

# Deuteronomy 26

by John Nelson Darby

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*Deuteronomy focuses on the people's responsibility in the land and their relationship with God, emphasizing worship, blessing, and redemption.*

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 26:1

**Topics:** "Obedience", "Faith and Dependence"

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## Description

John Nelson Darby expounds on Deuteronomy 26, emphasizing the unique perspective of the Israelites as they inhabit the promised land, focusing on their responsibility to worship and bless God for the blessings received. He highlights the importance of obedience to enjoy these blessings and the concept of returning to God for restoration after disobedience. Darby notes the absence of priestly roles in this chapter, indicating a direct relationship between the people and God, and discusses the significance of tithes and offerings in maintaining this connection. He contrasts the assurance of redemption with the need for constant dependence on God during their journey, illustrating the balance between faith and responsibility. Ultimately, he underscores the importance of recognizing God's faithfulness and the necessity of obedience in the believer's walk.

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## Transcript

This chapter gives a kind of epitome of the book of Deuteronomy. This book is totally different to all the other books in the Pentateuch; for the people are viewed as in the land, and it is the ordering of them in the land. In the tabernacle service the question was, whether they could approach God; the point was going up to God in His holiness; but here it is the worship and blessing of God as in possession of all these blessings. We get both, because it is in going into the sanctuary that we enjoy the blessings.

You do not get here any promise made to Abraham, or anything connected with it. Verse 5 refers to Jacob; it is God delivering the people, and bringing them into the land in responsibility. Chapter 29:29, they were put upon responsibility in the land to enjoy the blessings consequent upon obedience; but supposing they were not faithful, what then? Then he says, "If thou shalt return unto the Lord thy God . . . then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity," etc. (30:2); that is, there is the promise of blessing "the revealed things." But then there are "the secret things," which are, when they had come into the land and lost everything, through disobedience, yet, if their hearts turned to the Lord, the door was not in heaven or hades, but nigh them in their heart (30:14), and if they turned to Him there was recovery; those were "the secret things."

Between chapters 26 and 30 you get the real effect of the law, a curse in Chapter 27, and then in chapters 28 and 29 governmental blessings and cursings, and God restoring them in blessing. It is striking that chapter 27 takes up the law essentially in its character. He puts six tribes to curse, and you have all the curses; and he puts six tribes to bless, and you get no blessings at all. I suppose the blessings were pronounced historically, but we are only told of the curses. In chapters 28 and 29 you get governmental blessings; they would be blessed or not according as they obeyed: that is, a distinct thing from the curses or blessings being pronounced. Chapter 26 was the normal state, the right state of Israel. I have come to bring back to God what He has given me; but the principle was, that they had not defiled themselves with the dead (v. 14); that is, they had kept the principles of the first covenant.

The priests are left out in Deuteronomy, and the tithes given to the priests are left out too. There were three sets of tithes: the first in Num. 18, not given to the priests directly, but the increase of the people's fields, &c., given to the Levites, who gave a tenth of these tithes to the priests; these were the regular tithes. But in Deut. 12, and 14 you get nothing of that; the people take the tithes, their peace-offerings, and so on, and they go up to one place; for all social enjoyment was to be religiously connected with the place where God had put His name. They were to go up to Jerusalem, a leading principle in Deuteronomy to keep them from idolatry. If it was too far to take their offerings, they might sell them, and carry up their money to the place the Lord had chosen, and buy whatever they had set their heart upon, and feast upon it there. The priests are ignored, and the people go and feast upon it themselves; these were the second set of tithes. The third tithes (which Amos refers to chap. 4:4) came every third year; they eat the tithes in their house, and did not go up to Jerusalem. (See chap. 26:12.) They may have been the second tithes, and a special ordinance about them. You do not find the first tithes specified at all in Deuteronomy. The first tithes were the tenth part of all their increase given to the Levites. (Num. 18) The second tithes are in Deut. 12 and 14, not given to the priests, but eaten by the people themselves at Jerusalem. The third are in Amos 4:4 and Deut. 26:12. The priests are ignored in Deuteronomy, except in chapter 18; for there is nothing about going into the sanctuary. I do not suppose there was any sacrifice offered to Jehovah in the wilderness. (See Amos 5:25.) Amos says the people were to go into captivity "beyond Damascus." (v. 27.) Stephen quotes it, and says "beyond Babylon" (Acts 7:43), because it was a present dispersion. The priests in Exod. 19 were persons Moses appointed.

The very first verses of Deuteronomy are remarkable; the people took forty years for what was an eleven days' journey. The book goes on (with a division at chapter 12) to chapter 29; then you come to the secret things after failure. The other was the development of the basis on which they enjoyed the land when they got into it. In chap. 2 they turned and took their journey into the wilderness, and wandered there. All the people perished except Joshua and Caleb; all under twenty survived. Chapter 5 begins the book with commandments and statutes. Up to that Moses had been rehearsing their history with warnings; now he begins with the ten commandments. In chap. 12 he specially marks "the place which the Lord your God shall choose," which characterizes the body of the book, and which was to deliver them from idolatry, yet they soon had high places. In David's time Gibeon was a great high place; the ark was at Zion. Chapter 26 is based on redemption, and not on the original promise, only in chap. 30 he goes back to the original promise, and that is "the secret things." In Numbers it is the end of the wilderness; in Deuteronomy we are found in the land. In Numbers the priesthood closes; for Aaron dies, and it was Aaron who had carried them through the wilderness; his rod budded, not Moses'. You get in Numbers perfect justification after failure - "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob," &c. (Chap. 23:21.) The red heifer in Numbers 19 was for washing the people's feet when in evil. Balaam's four prophecies are a separated people, a justified people, a beautiful people, and Christ's coming again. That closes the wilderness history, and then I get

the being in the land, quite on distinct ground.

Our proper portion is in the holiest, and there I get two things. I have the assurance as to redemption, that I am come to God, that is a settled thing; that is, not counting on God's faithfulness, but believing in the assurance of that which He has wrought. But then, secondly, I get its application to me; for I am going through the wilderness, and I have to get to Canaan, and there dependence comes in - every-day faith in the Lord to keep me along the journey kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." It is a kind of assurance that is identified with incessant dependence on God every step of the way. If I am sitting in heavenly places in Christ, there is no one there to pluck me out of His hand; but if I am walking down here, it all depends on my dependence on the faithfulness of God. It must be constant dependence, or I am down in an instant. The moment I act in my own will I am wrong. All the "ifs" in the New Testament come in for the journey; it would be blasphemous to use an "if" as to salvation; it would be calling in question the efficacy of Christ's work. For the journey it is a different kind of assurance; it is just as sure; for "God hath spoken, and shall He not do it?" But it is not yet accomplished. Hebrews is full of "ifs;" for we are looked at there, not as in Christ, but as poor, feeble things walking on the earth, and Christ a Priest on high, therefore all conditions were looked at as finally fatal, if not kept; getting away from Him was apostasy. "If ye continue in the faith," etc. (Col. 1:23), if not, it was apostatizing from the faith. There are no "ifs" in Ephesians, because we are looked at there as sitting in heavenly places in Christ. In Colossians it is a hope laid up in heaven. Philippians always takes up salvation as something to come; it looks at justification as a future thing. In 1 Cor. 1:7 the apostle says, "God is faithful," and yet he begins to blame them for everything they were doing. (v. 8 is not standing but experimental work.) "At this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought?" When I speak of the work accomplished and done, I get that in Exodus 15; but there is still the other character, that we are walking through the wilderness, poor, feeble creatures, dependent on God every moment. In Philippians you get a man running a race, and doing nothing else; he has seen Christ, and he must win Him. There is no goal of attainment but Christ Himself; there is never any goal presented to us in this world for attainment; the goal is Christ in glory.

It is a wonderful thing what pains God takes with us, and the pains He takes to tell us all about it too.

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