

Deuteronomy Introduction and Chapter 1

THEME: Israel's failure at Kadesh–Barnea.

Moses is reviewing the journeys of the children of Israel and interpreting a great deal of what had taken place. All of that generation is now dead, with the exception of Caleb and Joshua. He is preparing the new generation to enter the land, and rehearsing the experiences of their fathers so that they might profit from them rather than repeat the failures. - McGee

Deu 1:1 These are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel on this side of the Jordan in the wilderness, in the plain opposite Suph, between Paran, Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Dizahab.

In that same area I stood on Mount Nebo—I have pictures which I took there—and I actually could see the city of Jerusalem from that elevation. What I saw did not look like a promised land at all. It looked like a total waste, and this reveals what has happened to that land down through the centuries. When Moses looked at it, I think he was seeing a green and good land. Today it is a desert. It looks like the desert area of California and Arizona. - McGee

Deu 1:2 It is eleven days' journey from Horeb by way of Mount Seir to Kadesh Barnea.

Mount Sinai is in Horeb. It was a journey of eleven days from Horeb to Kadesh–Barnea, which was the entrance point into the Land of Promise. Israel spent thirty–eight years wandering when it should have taken them only eleven days to get into the land. Why? Because of their unbelief. Their marching was turned to wandering, and they became just strangers and pilgrims in that desert. Because they were slow to learn, they wandered for thirty–eight years in that great and terrible wilderness.

We also are slow to learn, friends. I think we would characterize ourselves by saying we have low spiritual I.Q.'s. It seems as if the Lord must burn down the school in order to get some of us out of it!

Deu 1:3-5 Now it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, that Moses spoke to the children of Israel according to all that the LORD had given him as commandments to them, after he had killed Sihon king of the Amorites, who dwelt in Heshbon, and Og king of Bashan, who dwelt at Ashtaroth in Edrei. On this side of the Jordan in the land of Moab, Moses began to explain this law, saying,

Moses delivered his subsequent discourse to the children of Israel, preparatory to their entering Canaan in the fortieth year after they left Egypt. It was after both Sihon king of the Amorites and Og king of Bashan had been slain (Num. 21). – Believers' Bible Commentary

At the close of their time of wandering, Moses delivers his first oration to them. Obviously, his words were first given orally and then were written down later. The critics formerly found fault with this, claiming there was no writing at the time of Moses. Of course, now it has been shown that writing was in existence long before Moses. Moses was the spokesman who gave the oration, yet he makes it clear that this was given him by the Lord.

In reviewing their history and in going over their journeys in detail, Moses mentions his great mistake. – McGee

Deu 1:6-8 "The LORD our God spoke to us in Horeb, saying: 'You have dwelt long enough at this mountain. Turn and take your journey, and go to the mountains of the Amorites, to all the neighboring places in the plain, in the mountains and in the lowland, in the South and on the seacoast, to the land of the Canaanites and to Lebanon, as far as the great river, the river Euphrates. See, I have set the land before you; go in and possess the land which the LORD swore to your fathers—to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—to give to them and their descendants after them.'

Since most of this has already been covered in Numbers, we shall simply summarize it here: God's command to march to the Promised Land and **possess** it (vv. 6-8) – Believers' Bible Commentary

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The Old Testament is a type and shadow for us to learn from and Jesus and the new covenant which the Hebrews all looked forward to. Having said that, we can clearly see the parallels of the physical promised land and the Kingdom of God that Jesus proclaimed was at hand.

Have you dwelt long enough in this Babylonian world? If so, then be of good courage and step into the Kingdom of God. The Lord has equipped you with the Holy Spirit and we have victory if we choose faith over fear.

Leaders Appointed

Deu 1:9-13 "And I spoke to you at that time, saying: 'I alone am not able to bear you. The LORD your God has multiplied you, and here you are today, as the stars of heaven in multitude. May the LORD God of your fathers make you a thousand times more numerous than you are, and bless you as He has promised you! How can I alone bear your problems and your burdens and your complaints? Choose wise, understanding, and knowledgeable men from among your tribes, and I will make them heads over you.'

We find the account of this back in Exodus 18. Moses became provoked, burdened, and frustrated. He thought he alone carried the burden of Israel. The Lord permitted him to appoint elders; so, a committee of seventy was appointed. This later became the Sanhedrin, the organization which committed Christ to death many years later.

Moses, in his frustration, lost sight of the fact that God was bearing Israel. Moses was God's appointed leader; he didn't need a board or a committee. Moses made a real mistake, and he mentions it here. Very few people will mention their mistakes, but Moses does. He says it sounded so good, but it didn't work, and it caused a great deal of difficulty.

This same thing can happen in a church. I think one of the worst things that can happen to a church is a board that will not follow the pastor. In that kind of conflict, either the board should go, or the pastor should go. If the pastor is standing for the Word of God and is preaching it, then it is the duty of the board to support him. If they don't like the way the pastor parts his hair, they should get out. Unfortunately, usually they stay on, split the church, and try to crucify the preacher.

Do you want to know Moses' estimation of the wilderness they went through? – McGee

Deu 1:14-18 And you answered me and said, 'The thing which you have told us to do is good.' So, I took the heads of your tribes, wise and knowledgeable men, and made them heads over you, leaders of thousands, leaders of hundreds, leaders of fifties, leaders of tens, and officers for your tribes. "Then I commanded your judges at that time, saying, 'Hear the cases between your brethren, and judge righteously between a man and his brother or the stranger who is with him. You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small as well as the great; you shall not be afraid in any man's presence, for the judgment is God's. The case that is too hard for you, bring it to me, and I will hear it.' And I commanded you at that time all the things which you should do.

the appointment of judges over civil matters (vv. 9-18) – Believers' Bible Commentary

The OT is clearly commanding righteousness and impartiality. Jesus lived this out, as it is said the ground is level at the foot of the cross. This is more complicated than we might imagine as I was shown this week because the highest law is Love.

For example: Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) is clearly not biblical and stands in contrast to this and Jesus's prayer for us in John 17. However, the people that worship this DEI generally do not know the Lord, and consequently, view this truth as a personal attack on them for they feel DEI is their hope and provision.

Israel's Refusal to Enter the Land

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Deu 1:19 *"So, we departed from Horeb, and went through all that great and terrible wilderness which you saw on the way to the mountains of the Amorites, as the LORD our God had commanded us. Then we came to Kadesh Barnea.*

I'll take his word for it, because he was there. It was both great and terrible. The wilderness march was no nice daisy trail which they were following.

The second mistake which Moses records was the decision at Kadesh–Barnea. This was a mistake of the people. Again, it was the problem of having a board or committee. - McGee

Deu 1:20 *And I said to you, 'You have come to the mountains of the Amorites, which the LORD our God is giving us.*

Deu 1:21 *Look, the LORD your God has set the land before you; go up and possess it, as the LORD God of your fathers has spoken to you; do not fear or be discouraged.'*

Deu 1:22 *"And every one of you came near to me and said, 'Let us send men before us, and let them search out the land for us, and bring back word to us of the way by which we should go up, and of the cities into which we shall come.'*

Deu 1:23 *"The plan pleased me well; so I took twelve of your men, one man from each tribe.*

Here we go again! We must have a board or a committee to go in and search out the land. God had already searched it out! God had said it was a land of milk and honey. Sure, there were giants in the land, but God had said that He would take care of them. The people wanted a board; Moses wanted a board. Look what happened. This was the reason they were turned back into that awful wilderness.

The basic problem is unbelief. God had said it was a good land. The spies looked it over and agreed that it was a good land. But they said there were giants in the land. God had said that He would take care of the giants because He would enable Israel. They did not believe God.

Many times, the Christian today finds himself confronted by giants in his life. I'm sure that as a child of God you have found yourself in giant country. Believe me, it is difficult to know how to handle a giant when you are just a pygmy yourself. God has given us the same promise that He is able to handle the giants for us. It is wonderful to know that. It is not our circumstances on the outside which are our real problem. It is the circumstance on the inside of us, the unbelief in our hearts, which is the cause of our problems.

Now God makes it clear to them that the whole generation which came up to Kadesh–Barnea and turned back in unbelief will die. Only two men of the old generation will be permitted to enter the land. They are Joshua and Caleb. – McGee

Deep Thought on Old Covenant vs. New Covenant

I heard it recently said that the Lord chose Israel, and they are His so He will handle them (meaning the Old Covenant), and America chose the Lord at it founding, and therefore, it is our choice. (Meaning via the new covenant and Holy Spirit we will decide for ourselves.)

Deu 1:24-27 *And they departed and went up into the mountains, and came to the Valley of Eshcol, and spied it out. They also took some of the fruit of the land in their hands and brought it down to us; and they brought back word to us, saying, 'It is a good land which the LORD our God is giving us.' "Nevertheless you would not go up, but rebelled against the command of the LORD your God; and you complained in your tents, and said, 'Because the LORD hates us, He has brought us out of the land of Egypt to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us.*

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Has anything really changed? The children of Israel were about to enter the promised land, and they even verified the land was good as the Lord said, but they believed the lie of the enemy that they could not win. This led to murmuring and complaining. **How many times has the enemy stolen our peace and our kingdom territory because we believed we were defeated and leaned into the fear, forgetting the promises of our Lord?**

Deu 1:28-33 Where can we go up? Our brethren have discouraged our hearts, saying, "The people are greater and taller than we; the cities are great and fortified up to heaven; moreover, we have seen the sons of the Anakim there." "Then I said to you, 'Do not be terrified, or afraid of them. The LORD your God, who goes before you, He will fight for you, according to all He did for you in Egypt before your eyes, and in the wilderness where you saw how the LORD your God carried you, as a man carries his son, in all the way that you went until you came to this place.' Yet, for all that, you did not believe the LORD your God, who went in the way before you to search out a place for you to pitch your tents, to show you the way you should go, in the fire by night and in the cloud by day.

When you fear the enemy instead of God, that is sin. We should fear God, not Satan, especially today when we are on this side of the cross with the Holy Spirit. The Old Testament Saints longed for the days we live in.

The Penalty for Israel's Rebellion

Deu 1:34-38 "And the LORD heard the sound of your words, and was angry, and took an oath, saying, 'Surely not one of these men of this evil generation shall see that good land of which I swore to give to your fathers, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him and his children I am giving the land on which he walked, because he wholly followed the LORD.' The LORD was also angry with me for your sakes, saying, 'Even you shall not go in there. Joshua the son of Nun, who stands before you, he shall go in there. Encourage him, for he shall cause Israel to inherit it.

Caleb and Joshua were different from the others. They were spies who believed God and had brought back an accurate report, a good report. The fact of the matter is that Caleb will lay hold of the land that he wanted. We will find later, in the Book of Joshua, that he was a remarkable man. He walked up and down the land, and he claimed the mountain where the giants lived! "This is what I want," he said, and God gave it to him for an inheritance.

By the way, what do you want of God, friend? Are you a parent? Are you a young person starting out in life? What do you want of God? Let me say this: If you think you can sit on the sidelines and get it, you are wrong. There are a great many folk who think they should just sit and pray and pray and pray. I certainly agree that we must pray and live in fellowship with Him, but, my friend, you are going to have to go out there and take it. Did you know that? God said He would give to Caleb the land that he had trodden upon. A great many of us today are not being blessed because we are spending too much time sitting down. That is the wrong place to be if we want the blessing of God. We are to walk. There is a great deal said in the Scriptures about the Christian's walk and very little said about the Christian's sitting down. We need to lay hold of God's promises.

Joshua is the man who is to become the leader to succeed Moses. Why was he chosen? Well, he is a man of experience, and he is a man who wholly followed God. He and Caleb brought back the good report because they believed God. Faith was the essential thing. They believed God and they were willing to step out in faith. Friend, you don't believe God by just sitting down and claiming great blessings. You have to step out in faith for Him. - McGee

Deu 1:39 'Moreover your little ones and your children, who you say will be victims, who today have no knowledge of good and evil, they shall go in there; to them I will give it, and they shall possess it.

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There are some very important things here that we don't want to miss. First, the age of responsibility is older than we may think it is. Some of these folk who entered the land were teenagers at Kadesh–Barnea. We know from Num_14:29 that God set the age at 20, and all from twenty years old and upward died in the wilderness.

Something else to note here is that children who die in infancy are saved. How do I know? God did not hold responsible those young folk who had not reached the age of accountability when their elders refused to enter the land. He permitted them to enter the land. You see, the older generation had said they did not want to enter the land because they feared for their children's safety—they were thinking of their children. God made it very clear to them that this was not their real reason. They were insulting God; they were really saying that.

God didn't care for their children. In effect God says to them, “I do care for your children, and those little ones whom you thought would be in such danger are the very ones who are going to enter the land.” Now it is that generation of young folk who have come to the border of the land and are ready to enter the Promised Land. It is to them that Moses is speaking. - McGee

Deu 1:40-41 But as for you, turn and take your journey into the wilderness by the Way of the Red Sea.' "Then you answered and said to me, 'We have sinned against the LORD; we will go up and fight, just as the LORD our God commanded us.' And when everyone of you had girded on his weapons of war, you were ready to go up into the mountain.

After the children of Israel refuse to go into the land at Kadesh–Barnea, they face a terrible dilemma. They face the wilderness if they turn back—remember that Moses called it “that great and terrible wilderness.” Realizing they have sinned, and realizing they face the wilderness if they turn back, they decide to go into the Promised Land after all. - McGee

Deu 1:42 "And the LORD said to me, 'Tell them, "Do not go up nor fight, for I am not among you; lest you be defeated before your enemies." '

May I say to you that such a type of fighting is no good. Do you know why? Because they were out of the will of God. The reason they were willing to fight at this time was not because they believed God but because they were afraid. Their motivation was fear, not faith! They were motivated by fear, not by faith in God. – McGee

Actions have consequences, the opportunity for them to go into the land with God's blessing had closed due to their disobedience. What opportunities have we missed in life due to our disobedience? Knowing this, are you willing to resolve to lean into your faith and not miss these opportunities going forward?

Deu 1:43 So, I spoke to you; yet you would not listen, but rebelled against the command of the LORD, and presumptuously went up into the mountain.

This was not faith, you see. If they had gone up at the beginning because they believed God, that would have been one thing. This now is acting presumptuously and is altogether different.

I think there is a very fine distinction between faith and presumption. In the course of my ministry, I have counseled many people. One man told me, “You know, Brother McGee, I believed God and I thought He would bless my business. I went into business believing He would bless me, but He didn't. In fact, I went bankrupt.” Well, friend, was it faith in God or was it presumption? When we got down to the nitty–gritty, I learned that this man had heard another businessman speak at a banquet. His message had been that he had taken as his motto, “God is my partner,” and he had been very successful in business. He told about how he had taken God into partnership with him, and God had blessed and prospered him. Obviously, God led that man; I'm confident of that. However, I believe that my friend went home and

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presumptuously said, "Well, if God will make me prosperous, I'll take Him as my partner in business." God didn't lead him, you see. Believe me, friends, there is a difference between faith and presumption. - McGee

How many times have we failed to head God's advice or simply moved forward without asking only to find mishaps and failures?

Deu 1:44-46 And the Amorites who dwelt in that mountain came out against you and chased you as bees do, and drove you back from Seir to Hormah. Then you returned and wept before the LORD, but the LORD would not listen to your voice nor give an ear to you. "So, you remained in Kadesh many days, according to the days that you spent there.

Notice this. They came before the Lord, and they shed crocodile tears. They wept, and they repented. Yes, but what kind of a repentance was this? Listen to Paul in 2Co_7:10: "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death."

Did they weep because they disobeyed God? No. They wept because the Amorites had chased them. Their defeat was the reason for their weeping. You know of incidents when a thief is caught, and he begins to shed tears and repent. But wait a minute. What kind of tears are they? Does he weep because he is a thief? No, he weeps because he has been caught. There is a world of difference in that. This is exactly the case with these people. - McGee