



DEUTERONOMY

A 12-WEEK STUDY

Matthew H. Patton



J. I. Packer

THEOLOGICAL EDITOR

Dane C. Ortlund

SERIES EDITOR

“This series is a tremendous resource for those wanting to study and teach the Bible with an understanding of how the gospel is woven throughout Scripture. Here are gospel-minded pastors and scholars doing gospel business from all the Scriptures. This is a biblical and theological feast preparing God’s people to apply the entire Bible to all of life with heart and mind wholly committed to Christ’s priorities.”

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KNOWING THE BIBLE

J. I. Packer, Theological Editor
Dane C. Ortlund, Series Editor
Lane T. Dennis, Executive Editor

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Genesis	Psalms	John	1–2 Thessalonians
Exodus	Proverbs	Acts	1–2 Timothy
Leviticus	Ecclesiastes	Romans	and Titus
Deuteronomy	Isaiah	1 Corinthians	Hebrews
Joshua	Jeremiah	2 Corinthians	James
Ruth and Esther	Daniel	Galatians	1–2 Peter
1–2 Kings	Hosea	Ephesians	and Jude
Ezra and	Matthew	Philippians	Revelation
Nehemiah	Mark	Colossians and	
Job	Luke	Philemon	

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Matthew H. Patton

 **CROSSWAY**[®]
WHEATON, ILLINOIS

To Daniel I. Block
Mentor, teacher, friend

Knowing the Bible: Deuteronomy, A 12-Week Study

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S E R I E S P R E F A C E

KNOWING THE BIBLE, as the series title indicates, was created to help readers know and understand the meaning, the message, and the God of the Bible. Each volume in the series consists of 12 units that progressively take the reader through a clear, concise study of that book of the Bible. In this way, any given volume can fruitfully be used in a 12-week format either in group study, such as in a church-based context, or in individual study. Of course, these 12 studies could be completed in fewer or more than 12 weeks, as convenient, depending on the context in which they are used.

Each study unit gives an overview of the text at hand before digging into it with a series of questions for reflection or discussion. The unit then concludes by highlighting the gospel of grace in each passage (“Gospel Glimpses”), identifying whole-Bible themes that occur in the passage (“Whole-Bible Connections”), and pinpointing Christian doctrines that are affirmed in the passage (“Theological Soundings”).

The final component to each unit is a section for reflecting on personal and practical implications from the passage at hand. The layout provides space for recording responses to the questions proposed, and we think readers need to do this to get the full benefit of the exercise. The series also includes definitions of key words. These definitions are indicated by a note number in the text and are found at the end of each chapter.

Lastly, to help understand the Bible in this deeper way, we urge readers to use the ESV Bible and the *ESV Study Bible*, which are available in various print and digital formats, including online editions at esv.org. The Knowing the Bible series is also available online. Additional 12-week studies covering each book of the Bible will be added as they become available.

May the Lord greatly bless your study as you seek to know him through knowing his Word.

J. I. Packer
Lane T. Dennis

WEEK 1: OVERVIEW



Getting Acquainted

Deuteronomy (the title is Greek for “second law” or “second lawgiving”) is a national constitution, a founding document for the new life that Israel is about to begin in the Land of Promise. Forty years previously, God had brought Israel out of bondage in Egypt and made a covenant¹ with them at Sinai. But then, instead of receiving the land God had promised to them, Israel refused to enter it and was compelled to wander in the wilderness for 40 years. Now, at the end of those 40 years, Israel is on the cusp of entering the land once more. The book of Deuteronomy is the great, all-encompassing vision for what life in the land should look like for God’s people.

But Deuteronomy is also a farewell sermon. Moses is now 120 years old and is about to die. For decades he served as a mediator: he was God’s messenger to Israel and represented Israel’s requests to God. He was also Israel’s ruler, guide, and judge, with authority unsurpassed by anyone else in Israel. As his monumental life draws to a close, Deuteronomy is Moses’ last plea to Israel to live by the light of all that God has taught them.

And yet, Deuteronomy is ultimately about what *God* does for Israel, not what Israel does for God. The call to obedience (chs. 4–26) is rooted in God’s redemptive work in the past (chs. 1–11) as well as the promise of God’s work in the future (chs. 27–28). Even as Deuteronomy reckons with Israel’s profound brokenness and inability to obey (chs. 29, 31–32), it still holds forth an unshakable hope for the future based on God’s faithfulness (chs. 30, 32–33).

(For further background, see the *ESV Study Bible*, pages 325–329; also online at esv.org).

Placing Deuteronomy in the Larger Story

To begin to read Deuteronomy is to enter an epic story midstream. Deuteronomy is a major milestone in a narrative that began all the way back in Genesis and that continues to the end of Revelation.

Back in Genesis, God made several promises to Abraham: Abraham would have abundant offspring, this offspring would have a covenant relationship with God, and this offspring would enjoy that covenant relationship with God in the land of Canaan (Gen. 17:6–8). These promises encompass all that the garden of Eden held out to Adam before his fall into sin: a holy² God dwelling among a holy people in a holy place. What Adam forfeited, God promises he will still provide one day.

By the time we reach Deuteronomy, Abraham's offspring have become a large nation (Ex. 1:7; Deut. 1:10), and God has established his covenant with them at Sinai (Ex. 24:1–8). What remains is for them to enter the Promised Land, which they are about to do (see the book of Joshua). Deuteronomy calls Israel to the obedience that leads to genuine life with the Lord, in contrast to Adam's choice of death.

But Israel ultimately chooses death, just as Adam did, and they must be removed from the land (Judges–Kings). Thus Deuteronomy points forward to the true Adam and the true Israel, Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ obeyed God on our behalf and won for us the ultimate fulfillment of the promises to Abraham: eternal life. He thus brings about the holy kingdom foreshadowed in Deuteronomy.

Key Verse

“I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.” (Deut. 30:19–20)

Date and Historical Background

Deuteronomy records its own writing, stating in 31:9 that “Moses wrote this law and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel” (see also 31:22, 24). In context, “this law” probably refers to most of the book, which Moses wrote shortly before his death in either 1406 or 1220 BC (see the *ESV Study Bible*, pages 33, 385

for further discussion). However, even though Moses was responsible for most of Deuteronomy, there are a few parts of the book that date from a later time. These include the framing words in 1:1–5 (with its reference to events “beyond the Jordan”), the account of Moses’ death in chapter 34, and small editorial comments (e.g., 2:10–12). But as much as God may have seen fit to enhance Deuteronomy for later audiences, the core of the book was available in written form throughout Israel’s history, both for their instruction (17:18; 31:10–13; 33:10) and as a witness against them when they disobeyed (31:19, 26).

Outline

- I. Prologue: Israel’s Recent History (1:1–3:29)
 - A. Setting of the book (1:1–5)
 - B. Israel’s failure at Kadesh-barnea (1:6–46)
 - C. The journey to the plains of Moab (2:1–3:29)
- II. The Heart of Covenant Life with the Lord (4:1–11:32)
 - A. The uniqueness of the Lord and his law (4:1–43)
 - B. The Ten Commandments and Moses as mediator (4:44–5:33)
 - C. Israel to obey the Lord alone (6:1–8:20)
 1. With all that they are (6:1–25)
 2. Not drawn away by other nations (7:1–26)
 3. Not boasting in themselves (8:1–20)
 - D. Israel to love the Lord (9:1–11:32)
 1. For his grace shown at Sinai (9:1–10:11)
 2. For his powerful love to Israel (10:12–22)
 3. For the reward of life in the land (11:1–32)
- III. Specific Commands (12:1–26:19)
 - A. Concerning the place of worship (12:1–32)
 - B. Concerning false teachers (13:1–18)
 - C. Concerning food and times of the year (14:1–16:17)
 - D. Concerning leaders, war, and justice (16:18–21:9)
 - E. Concerning marriage, money, and the details of life (21:10–25:19)
 - F. Concerning the firstfruits (26:1–19)
- IV. Blessings and Curses (27:1–29:1)
- V. The Future of Israel (29:2–33:29)
 - A. God’s implacable anger (29:2–29)
 - B. A future beyond judgment (30:1–10)
 - C. Moses’ final plea (30:11–20)
 - D. New leaders, but the certainty of Israel’s apostasy (31:1–29)
 - E. A song of Israel’s future (31:30–32:52)
 - F. Moses blesses Israel (33:1–29)
- VI. Epilogue: The Death of Moses (34:1–12)

WEEK 1: OVERVIEW

As You Get Started

Before you began this study, what did you expect Deuteronomy to be about?

Does it seem strange that a book with so many laws could ultimately be about God's grace? If so, why?

List some questions you have about Deuteronomy. Perhaps some will have to do with how an ancient book written for Israel could apply to Christians today, which will be a central concern for this study.


As You Finish This Unit . . .

God gave the whole Old Testament to instill a hunger for Christ, the coming Redeemer of God's people. Ask God to help you approach Deuteronomy with an open heart, expectant that God will feed you here with his grace.

Definitions

¹ **Covenant** – A binding agreement between two parties, typically involving a formal statement of their relationship, a list of obligations for both parties, a list of witnesses to the agreement, and a list of curses for unfaithfulness and blessings for faithfulness to the agreement.

² **Holy** – Set apart by God for a good and special purpose.



THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY contains the final words of Moses to the people of Israel as they await entrance to the Promised Land. Remembering God's great deliverance from Egypt, Moses calls Israel to forsake their past faithlessness and love the Lord with all that they are.

This accessible study guide walks readers through this important biblical book, helping Christians understand that the only hope for obedience to God's commands is the grace of God found in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

ABOUT THE *KNOWING THE BIBLE* SERIES

Over the course of 12 weeks, these studies explore books of the Bible and:

- Ask thoughtful questions to spur discussion
- Show how each passage unveils the gospel
- Tie the text in with the whole story of Scripture
- Illuminate the doctrines taught in each passage
- Invite you to discover practical implications
- Help you better understand and apply God's Word

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GRAEME L. GOLDSWORTHY

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