

D E U T E R O N O M Y

study three : how it all ends up (Deut 29-33)

Introduction

What is the point of studying Dt this term?! (in the group, push people on this, maybe playing devil's advocate?)

Getting started

Dt 29-33 is Moses' third and final sermon. He is about to die, and he is irreplaceable (cf 34:10-12).

The book ends with Moses putting in place the people and structures to ensure Israel will continue without him.

A new choice

Read Dt 30:11-20.

What are the choices for Israel? How is each choice made? What are the consequences of each choice?

How is it a fitting conclusion to the whole book to end with this stark choice? (NB remember the context in Dt 1.)

What does it mean to say that this choice is 'not difficult for you or beyond your reach' (11-14 NIV)?

Dt 30:16 is full of allusions to what God promised Abraham back in Gen 12 (see [Study 1](#)): many descendants, God's blessing and a land. God is keeping those promises. Now is the time for national response. Obedience to God (which is how Israel is to 'love' God cf Dt 11:1, 13, 22) will bring a life of joy. Rejecting God will bring a life of cursings. Heaven and earth will be witnesses (19) for this significant choice of how Israel will live in the land.



Stop and Think!

How seriously do we take God's call to obey him?

In what ways is this a matter of life and death, or is this an exaggeration?

Are God's commands 'too difficult'? And if not, why do so many people (Christians and not) complain they are?

A new leader

Read Dt 31:1-8.

After mentioning his own death, what is the first thing Moses tells Israel (3-6)? How was this encouraging?

What does Moses organise for Israel's future (cf 31:23 too)? Why was it wise to do this before Moses died?

What does Moses do and say as Joshua starts out on this new task? How would each thing help Joshua?



Stop and Think!

What are the most encouraging things to say to a new leader of God's people? Why?

What models are there here for the succession of a new godly leader to replace someone moving on / retiring / dying?

A new mediator

Moses has been more than just the leader of Israel.

He has also been the mediator between God and his people, bringing God's word to them.

Read Dt 31:9-13.

How will Israel receive God's word when Moses can no longer bring it to them? Why is this plan so important?

What are future generations to do with what they hear? How does this differ from what these people should do?

Dt 4:11-14 explains that although this later generation had not been at Horeb, they 'came near' to God every time they listened properly to what God had said there. Every subsequent generation (including us!) miss out on none of that first generation's experience of Horeb so long as we do the same. As we 'remember' God's words, a past encounter with God is passed on ... and made present experience. What God spoke is of ongoing relevance.



Stop and Think!

Why is God's word as relevant today as when it was first given?

Why is there so much emphasis in Dt on one generation passing on to the next what God said? (eg 6:6-9)

Why should we read the Bible/God's words? (Think hard here from the passage rather than saying the obvious!)

What implications does this have for what we are doing in our 'Quiet Time' and at church?

Why don't we value 'God's word written' as highly as we should?

Put on your NT spectacles

In Dt 18:15-22, God promises that he will send another prophet to tell Israel his word.

By the end of the OT, although they had had many prophets sent from God, Israel were still looking for a prophet to fulfil these words (cf Malachi 4:4 still looking back to Moses; and in John 1:21b asking 'are you The Prophet?'). Jesus steps into history as that Prophet.

And in Acts 3:11f, Peter confirms explicitly that the time of which Moses spoke has now come (cf v22-23 esp).

At last, all those promises God made to Abraham are fulfilled in Jesus (cf v24-25).

Read Hebrews 1:1-3 and John 1:14-18

How is Jesus a greater prophet than Moses?

What is the word Jesus came to speak?



Stop and Think!

How do we 'listen' to the word Jesus came to speak?

But, the same old problem

Read Dt 31:14-22.

How will Israel respond to God?

How will God respond to Israel?

(The 'song' of Dt 31:19 is recorded for us in Dt 32. If you have time, you might like to read Dt 32:1-20.)

What is the mood at the end of Dt?

Adam and Eve were offered the opportunity to live in the Garden of Eden forever, but they sinned and were removed.

Israel had previously been offered the Promised Land, but they'd sinned and spent 40 years in the wilderness. Again, they're now offered all the milk and honey they could ever want, but they'll sin and be exiled.



Stop and Think!

Why do you think Dt starts full of hope, and ends on this note of despair?

Where did/will Israel go wrong? (Be specific here rather than just saying 'they sinned' or 'they disobeyed'.)

What is the point of studying Dt this term? (cf Introduction question.) How can we learn from Israel's history?

The Big Idea

Even God's people are so prone to rebel that Deuteronomy points us straight to Jesus.

Digging deeper

Moses is preaching to Israel throughout Dt the lessons that they should learn from their history. The end of the book prepares us for the sorry tale that is the rest of the OT: clearly all they have learnt is to repeat the rebellion of the previous generation. In a way, the despair at the end of Dt points us straight to Jesus as the only hope for sinful people.

Read Matthew 4:1-11 to see what happens as soon as Jesus arrives on the scene. He is immediately 'in the wilderness' for 40 days, where he faces the devil's temptations, just as Israel did in the wilderness for 40 years. But Jesus did not sin there. He clearly learnt the lessons that Israel failed to learn. He 'learned obedience' (Hebrews 5:8). In fact, the three answers that Jesus gives to the devil (and note, that they are all quotations from Dt!) neatly summarise the very lessons that Moses is passing on to Israel through Dt:

- they need to feed on God's words (Matt 4:4 = Dt 8:3)
- they must not put God to the test as they had done in the desert (Matt 4:7 = Dt 6:16)
- they must worship the One-and-Only (Matt 4:10 = Dt 6:13).

And so Jesus proves to be the true Israel. (Actually it's even clearer in Luke's version that the temptations are to demonstrate that Jesus is indeed 'the Son of God' that Israel so dismally failed to be [cf Dt 14:1; Exodus 4:22-23]. And because he is the Son of God [Luke 3:28], the devil repeatedly tempts 'If you are the Son of God ...' [4:3, 9] and his first public ministry ends in debate about whose Son he is [4:22].)

The application of all this is best summarised for us in Hebrews 3-4 (cf [Study 1](#)). We must watch ourselves (3:12) and one another (3:13) lest we rebel against God as Israel did. How do we rebel like that? By hearing God's voice (3:7, 15; 4:7) and yet not believing it (3:12). Hebrews makes it clear (cf 1:1-3) that how God has spoken to us in these last days is through his Son. How then do we listen to this last-days-voice-of-God (so that we don't hear it but then rebel)? Again, Hebrews makes it clear that the danger for these Christians was drifting (2:1) and ignoring (2:3) the salvation that God offers us through Jesus. So how we Christians 'make every effort to enter that rest' (4:11 NIV) is by continuing to trust in Jesus and in Jesus alone. [NS]