

Deuteronomy – Introductory Thoughts and Worries: *Deut 30:19-20*

Introduction – How do you respond to the idea that the next book of the Bible that we'll be preaching through is the last book of the Pentateuch? There are some theological systems, well entrenched in modern evangelicalism, that claims the OT (and even portions of the NT) are not for today's Christians. Many Bible-readers act like this even though they don't necessarily believe it. Hopefully, we'll see how this is not true.

Deuteronomy, like much of the Old Testament, seems to have scads of details that just don't seem to matter or apply to us today, unless you're playing a Bible Trivia game. We'll discuss the problems with such a view.

But finally, why not just study the New Testament? There we have Jesus clearly portrayed for us and the Gospel laid out in its fullness. The problem with that is that Jesus Himself, in describing Himself and directing His disciples in the Gospel, constantly turns to the Old Testament. Knowing Jesus requires knowing the Old Testament. Following Jesus requires understanding the Old Testament. And we'll discuss this as well.

Weird Verses – As we go through the book, we will run across some really important verses, like the size of King Og's bed (3:11). We'll see that mountains you've never heard of have blessings and curses on them (11:29). Being a happy-carnivore, we'll come to my favorite meat-verse (12:20). We'll learn lessons about hair-cuts (14:1), cooking (14:21b), and credit card debt (15:1-2). Haven't you ever wondered what you should do if the ax head slips off your handle and accidentally kills your neighbor (19:5)? And then there are the multitudes of PG-13 verses that will make you blush sitting there with your children at your side (like 22:13-15 and 23:12-13). And while we'll read 14 verses of blessings in Chapter 28, these are followed by 54 verses of curses. What fun!

Why Bother? – Paul said that all Scripture was profitable for teaching (1 Tim 3:16) and Peter said some Scripture is tough to understand (1 Pet 3:16). Jesus taught His disciples to see how all the Scriptures spoke concerning Him (Luke 24:25-27, 44-45). While it takes some digging, the Scriptures teach us how to make sense of these weird verses and see that they aren't quite so obscure or unimportant to the true disciples of Jesus.

Some Easier Examples – Deuteronomy is quoted and mentioned indirectly dozens and dozens of times throughout the New Testament. Jesus uses Deuteronomy to stand against the temptation of the devil (Matt 4:4, 7). Jesus tells us that the greatest commandment comes from this book (Mark 12:29f). Deuteronomy describes God as a consuming fire and He remains so in the NT (Heb 12:29). The God of Deuteronomy closes eyes (Rom 11:8) and yet promises a great ministry to the Gentiles (Rom 15:10).

The Never Changing Law of God (Matt 5:17-18) – Christians who teach that we do not have to obey the Ten Commandments are in direct disobedience to Jesus. He sets up the idea of destroying or fulfilling the Law as direct opposites. He has come to fulfill for the Law is the very character of God (Deut 4:7-8). Whenever you preach grace, there is always the charge of antinomianism (Rom 6), but Christ preaches a Gospel of Grace to fulfill His own righteous Law (Rom 6:20-23). The Word of God *never* fades away (1 Pet 1:22-25), which is why men could turn to the Old Testament in order to confirm the Gospel being preached by Paul and Silas (Acts 17:10-11).

Least and Great in the Kingdom (Matt 5:19) – Notice it is anyone who *breaks* or *teaches others to break* the least of the commandments who is called the least in the kingdom. To despise the least of His commandments is to despise Him; to break one of His commandments is to be guilty of them all (James 2:10). The call is not for perfection, however, for we all stumble in many ways, and the merciful lovingkindness of God will be clearly stated in Deuteronomy. It is an admonition to universal obedience. Have you settled now that you will repent of anything that is sin, that it is your desire to love the Lord in every way (Deut 6:4-5)?

Life to Live the Law (Deut 30:19-20) – The Ten Commandments are given after the declaration of liberty, a free gift of God (Deut 5:6), and so it is in this passage as well. The choice is not between the drudgery of law-keeping and the freedom of self-centered pleasure-seeking. The choice is between life and death, liberty and bondage. Liberty is expressed in faithful, joyful law-keeping which only comes when God grants that liberty in your heart (Deut 30:6, Col 2:11), cutting away the old man and his ways. Life to live the law comes from life given to a dead man, in the Old and New Testament. Believe the Gospel, believe in Jesus Christ, and the Law is no burden at all (1 John 5:3).

Life and Revival: Covenant and Covenant Renewal – One man wrote, "*Deuteronomy is a very important book of the Bible. Its rediscovery during the days of Josiah the King led to a revival in the church of that time, and we should hope and pray that it may have a similar effect among us as we attend to it.*" And that is why we should study the last book of the Pentateuch.