



# Deuteronomy

## The One & Only

Bible Studies for  
**Ashfield Presbyterian Church**  
*[ashfieldpresbyterian.org.au](http://ashfieldpresbyterian.org.au)*

# Deuteronomy: What You Need to Know

Here's what you need to know about the story so far before we get started

**Who wrote it?** Deuteronomy is the fifth book in the Old Testament and come at the end of the section known as the Pentateuch, or five books. It is likely that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch..

**Who are these people and why are they here?** In Genesis 12, God promised Abraham that he would make his descendants into a great nation, with their own Land. He would be their God, and they would be his people... and he would use them to bring blessing to all the nations. But as his family grew, the following generations found themselves in slavery in Egypt. Under God's hand, Moses led them to freedom, and into the desert, where God gave them his law and declared them to be a nation – Israel.

**What's just happened?** When they got to the edge of the promised land, instead of trusting God to give them victory, the Israelites sent spies, who came back with the report that there were giants in the land. Afraid, the people refused to enter the land. As a result, God left them to wander in the wilderness for 40 years until the whole generation died out. Now, they're about to try again.

**What's the title mean?** As Deuteronomy opens, Moses is preparing the Israelites to finally enter the land. It contains a long speech from Moses, in which he explains God's law to Israel a second time. (Deuteronomy means 'second law', The first time was on Mt Sinai, at the start of their journey to the promised land.)

**What's in the book?** In his speech Moses will look back over what went wrong, remind the Israelites of the importance of listening to God, give them detailed laws for living in God's land, and then warn them of the terrible consequences if they disobey. Based on their track record, he will finish the speech without much optimism. The book of Deuteronomy "functions as a theological manifesto, calling on Israel to respond to God's grace with unreserved loyalty and love." (Daniel I. Block, *Deuteronomy* (NIVAC), 25).

**Why is it so important?** Deuteronomy is a pivotal book in the Old Testament. It brings to conclusion the Pentateuch, drawing together many of the key themes, including the patriarchal promises, the history of the exodus and the wilderness, and the laws given at Sinai. It also provides a theological foundation for the books that follow, especially Joshua to 2 Kings. Deuteronomy is also frequently quoted in the New Testament, and ultimately points forward to the promises of God fulfilled in Jesus. Just like Israel, we need God's grace to deal with our sin, and we need God to act in our lives to enable obedience to his law.

# Deuteronomy 1-3: The God of Power

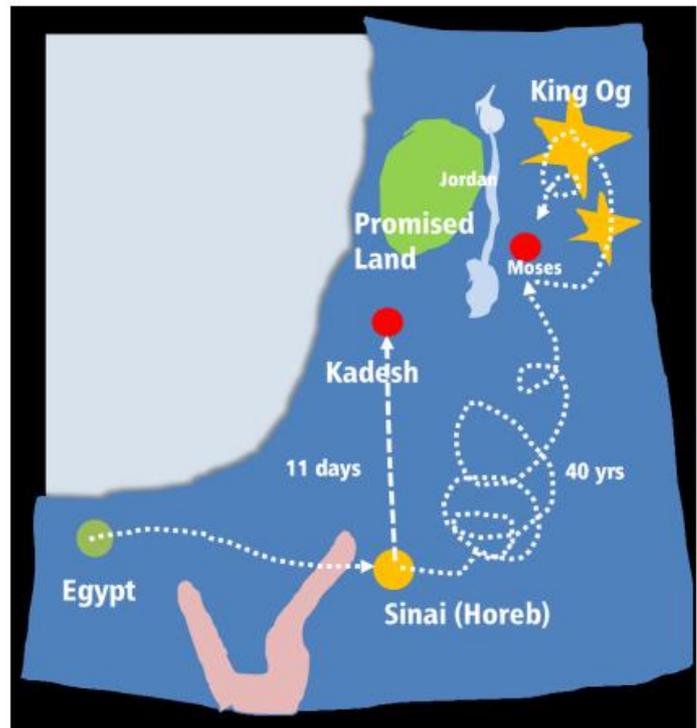
## Read Deuteronomy 1:1-8

1. When they first came to Mt Horeb (also known as Mt Sinai), what did God tell the Israelites to do (v7-8)?
2. On this first attempt the Israelites travelled from Horeb to Kadesh to launch their campaign. How long does this trip normally take (v2)?

Now, on their second attempt, they are approaching the promised land from the east side of the Jordan River. How long has THIS trip taken (v3)?

## Read Deuteronomy 1:9-46

3. So what went wrong for Israel?
4. Why did Moses tell them not to be afraid of big people (like the Anakites)?
5. What's at the heart of the problem (v32)?
6. How did the Israelites make things even worse (v41-45)?



## Read Deuteronomy 2:1-23

*The geography and tribal names in this section seem complicated but revolve around Esau, Moab and Ammon who all have some things in common.*

7. How were the Israelites told to treat these nations and why (v5, v9, v19)?
8. What excuse had the Israelites given the first time for not taking the land (1:28)?

9. Compare that with the history of Esau, Moab and Ammon. What kind of people had been in their lands before them, and what had God done for them (v10, v20-22)?

*Whatever you call them (Rephaites, Anakites, Emmites or Zamzummites), these guys were huge. But they weren't as tough as they looked. As the Lord God prepared and gave places to each of these other nations, the huge opponents had been sent running. Oddly, only God's own special nation, the Israelites, had failed. And it's because they refused to trust God's promises.*

10. Skim through the accounts of the victories against King Sihon of Heshbon and King Og of Bashan (2:24-3:11). What do you notice about Og, and why is it significant (3:11)?

11. **Read Deuteronomy 3:21-29.** Why is there no reason for Joshua to be frightened (v21-22)?

12. As Christians, what basis do we have for trusting God? See Romans 5:8-10

13. The Israelites had to live out their trust by entering the land in obedience to God's command. How do we live out our trust in God? See Romans 12:1-2.

14. **Read I Corinthians 1:18-31.** Where is the power of God found?

What does the world want (v22) and what do we offer?

From v27-31 how does God work in our world?

15. Our society's apathy and opposition to the gospel can sometimes seem 'giant', just too big for us to even try to overcome. Has that ever made you feel like giving up on talking about Jesus or using your life as a witness to him?

How can lessons from Israel's past and our Christian past help us here?

16. When we stop hoping in God's weak-looking plans and only see the giants that are against us, we often give up on obedience. In Israel's case, this led to disaster after disaster. How can we help each other from making the same mistakes?

**Prayer Points:**

Thank God that he can be trusted. Ask him to help you to trust him and act accordingly.

## Deuteronomy 4: The God of Word

*While other nations worshipped idols that could be seen but were silent, the nation of Israel served an unseen God who spoke to them. He was a God of WORD. Idols might be solid and visible, but they didn't bring Israel out of slavery, didn't speak from the fire, didn't perform awesome deeds in the wilderness, and they won't keep Israel safe in the promised land. So that meant they needed to listen carefully to God's word!*

1. Have you ever wished you could see God? Why or why not?
2. **Read Deuteronomy 4** and note any references to **hearing** God.
3. What is Moses about to teach Israel, and what must they do with it (1-2)?

What will be the consequence if they obey (1)?

In Numbers 25 the Israelites began to worship Baal at Beth-Peor. What should the Israelites who remain have learned from what they saw with their own eyes (3-4)?

What are the surrounding nations meant to think when they look at Israel (5-8)?

What are Israel's great privileges? Her great responsibility (9)?

4. What does Moses call the Israelites to remember about their past encounter with God?
5. What were they meant to do when they heard God's words?
6. Describe their experience in 11-14.
7. What dangerous temptation do they need to watch out for (15-19)?
8. What is the big difference between Israel and everyone else (20)?

9. What will be the consequences if they or their children or grandchildren start worshipping any kind of idol (23-28).

*The future security of Israel in the land all depends on whether they are prepared to trust the words of the God who has spoken, and are not tempted to replace him with a 'god they can see' in the form of the kind of idols that all the other nations serve.*

10. But even if/when the worst happens, what reassurance does Moses give (29-31)?

11. List the marvellous things God has done (32-40).

12. What is the one reason why God has redeemed his people from slavery?

13. What one truth do they need to learn about God (35, 39)?

14. What one response must Israel have to God's words? With what consequence (40)?

15. **Read John 1:1, 17-18.** How can we get to know the unseen God?

16. What incredible privilege do we have over Moses when it comes to knowing God?

17. What difference does this make in your life?

18. What does it mean to listen to this ultimate and complete and final WORD from God?

19. What would you say to someone who says, "I like to think of God as ..."?

### **Prayer Points**

# Deuteronomy 5-11: The God Who Initiates

*In Deuteronomy 5 Moses begins his second sermon. It is by far the longest in Deuteronomy, stretching all the way to chapter 28. Although it is long, it has a simple point: God initiates the relationship, we are to respond accordingly.*

## Read Deuteronomy 5:1-6:3

1. What is Moses trying to persuade Israel to do in this part of his sermon (5:1; 6:3)?

How did God introduce himself when giving the law (5:6)?

Why should they rest on the seventh day (5:15)?

Why should they not worship idols (5:10-11)?

Why should they honour their parents (5:16; 6:3)?

What was Israel's initial reaction (5:23-26) and how did God rate it (5:28-29)?

## Read Deuteronomy 7:6-9

2. Why *didn't* God choose Israel?
3. Why *did* God choose Israel? What was his motivation?
4. Consider the following New Testament passages.

	How did God save us?	Why did God save us?
Romans 5:6-8		
Ephesians 2:8-10		
1 John 4:7-10		

5. Did Israel earn their salvation by keeping the law? Or did God save them before he gave them the law?
6. What will be the consequences of keeping the law? What if they don't? (See also 11:13-28).

*Israel have already been saved by God. And they know he will keep blessing them unless they abandon obedience. God's grace in the past and God's grace in the future are both strong reasons to keep God's law.*

*But Moses needs to warn them of the dangers that lie ahead:*

**Read Deuteronomy 6:4-20 and 8:10-20**

7. What temptations will the Israelites soon face (6:12; 8:11, 14)?
8. What new circumstances will make this such a strong temptation (6:10-11; 8:7-9,12-13)?
9. What key strategy will help them overcome this temptation (6:4-9, 20-25; 8:2, 18)?
10. What lessons can you learn for your situation today?

**Read Deuteronomy 7:1-6, 17-25**

11. What is the big danger here (7:4, 25-26)?
12. How could this become a strong temptation (7:3,17)?
13. What key strategies will help them overcome this temptation (7:2, 18-25)?
14. Is there any application for your situation today?

**Read Deuteronomy 9:4-6 and 10:12-16**

15. What is Israel's real problem (9:6; 10:16)?
16. What does Moses tell them to do about it (10:16)?
17. What could stop them tackling this problem head on (9:4-5)?
18. What lessons are there for us in this?
19. Considering how God has acted towards us, how do you think we should respond?

Why is our response to God often less than it should be?

20. Why do Christians do good works?

**Prayer Points**

# Deuteronomy 12-26: A Peculiar People

*As they stand at the entrance to the Promised Land... again... Moses preaches to the people the lessons he's learned from forty years of reflecting on the significance of the Exodus and God's covenant with Israel. Chapters 12-26 represent an exposition, rather than a recital, of the laws already given in earlier books.*

1. Imagine you were starting a new nation, what would be your first three laws? Why?
2. **Read 12:1-7.** Where and when is Israel to keep God's laws (1)?

Does this mean they are irrelevant for us today in Australia?

How do we go about working out which laws we are meant to keep and which ones are not for us?

3. What are Israel to do to the idols and altars that are already in the land?

Why (4)?

When and how are they to worship God (5-7)?

*Israel are to be entirely separate from the people of the land. This is one of the reasons given for why Israel is to keep God's laws. Sometimes no reason is given at all, and the Israelites simply needed to obey. But at other times God is very clear about the motive and logic behind his regulations.*

4. **Read 13:6-18.** What is the penalty for someone who tries to entice you to worship an idol?

What is the reason for the penalty (10-11)?

5. **Read 14:1-2.** What point is made three times?

Without knowing any of the background for the odd thing they were told NOT to do, where do you think they would get the idea of doing it?

In what sense is v2 a REASON?

6. 14:3-21 contain a whole list of animals that Israel can and cannot eat. According to verses 8, 10 and 11, what word is used to describe foods on the 'banned' list?

According to v19, swarming insects are "unclean TO YOU." Then in v21, certain things that Israel must NOT eat are said to be okay for others. What REASON is given for this in v21?

*Noticing unclean and clean things is a visual aid to help Israel remember that THEY are privileged and different and holy and clean – set apart from the other nations who lived in the land.*

7. Brainteaser: What possible reason might there be for the following laws?

14:21d

22:5

22:6-7

22:9

22:10

22:11

22:12

8. In Acts 10:11-16 the Jewish apostle Peter has a radical vision that redefines “clean” and “unclean.” What does he say, and what does God say?

How does this affect his response to the non-Jew Cornelius? (And, from then on, to people like us?)

How has God made the unclean (like us) clean?

Israel can respond with gratitude to God (and be reminded to be grateful) by the way they treat others.

9. From 15:11, what guiding principle is there for how Israel is to treat their poor?

10. From 15:15, what should motivate the way Israelites treat their slaves?

What reason is given for how the foreigner, orphan or widow is to be treated in 24:17-22?

Israel can respond with gratitude to God (and be reminded to be grateful) by the way they celebrate the festivals.

11. Why celebrate the Passover (16:3)?

12. What is the purpose of the feast of weeks (16:11)?

What should they remember (16:12)?

13. What measure is used for how much is to be given (16:17)?

*Some laws flow from the character of God himself. He is the one true God, just, holy, true, gracious, loving and compassionate. His people who keep his laws will reflect his character.*

14. Why does God hate asherah poles and sacred stones (16:21-22)?

15. Why are the people not to imitate the detestable ways of the nations (18:9-13)?

16. What reason is given in 17:7, 12; 19:19; 21:21 for severe punishment?

17. Many laws for how Israel is to love their neighbour reflect God's love and justice. Which of the Ten Commandments do the following laws apply to?

19:14

19:16-21

21:18-21

22:1-3

22:13-30

23:24-25

18. Ultimately, from 26:18-19, what will obedience to these laws show?

19. **Read I Peter 2:9-17.** What have we been saved from? What have we been saved for?

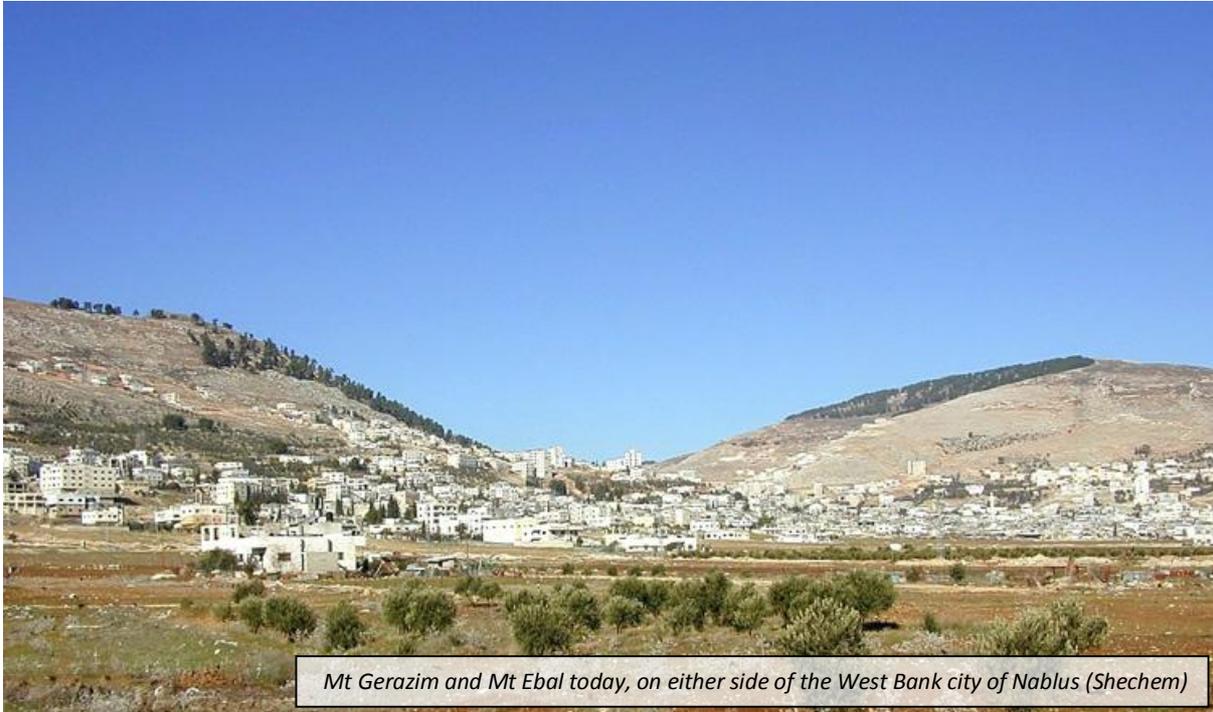
How are we to live as God's alien, peculiar people in the world? Why?

Can you think of practical examples of how we can better reflect our redemption in the way we treat people?

### **Prayer Points**

## Deuteronomy 27-28: Twin Peaks

*On the verge of the promised land, the people of Israel face a huge choice with huge consequences. To help them understand and remember, God organises a huge 'visual aid'. On the other side of the Jordan lie two mountains, Mt Gerizim and Mt Ebal. Each mountain represents a completely different version of the future.*



*Mt Gerazim and Mt Ebal today, on either side of the West Bank city of Nablus (Shechem)*

1. Can you think of any 'turning points' moments in your life where you had to make a significant life choice?

How did you make the choice?

2. **Read Deut 27:1-13.** When they cross the Jordan and take over the promised land, the people are to split into two groups, one on Mt Ebal and one on Mt Gerizim. What are they to write on the whitewashed stones they set up on Mt Ebal (v3, 8)?

It seems like a selection of the laws they are to follow is pronounced by the Levites in 27:14-26.

3. According to v9-10, what has the crowd of Israelites now become, and what must they now do?
4. What are the crowd on Mt Gerizim to do (v12)?
5. What are the crowd on Mt Ebal to do (v13)?

6. What two options are put before the Israelites (28:1-2 cf 15).

The outcome depends on their attitude to what?

7. **Scan chapter 28.** Fill out the table below, writing out the blessings or curses pronounced in each.

<i>Blessings</i>	<i>Curses</i>
28.3	28.16
28.4	28.18
28.5	28.17
28.6	28.19
28.7	28.25
28.12-13	28.38-44

8. Who will carry out either the blessings (28:1) or the curses (28:20)?

9. The description of curses seems to go on much longer than the description of blessings. Why?

What is the worst of them (36, 37, 41, 48)?

10. In what ways are the curses a reversal of the grace God has shown Israel so far and promises to show them in the land?

11. Jump forward many hundreds of years. Israel are exiled, then they return. But all is not well. What do you notice in

a. Mark 1:29-33 (cf 28:21)

b. Mark 8:22 (28:28)

c. Mark 15:33 (cf 28:29)

*By the time Jesus arrives, the promise land has fallen under God's curse. In fact, the land has been under God's curse for hundreds of years because Israel did exactly what God warned them not to do. But as Jesus travels the land, he progressively turns things around and brings blessing again. He is the one who can undo God's curse. He brings Israel the odder of healing and restoration and God's blessing again. And, ultimately, he does it by taking the full force of God's curse on himself (Deut 21:23).*

12. **Read Galatians 3:13-14.** What did Christ do for us?

How?

In practical terms, what does the blessing given to Abraham look like for Gentiles like us today?

13. Is it possible for Christians today to receive curses from God? Why/ why not?

14. What blessings does **Ephesians 1:3-14** list as coming to us from Christ?

***Prayer Points***

Spend some time giving thanks for all the blessings that come to us in Christ.

# Deuteronomy 29-30: From the Heart

1. Do you ever read the terms and conditions on forms that you sign or software that you install on your computer? Why/ why not?

*Chapter 29-30 is often called Moses' third address to the nation of Israel. He begins by reminding them (29:2-8) of all the great things they have seen God do for them as he brought them out of slavery in Egypt.*

2. What, from the very beginning to that day, had been the problem with Israel (v4)?
3. And yet, Moses says that they've seen (29:2) and known (29:16) what God has done. How could they see and know, but not "see" and "understand" (29:4)?
4. **Read 29:9-15.** Moses renews the covenant made at Mt Sinai (Horeb), for the new generation at Moab. He places a clear choice before Israel.
  - a. What is required of Israel?
  - b. What will be the outcome if they do this (29:9)?
  - c. What will making the contract do to the relationship between God and the people (12-13)?
5. What sin does Moses warn the people of in 29:16-18?

## **Good News and Bad News**

*Deuteronomy 29:22-30:10 has both good and bad news for Israel. In much the same way as God's promises in Genesis 12 shaped the rest of the story that followed, this short section reads like a table of contents for the rest of the Bible.*

6. **Read 29:25-28.** If the curses come upon Israel, why will this be?
7. **Read 30:1-6.** From the way Moses begins chapter 30, how likely do you think it is that Israel will rebel and suffer the curses?
8. If things are going to be fixed, what will they have to do first (v1)?  
  
What will they have to do second (v2)?
9. What will God do for them when they take to heart their exile and repent with all their heart and soul (vv3-5)?

10. Identify events from 29:28-30:10 that you see occurring in the rest of the Biblical storyline.

11. What is it that will ultimately enable Israel to obey God and live (v6)?

**Read Jeremiah 31:33.** What does Jeremiah foresee?

**Read Ezekiel 36:24-28.** What does Ezekiel foresee?

When does this happen?

12. **Read Colossians 2:11-14.** Who finally performs the circumcision promised in Deuteronomy 30:6?

What was required to effect this circumcision? (v.14)

How does this circumcision done by Christ, allow God's people to finally love him with all their heart and soul?

13. **Read 30:15-20.** Moses final speech is coming to an end. Israel has before her a life and death decision. Summarise these six verses in your own words and write it out below, describing the choice Moses sets before Israel.

*Sadly, it was too hard for Israel to choose life... they chose death. But one day an Israelite would come who would choose life in every way... and would obey God with all his heart and soul. The benefits of that would flow to all humanity.*

14. In Romans 10, Paul looks back at the words of Moses in Deut 30:15, and makes a significant change to Moses' original words. Read Romans 10:8-9. What word is it that saves US?

### **Prayer Points**

Thank God for his desire to bless us through Jesus. Pray that we would love God with all our heart and soul.

# Deuteronomy 31-34: Waiting for a Rescuer

*For Israel, Moses' death would have been almost impossible to comprehend. The nation only existed because of Moses. The political, religious, economic and social structures depended on him. Moses stood between God and the people. Now, on the doorstep to the promised land, they are going to lose their leader. The prospect was very, very scary!*

*In one sense, they couldn't replace Moses. Indeed, the book ends by saying just that (34:10-12). Israel will never get another Moses. He was unique. But life must go on. A replacement has to be found. This is what happens in the last few chapters. Like any good leader, Moses tries to make himself redundant, putting in place people and structures to ensure that Israel will continue.*

## **Do Not Enter!**

Chapter 31 begins with Moses instituting Joshua as the new leader, because God has forbidden Moses from entering the promised land (**Deut 32:48-52**). The reason is that Moses and Aaron disobeyed God at Kadesh. God commanded that they speak to the rock, and God would provide water for the people. Instead Moses struck the rock with his staff, and took credit for the miracle himself. Moses not only disobeyed God, but dishonoured him in front of the people. Moses had a great responsibility as Israel's leader, and he was severely punished for this act of



1. After 40 years wandering in the desert, Moses is the only leader the current generation of Israelites have ever known, yet God forbids him from entering the promised land. How do you think this might make Israel feel?
2. **Read Deut 31:1-8.** After mentioning his own death, what is the first thing Moses tells Israel (3-6)?

How would this have been an encouragement for Israel?

3. What else does Moses organise for Israel's future? (See also 31:23)

Why was this a wise thing to do even though Moses wasn't dead yet?

## **A new mediator**

4. **Read Deut 31:9-13.** What plan for Israel's future does Moses put in place here?

Why is this plan so important?

*Moses was more than just a political leader. He was a mediator between God and Israel. God would talk to Moses and Moses would pass the message on to the rest of Israel. He brought the word of God to them. However, after Moses' death, this arrangement would change. Moses the mediator is to be replaced by the law. All the things that God had told Moses were to be written down and read out in full, every seven years, before all the people. Through the reading of the law, God would again address the nation. This tells us something about the permanence of God's word.*



9. In v21, God says Israel made him jealous by gods that are not really gods. So he is going to make them envious by a people who are not really a people. Romans 10:19 and 11:11, 13-14 quotes these words. Non-Jews everywhere are putting their trust in Jesus. What does Paul hope this will do for the Jews?

10. Moses finishes the song of warning. How are Israel to treat these words (v47)?

11. In Deut 33, Moses blesses Israel, tribe by tribe, much as Jacob blessed his sons back in Gen 49. What incredible privileges does he remind Israel are hers (33:47)?

If you had to write a similar blessing for God's New Testament people, what might you write?

*Blessed are you...*

*In Ch 34, God takes Moses to the top of Mt Nebo, in present day Jordan, where you can look right down to the rolling hills of the promised land.*

"Moses... certainly had a breathtaking view. We stood facing west, looking out across the valley, rumpled and brown. To the north, our right, it was cut by the glinting ribbon of the Jordan River, the border of modern Jordan and Israel. Straight ahead, the northern tip of the Dead Sea glistened. Bethlehem and Hebron were over on the left somewhere, hazy beyond the haze that rose from the hills on the Dead Sea's western shore... Jerusalem was on the horizon just about due west of us, Jericho stood at the northern tip of the Dead Sea a little to our right and further in that direction is the troubled West Bank." (Morgan Spurlock, *Where in the World is Osama Bin Laden*, p114)

*In short, it's a place where you can take in the whole sweep of the promised land. Sadly, that view was all Moses would get. Moses dies there in Moab, outside the promised land, just as God had said he would. It's the end of the story of Moses, and the beginning of the story of Joshua, his successor. But nobody could ever really fill the shoes of Moses.*



**12. Read 34:9-12.** What was so special about Moses?

*Moses was the greatest leader Israel had ever known, and Israel are expecting a prophet like Moses to come again in the future (Deut 18:15-19). Although Israel have many prophets after him, none match Moses for his relationship with God and his miraculous deeds. For that, Israel would have to wait a bit longer, until that future time when God would reveal his grace to all people.*

**13. Read Acts 3:17-26.** Who is the prophet like Moses that God has finally raised up for his people?

**14. Read John 1:17-18.** The law Moses brought was good, but what is far better? Why?

### **Prayer Points**

Thank God for his grace to us in sending Jesus as promised.