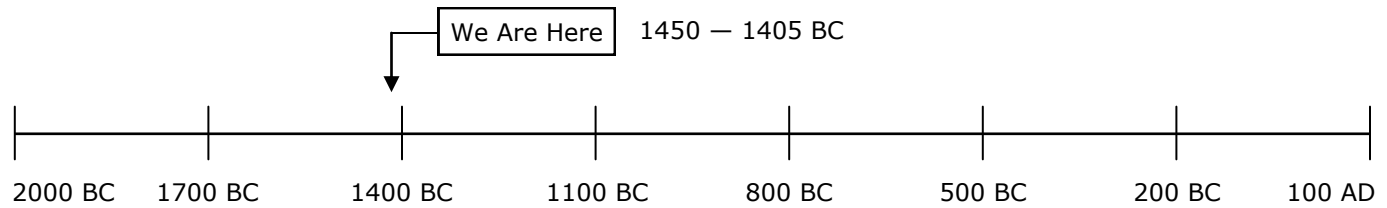


Looking Back, Looking Ahead

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Week 11: March 12-18 — *Deuteronomy 1-25*

21% Complete — 288 Days to Go



Helpful Resources

Map of the Exodus (p.101), Overview of Bible History (p.37)

Making Sense of It All

- The Big Picture

As the Israelites camped on the east side of the Jordan River, prepared to enter Canaan and fight for the land God promised, Moses took time to reflect on their desert adventures. He knew that the people who were following him were the second generation, those who were younger than 20 at the time of the exodus, and that they may not have remembered all that God had done for them. Thus, he hit the highlights with a brief recounting of their wilderness trek. After looking at the past, Moses challenged the people to look to the future and to consider how they were to live as a holy nation. Here are a few things he pointed out.

The Past — Moses reminded everyone of the Golden Calf, the Ten Commandments and other laws of God, appointing judges to help him, scouting Canaan, Israel's rejection of Canaan, wandering in the desert for 40 years, the second approach to Canaan, victory over the Amorites, tribes settling to the east of the Jordan, and, finally, his own mistakes.

The Future — Moses challenged the people to consider the days to come and, then, he gave them instructions for how to survive and succeed in the Promised Land. All of his instructions can be lumped into one simple message — be faithful to keep the covenant with God!

- Keeping the Covenant

A covenant was an agreement, a contract, or a promise. God promised to bless Israel, to provide for and protect them, if they kept their end of the deal, which had two parts:

1. **Worship Only God**: One aspect that sets Israelites apart from other nations was that they worshiped one God. God treated His covenant with Israel like a marriage and the people like His spouse; therefore, He demanded that they remain faithful in that marriage or He would become jealous and destroy them (*Deut. 4:24; 11:16, 17*). When they entered Canaan, God instructed them to tear down all idols and eliminate any temptation to worship other gods (*12:4, 5, 29-31*). Idolatry in His eyes was like committing adultery.
2. **Obey His Commands**: Because the people had seen what God had done (*Deut. 11:7, 8*), and out of fear and love for Him (*11:22-28*), the Israelites were expected to follow His commands; without obedience the people would never see God's blessings. Note that the terms of the covenant (or at least the foundation of it) — the Ten Commandments — were placed in the Ark of the Covenant for safe-keeping.

- Prophetic Passages
 1. **Prophecy of Idolatry** (*Deut. 4:26-31*): God foretold of Israel's future fascination with foreign gods and His eventual destruction of their nation. However, He also foretold of their return to Him. This prophecy of their judgment and destruction will come true through the nations of invasions of Assyria and Babylonia.
 2. **Prophecy of Kings** (*17:14-20*): Although this passage may not seem like a prophecy, it is a foreshadowing of the sins of future kings (even David, Solomon, *1 Kings 11:1-43*).
 3. **The Great Prophet** (*18:15, 18*): Moses foretold of a Prophet unlike any other, one whom the people should follow for salvation. Of course, he was referring to Christ.
- Pictures of Christ
 1. **Mediation of Moses** (*Deut. 5:5*) is a picture of Christ's mediation for us (*1 Tim. 2:5*).
 2. **Curse of the Tree** (*21:22, 23*): foreshadowed Christ's being cursed because of our sins as He also hung on the tree (*Galatians 3:13*).
- Personal Application
 1. **Looking Back, Looking Ahead**: Moses wrote the book of *Deuteronomy* for the very purpose of looking back and looking ahead. He reminded Israel of key events in its short history and urged them not to forget them once in Canaan. Then, he reminded the people of their covenant with God and what it would take for them to prosper under God's blessing in the Promised Land. We too should always look back and see what God has done for us, so that we will not forget Him or stray away from His path in the future.
 2. **Obey or Stray?**: Part of Israel's covenant with God was to obey His commands, out of fear and respect for Him, but also out of love (*Deut. 4:6-8*). As Christians, we have surrendered our lives to the One who gave His life on the cross; out of genuine love for Him, we follow His instructions (*John 14:21*). It is the least we can do for Him who gave the most He could for us. Besides, God promises great blessing for obedience to His commands (*Deut. 11:8-32; Joshua 1:8*). It is the fool who chooses otherwise.
 3. **No God But God**: The Lord made it clear that following after other gods was detestable and unacceptable in His sight; and, yet, Israel did not listen but chased after and placed their hope in the deities of man. Idolatry is one of Satan's masterpieces, a subtle distraction to derail people from their commitment to God. Let us not fall into the same trap, but rather let us choose to reject self-reliance and/or dependence on other gods of this world for our help, health, and happiness.

The Bottom Line

When we *forget* what God has done in the *past*, we are less likely to *trust* Him in the *future*.

Questions to Consider

1. Of the motives for obedience to God, which one is primary in your life? Explain why.
2. What is Satan's most effective trick to cause you to stray from obeying God?
3. Name the gods that Americans worship today. Why is it foolish to worship them?