

Present Truth in Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy in the New Testament

Lesson #12 for December 18, 2021

Scriptures: Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:1-11; Acts 7:37; 10:34; Galatians 3:1-14; Hebrews 10:28-31.

1. A careful investigation of the New Testament would show us that there are expressions from the Old Testament, even entire passages, quoted in many places. Someone has done a very careful study of the book of Revelation and has suggested that there are more than 600 stated or implied references to the Old Testament just in the book of Revelation! Jesus Himself several times said, "It is written," meaning, written in the Old Testament since the New Testament had not yet been written. As recorded in Mark 14:49, He also said, "The Scriptures must be fulfilled." That Scripture must have been the Old Testament.
2. Furthermore, Jesus Himself after His resurrection, speaking to the two men on the road to Emmaus and, later, to all of the disciples, used that opportunity to describe what the Old Testament said about Him in the law, the prophets, and the writings (also call the psalms because that was the first and longest book in the section called *the writings!*) (See Luke 24:27,44.) Clearly, He was speaking about the entire Old Testament as we know it.
3. It should be obvious that, since their society and their religion were permeated with ideas from the Old Testament, it would be natural for us to expect them to use those expressions and those ideas especially when talking about religious subjects. We should notice that the four books that are most commonly quoted in the New Testament are Genesis, Deuteronomy, Psalms, and Isaiah. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, Galatians, as well as 1 and 2 Corinthians, Hebrews, the pastoral epistles, and Revelation all refer back to Deuteronomy. There are only a few books in the New Testament that do not refer back to Deuteronomy! Pharisees had memorized much of the Old Testament in Hebrew.
4. It is interesting to notice that one of the very first things that Jesus did in His ministry was to face off with Satan in the "wilderness temptations." Notice what ammunition Jesus used.

Matthew 4:1-11: ¹Then the Spirit led Jesus into the desert to be tempted by the Devil. ²After spending forty days and nights without food, Jesus was hungry. ³Then the Devil came to him and said, "If you are God's Son, order these stones to turn into bread." ⁴But Jesus answered, "**The scripture says**, 'Human beings cannot live on bread alone, but need every word that God speaks.' "

⁵ Then the Devil took Jesus to Jerusalem, the Holy City, set him on the highest point of the Temple, ⁶and said to him, "If you are God's Son, throw yourself down, for the scripture says:

'God will give orders to his angels about you;
they will hold you up with their hands,
so that not even your feet will be hurt on the stones.' "

⁷ Jesus answered, "But **the scripture also says**, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.' "

⁸ Then the Devil took Jesus to a very high mountain and showed him all the

kingdoms of the world in all their greatness. ⁹ “All this I will give you,” the Devil said, “if you kneel down and worship me.”

¹⁰ Then Jesus answered, “Go away, Satan! **The scripture says**, ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve only him!’ ”

¹¹ Then the Devil left Jesus; and angels came and helped him.—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Matthew 4:1–11). New York: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible*].[†]

5. Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy 8:3; 6:16; and 6:13 in answer to the Devil’s temptations.
6. If Jesus used three passages from Deuteronomy in one of the most important conflicts of His ministry and life on this earth, shouldn’t that be a clue about how important Deuteronomy and the rest of the Old Testament are for us? He certainly recognized the truth of Hebrews 4:12.

Hebrews 4:12: The word of God is alive and active, sharper than any double-edged sword. It cuts all the way through, to where soul and spirit meet, to where joints and marrow come together. It judges the desires and thoughts of the heart.—*Good News Bible*.*

7. Look at the three passages from Deuteronomy which Jesus used.

Deuteronomy 8:3: “He made you go hungry, and then he gave you manna to eat, food that you and your ancestors had never eaten before. He did this to teach you that **human beings must not depend on bread alone to sustain them, but on everything that the LORD says.**”—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

Deuteronomy 6:16: “Do not put the LORD your God to the test, as you did at Massah.”—*Good News Bible*.*

Deuteronomy 6:13: “Honour the LORD your God, worship only him, and make your promises in his name alone.”—*Good News Bible*.*

8. Another very important message from the Old Testament, in particular from Deuteronomy, is found in Deuteronomy 10:17-19.

Deuteronomy 10:17-19: ¹⁷ “The LORD your God is supreme over all gods and over all powers. He is great and mighty, and he is to be feared. **He does not show partiality, and he does not accept bribes.** ¹⁸**He makes sure that orphans and widows are treated fairly; he loves the foreigners who live with our people, and gives them food and clothes.** ¹⁹So then, show love for those foreigners, because you were once foreigners in Egypt.”—*Good News Bible*.^{*†} [Does that mean that we should care for the homeless?][‡]

The phrase “shows no partiality” is translated from a Hebrew figure of speech; it means literally that He does not “lift up faces.” This is believed to have come from a legal setting in which the judge or king sees the face of the person on trial and, based on that person’s status (important person or someone insignificant), the judge or king renders a verdict. The implication here in Deuteronomy is that the Lord doesn’t treat people in such a manner, despite His great power and might. He’s fair with everyone, regardless of

their status. This truth, of course, was revealed in the life of Jesus and how He treated even the most despised in society.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Monday, December 13. ‡ [Would that include tax collectors? Prostitutes? Gentiles? And even lepers?][‡]

9. Notice how the ideas of Deuteronomy 10 were used repeatedly by Luke, Paul, and even Peter.

Acts 10:34: Peter began to speak: “I now realize that it is true that God treats everyone [including the Gentile Cornelius and his family] on the same basis.”—*Good News Bible.** ‡

Romans 2:11: For God judges everyone [Jews as well as Gentiles] by the same standard.—*Good News Bible.** ‡

Galatians 2:6: But those who seemed to be the leaders [the Christian leaders of the church in Jerusalem]—I say this because it makes no difference to me what they were; **God does not judge by outward appearances**—those leaders, I say, made no new suggestions to me.—*Good News Bible.** ‡

Ephesians 6:9: Masters, behave in the same way towards your slaves and stop using threats. Remember that you and your slaves belong to the same Master in heaven, who judges everyone by the same standard.—*Good News Bible.**

Colossians 3:25: And wrongdoers will be repaid for the wrong things they do, because God judges everyone by the same standard.—*Good News Bible.**

1 Peter 1:17: You call him Father, when you pray to **God, who judges all people by the same standard, according to what each one has done;** so then, spend the rest of your lives here on earth in reverence for him.—*Good News Bible.** ‡

10. If God refuses to show any partiality based on externals, then surely, we should not either. That idea is spelled out clearly in James 2 as well. God does not place us on different levels when it comes to salvation. We are either saved; or, we are not saved. Each and every one of us who enters heaven will do so because of God’s mercy and grace.
11. In ancient times when a conquering nation was attacking and sieging a weaker nation, they often crucified, or just stuck up on poles, the dead bodies of those who had tried to escape. They did this in order to intimidate the people inside the city even further. Deuteronomy 21:22-23 and 27:26 clearly state that this should never happen, even if the person is put to death because of some crime he has committed. Paul used that idea in Galatians 3:1-14 to emphasize the horror of what happened to Jesus.

Galatians 3:13-14: ¹³ But by becoming a curse for us Christ has redeemed us from the curse that the Law brings; for the scripture says, “Anyone who is hanged on a tree is under God’s curse.” ¹⁴ Christ did this in order that the blessing which God promised to Abraham might be given to the Gentiles by means of Christ Jesus, so that through faith we might receive the Spirit promised by God.—*Good News Bible.**

12. Jesus Christ’s life and His death are a lesson for us: (1) We can choose to live a life as far as possible—with His help—like His life; or (2) we will die the death He died, separated from God, the only Source of life. The fact that He died—and what it can teach us—make it

possible for us to be saved and go to heaven. **That is what *substitution* really means. *Substitution* has been expanded to include all sorts of ideas that were not intended in the beginning.**

13. What does it mean to you to say that Christ became a *curse for us*? We all know that we are sinners; and as sinners, without the mercy and grace of God, we would all die as a result of our sins. (Romans 6:23) But, we also know that “the gift of God is eternal life.”

None but Christ could redeem fallen man from the curse of the law and bring him again into harmony with Heaven. Christ would take upon Himself the guilt and shame of sin—sin so offensive to a holy God that it must separate the Father and His Son.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets** 63.2.

14. **However, let us never forget that the life and death of Christ were for the benefit of the entire universe, not just for human beings.**

But the plan of redemption had a yet broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of man. It was not for this alone that Christ came to the earth; it was not merely that the inhabitants of this little world might regard the law of God as it should be regarded; but it was to vindicate the character of God before the universe. To this result of His great sacrifice—its influence upon the intelligences of other worlds, as well as upon man—the Saviour looked forward when just before His crucifixion He said: “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto [69] Me.” John 12:31, 32. **The act of Christ in dying for the salvation of man would not only make heaven accessible to men, but before all the universe it would justify God and His Son in their dealing with the rebellion of Satan. It would establish the perpetuity of the law of God and would reveal the nature and the results of sin.**—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets** 68.2.† Compare *Reflecting Christ** 50.3-4 [which says “will draw all men unto me,” excluding the beings in the rest of the universe].‡

15. Have you ever stopped to think what kind of a death you deserve because of your sins?

Deuteronomy 4:6-8: ⁶ “Obey them faithfully, and this will show the people of other nations how wise you are. When they hear of all these laws, they will say, ‘What wisdom and understanding this great nation has!’

⁷ “No other nation, no matter how great, has a god who is so near when they need him as the LORD our God is to us. He answers us whenever we call for help. ⁸No other nation, no matter how great, has laws so just as those that I have taught you today.”—*Good News Bible*.*† [How long did it take for the surrounding nations to learn about all that God had done for the children of Israel?][‡]

Deuteronomy 18:9-14: ⁹ “When you come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you, **don’t follow the disgusting practices of the nations that are there.** ¹⁰Don’t sacrifice your children in the fires on your altars; and don’t let your people practice divination or look for omens or use spells ¹¹or charms, and don’t let them consult the spirits of the dead. ¹²The LORD your God hates people who do these disgusting things, and that

is why he is driving those nations out of the land as you advance. ¹³Be completely faithful to the LORD.”

¹⁴ Then Moses said, “In the land you are about to occupy, people follow the advice of those who practice divination and look for omens, but the LORD your God does not allow you to do this. ¹⁵**Instead, he will send you a prophet like me from among your own people, and you are to obey him.**”—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

16. Please notice a very important explanation of those paragraphs: **God does not hate any of His children. What He hates is the sin that is destroying them.** When people follow the practices of the Devil and repeatedly choose his way of doing things, then God’s wrath must fall on them—He must let them go to reap the natural consequences of their own rebellious choices if they persist in those choices. What does it take for people to learn about the bad consequences of sin?

Deuteronomy 18:15-20: ¹⁵ “**Instead, he will send you a prophet like me from among your own people, and you are to obey him.** [Follow the example of Jesus. Don’t follow Satan’s ways!]

¹⁶ “On the day that you were gathered at Mount Sinai, you begged not to hear the LORD speak again or to see his fiery presence any more, because you were afraid you would die. [But, a few weeks later, they were dancing drunk and naked around a golden calf!] ¹⁷So the LORD said to me, ‘They have made a wise request. ¹⁸**I will send them a prophet like you from among their own people; I will tell him what to say, and he will tell the people everything I command.** ¹⁹He will speak in my name, and I will punish anyone who refuses to obey him. ²⁰**But if any prophet dares to speak a message in my name when I did not command him to do so, he must die for it, and so must any prophet who speaks in the name of other gods.**”—*Good News Bible*.^{*†‡}

17. Remember that Moses had previously written the book of Job including a great deal about the great controversy between God and Satan over the character and government of God. Even though Moses in Deuteronomy did not mention Satan or the great controversy, he clearly spelled out what will happen to those who reject God’s guidance and follow the Devil’s biddings. The Devil will use any means he can to deceive and mislead humans, including the use of “prophets” that promote his agenda! It has been reported that there are up to 43,000 different religious groups in the world! Can more than one be correct?
18. It is very interesting to notice that almost immediately after the giving of the Ten Commandments as recorded in Exodus 20:3-17, it says in Exodus 20:18-21 that the children of Israel begged for someone to stand between them and God because hearing God’s voice scared them to death.
19. It is important to notice that it was **not** God’s idea to have an intercessor between Himself and His children; He Himself wants to be our Friend. Jesus, who was God Himself, did not need anyone between Himself and His disciples or even the rest of the Jewish people.

John 15:15: [Jesus said:] “**I do not call you servants [slaves] any longer, because servants do not know what their master is doing. Instead, I call you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my**

Father.”—*Good News Bible*.^{*†‡}

John 16:25-27: ²⁵ [Jesus said:] “I have used figures of speech to tell you these things. **But the time will come when I will not use figures of speech, but will speak to you plainly about the Father.** ²⁶**When that day comes, you will ask him in my name; and I do not say that I will ask him on your behalf,** ²⁷**for the Father himself loves you.** He loves you because you love me and have believed that I came from God.”—*Good News Bible*.^{*†‡}

20. Both Luke in the book of Acts and Peter later spoke about God using words from prophets who lived long ago. Stephen also did so.

Acts 3:19-21: ¹⁹ “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that he will forgive your sins. If you do, ²⁰times of spiritual strength will come from the Lord, and he will send Jesus, who is the Messiah he has already chosen for you. ²¹He must remain in heaven until the time comes for all things to be made new, as **God announced through his holy prophets who lived long ago.**”—*Good News Bible*.^{*†} [Those ancient prophets were recognized as authorities.][‡]

Acts 7:37: [In his speech shortly before he was killed, Stephen said:] “Moses is the one who said to the people of Israel, ‘God will send you a prophet, just as he sent me, and he will be one of your own people.’”—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

21. Rejecting God and rejecting the offer of Jesus will indeed lead to “weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matthew 22:13)

22. Some have considered the book of Hebrews just one long exhortation to young Jewish believers in Jesus to encourage them to stay faithful to the LORD!

23. Choosing to act selfishly by following the example of Satan will eventually take us so far away from God’s love that He will have to let us go! Further details are given in Hebrews 10:28-31.

Hebrews 10:28-31: ²⁸Anyone who disobeys the Law of Moses is put to death without any mercy when judged guilty on the evidence of two or more witnesses. ²⁹What, then, of those who despise the Son of God? who treat as a cheap thing the blood of God’s covenant which purified them from sin? who insult the Spirit of grace? Just think how much worse is the punishment they will deserve! ³⁰For we know who said, “I will take revenge, I will repay”; and who also said, “The Lord will judge his people.” ³¹It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God!—*Good News Bible*.^{*} [If God is love, would it be terrifying to fall into His hands?][‡]

24. Near the end of Hebrews, we read this warning in Hebrews 12:28-29:

Hebrews 12:28-29: ²⁸ Let us be thankful, then, because we receive a kingdom that cannot be shaken. Let us be grateful and worship God in a way that will please him, with reverence and awe; ²⁹because **our God is indeed a destroying fire.**—*Good News Bible*.^{*†} [When He is described as a “destroying fire,” would you want to give Him a big hug?][‡]

25. In fact, **the best thing that could happen to us is to fall into the hands of a loving God!** But, God must eventually destroy sin. If we cling to sin, it will destroy us. It is not God who destroys sinners, it is sin!

Romans 6:23: For sin pays its wage—death; but God’s free gift is eternal life in union with Christ Jesus our Lord.—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

26. God is extremely hesitant to give up any of His children. The only thing that will cause Him to let them go is their own choice, i.e., if they repeatedly choose the Devil’s selfish side.
27. In our day, we have so much more light available to us than any of the Bible authors did. How could we turn away and reject all that evidence of God’s saving grace?

One can learn a great deal, too, about how to interpret the Bible by how the inspired writers of the New Testament used the Old. And one of the first lessons we could learn is that, unlike so much Bible scholarship today, the New Testament writers never raised any question about the authenticity or authority of the Old Testament books. Nothing in their writings revealed, for instance, doubt about the historicity of Old Testament stories, from the existence of Adam and Eve, the Fall, and the Flood to the call of Abraham, and so forth. The “scholarship” that questions these things is just human skepticism, and it should have no place in the hearts and minds of Seventh-day Adventists.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*^{*} for Friday, December 17.

28. So, what can we conclude about the use of Deuteronomy in the New Testament? Some scholars have compared Deuteronomy to the book of Romans.

We find in Deuteronomy the theological tension between the rigor of the law and the good news of the grace of God. It is from the book of Deuteronomy that Paul draws the idea that the law reveals sin (*Rom. 7:7*), that righteousness is only by faith (*Rom. 1:17; 10:6, 8, 17; compare Deut. 30:12-14*), and the hope that someday God’s people will join as one with the Gentiles (*Rom. 15:10; compare Deut. 32:43*). **This is why the book of Deuteronomy has been compared to the book of Romans in the New Testament. This week’s study is devoted to the place and significance of the book of Deuteronomy in the New Testament.**—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*^{*} 158.^{†§}

29. Hopefully, we have seen in this lesson the close relationship between the teachings of the Old Testament and the teachings of the New Testament. In this lesson we have talked about the use of the expression *it is written*. We have mentioned people who have encouraged us to live by the Word and to understand the relationship between law and grace. Finally, we discussed the issue of who was *a prophet like me*.

The passive form of the verb [in the expression *it is written*] indicates the grammatical intention to imply the divine subject behind these writings. **It is interesting that not only Jesus but also Satan refers to the inspired Scriptures, and both use the conventional “It is written” to introduce their quotations. But only Jesus, not Satan, points to God.** The devil focuses only on the miracle, and God is not important in his theology. Jesus, on the other hand, focuses on God, whom alone we should worship (*Matt. 4:10*). For it is possible to know the Scriptures well and quote them all the time, and yet ignore or even reject the God who inspired them.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*^{*} 159.^{†§} [The people in the days of Jesus who memorized much of the Old Testament still refused to

understand and follow its instructions.][‡]

30. We noticed in our study last week that whoever was the leader of the people, especially if it was a king, was supposed to keep a copy of Deuteronomy beside him and read it or have it read to him every day. Compare other passages from the Scriptures such as: Joshua 1:8; 1 Kings 2:3; Nehemiah 10:34; Mark 9:13; Acts 1:20; and 1 Corinthians 1:19.
31. In Jesus's answer to Satan recorded in Matthew 4:4, He said: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." The original Hebrew from Deuteronomy 8:3 carries additional implications that are very significant.

The Hebrew text says literally, "Man shall live on all that will come out from the mouth of God" (*Deut. 8:3; compare Robert Alter's translation; compare JPS*). The Hebrew verse also alludes to God's creation of human beings (*Gen. 2:7*). What Moses was emphasizing was that it is from God's mouth, not from bread, that humans receive life. It was important that the Israelites understand this lesson. Spoiled by the manna that fell regularly and surely on their ground, the Israelites got used to that natural provision and may have, indeed, forgotten that it came from God. Jesus reminds Satan that even the power of the miracle was not the point, but the person of God Himself was.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 159-160.[§]

32. Do we understand clearly why keeping the law can never save us? There is one simple answer: None of us can actually keep the law! Yet, both Deuteronomy and Galatians 3 suggest that *if we could keep it* [the law], we could be saved by it. This is a paradox. And the answer, of course, is the full plan of salvation. How could we be so foolish—as Paul suggests in Galatians 3—to ignore God's offer?
33. When Moses spoke about *a prophet like me* that was to come, he was clearly referring to Jesus Christ; the New Testament apostles recognized that. (See John 6:14 and Acts 3:22-23.)
34. Are we willing to live according to the suggestions of Moses and Jesus Christ? Do we recognize that this is a life or death matter? How do we observe the Sabbath? Are we paying a faithful tithe? What other things that we could mention are testing issues in our day? Are we studying our Bibles daily? Praying? And witnessing? Can we clearly explain the meaning and importance of the three angels' messages? Do we truly believe the Scriptures which suggest that Jesus is coming again very soon? Could it happen in our lifetimes?

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