

- *God's people are about to enter the Promised Land after 40 years of wandering.*
- *How are they supposed to live now, so they don't continue to wander aimlessly?*
- *And how are they to act as representatives of the living God, as His disciples, His image-bearers in a pagan culture?*
- *We'll answer these questions for **them and us** in our lesson. . . .*

## Deuteronomy

### Where rules become joyful reality in our lives

#### As we begin, I like this quote from John McArthur

- John McArthur says this in summary of the book:
- *Like Leviticus, Deuteronomy does not advance historically, but takes place entirely in one location over about one month of time . . . Israel was encamped in the central rift valley to the east of the Jordan. . .*
- *It had been almost 40 years since the Israelites had exited Egypt.... Like Leviticus, Deuteronomy contains much legal detail, but with an emphasis on the people rather than the priests....*
- *The book of Deuteronomy, along with Psalms and Isaiah, reveals much about the attributes of God. Thus, it is directly quoted over 40 times in the NT (exceeded only by Psalms and Isaiah) with many more allusions to its content.*

#### Important to remember

- As we go through reading the entire Bible, we don't read the books in isolation.
- **John McArthur continues**—*The book also assumes the reader is already familiar with the 4 books that precede it.*
- *Deuteronomy brings into focus all that had been revealed in Genesis to Numbers, as well as its implications for the people as they entered the Land.*

#### Matthew Henry (1600's) summarizes the content of Deuteronomy like this

- ***Our heavenly Father forbids nothing but for our welfare. Do thyself no harm; do not ruin thy health, thy reputation, thy domestic comforts, thy peace of mind. Especially do not murder thy soul. Do not be the vile slave of thy appetites and passions. Do not render all around thee miserable, and thyself wretched; but aim at that which is most excellent and useful.***

Matthew Henry

- God's laws, His rules for us are for our GOOD!
- **In deciding to follow them you will do what Moses continuously encourages his people to do in the book –you will CHOOSE LIFE!**
- The whole book (actually the Bible as a whole) is about how God loves us and set up guidelines for how to truly live joyful, satisfying lives.
- The 40 years of punishment (and wandering in circles) is about to end and let's look at 3 ways they, and we, are to live.

#### Deuteronomy tells us—

- How we should love
- How we should give
- How we should define ourselves and how it influences all we do

### **How we are to love—as a reflection of God’s love**

- *Deut. 7:7-9 The Lord did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath he swore to your ancestors that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt.*
- **John 3:16 God so loved the world that He gave.....**
- Throughout the Bible, from first to last, God is the initiator, the one who loves first.
- He demonstrates how we are able to love and show love to others because God loved us first.

### **Why we need to be assured of God’s love to be able to love others**

- One reason is because “Hurt people, hurt people.”
- This is so true—people who hurt others, who lash out, who get overly defensive, etc. usually do it from a place of internal hurt.
- That is why being assured, truly assured of and confident of God’s love is the foundation for being able to reflect His love to others.
- **Sometimes that isn’t easy.**
- The enemy whispers that God doesn’t really love us; when difficulties come, we are pounded with thoughts that He doesn’t care.

### **BUT HE DOES....**

- He showed Israel consistent love in their 40 years of wandering.
- And He shows it to us today. When you doubt, review verses of His love—think back of all the good things in your life, big and little—be thankful—journal to remember.
- And when it’s hard to believe it, we can pray with the Apostle Paul for God’s help in believing, as he says—
- *Eph. 3:16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, <sup>17</sup> so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, <sup>18</sup> may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, <sup>19</sup> and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*
- It’s OK to say, “I know you love me, but I don’t feel it....help me.”

### **Deuteronomy goes on to show us that we can’t just stop at accepting love from God**

- We need to give it out and Jesus gave us an example of how to do it.
- He often quoted from the Deuteronomy (more in fact than from any other book) and He clearly tied together the idea of loving God and people in—
- The story of the Good Samaritan.
- The context of the parable is instructive as an “expert in the Law” initiated the conversation—and as such he should have been very knowledgeable about the commands and their application in Deuteronomy, but.....
- Let’s look at the story.

### **“On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus, (in Luke 10)**

- “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”
- “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”

- He answered, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’ [Deut. 6:5] and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” [Lev. 19:18]
- “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

#### **But the teacher of the Law didn’t quit there**

- And like many of us, attempting to justify himself, he asked, “and who is my neighbor?”
- The passage goes on to tell the story of Good Samaritan, where a Jewish man was beaten, robbed, and left for dead. Religious people walked by him, but a Samaritan, a man who racially was despised by the Jews, stopped, took care of him, took him to an inn to be cared for, and paid for it.
- It was a shocking answer, and I think aside from the shock of making the Samaritan the hero of the story was, Jesus told it to challenge the man who asked, because that “teacher” should have known the answer.
- That kind of care for the poor and the stranger is talked about continuously throughout Deuteronomy—that is what defines a “neighbor” and should have been obvious to “an expert in the Law.”

#### **Here is an example in Deuteronomy 15:7-11, MSG**

- *When you happen on someone who’s in trouble or needs help among your people with whom you live in this land that God, your God, is giving you, don’t look the other way pretending you don’t see him. Don’t keep a tight grip on your purse. No. Look at him, open your purse, lend whatever and as much as he needs. Don’t count the cost. Don’t listen to that selfish voice [inside you] . . . and turn aside and leave your needy neighbor in the lurch, refusing to help him. He’ll call God’s attention to you and your blatant sin.*
- <sup>10-11</sup> *Give freely and spontaneously. Don’t have a stingy heart. The way you handle matters like this triggers God, your God’s, blessing in everything you do, all your work and ventures. There are always going to be poor and needy people among you. So, I command you: Always be generous, open purse and hands, give to your neighbors in trouble, your poor and hurting neighbors.*

#### **According to Deuteronomy, all God’s people should help those in need**

- One would assume especially those who were religious leaders should see that they should be the first to help, but they didn’t.
- Not only did the religious leaders in the story not obey specific commands to care for others, but they also obviously forgot a reminder from Deuteronomy that is mentioned numerous times in the Pentateuch that says—
- <sup>Deut. 24: 17</sup> *Do not deprive the foreigner or the fatherless of justice, or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge. <sup>18</sup> Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you from there. That is why I command you to do this.*
- <sup>19</sup> *When you are harvesting in your field and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it. Leave it for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow, so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. <sup>20</sup> When you beat the olives from your trees, do not go over the branches a second time. Leave what remains for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow. <sup>21</sup> When you harvest the grapes in your vineyard, do not go over the vines again. Leave what remains for the foreigner, the fatherless and the*

widow. <sup>22</sup> **Remember that you were slaves in Egypt. That is why I command you to do this.**

**We humbly help others not only because it is commanded, but because we realize *we are the same as those in need***

- We too are aliens and strangers.
- The same idea of our true status in the world is in the New Testament:
- 1 Peter 2:11 ***Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.***
- Other translations describe us as:
  - aliens and strangers *and* exiles
  - foreigners and pilgrims
  - immigrants and strangers

**As it has always been with God's people**

- As it Hebrew 11:13-16 reminds us
- *All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.*
- And 1 Peter 1:17 commands us to ... *live out your time as foreigners,(temporary residents, strangers) here with reverent fear.*

**The temptation to think more of ourselves than we should is also addressed in the final letter to the churches in Revelation**

- *Rev. 3:14 "To the angel of the church in Laodicea write:*
- *These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation. <sup>15</sup> I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! <sup>16</sup> So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. <sup>17</sup> You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. . . . <sup>19</sup> Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent. <sup>20</sup> Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.*
- The passage we often quote in evangelism is really addressed to lukewarm Christians who don't realize who they truly are before God—"wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked."
- **Precisely the description of the people many look down on—Jesus says that's all of us.**

**Finally, as a country western song reminds us**

- ***You Don't Love God If You Don't Love Your Neighbor***
- *There are many people, who will say they're Christians  
And they live like Christians on the Sabbath day  
But come Monday morning, till the coming Sunday  
They will fight their neighbor all along the way.....*
- *Oh, you don't love God  
If you don't love your neighbor*

*If you gossip about him, if you never have mercy  
If he gets into trouble, and you don't try to help him  
Then you don't love your neighbor  
And you don't love God*

- *There's a God Almighty, and you've got to love him  
If you want salvation and a home on high  
If you say you love him while you hate your neighbor  
Then you don't have religion, you just told a lie.*

## **#2 How we give—the very obvious and practical way to put God's love into practice**

- **A continuous, priority part of life—here's how Deuteronomy describes it**
- *Deuteronomy 14:22-29 Make an offering of ten percent, a tithe, of all the produce which grows in your fields year after year. Bring this into the Presence of God, your God, at the place he designates for worship and there eat the tithe from your grain, wine, and oil and the firstborn from your herds and flocks. In this way you will learn to live in deep reverence before God, your God, as long as you live. But if the place God, your God, designates for worship is too far away and you can't carry your tithe that far, God, your God, will still bless you: exchange your tithe for money and take the money to the place God, your God, has chosen to be worshiped. Use the money to buy anything you want: cattle, sheep, wine, or beer—anything that looks good to you. You and your family can then feast in the Presence of God, your God, and have a good time.*
- <sup>27</sup> *Meanwhile, don't forget to take good care of the Levites who live in your towns; they won't get any property or inheritance of their own as you will.*
- <sup>28-29, MSG</sup> *At the end of every third year, gather the tithe from all your produce of that year and put it aside in storage. Keep it in reserve for the Levite who won't get any property or inheritance as you will, and for the foreigner, the orphan, and the widow who live in your neighborhood. That way they'll have plenty to eat and God, your God, will bless you in all your work.*

### **Wait.....sounds like more than one tithe!!!**

- YES! And many commentators confirm there was more than one, but actually 3 tithes:
- **The Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, mentions the custom of paying three tithes:**  
*"In addition to the two tithes which I have already directed you to pay each year, the one for the Levites and the other for the banquets, ye should devote a third every third year to the distribution of such things as are lacking to widowed women and orphan children."—Antiquities iv. 240; Loeb ed.*

### **Matthew Henry's comment**

- *A second portion from the produce of their land was required. The whole appointment evidently was against the covetousness, distrust, and selfishness of the human heart.*
- *It promoted friendliness, liberality, and cheerfulness, and raised a fund for the relief of the poor. They were taught that their worldly portion **was most comfortably enjoyed, when shared with their brethren who were in want.***

## What we see here (and in many other passages) the THREE PURPOSES of the tithes

- **First, used to support the Levites**, which were the spiritual leaders of that day.
- AND two more reasons--
- **Second, to rejoice, to have a PARTY!**—notice it says, *“Use the money to buy an ox, a sheep, some wine, or beer, to feast there before the Lord your God, and to rejoice with your household.”*
- **Third, to give to those less fortunate**— *“foreigners, or to widows and orphans within your city, so that they can eat and be satisfied; and then Jehovah your God will bless you and your work.”*

### The challenging, fun, and compassionate implications of this passage

- Giving is about so much more than a 10% grudgingly or legalistically given.
- Just as we are not under the many specific laws of the Old Testament, so too we are not under the specifics of the laws here.
- HOWEVER, we are still to reflect the principles in them and in this case, it is one of joyful liberality in our lives—to the church, for godly celebration, and for the compassionate care of others.
- Our potluck celebrations with lots of food are a conscious celebration of this!
- This leads into the 3<sup>rd</sup> lesson from Deuteronomy and that is ...

### #3 how we define ourselves

- We tend to see ourselves and our obedience to God as individuals and while that is important, we also need to consider that—
- The rules and guidelines in Deuteronomy are based on statements like this:  
*For you **are a people** holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession. Deut. 7:6*
- We’ve talked in other lessons about the importance of holiness, and though that is important, also note that our holiness isn’t just a personal attribute but should describe us as “a people.”

### I want to focus here on the word, “people”

- **Hebrew word:** *‘am*
- Definition: *a people (as a congregated unit); specifically, a tribe (as those of Israel); hence (collectively) troops or attendants; figuratively, a flock:—folk, men, nation, people.... original meaning those united, connected, related.*
- What is important here, is the CORPORATE nature of God’s calling, God’s commands, how He wants us to live.
- It isn’t just about us as individuals in isolation.

### Why this is so important

- The core, the foundation of how Israel (and we) are supposed to live presupposes RELATIONSHIP.
- Love by its very definition is relational.
- The commands we just discussed on how to relate to others, how we are to give are **all relational**.
- The ones on giving are especially interesting when we look at them in terms of relationship—you don’t just give to get an obligation out of the way, you give to support spiritual leadership, to rejoice with those closest to you, to take care of the less fortunate.

## **Relationships are of primary importance because they reflect the character of our Triune God**

- The importance of RELATIONSHIPS goes back to the nature of God Himself who is a Trinity of Persons, an eternal relational entity.
- That is why a proper understanding of the Trinity is foundational to all other theology and why this is where all cults and non-Christian religions go wrong.
- ***Particularly an understanding of the 3 PERSONS of the Trinity and their relationships to each other.***
- Please see lessons on the Trinity—(Links at [www.Bible805.com](http://www.Bible805.com))
- ***IT IS NOT COMPLEX to understand. The reality of it is much easier than complex attempts at explanations of it.***

## **In the Old Testament, the term used of God's chosen was the "People"**

- In the New Testament, it talks about the "Kingdom of God" because the Kingdom is now made up of many people groups, under ONE King—Our God.
- There is much that can be said about the Kingdom of God—and these three descriptions are all true—
- It is within us if we allow Jesus to be the ruler of our lives.
- It is present where his people corporately follow and reflect Him.
- It is "not yet" as it will be when Jesus returns and will be reality for eternity.

## **OT or NT we are always part of something beyond ourselves**

- Peer pressure is very powerful for good or evil.
- This is why in the lessons I also have questions so you can discuss them with a group.
- That's why I encourage in all groups snacks so people can come a bit early, chat after the lesson, get to know others in the group. That's why my groups have potlucks.
- My goals with the group I teach at church and for every instance where you take in or share these lessons is not to only pour in information.
- Biblical instruction is an essential FOUNDATION for our interactions, but we want to put all we learn into practice in our relationships, so we don't become like the expert in the law, who knew all the answers, but failed miserably in living as God truly wanted him to.

## **A very practical idea—Our celebrations and inviting people to them**

- Are a wonderful way to share our faith.
- They reflect our God, who gave his people the Sabbath and yearly festivals,
- And our Savior who started his earthly ministry at a wedding party and who will welcome us to eternity at the wedding super of the Lamb.
- Deuteronomy emphasizes we are to love others as God loves us, give generously, and invite others into the Kingdom to be part of our Bible Studies, Potlucks, baptisms, church celebrations, service projects—invite people outside the church to celebrate our salvation with us.
- In all we do may we all remember and help others to see that, as C.S. Lewis said that "Joy is the serious business of heaven."
- ***What I want you to remember about our study of the first 5 books of the Bible, the Pentateuch—is that they are not only all about rules, but that they are truly guidelines for joy and an ultimately satisfying life and eternity from the God who loves you more than you can imagine.***