The covenant parties and setting are given (1:1-5).
- II. Historical Prologue: Faithfulness to the covenant is motivated by the Lord’s faithfulness (1:6-4:49).
- III. Covenant Stipulations: Faithfulness to the covenant is accomplished by careful obedience (5:1-26:19).
 - A. General Stipulations: Faithfulness to the covenant requires wholehearted love of the Lord (5:1-11:32).
 - B. Specific Stipulations: Faithfulness to the covenant requires strict compliance with the Lord’s decrees (12:1-26:19).
- IV. Blessings and Curses: Faithfulness to the covenant is rewarded by abundant life (27:1-29:1).
- V. Covenant Renewal: Faithfulness to the covenant is required by all generations (29:2-30:20).
- VI. Leadership Transition: Faithfulness to the covenant is facilitated by Moses’ final arrangements (31:1-34:12).

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DEUTERONOMY

Because Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy more than any other OT book, some believe that it may have been his favorite. Scholars today consider Deuteronomy to be “one of the great theological documents . . . of any time” and “at the heart of the Old Testament theological witness.” “Deuteronomy has perhaps had more influence on the rest of the biblical story (both Old and New

Testaments) than any other book of the Bible.” Some consider Deuteronomy to be the “Romans” of the Old Testament, offering “the most systematic presentation of truth in the entire OT. . . . In short, Deuteronomy provides the theological base for virtually the entire OT and the paradigm for much of its literary style.”

Deuteronomy looks backward to Mount Sinai in its renewal of the covenant, but it looks forward to the covenant relationship of Yahweh and Israel in the Promised Land. As such, the book of Deuteronomy is a vital hinge in sacred history, revealing the Lord’s will for his people in the familiar context of a suzerain-vassal treaty.

THE MESSAGE OF DEUTERONOMY

Poised to enter the Promised Land, the Israelites are exhorted to be faithful to their covenant with Yahweh, loving him with all of their heart, keeping his commands, and trusting his promises.

Structure: Sermon series that echoed suzerain vassal treaty

Though its overall organization resembles the pattern found in suzerain-vassal treaties known from the Hittite empire, Deuteronomy is actually a series of sermons given by Moses to the nation of Israel. The inclusion and ordering of the major elements in Moses’ discourses in a similar format to Hittite treaties suggests that the book was intended to call to mind this well-known treaty type. The close parallels certainly cannot be accidental, and they suggest that Israel’s relationship with Yahweh could be compared to that of a vassal’s relationship with a sovereign king.

“Deuteronomy is thus full of the rhetoric of the preacher. It is pressing. It is repetitive. When it is talking about the law, its purpose is not to explain its niceties but to persuade the listener to keep it” (Wenham 124).

Basis of covenant: God’s relationship with his people

Deut 5:6-7 “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me.”

“In both the Old and New Covenants, real obedience to the Lord flows out of a heart that is awed by his greatness, takes seriously his Word, is surrendered to his ways, trusts in his promises, and looks to him for help” (DeRouchie).

Essence of the covenant: Love God and love your neighbor

Deut 6:4-5 “Hear, O Israel: 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.”

Deut 28:47 “Because you did not serve the LORD your God joyfully and gladly in the time of prosperity.”

“Love for God is the spring from which love of neighbor flows (10:12, 19; cf. Lev. 19:18). Neighbor love summarizes *what* God’s people were to do; the Ten Words (the “testimonies”) and all the additional “statutes and rules” clarify *how* God’s people were to do it (see Deut. 4:45; 12:1; 26:16). Love toward God and neighbor is the essence of covenant relationship” (DeRouchie).

Result of covenant faithfulness: God’s glory revealed to the nations

Covenantal loyalty would result in the wonder of the nations, whereas covenantal disloyalty would lead to Israel’s dispersal *among* the nations.

Deut 4:6-8 “Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, “Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.” What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the LORD our God is near us whenever we pray to him? And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today?”