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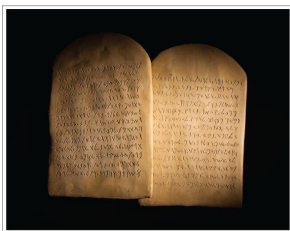
## I. First Sermon: Review of Israel's Recent History (Dt 1:1-4:49)

### A. Emphasis on the Covenant

Deuteronomy and Joshua go together in many ways. Deuteronomy brings to an end the books of Moses; it is a restatement of God's covenant for the new generation about to enter the Promised Land, and then Joshua is the story of the conquest of that land, at least the beginnings of it. When we look at Deuteronomy we see that it is not giving the Israelites a whole bunch of new information, but it is stating for them God's law in a way that sort of packages that law around the emphasis on covenant. The book of Deuteronomy is organized especially as a covenant all by itself as a book. The original Sinai covenant starts with the Israelites at Mt. Sinai in the second part of Exodus and continues with the book of Leviticus, and then even has some sort of appendixes in the book of Numbers as the law is being fleshed out in the action and lives of the people as they traversed the wilderness.

### B. Renewal of the Covenant

In the case of Deuteronomy, Israel is gathered in one place: the plains of Shittim in Moab, right across the Jordan River from the Promised Land proper, the land of Canaan. As his last great act, Moses delivers to the people an inspired speech of the law. He renews God's covenant with them. We find Moses preaching the law to a new generation of people. What did he emphasize? Well, he emphasizes the fact that God loves His people. God's covenant love for them is important, and in turn they must love God. This, again, is not love in the sense of feeling a certain way toward God; it is how one acts. It is doing acts of love for



God and on God's behalf, as one relates to others.

## II. Second Sermon: Review of Sinaitic Laws (Dt 5:1-26:19)

### A. Love Is Obedience

Another emphasis is God's special choice of Israel as His people. This is a theme of the book of Deuteronomy. Israel is not just any nation. Israel is a nation that God rescued out of Egypt and shaped in the wilderness, protected and cared for, and built into His own people. Their responsibility certainly is to act like it. How do they act like it? They keep His covenant; they obey His law. Obedience is faithfulness. Obedience is proof that they love Him and belong to Him—that they are His people.

### B. Choose to Serve God

Another theme that one finds in addition to the theme of love is the theme of choice. God has chosen them as compared to any other nation. Is this because God does not like other nations? Certainly not—that is not the emphasis at all. But rather, to this nation has been entrusted the responsibility of specially serving God, of being the stewards of His Word, of knowing His covenant and what His righteousness consists of, of living as a holy people for Him. This means they are under a burden, and so they are warned. If they do keep His law, their life on the earth will be long. But if they don't, they will rapidly be thrown off from the Promised Land into captivity.

Already in chapter 4 this prediction is made. The whole sweep of Israel's history is outlined in just a few verses of chapter 4, from about verses 21-31. You can see the plan there. They will be long in the land, but eventually they will worship other gods and will dishonor God, breaking His covenant. Then He will give them into the hand of their enemies who will deport them. And then in exile they will finally turn back to Him. In His mercy, He will bring them back, a renewed people—not only into their land physically, but into His protection and into His new covenant spiritually.

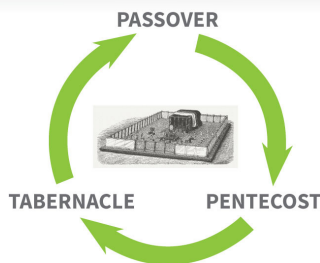
Deuteronomy 6:17

*Be sure to keep the commands of the Lord your God and the stipulations and decrees He has given you.*



Deuteronomy 4:22-31

*You are about to cross over and take possession of that good land. . . . After you . . . have lived in the land a long time—if you then become corrupt . . . doing evil in the eyes of the Lord your God . . . the Lord will scatter you among the peoples . . . . But if from there you seek the Lord your God, you will find Him . . . then in later days you will return to the Lord your God and obey Him. . . . He will not abandon or destroy you or forget the covenant with your forefathers.*



### C. Unity of God's People

Another theme that Deuteronomy brings before us is the unity of God's people. They cannot just keep some laws, spread out, and get along with some neighbors. They cannot just see themselves as free to do whatever they want, as long as it does not get them in too much trouble in the local scene. No, they are supposed to be a people who function together. One particular way in which they function together is worship.

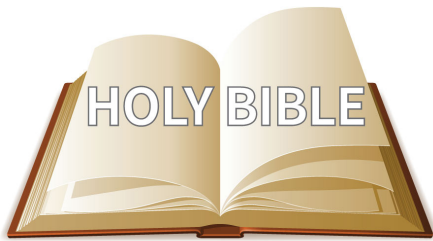
We find in Deuteronomy a very strong emphasis on corporate worship. This is a very important biblical theme. Everybody has to worship together. Deuteronomy 12 tells us that God plans to take His tabernacle and place it somewhere once they get into the heartland of the Promised Land. There, everybody will gather three times a year. The whole nation will come—the people from the distant edges of the nation, the people near the central sanctuary. It does not matter, they will all gather together three times a year. They will especially worship as a nation. They will come at the time of the Passover in the spring; they will come at the time of Pentecost in the summer; they will also come at the time of Tabernacles in the fall—three great festivals. Worshiping together, they will show their unity as a people.

Isn't that the way we show our unity? Isn't it by worshiping together? Of course, we show our love for one another and our care in many other ways. But certainly, worship is one of the key ways that God's people indicate they belong to Him, all together as a unified people.

### D. God's Faithfulness

Another theme is God's faithfulness to His promises. This is very big in Deuteronomy. Moses tells the people about their responsibility to keep the law. As he describes their stipulations, he also emphasizes for them by way of the prologue, part of the covenant, how faithful God has been. "God delivered you; God cared for you." Who did God do this for? Who else has ever had anything like this happen? Who worships any other gods that they think can come close to this in terms of beneficence, kindness, and loving faithfulness? The mercy of God, His constant

*Then I said to you, "Do not be terrified; do not be afraid of them. The Lord your God, who is going before you, will fight for you, as he did for you in Egypt, before your very eyes, and in the desert. There you saw how the Lord your God carried you, as a father carries his son, all the way you went until you reached this place."*



faithfulness, His loyalty—these are great themes of the book of Deuteronomy that Moses stresses for the people.

### E. God's Self-revelation in His Word

There is also the concept of God's self-revelation in His Word. This is something that we do not often pay much attention to, but God's Word is where we find out about Him. If you want to know God and you do not have a Bible, you are in trouble. It is hard. You can know some things about God; you can know general things about God, but God has caused His Word to be the place where we are to go to learn. He has put it in black and white. He has written it down for us. Moses makes much in Deuteronomy of this aspect of the Israelite responsibility to know that Word, to teach it to their children, to read it regularly, to live by it, not to let it depart from their minds, but to cause it to be firmly fixed therein.

### F. God's Sovereignty over the World

Another theme is the importance of God's sovereignty over the world and world events. The Israelites were a pretty small people on the scene. There were big powers like the Egyptians, or the Hittites, or the Babylonian Empire, or the Hurrian Empire, or any of a number of other empires. Israel was pretty small. Remember that when the spies in the book of Numbers looked over even the land of Canaan, which itself was not all that big, they felt outnumbered and outclassed by what they saw. The Israelites needed the encouragement of realizing that God was really in charge of all things, all nations. God would make happen for them what He chose to make happen. They did not need to fear; they did not need to lack confidence.

People in those days often believed in local gods and goddesses. They believed that an individual who worshiped a god was, in a certain sense, localizing that god. And where gods were worshiped, they might have some power; but if you get to some place where a god was not worshiped, that god probably did not have much power in that location. But the Israelites needed to know that the one true God, the God who had rescued them and made them a people, in fact, was sovereign over the entire world.

Deuteronomy 28:1

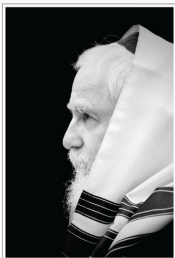
*If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully follow all His commands I give you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations on earth.*





## Curses from Deuteronomy 28

- Plagues
- Rebuke
- Confusion
- Oppression
- Famine
- Drought
- Exile
- Captivity
- Affliction
- Hunger
- Thirst
- Nakedness
- Poverty
- Defeat



## III. Third Sermon (Dt 27:1-34:12)

### A. Curses and Blessings

Yet another theme of the book is God's grace in abundance toward His people. He gives them more than they deserve; He gives them a lot. It is not just sustenance; it is not just the minimal. Deuteronomy emphasizes that, with its long lists of blessings that God provides for His people. On the other hand, He demands obedience as proof of faith and love. There are also plenty of curses listed in the book, covenant curses as part of the sanctions of the covenant. And Deuteronomy 28-32 is replete with these—descriptions of all the miseries the people can get themselves into if they do not obey God and keep His law.

### B. Succession

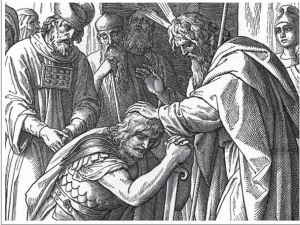
Another concern of the book is succession. This, after all, is a new group of people to whom Moses is preaching. Most of them had not been in Egypt. They have been born, instead, in the wilderness and were a new generation ready to enter the Promised Land. They were oriented forward to that experience; they were the successors to those who had lived in Egypt, and they need to have a sense of proper succession—the idea of the generations coming and going, the idea that every new generation must renew the covenant with God. Every new generation must for itself be faithful. A generation could not count upon the benefits that had been passed down to it by a prior faithful generation. It had to make its own commitment of faith and obedience to God.

### C. A Successor to Moses

The succession from Moses is also an issue at the very end of the book. What will happen when Moses dies? Well, the answer is that God will be faithful. He will have a successor. In the very last chapter of the book, chapter 34, we read about Moses' death, about the care with which God buried him. He had led the people faithfully. Yet for all the strong and wonderful things he had done, he was actually a very meek and humble person, not that he did not have vigor and force in what he did, but that he put others ahead of

himself. In other words, he knew how to love neighbor as self and how to love God with all his heart.

#### IV. Preparations for Entering the Promised Land (Jos 1:1-5:15)



There is a transition from Deuteronomy to Joshua, and in a way it is embodied, in part, in the transition from Moses to Joshua because, of course, the book of Joshua bears the name of Joshua, who is one of its main characters. I'd like to emphasize for you, since this is the first book of the Bible that is named after a single individual, that Joshua is not actually the hero of the book. Joshua is not the most important figure in the book that bears his name. The hero in the book of Joshua is God. God is the one who makes things happen. God is the one who leads His people. God is the one who protects them. God is the one who gives them victory. Joshua is an important player, but the real emphasis is on God as the supreme leader—God as the sovereign, God as even the warrior, for His people.

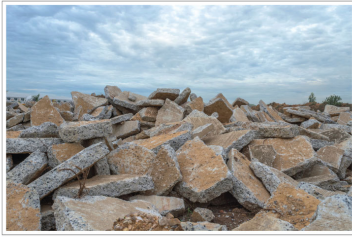
#### V. Conquest of the Land (Jos 6:1-12:24)

##### A. Central Campaign



When we look at the book of Joshua we observe that the Israelites entered the Promised Land and then after a central campaign went to the south, and after a campaign in the south went to the north. One of the things you observe in following that process is that quite a number of chapters are given to the campaign which we call the central campaign, the entry campaign. The Israelites crossed the Jordan River in a kind of reenactment of the experience they had had at the Red Sea. They went on dry land across a riverbed. God dams up the waters for them and allowed them to experience again, as a new generation, the same kind of miracle that their fathers had experienced forty years prior.

In addition, He brings them into the Promised Land—part of that land opposite Jericho, a great ancient city with huge walls. Now how were the Israelites to conquer the Promised Land if it had so many cities with high walls?



Sure, they could start elaborate siege works, but besieging a city takes years. If they would have to siege every single city, since most of them were defended with very high impenetrable walls that an army of infantrymen could not breach—except after long, slow, patient effort, they would never mop up the Promised Land in their lifetimes.

So, God gives them, in the situation of Jericho, a real encouragement. They actually do not fight for the city at all. They march around the city. They march around one day; they march around another. After six days, they march around on the seventh day, seven times, and then God causes the walls of that city to crumble down flat so the Israelites can just walk in over the rubble, come in and take captive the citizenry, and begin the conquest of the Promised Land.

### B. Holy War

It is an incredible kind of war. God did the fighting for them; they did not do it themselves. In this connection, we observe that there are a number of ways in which the Israelites are entering into a battle, a series of battles, a war, or a series of wars, always from a different angle from which we might think soldiers would approach a battle from. That is, they are fighting what scholars call a “holy war.” This holy war is characterized by quite a number of special features. The Israelites actually do not get paid. They are all volunteer soldiers. This is different from what happens in most of the ancient world. In most warfare in the ancient world, people were allowed to take whatever they could gain. As they were successful in battle, they were able to get rich. Whatever they could carry off after they defeated their enemies, they could keep.

But the Israelites could not do that. They were allowed no pay; they were allowed no plunder. They could not take the spoils of war—that was all dedicated to God. They fight with only a volunteer army, no professional soldiers. They fight only for the taking and holding of the Promised Land, not for personal gain in any way. They fight as the Lord’s soldiers, as Yahweh’s soldiers, as God’s army. And accordingly, they cannot just decide when to go into battle. We see this in the book of Joshua. God tells them where to go and where to fight and what to do. It is at His behest that



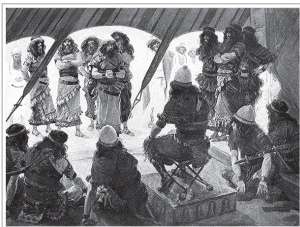
they fight; and furthermore, no particular political leader can tell them when to fight. Only one of God's prophets can do that. In the case of Joshua, he is both a general and a prophet, so he is one to whom God can speak. But this is a special type of warfare, not the normal sort.

It is especially important to note that it cannot be a warfare that they fight just anywhere or any time. They only fight at God's call, only because they hear God's voice through a prophet, and only for the taking and holding of the Promised Land. Finally, if they go into this kind of war and somebody violates these provisions, violates the provisions that they are not in it for themselves but are fighting as God's army for Him—not for reward of any sort—then the violator becomes the enemy.

### C. Ai

This leads to the story that takes place in chapter 7 of Joshua, right after the terrific success they had at Jericho—a wonderful miraculous delivery of a city into their hands. They then proceed to a little town called Ai. Ai in Hebrew means “ruin.” We expect that this is not much of a place. And yet, after they start to attack the little “ruin,” they are driven back, a number of them are killed, and we find Joshua on his face on the ground, saying, “Lord, what have you done? Have you brought us over the Jordan to kill us?”—because Joshua, of course, cannot figure out what is going on. It is supposed to be a holy war. It is supposed to be a special kind of process in which God does the fighting for His people, so that they always win; and here they have lost a battle against an inferior force, against a little ruined town. The answer is that some of the Israelites had been taking plunder during the attack on Jericho.

One of them is singled out as an example. In fact this story, sadly, is presumably intended by the writer of Joshua—whoever it was, we do not know—to be an indication of the kinds of things in general that the Israelites did that would keep them from a completely successful campaign in the Promised Land. Though Joshua did lead the troops at God's behest through the central part of the country (and then headed further south and mopped up territories in the south and then went on to defeat a coalition of Canaanite kings in the north), the fact is that the Israelite conquest





was only partial.

### D. Incomplete Taking of the Land

The book of Joshua and the following book of Judges give lists of places that they did not capture and mention large numbers of groups who stayed with them right in the Promised Land, though they were not native Israelites. In other words, the lack of faithfulness as sampled in chapter 7 was widespread enough that in spite of all the warnings, the Israelites really did not do as thorough a job of the conquest as God had wanted them to do.

## VI. Allocation of Territories (Jos 13:1-24:33)

### A. Assignment of Land

However, God is faithful even when His people are not. After the campaigns winds up, then there is the assignment of the land. This starts with chapter 13, and it is a very long section of the book, and it goes until the end of chapter 21. It is not very exciting reading: lots and lots of lists of towns and cities, long descriptions of borders of tribal territories. But it is very important information. Here after all that time, after centuries of time, since God had originally promised this land to the descendants of Abraham, the descendants of Abraham were being handed that land. They may have imperfectly occupied it, and they may have made some serious flaws in their conquest as they were not as faithful to God as they should have been, but He is giving them the land.

### B. Intertribal Rivalry

As the lot falls to this tribe or that family or clan, the land is distributed. And after that wonderful, though somewhat tedious, description of a fulfillment of a great promise, then we read about the fact the people themselves were falling into disunity. Chapter 22 describes intertribal rivals, tribes almost going to war against one another. Fortunately, that does end in proper negotiation under the covenant and a restoration of unity, but it does bode ill for the future. If these tribes, after all the good that has been done for them, cannot stay together, live together, or work together,



**Joshua 24:15**

*Choose for yourselves this  
day whom you will serve . . . .  
But as for me and my house-  
hold, we will serve the Lord.*

maybe there is in their future a dissolution—and we will see that when we come to 1 and 2 Kings.

### C. Joshua's Final Message

In chapter 23, there is a wonderful story of Joshua's appeal to the people to remain faithful. It is great reading. He had to make it, because that generation needed to renew the covenant, too. Just as the first generation of Israelites had made their covenant at Sinai, the second generation under Moses, toward the end of Joshua's life, there was yet another generation. They needed to be faithful, and so he brings before them again God's covenant, and urges them to keep the law, to be obedient, to put away their idols and to stay with the Lord, who alone could bless them and protect them.

The final chapter of the book is an account of the renewal of that covenant, along with Joshua's death. Joshua stresses for the people that they have got to serve the Lord. "Serve" can mean "worship"; it can mean "work for"; it can mean "be obedient to"; it can mean "belong to"; it covers a lot of territory. Joshua says, "I have done it. My family has done it. Will you do it too? Will you serve the Lord?" And the people say they will, so he swears them to it—to serve Him fully, to really obey Him. So Joshua dies, having led that generation, having been faithful to God. At the end of the book of Judges, we will see what happens to transition from there. And in the end of Joshua, we will see what happens as it transitions into the book of Judges. Once Joshua is gone, things will not be as good.