

DEUTERONOMY

STUDY FOUR | CHAPTER 8:1-20

LESSONS
FOR THE HEART




 ST. JOHN'S
VANCOUVER

INTRODUCTION

In last week's study, Israel heard the clarion call of exclusive devotion to the LORD. They were asked to love the LORD their God with all their heart, soul, and strength, and they were reminded to make the safeguarding and nourishing of that love the central purpose of their lives.

Today's passage takes that same idea and explores it through a reflection on God's providence in both good and bad times as Moses continues to prepare the people for the temptations they will face when they enter into the land. The wilderness they are leaving was a place of profound challenges, and these challenges exposed weakness. But God did not humble Israel to humiliate and deject them. He humbled them to expose what was in their hearts, so that they would learn that "man does not live by bread alone...but by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD." God's faithfulness and provision in the wilderness would be a crucial lesson to remember as they entered the blessings of an abundant inheritance. Just as before, the question comes: will they serve the LORD or not?

STUDY FRAMEWORK

-  Bible Passage
-  Study Notes + Study Questions
-  Prayer

Bible Passage

DEUT 8:1-20

- 1 The whole commandment that I command you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land that the LORD swore to give to your fathers.
- 2 And you shall remember the whole way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not.
- 3 And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.
- 4 Your clothing did not wear out on you and your foot did not swell these forty years.
- 5 Know then in your heart that, as a man disciplines his son, the LORD your God disciplines you.
- 6 So you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God by walking in his ways and by fearing him.
- 7 For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing out in the valleys and hills,
 - 8 a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey,
 - 9 a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper.
- 10 And you shall eat and be full, and you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land he has given you.
- 11 Take care lest you forget the LORD your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command you today,
- 12 lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them,
- 13 and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied,
- 14 then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery,
- 15 who led you through the great and terrifying wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water, who brought you water out of the flinty rock,
- 16 who fed you in the wilderness with manna that your fathers did not know, that he might humble you and test you, to do you good in the end.
- 17 Beware lest you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.'
- 18 You shall remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day.
- 19 And if you forget the LORD your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I solemnly warn you today that you shall surely perish.
- 20 Like the nations that the LORD makes to perish before you, so shall you perish, because you would not obey the voice of the LORD your God.



Study Notes

BACKGROUND

In vv.8-9 we get a list of staple crops, and two important metals from ancient Mesopotamia. The land God is giving Israel starkly contrasts the wilderness they are leaving.

The Hebrew word for “confirm” in v.18 carries the sense of completion; of achieving the intended purpose. God fulfills his covenant when mankind participates in it by loving and serving him.

IMMEDIATE CONTEXT

- In Chapter 7 God gives Israel principles for war. The focus is on destroying idols and those who worship them, so that Israel does not become trapped in idolatry. This is an important connection for the final verses (vv.17-20) of today’s passage.
- After Chapter 8, God reminds Israel that it is not because of their goodness that they will possess the land, but because of God’s gracious faithfulness to them and because of his righteous judgement of the other nations.

IN DEUTERONOMY

- v.2 “Remember the whole way that the LORD your God has led you...” Recalling lessons from the past is an important theme of Moses’ teaching (e.g. Deut 7:18; 9:7) and, in particular, remembering God’s salvation (Deut 5:15; 15:15; 16:3, etc).

- v.7 “For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land...” The goodness of the land has been described before (e.g. Deut 26:15) but here it is a focal point.

IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

- v.1 “that you may live and multiply” is language strongly reminiscent of Genesis 1.28. This land is intended to be a blessing for Israel in the same way that Eden was a blessing.
- v.2 The “forty years in the wilderness” Israel’s rebellion leading to the forty years of wandering occurs in Numbers 14.
- v.7 “God is bringing you into a good land...” This has been promised and described in Exodus 3:17, 13:5, and 33:3. Crucially, the land is a major component of the covenant God made with Abram in Genesis 12 and 15, which, up unto this point, had not been fulfilled.
- Though the wilderness was a tremendously difficult place, it was also the place of God’s provision. Not only did he materially provide for them, but he also taught them important lessons about his faithfulness:
 - > v.15 “...fiery serpents” refers to the incident in Num 21:4-9.
 - > “...water out of a flinty rock” refers either to the miracle in Exodus 17 or Numbers 20.
 - > v.16 “who fed you...with manna” refers to Exodus 16, when God literally gave Israel bread from heaven.

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

- Jesus quotes v.3 when he is tempted by Satan in the wilderness (Matt 4:1-11).
- Hebrews 12:3-13 picks up on this theme of God’s discipline.

Study Questions

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

What two physical landscapes are described in this passage, and what is associated with each of them?

Pay attention to vv.3-5. What was the purpose of Israel's time in the wilderness?

What warnings does Moses give and what are the consequences of neglecting them?

STUDY TIPS

Ⓐ Pray

Ⓑ Look closely

- Commands
- Descriptions of God or His People
- Words and phrases
- Repetitions, Contrasts, Surprises
- Big Bible Words
- Characters
- Dialogue – who is talking to whom?
- Setting (timeline and place) – does it change?

Ⓒ Look at the context

- What kind of writing is this?
(eg. narrative, poetry, teaching)
- How does the dialogue progress?
- Divide the passage into its natural sections, looking for transitions in setting, speaker, or theme can help with this
- Create a heading for each section
- Summarize the section in your own words

Ⓓ Share

- In your small group share something you noticed

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Read Deut 7:12-16 and 9:1-12 to help fill out the context.

What do you think God was trying to do when he tested Israel?

What happened to Israel in the wilderness?

What was Israel in danger of forgetting amidst the abundance of the Promised Land?

STUDY TIPS

Ⓐ Look at the context

- ▶ Read the passage immediately before and after
- ▶ How does the context help us understand the meaning of the text?
- ▶ Look up cross references.
- ▶ How do they help us better understand the passage?
- ▶ In your small group share how the context has added to your understanding of this week's passage.

Ⓑ Summarize the big idea

- ▶ So, what's the main idea of the passage? How would you title this passage?
- ▶ In your small group share the main idea

Ⓒ Stop to pray

- ▶ Thank God for all he has already revealed to you, and ask him to help you see Jesus more clearly, and love him more deeply, through the next steps of your study.

WHAT DOES IT REVEAL?

Why does God lead Israel into both wilderness and plenty?

Why does God warn his people not to forget him?

Whether in need or in plenty, what's the root of temptation in this passage?

How does Jesus' example in the wilderness in Matthew 4 show us the remedy to this temptation?

HOW WILL I RESPOND?

How does recalling God's salvation and provision in the past help you face temptations and challenges in the present?

What false loves/securities do times in the wilderness expose in you?

In what ways are you tempted to forget God in the midst of wealth?

How do you rely on the Word of the LORD in both abundance and difficulty?

Prayer

It is easy to become preoccupied with our external circumstances and lose sight of the God who loves and sustains us. Take time to thank the LORD for everything he has given you in Jesus Christ, and ask for his help to trust him more.

