



BOOKS OF THE BIBLE STUDY QUESTIONS

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DEUTERONOMY



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INTRODUCTION

The twelve tribes of Israel have completed forty years of wandering in the wilderness. They are camped across the Jordan River from Jericho, ready to cross over at the Lord's command. Soon, Moses will leave them, and Joshua will become the leader who brings them into the Promised Land. But first, Moses preaches a series of farewell sermons to encourage and remind them of the covenant life God has set before them—a life of joy, peace, and hope.

AUTHORSHIP

Moses wrote the Book of Deuteronomy. He preached to the people of God and wrote this book as they were on the verge of entering the Promised Land as a final word of encouragement before he died.

PURPOSE

Mindful of the previous generation's unbelief and fear at the thought of going up into the Promised Land, which caused forty years of wandering through the wilderness, Moses gives his sermons to encourage Israel to put its faith in God and to live according to the covenant they made with Him.

OUTLINE

For the purposes of this study, we will divide Deuteronomy into the following sections:

1. Historic Introduction
2. Moses Recalls the Events of the Wilderness Wanderings
3. Details of God's Covenant That Will Guide Life in the Promised Land
4. Israel Ratifies the Covenant
5. Transfer of Leadership from Moses to Joshua

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

HISTORIC INTRODUCTION

Moses provides the location for his Deuteronomy sermon series.

Read 1:1–4.

Q 1: Why does verse 2 mention the travel time between Horeb and Kadesh-barnea?

A 1: Horeb is another name for Mount Sinai, where Israel received the Ten Commandments and constructed the ark of the covenant and the tabernacle according to the instructions Moses received during the forty days he was on the mountain. Kadesh-barnea was the city on the southern boundary of the Promised Land, from which God first intended to launch Israel's conquest into the Promised Land.

In this first extended sermon (1:5–4:43), Moses will recount the history of the wilderness wanderings—highlighting God's faithfulness and Israel's rebellion. Here, he is exposing the faithlessness of the Israelites. In eleven days, God faithfully led Israel from Mount Sinai to the Promised Land, and He was ready to give it into their hands immediately. But because of the people's unbelief and refusal to enter the land, the next generation sits across the Jordan River from the Promised Land, forty years after their parents failed.

Q 2: Who were Sihon and Og?

A 2: Sihon and Og were two kings who lived and ruled east of the Jordan River from the Promised Land (a region known as Gilead or Transjordan). They had attacked Israel and were defeated by God through Joshua and the Israelites. The Israelite tribes were now camping in the territory they once possessed. The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh requested the land of Sihon and Og as their inheritance, and God gave it to them through Moses.

MOSES RECALLS THE EVENTS OF THE WILDERNESS WANDERINGS

Moses' first sermon contrasts God's trustworthiness with Israel's rebellious faithlessness throughout the forty years of wandering in the wilderness.

FROM SINAI TO THE BOUNDARY OF THE PROMISED LAND

Moses recounts the journey from Mount Sinai to the southern border of the Promised Land.

Read 1:5–8.

Q 3: In verse 6, what did God mean by saying “You have stayed long enough at this mountain”?

A 3: Israel had taken about three months to travel from Egypt to Mount Sinai. They spent nearly a year at the mountain as Moses received the Ten Commandments, built the ark of the covenant and all the furnishings of the tabernacle, and anointed Aaron and his sons as priests. Following a census of all the Israelite warriors who were twenty years old and over, God led Israel on an eleven-day trek to the Promised Land.

Q 4: What promise did God make to Israel in verse 8?

A 4: God's words, “I have set the land before you,” were His promise to bring the Israelites safely into the Promised Land and give them victory over the Canaanites. After witnessing the ten plagues upon Egypt, crossing the Red Sea, marching under the pillars of cloud and fire as well as seeing the fire and hearing God's voice on Mount Sinai, Israel had every reason to be confident in God's ability to give them the land He had promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

THE APPOINTMENT OF LEADERS

Moses describes the origin of Israel's leaders.

Read 1:9–18.

Q 5: Why was it important for Israel to have this hierarchy of leaders?

A 5: God established government and leadership to maintain order among His people. Since the Israelites were sinners who would not always see matters clearly, God established this government to settle disputes.

Q 6: Why was it important for the Israelites to have a voice in choosing their leaders?

A 6: Allowing them a say would help the Israelites be more invested in their nation and more likely to obey the leaders they chose. These leaders were ratified by God through Moses' oversight. This same kind of leadership exists in our congregations through the pastors and church workers we call and the lay leaders we elect.

SPIES SENT OUT

Moses recalls the journey to the Promised Land and how God protected and faithfully provided for Israel.

Read 1:19–25.

Q 7: What was so “great and terrifying” about the wilderness between Mount Sinai and Kadesh-barnea?

A 7: The terrain of this wilderness was nothing but sand and limestone. It was terrifying because it was a trek over one hundred miles long with children, the elderly, and livestock.

Q 8: Why do you think the Israelites asked for spies to be sent into the Promised Land?

A 8: Answers vary on this point. Wanting reconnaissance could well indicate the doubts of the Israelites; their distrust of God's promise to give them victory despite everything they had seen in Egypt and at the Red Sea.

REBELLION AGAINST THE LORD

Despite God's great deeds and promises, faithless Israel refuses to enter the Promised Land.

Read 1:26–33.

Q 9: Why did the Israelites conclude that God hated them?

A 9: Instead of humbly trusting God, Israel believed God was leading them to certain death. Their fears should have driven them to flee to God for His infinite mercy and love. Despite all the evidence of His tender care, His protection, and their safe deliverance from Egypt and across the wilderness, they still thought wrongly of Him.

When we go through difficult trials or situations, we may think it is all up to us and forget that our all-powerful God is right here to help us. We may even find ourselves angry at God, doubting His power or His concern for us. We might blame Him for allowing us to fall into difficult situations or think that He is punishing us for our sins—which is impossible, because He already punished Jesus

in our place on the cross. Instead, we should pray to God and find encouragement in Jesus' death and resurrection.

Q 10: What did Israel mean in verse 28, “Our brothers have made our hearts melt”?

A 10: Their brothers were ten of the twelve spies who scouted the Promised Land. They noted the rich land and its abundant fruit but exaggerated about the size of the Canaanites and said the land devoured its inhabitants. Though Joshua and Caleb, the other two spies, encouraged the people to trust God's love, faithfulness, and power, the people listened to the ten and rebelled. (See Numbers 13 and 14.)

Q 11: Who are the sons of the Anakim?

A 11: The sons of the Anakim are the descendants of the giants—we would include Goliath of Gath (whom David later slew), and Og, the king of Bashan (one of two kings the Israelites had recently defeated east of the Jordan River). See Deuteronomy 3:11.

Read 1:34–46.

Q 12: What was God's reaction to the Israelites' rebellion and unbelief?

A 12: God was angered and swore that Israel would wander in the wilderness until every person of that generation died—only Caleb (one of the faithful spies) would be permitted to go in. He declared that Moses himself would not lead Israel into the Promised Land because of his own sin, stating that Caleb's faithful spy partner, Joshua, would replace Moses to lead the Israelites' children into the Promised Land.

Q 13: How did the Israelites make matters worse?

A 13: The Israelites still thought they could receive God's blessings on their own terms instead of by faith and obedience to His Word. Not liking the notion of wandering in the wilderness until they all died, they decided they would go on up without God to take Canaan. God had Moses warn them they would go alone, but they went anyway. They were soundly defeated and driven out into the wilderness.

WANDERINGS IN THE DESERT

Moses quickly sums up Israel's thirty-eight years of wandering in the wilderness then describes in detail Israel's travels toward the Jordan River and the Promised Land.

Read 2:1–23.

Q 14: What is implied by the Lord's words in verse 2, “You have been traveling around this mountain country long enough”?

A 14: God used these same words back in 1:6 on Mt. Sinai to indicate the time had come to travel to the Promised Land and claim it. Now the same is true—it is time for the next generation to end its wilderness wandering and march toward the Promised Land.

Q 15: Why did God command Israel not to harass the nations along the way to the Promised Land?

A 15: Moving from the east toward the Jordan River, Israel would pass through territory God had given to Jacob's brother, Esau, and Moab and Ammon, the sons of Abraham's nephew Lot. Clearly, God had a specific area in mind and did not intend Israel to grab any other land that it could. He wanted to give them Canaan, an area whose inhabitants were guilty of great sin. Canaan's time of judgment and punishment had come.

Q 16: Why did Moses add the sidenote in verses 10–12 about nations the people of Moab and Esau had driven out?

A 16: By remembering the success of their relatives, the Israelites could have confidence that by God's might, they would be able to do the same with the Canaanites.

DEFEAT OF SIHON, KING OF HESHBON

Moses reminds the Israelites of the time that Sihon, the Amorite king of Heshbon, met Israel's request for passage through his territory with his army. This battle is also recorded in Numbers 21:21–30.

Read 2:24–37.

Q 17: Why did Moses consider it important to record the victorious wars against Sihon and Og?

A 17: The battles against Sihon and Og struck terror into the hearts of the Canaanites. The two spies Joshua will later send to Jericho will learn of this terror from Rahab (see Joshua 2:9–11). This will encourage Israel to trust God to give them victory in the coming invasion of Canaan.

Q 18: How does Sihon's action illustrate the fate of those who make themselves enemies of the Lord and His people?

A 18: Sihon foolishly believed he could not trust God's promise of peace, so he brought his powerful army to safeguard his kingdom. Since he opposed God and His people, he and his army were destroyed instead. The tribe of Reuben inherited his land.

Q 19: What does it mean that God had hardened Sihon's spirit (v. 30)?

A 19: We need to be clear that God did not change Sihon's heart or spirit from that of a peaceful king to a hostile one. Nor did the Lord make

Sihon reject Moses' message of peace or react in such a hostile way against Israel. Sihon's hostility and warlike anger were already there. God hardening his heart permitted Sihon to act according to his sinful choices and inclinations. Note that God did not step in and force Sihon to accept peace that he did not desire.

In a similar way, God had hardened Pharaoh's heart in the early chapters of Exodus. God did not change a peaceful Pharaoh into a hostile, rebellious king—but God did permit Pharaoh to defy His commands to free Israel, then God hardened him in his stubborn, self-destructive rebellion.

In the Book of Joshua, we will see the same thing. God hardens the hearts of all the kings of Canaan, except the king and people of Gibeon (see Joshua 9). All of them hardened their hearts against Joshua and Israel and even joined forces in an effort to overwhelm God's people. All of them were defeated.

The same will be true of the condemned on Judgment Day. The unbelievers chose to reject God and His ways; God will punish them, but the blame is theirs alone—not His.

Q 20: Why would our loving God command Israel to exterminate Sihon and all his people as well as all the people of Canaan?

A 20: We need to step back in humility before charging God with injustice or hatred, or we will be like the rebellious people of Israel who judged God and said that He hated them and that He only brought them out of Egypt to die in war against the Canaanites.

God's judgment against these nations foreshadows His judgment of unbelievers on the Last Day. God is perfectly just and right in His judgments. We show our sinful blindness when we refuse to submit to Him and recognize that He is acting in a holy, just way. Meanwhile, through Jesus Christ, He provides all nations the chance to escape His judgment.

Remember that God permitted the Canaanites to hear the good news through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and his sons, who sojourned in the land of Canaan. God gave the people four hundred years to repent and amend their lives during Israel's slavery in Egypt as well as a forty-year reprieve when Israel wandered in the wilderness.

DEFEAT OF OG, KING OF BASHAN

Israel faces war with another king east of the Jordan River. This battle is also recorded in Numbers 21:31–35.

Read 3:1–11.

Q 21: Who was the aggressor in this campaign?

- A 21: Og was the aggressor; clearly, Og led his army out against Israel, and Israel went to battle to defend itself.
- Q 22: When God said, “Do not fear him,” that is, do not fear Og, who was He speaking to? And why did God say this about Og but not about Sihon?**
- A 22: God was giving special encouragement to Moses himself. Og was a terrifying giant whose notoriety was similar to that of Goliath in David’s day. Moses was intimidated by Og. Sihon, on the other hand, was not a giant.
- Q 33: What is remarkable about Moses’ description of Og’s territory in verses 4–5?**
- A 23: Og’s kingdom was extensive. He had sixty cities with tall walls and strong towers. When the Israelites must face the powerful armies and walled cities of Canaan, they can remember how God gave them all of Og’s powerful cities.
- Q 24: Why did Moses take the time to record the size of Og’s bed in verse 11?**
- A 24: Og was a giant—the last of the Rephaim. The Rephaim lived in the land of Canaan at the time of Abraham. A generation before, they were the very same giants which the ten evil spies had mentioned to terrorize the people of Israel and discourage them from trusting God’s promise to attack the Promised Land.

Og’s death would give the children of Israel courage that God could defeat any giants that stood before them. In another five hundred years or so, David would have that same confidence that the Lord would deliver Goliath into his hands.

DIVISION OF THE LAND

Moses divides the land conquered from Sihon and Og between two and a half tribes of Israel.

Read 3:12–20.

Q 25: Which tribes inherited Sihon’s territory?

A 25: Reuben inherited the southern portion, and Gad inherited the northern portion.

Q 26: Which tribe inherited the land of Og?

A 26: Half of the tribe of Manasseh inherited the land of Og. These were the descendants of Machir, Manasseh’s oldest son and Joseph’s grandson. Manasseh’s other sons (the other half-tribe of Manasseh) inherited land west of the Jordan River in Canaan. Machir lived north of the tribe of Gad.

Q 27: What condition did Moses give these two-and-a-half tribes to inherit their lands?

A 27: Moses gave the condition that the wives, children, and livestock of the tribes could remain in this inherited land, but their armed men had to cross over the Jordan with their brother tribes to conquer the Promised Land. Then, when their brothers had rest, the warriors could return to their inheritance.

MOSES FORBIDDEN TO CROSS THE JORDAN

Moses encourages his replacement, Joshua, and recalls his own pleas for God's permission to lead Israel into the Promised Land.

Read 3:21–29.

Q 28: Why did Moses give this encouraging reminder to Joshua?

A 28: Moses knew the victories Joshua had won over Sihon and Og as the commander of the army would give him encouragement in the upcoming battles for Canaan. This was important because the prospect of war with the powerful nations of Canaan had intimidated the first generation.

Just as God's past works gave Joshua and Israel courage to trust His promises for the future, Christ Jesus' death and resurrection give us courage to trust God's promises for the present and future.

Q 29: Was it wrong for Moses to plead with God to change His mind and allow him to cross over into the Promised Land?

A 29: No, Moses had prayed bold prayers before, which serve as evidence of his faith in God's power to do the seemingly impossible. He rightly appeals to God's undeserved grace and goodness—and rightly praises the mighty acts of God that glorify His name. God's answer in the negative does not in any way indicate that Moses was wrong to have offered the prayer.

We should remember this when we pray for big, bold things. God invites us—commands us—to pray extravagantly, even if we don't think our prayers will ever happen. God can do all things. We pray in Jesus' name, confident that God will hear our prayer for the sake of Jesus' spotless life, His innocent suffering, and atoning death in our place. Then, we close the prayer with "Your will be done," showing our recognition that God is all wise and that we have no idea if the thing we have requested will be good for us.

Q 30: Why wouldn't God forgive Moses for his sin and let him lead Israel into the Promised Land?

A 30: The Lord did forgive Moses. But our sins have consequences. At that moment at the rock, when Moses struck it with his staff instead of telling it to yield water as God commanded, God wanted

to show Israel His great mercy, patience, and love. Moses showed them the exact opposite: impatience, wrath, and anger. God chose this stern consequence for Moses to make it abundantly and eternally clear to Israel (and us) that He graciously forgives our sins, does not act in wrath and anger as we deserve, and loves us as His own children.

Sometimes, God in His wisdom allows believers to feel the effects of our sin and guilt. Sometimes, that drives us to seek His help and forgiveness and helps us learn to resist a sin we previously committed.

We can learn a lesson from this. Sometimes, we must live with the consequences of our sins, other people's sins against us, or of simply living in a world corrupted by sin. Our ongoing health problems, financial struggles, and strained relationships are not a sign that God refuses to forgive us, for He punished His Son on the cross in our place. We can pray for God to lift these burdens, but if He chooses not to do so, we can be confident that He will strengthen us to endure them. He will make these trials work together for our good while giving us the opportunity to bring glory to His name by the patience, peace, and cheerfulness He grants us.

Q 31: Why did God command Moses to stop praying for Him to change His plans?

A 31: As long as Moses held out hope that he could continue to lead Israel, Joshua and the nation were left in limbo, unsure of who would lead them in. God had chosen Joshua; Moses needed to accept God's decision and support Joshua's leadership.

Q 32: How can we know when to stop praying about particular things for which we yearn?

A 32: Since God rarely gives us clear commands to stop praying for specific things, it is not a sin to continue praying for them. But often, time and circumstances lead us to accept life without the things for which we once yearned: perfect health, financial abundance, peace in our family, children, and so on.

Q 33: Why was it important for Moses to be able to look upon the Promised Land from a mountaintop outside of it?

A 33: The view reassured Moses that God had, indeed, forgiven him. It reminded him that his labor of leading Israel for forty years was not in vain. And it reminded him that God will preserve His Church and keep it safe throughout the future.

OBEDIENCE COMMANDED

Now that Moses has recalled the wilderness wanderings from Mount Sinai to the shore of the Jordan River, he closes his first sermon by introducing the theme of his second sermon: obey the God who has done such wonderful works for you.

Read 4:1–14.

Q 34: What happened at Baal-peor (v. 3)? What did the Lord do there?

A 34: This event is recorded in Numbers 25. After Balaam was unable to gain a huge reward from King Balak by making God put a curse on Israel, he advised the young women of Moab to seduce the men of Israel into offering sacrifices to Baal and celebrating a religious ceremony with them that included sexual sin. As a result, the Lord struck the Israelites with a great plague.

Q 35: Why does Moses take the people back to the events at Horeb (or Mount Sinai)?

A 35: Moses recounts the events of God's appearance in fire at Mount Sinai because that same awe and reverence should characterize Israel's attitude toward God through all generations. All of us should fear the Lord our God, take His Word seriously, and obey Him. Consider what will happen on Judgment Day; all the nations will see the great glory of God—not on an isolated mountain range, but all over the earth.

IDOLATRY FORBIDDEN

Moses warns Israel against falling into idolatry, foretelling the disaster that will result but reminding Israel they will still be able to return to God.

Read 4:15–31.

Q 36: Why does God describe Himself as a consuming fire and a jealous God in verse 24?

A 36: God's wrath toward sin is fiery—it reminds us of the destruction coming upon the heavens and the earth at Christ's return and the eternal fire of hell. Yet the fire in the burning bush (Exodus 3) did not consume the bush, and Moses was able to go up on Mount Sinai while it was covered with fire without being hurt. God's holiness burns away our sins and makes us pure.

Q 37: Why would God give the Israelites such a stern punishment as exile?

A 37: Exile was a desperate act of love that would force the Israelites to see clearly the slavery and eternal danger of their sin. It would help them recognize their folly, turn from their sin, call upon the Lord for help, and learn His mercy, love, and forgiveness.

The same holds true for the sins in which we entangle ourselves. Sins can easily become addictions that take away our jobs, families, homes, and possessions. They can drive us to rock bottom—where, hopefully, we will repent and call on God for deliverance through Jesus Christ.

THE LORD IS GOD

Moses reminds Israel that everything they have seen shows them that their God is unique.

Read 4:32–40.

Q 38: How does remembering God’s great acts in history (especially Jesus’ birth, life, death, and resurrection) make it “go well” with us and our children (v. 40)?

A 38: Remembering the evidence of God’s love through Jesus Christ leads us to put aside sinful temptations and desires and to come to Him in repentant faith. This makes our earthly life more productive and beneficial to our neighbor, giving us great peace and contentment as we look forward to Christ’s triumphant return and the eternal glory we will share in from then on.

CITIES OF REFUGE

Moses closes his first sermon by listing the three cities of refuge east of the Jordan River.

Read 4:41–43.

Q 39: What was the purpose of a city of refuge?

A 39: If a person committed involuntary manslaughter (someone dying as a result of unintentional carelessness or an accident) he would flee to the nearest city of refuge and his life would be spared from the avenger. He had to remain in that city until the high priest died, then all such killers were free to return to their homes.

Q 40: How does the city of refuge prefigure Jesus?

A 40: Whenever we sin, we can flee to God for forgiveness, and we are safe as long as we remain in Him. Also, Jesus is the High Priest. At His death, we were all set free from our sins to live without fear in holiness and righteousness all our days.

This ends the first of Moses’ three sermons to Israel.

DETAILS OF GOD’S COVENANT WHICH WILL GUIDE LIFE IN THE PROMISED LAND

Moses begins his second sermon, by far the longest of the three.

MORAL LAW

Having reminded Israel of God’s faithfulness in bringing them from Egypt to the Promised Land, Moses now sets out the rules God has given to govern their lives in the Promised Land. Had Israel lived by this covenant, it would have been a magnificent nation in which to live as each person respected all others out of faith and love for God.

INTRODUCTION TO THE LAW

The location of this sermon is summarized in the closing verses of chapter 4.

Read 4:44–49.

Q 41: Why is it important to keep in mind where this sermon took place?

A 41: The Israelites are right at the banks of the Jordan River, ready to cross over into the Promised Land. It shows the grace of God toward Moses to allow him to instruct the people of God—to set a vision of the life to come—right before his death when it was time for Israel to enter the Promised Land, rather than years beforehand.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Moses repeats the Ten Commandments.

Read 5:1–21.

Q 42: What was the role of Moses when he states in verse 5, “I stood between the LORD and you at that time”?

A 42: After God uttered the Ten Commandments, the Israelites were terrified and begged Moses to talk to God then tell them what God had said. Moses was God’s representative to them, far less intimidating than God Himself. In the same way, Jesus Christ, God’s Son, is the mediator between God and us. He comes in meekness and lowliness through Word, water, bread, and wine, so that we are not filled with terror.

Read 5:22–27.

Q 43: What can we make of the people’s request for Moses to be their intercessor with God?

A 43: Sinful people cannot stand directly before our holy God and Creator. We would die. This is why God wrapped the dark cloud around Himself on Mount Sinai, why Jesus wrapped Himself in His human flesh, and why God the Father spoke from the bright cloud at Jesus’ transfiguration. As intercessor, Moses brought the people’s needs to God and brought God’s instructions to His people. In this way, Moses prefigured Jesus, the ultimate mediator between God and us.

God is pleased with Israel’s response.

Read 5:28–33.

Q 44: What does it mean to “turn aside to the right hand or the left” in verse 32?

A 44: The Lord is not speaking of conservatism or liberalism, but comparing our earthly lives to walking along the straight road of following God’s commandments. We should visualize ourselves walking straight toward God and heaven, not turning aside to earthly distractions and sinful desires.

LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD

Moses reminds Israel how God brought them into the Promised Land.

Read chapter 6.

Q 45: Does the phrase “The LORD is one” in verse 4 conflict with our beliefs about the Trinity?

A 45: Not at all. The teaching of the Trinity is that there are three persons in the one true God. The Bible teaches the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct persons who share the same divine nature as one God—not three gods.

Q 46: How did Israel test God at Massah?

A 46: In Exodus 17:2–7, the Israelites were thirsty and quarreled with Moses to give them water to drink. They tested God, stating they would believe He was with them only if He gave them water to drink.

When Satan tried to get Jesus to jump from the temple in Matthew 4:5–7, he was making the same demand. But Jesus cited this passage to show that true faith doesn’t demand that God prove Himself; it waits patiently for His answer in His time.

DRIVING OUT THE NATIONS

The Lord commands Israel to exterminate the Canaanites.

Read 7:1–5.

Q 47: Why would our God of love demand the complete and total annihilation of the people of Canaan?

A 47: God knew the corrosive effect sinful temptations have and knew His people would go astray if they permitted the Canaanites to remain. They would have allowed themselves to be exposed to temptation, and God loved them too much to leave such temptation around. As it turned out, however, Israel did not exterminate their neighbors and were led astray, to their own sorrow and hurt.

God's holiness and righteousness demand that sin be punished. He is consistent with His justice and shows His grace in heaping that punishment on Jesus Christ in the place of all sinners. Those who refuse to repent and receive that salvation fall under God's wrath. Hell seems harsh and unloving, but it is real. The fact that God provides us a way to escape eternity in hell through His own Son's death and resurrection shows He is truly a loving God.

Israel must choose between life and death.

Read 7:7–16.

Q 48: What two ways of life does God set before the children of Israel, and us?

A 48: He promises His faithful love, mercy, and care if we trust Him, repent of our sins, and serve Him with our lives; but threatens His wrath and destruction if we forsake Him.

Q 49: How can the Israelite soldiers find confidence when they go against stronger armies and city defenses?

A 49: God chose them out of His love and swore an oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Knowing this should direct the Israelite soldiers to God for their confidence, not themselves.

Read 7:17–26.

Q 50: Why will God only gradually give the land to Israel instead of giving them all the land right away?

A 50: The number of Israelites at this point is too small to be able to keep the native vegetation and wild animals under control.

DO NOT FORGET THE LORD

Moses teaches Israel lessons from manna.

Read chapter 8.

Q 51: In what way did the manna in the wilderness humble the Israelites?

A 51: Israel quickly learned that they were powerless to keep themselves alive and therefore were completely dependent upon God for their food, drink, and survival. For forty years, they had to depend upon God to give them their daily bread—and He faithfully did without ever failing.

We are often tempted to forget that God provides for all our daily needs as well, thinking that our hard work earns the money to provide for ourselves. But ultimately, God has given us the talent, strength, and ability to work. Israel's manna can remind us that God will faithfully provide for our daily needs in times of sickness, accident, injury, or incapacitation. And, of course, in the Lord's Prayer, Jesus taught us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread" to remind us of God's faithful provision of manna. It is a promise that He will continue to provide for our needs.

Q 52: How did God use the daily bread to discipline Israel?

A 52: The arrival of the manna each morning occurred on God's timetable, not Israel's. It consistently arrived with the morning dew and burned off when the sun rose high. So Israel had to gather it during the time God provided. They had to get up and gather, even on those mornings they didn't feel like getting out of bed. And if they awoke hungry in the middle of the night, they still had to wait until God's time, learning patience.

God's discipline trains us to put aside our impatient doubts and fears, and our selfish, hurtful, sinful desires. When we learn to bear up for a time under our hunger pangs or unfulfilled desires, those yearnings drive us to God for help. Through prayer, Bible study, and Holy Communion, we learn patient endurance and build self-discipline that serves us well in every time of temptation or trouble.

Q 53: Why does God speak of the bounty and variety of food and water in the Promised Land in verses 7–10?

A 53: Israel sometimes grumbled about having to eat the same manna day after day in the wilderness and only having water when God chose to provide it. Moses reminded them that was only a temporary situation—soon, they would be able to enjoy a wide variety of foods and abundant supplies of water.

We can think of the difficulties and deprivations of our earthly lives, but when we ponder the abundant blessing and wide variety

of pleasures in the world to come, we can patiently endure and even enjoy the earthly blessings God provides, knowing the abundance that He is preparing for us upon Christ's return.

Q 54: What warning does God give us in verses 11–20 for the times we enjoy prosperity in our lives?

A 54: We are tempted to think our fortunes are self-made, the result of our hard work, ingenuity, industriousness, or our education. The truth is, as verse 18 says, "It is He who gives you power to get wealth." Even when we enjoy material prosperity, we must be careful not to depend upon it. Wealth can easily flee away from us. Illness, injury, or disaster could take our possessions away. Certainly, in the hour of death, these will fail us, and we will find God alone can deliver us.

NOT BECAUSE OF ISRAEL'S RIGHTEOUSNESS

God is driving out the Canaanites because of their wickedness, not because of Israel's righteousness.

Read 9:1–6.

Q 55: Why was it important for Israel to realize they were unworthy of God driving out the wicked Canaanites because of their sin?

A 55: Israel became proud over time, believing they were holier than all the nations around them. But Moses will expose their sinfulness and the wrath of God they deserved, which God forgave for His mercy's sake.

We are all prone to self-righteousness and self-justification. We should repent, recognizing our sin and the fact that we deserve God's judgment as much as anyone else—recognizing we are saved only by God's righteousness and mercy for Jesus' sake.

THE GOLDEN CALF

Moses reminds the Israelites that God nearly destroyed all of them at Mount Sinai.

Read 9:7–29.

Q 56: Why was it important for Israel not to forget the embarrassing golden calf incident?

A 56: Whenever the Israelites became proud of their status as God's nation, they would regain their proper spiritual perspective by recalling this event. At Mount Sinai, the people were clearly in the presence of God, shown by the fire raging on the mountain. They had evidence of God's presence, yet pressured Aaron to form the golden calf and then worshiped it.

Q 57: What is important about Moses interceding for Israel?

A 57: Israel was not saved from God's wrath because of their righteousness or because they were punished for their sin. They were only forgiven and saved because Moses interceded for them and God accepted his prayer for the sake of Jesus' coming death. Likewise, we are only saved from God's eternal wrath by Jesus' intercession for us on the cross.

TABLETS LIKE THE FIRST ONES

After breaking the first set of tablets because of the golden calf, Moses cuts out two new tablets, which God inscribes with His Commandments so the people will always have them, along with God's presence.

Read 10:1–11.

Q 58: How did God show He had completely forgiven the Israelites' idolatry?

A 58: God inscribed His Commandments on the second set of tablets, permitted Israel to move on from Mount Sinai, and sent Moses to lead them to the Promised Land and take possession of it.

FEAR THE LORD

God's gracious love moves us to love one another.

Read 10:12–22.

Q 59: In verses 12–13, is Moses telling the Israelites their works can gain God's favor and eternal life?

A 59: No. Otherwise, he would not tell them to circumcise their hearts in verse 16 and counsel them to no longer be stubborn. They are sinners who are inheriting Canaan by God's grace, not because of their righteousness. Notice also in verse 15 that God chose Israel—neither they nor their fathers chose God. He initiated their relationship of faith, just as He does today. Their obedience, commanded in verses 12–13, is their grateful response of faith to all God has done and will do for them.

Q 60: Who are the sojourners? Why does God care about them?

A 60: God chose one nation, Israel, over all the others. But He still loves all people of all nations and wants them to be saved. God established Israel as a missionary nation to all others until the time of Jesus' earthly ministry, when the Church could go out to all the earth. When Gentiles heard of God's great deeds, some sojourned—that is, came to live as foreigners in Israel to learn of their God.

LOVE AND OBEY THE LORD

Moses warns Israel to obey God or face His curses.

Read chapter 11.

Q 61: Who were Dathan and Abiram?

A 61: Dathan and Abiram were Israelites who rebelled against Moses' leadership and refused to obey him. As punishment, the earth opened up and swallowed them and their families alive.

Q 62: What does God threaten in verses 16–17 if Israel turns from Him while living in the Promised Land?

A 62: In Egypt, the land received its water by irrigation from the Nile River—hard and difficult labor the Israelite slaves performed. In Canaan, God will provide water for the land through rain. But if Israel turns from Him, God will withhold the rains and they will suffer drought. Sadly, this happens in the time of the divided kingdom.

Q 63: What is significant about the two mountains Moses mentions in verse 29?

A 63: At this point, Moses only briefly introduces these two mountains. In chapters 27 and 28, he will provide a liturgy to be used on these mountains. Mount Gerizim, the mount of blessings, is rich and fertile; Mount Ebal is barren and unproductive. These central mountains would serve as ongoing reminders of the blessings of obedience and the curses of disobeying God.

THE ONE PLACE OF WORSHIP

Moses reminds Israel of worship, which is central to their covenant life.

Read 12:1–28.

Q 64: How was worship crucial for Israel's ability to keep the covenant and ensure the Lord's blessings instead of His curses?

A 64: The key to living according to the covenant cannot be our own holiness and righteousness. If it were, Israel would have been doomed to failure. But God established a worship service which supplied His grace, blessings, and power to His people, enabling them to live under the covenant and please God. Their sins and failures were washed away by the blood of the sacrifices presented at the place of worship, each of which pointed ahead to Jesus' sacrifice on the cross.

Q 65: Why did God require one place of worship, instead of letting Israel worship anywhere?

A 65: God was conditioning His people to worship as He required rather than as they each preferred. The only worship in which we can be assured of receiving the Lord's blessings is that which is done according to His command.

This one place was symbolic of the coming Savior, the only one through whom we have access to the Father (John 14:6). Now that Christ has come and fulfilled God's righteous plan, we are no longer bound to one geographic location where we must worship God. But still, we can only approach Him through Jesus Christ and confine ourselves to find and receive Him in His Word and Sacraments alone.

Q 66: Why did God forbid His people to eat meat with the blood still in it?

A 66: God was reserving the blood for a special purpose: for His people to connect the shedding of blood to the forgiveness of their sins. This was also pointing His people to His forgiveness through the sacrifice of the coming Messiah. It is interesting that in Communion, Christ gives us His body to eat and His blood to drink.

WORSHIPING OTHER GODS

Moses gives directions to the Israelites to keep them from falling into idolatry.

Read chapter 12:29–13:18.

Q 67: What was so abominable to God about the way the Canaanites worshiped their false gods?

A 67: Their worship involved sexual immorality (cult prostitutes) and even child sacrifice.

CLEAN AND UNCLEAN FOODS

Moses teaches the dietary restrictions of Israel's covenant with God.

Read 14:1–21.

Q 68: Why did ancient peoples cut themselves and make their foreheads bald for their dead relatives?

A 68: By cutting themselves and making their blood flow, they thought they could force their god to act on their behalf. They also tore out the hair from their foreheads to show despair or arouse pity when a loved one died.

Israel was forbidden to do these things because God does not answer prayers based on what His people do, but because of His mercy and grace. Also, Israel is to live by faith, trusting that God will answer their prayers and comfort them out of His mercy.

TITHES

God establishes a means to support professional church workers (priests and Levites) and the poor, widows, orphans, and strangers.

Read 14:22–29.

Q 69: What is a tithe?

A 69: A tithe is ten percent of a person's income, be it produce from the fields, new animals from the herd, or any other sort of income.

Q 70: What was to be done with the tithe and why?

A 70: The tithe was given to the Levites so they could give their full-time attention to worship and teaching. The Levites in turn gave their tithes to the priests, Aaron's descendants among the tribe of Levi. It was also shared with the orphans, widows, and foreigners who were in need.

Tithes are not required of Christians today; God wants us to give freely, as He has freely given to us.

THE YEAR FOR CANCELING DEBTS

Every seventh year the debts of all Israelites will be forgiven.

Read 15:1–11.

Q 71: Why would God ask His people to take a loss on money they had loaned to others when that debt would be forgiven every seven years?

A 71: The covenant the Lord made with Israel focused their trust on God to provide their daily bread. Freed from the worry of how they would provide for their families, trusting God to meet all their needs, they would open their hearts to their needy neighbors and share with them generously.

At the same time, borrowers would also show their trust and confidence in God by not borrowing money or other goods dishonestly from their neighbor.

Q 72: Isn't there a contradiction between verse 4, where it says, "there will be no poor among you" and verse 11, where it says, "there will never cease to be poor in the land"?

A 72: Verse 11 speaks about the consequences of living in a world ruined by sin. Families would fall on hard times—crop failure, sickness, injury, or death of their providers. Verse 4 speaks of how the generous Israelites would alleviate that poverty. God's covenant creates selfless generosity in the hearts of the Israelites. When they worship regularly and are fed by God's Word, they will naturally care about those in need around them and lend to them generously.

As a result of the generosity of those who love, fear, and trust in God, there will be no poor among the Israelites.

FREEING SERVANTS

God provides for Israelites who fall into hard economic times.

Read 15:12–18.

Q 73: Why would an Israelite sell himself or herself to another Israelite?

A 73: It was a means for Israelites who fell into hard financial times to provide for themselves and their families. The seventh year release was meant to prevent perpetual slavery. The “employer” Israelites would release their “servants” with a generous “severance package” so they could support themselves and not fall into servanthood again. A provision was given for life-long servanthood when the relationship between the two was mutually beneficial and a loving, caring relationship had been established between the two.

THE FIRSTBORN ANIMALS

Directions for firstborn animals.

Read 15:19–23.

Q 74: Why is God so concerned about Israel sacrificing firstborn animals?

A 74: God was reminding the Israelites that all their possessions were His gracious gifts. By offering the firstborn, they were demonstrating their faith and trust in God to provide more offspring. In Israel, the Levites who served God represented the firstborn males of Israel (Numbers 3:40–41).

Actually, all these firstborn animals and humans were pointing ahead to Jesus, the only-begotten Son of the Father who was consecrated, set apart for God’s service, and made the sacrifice for all our sins.

PASSOVER

All Israelite males are to appear before the Lord for three annual festivals. The first is Passover.

Read 16:1–8.

Q 75: Why was Passover the chief festival?

A 75: That event was the founding of Israel as a nation when God brought it out of slavery in Egypt. It is similar to the Independence

Day celebrations in the United States—the biggest national holiday Americans celebrate.

Q 76: What was the purpose of all the ceremonies of the Passover—for example, using unleavened bread instead of leavened bread and the haste of the preparation and eating?

A 76: By observing the Passover in this way, the Israelites were “going back” to that wondrous night and reliving what their ancestors experienced—the great joy and bliss of being released from centuries of slavery. They even celebrated the Passover through the night, just as many Christians have their Christmas meal at midnight on December 25.

We can think of these same things when we gather during Holy Week to rehearse and relive Jesus’ Last Supper and His great sacrifice for us on the cross. And each time we eat the unleavened bread and wine of Holy Communion, we stand in spirit at the foot of the cross and remember Jesus giving His body and shedding His blood to free us from the slavery of sin, death, Satan, and hell.

FEAST OF WEEKS

Moses commands an interval of seven weeks between Passover and the harvest festival.

Read 16:9–12.

Q 77: What was the purpose of this festival?

A 77: The harvest festival reminded Israel of God’s abundant provision for their needs. Later, it took on the name *Pentecost* (meaning fifty days after Passover) and on that day, God poured out His Holy Spirit upon His Church. The harvest festival involved the provision of food for the needy among the Israelites and a freewill offering to thank God for His generosity.

FEAST OF BOOTHS

The third festival recalls Israel’s forty years of wandering in the wilderness, living in tents.

Read 16:13–17.

Q 78: Why the long list of participants in verse 14?

A 78: This is to remind the Israelites that everyone was welcome to enjoy and rejoice in God’s blessings; rich and poor, healthy and sick, Israelite and Gentile sojourner. No one should be excluded. The fact that “all males” were to appear did not exclude women and children. The males were representatives of their family, and would be sure to bring their wives and children with them.

CIVIL LAW

Moses turns to laws God gave to arrange civil life within Israel.

JUDGES

Moses commands judges to be just in their judgments—like God.

Read 16:18–20.

Q 79: Why would judges be tempted to be unjust in their judgments?

A 79: They could be bribed by the wealthy, or intimidated or rewarded by the socially powerful. But God Himself is impartial and judges rightly by a person's words and deeds. Earthly judges should reflect that so people won't think God is like wicked, unjust judges. That is why statues in front of courthouses are often blind-folded. They will not show favoritism by the status of the parties appearing before them for judgment.

WORSHIPING OTHER GODS

Rules regarding false worship.

Read 16:21–17:7.

Q 80: Why was God so strict about worship, commanding the stoning of anyone who worships a false god?

A 80: God is concerned about the eternal welfare of His people and their witness to the world. He wants to avoid His people being lured into unbelief and damnation by the actions of others, which would be likely to happen if there was not a strong response. This is one of the reasons we have excommunication in the church. Israelites who worshiped a false god did so despite having better knowledge that the Lord is the only true God.

Q 81: How does 17:6 relate to Jesus' trial?

A 81: Since no one could be put to death on the testimony of a single witness, the high priest Caiaphas gathered false witnesses against Jesus—but even with their lies, he could not find two whose testimony agreed.

LAW COURTS

Procedures for solving cases too difficult for local judges.

Read 17:8–13.

Q 82: What does it mean to act presumptuously?

A 82: To be presumptuous is to think that we know better than God, His Word, or the ministers He has placed over us who are teaching and

acting according to His Word. It is the essence of Satan's temptation of our first mother, Eve, and our sinful inclination to rise out of our creaturely status to become like God, standing in His place—even though He is all wise, and our wisdom, perspectives, and vantage points are all very limited.

THE KING

God lays down requirements for rulers, knowing one day Israel will demand a king.

Read 17:14–20.

Q 83: Why did God set limits on the military power, number of wives, and wealth that a king might have?

A 83: In terms of military power, God wanted Israel to rely on His protection by faith—not to trust in the strength and size of their military.

For the number of wives, God knew the influence that wives have on their husbands. Even though God gave Solomon a wise and discerning heart, he married so many foreign princesses that he got swept up worshipping their gods and built temples for them.

And God forbids kings to amass great wealth because He wanted to spare His people from excessive taxation and forced labor—which was the only way a king could become extremely wealthy. When Solomon died and his son Rehoboam took his throne, the people of Israel requested him to lighten their taxes and their forced labor.

Sadly, wise King Solomon disobeyed all three of these limitations God gave through Moses. In his later years, he thought back on all he had accomplished and considered it meaningless (see Ecclesiastes).

OFFERINGS FOR PRIESTS AND LEVITES

Israel is responsible for providing for the priests and Levites who represent them before God.

Read 18:1–8.

Q 84: Why were the people required to support the priests and Levites?

A 84: The tribe of Levi did not receive land in the Promised Land, so they were not able to raise livestock and crops to provide for their families. They were dedicated to serving the Lord and being the mediators between God and the people. Like our pastors in full-time ministry, they dedicate themselves and their families to

serving us. And we gather our offerings to provide for the needs of their families.

Q 85: If God is going to choose one city (Jerusalem) to dwell amid His people, why would He spread Levites throughout the nation away from that city, as we see in verse 6?

A 85: After the conquest of the Promised Land, God established Levitical towns throughout the tribes (Joshua 21). Like our pastors serving throughout the country, the Levites were to teach the Word of God to the Israelites throughout all the twelve tribes and encourage the people to go up to Jerusalem for the major festivals.

DETESTABLE PRACTICES

God forbids Israel to use worship techniques practiced by Canaanites or their Gentile neighbors.

Read 18:9–14.

Q 86: Did ancient Gentiles actually burn their children in fire?

A 86: Yes, sadly, and in later days, some of Israel's kings followed their example and offered their children to false gods by burning them (2 Kings 16:3, 17:17). These precious children were either killed first and then put in the fire, or put alive into the fire. The idea was that the person was offering their most precious thing to the god so the god would honor their sacrifice and fulfill their prayer. God's command for Abraham to offer Isaac in Genesis 22, then stopping him at the last minute, shows that God forbade His people to sacrifice their children. He alone would sacrifice His Son, Jesus, on the cross.

Q 87: What is so bad about consulting mediums or spirits of the dead?

A 87: God is the sole source of truth and power. Consulting any other sources for information, power, or knowledge of the future is breaking the First Commandment—fearing, trusting, or loving something more than God. The Canaanite nations were being punished for practicing these things. Israel would be punished if they deserted God to practice them.

THE PROPHET

Moses predicts the coming of Jesus Christ, a prophet like Moses was.

Read 18:15–22.

Q 88: What does Moses mean when he says, “a prophet like me”?

A 88: In Numbers 12, Moses' brother Aaron and sister Miriam complained that Moses, their little brother, should not be their lord.

God answered them, “If there is a prophet among you, I the LORD make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak with him in a dream. Not so with My servant Moses. He is faithful in all My house. With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in riddles, and he beholds the form of the LORD” (Numbers 12:6–8). Israel would see great prophets like Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel, but none would be an equal to Moses. Only Jesus Christ spoke face to face with the Father and surpassed Moses.

CITIES OF REFUGE

Moses had listed the cities of refuge east of the Jordan River back in chapter 4. Now, he gives the laws regarding who may take refuge and for how long.

Read 19:1–14.

Q 89: What was the difference between a manslayer and a murderer?

A 89: If someone died as a result of a person’s unintentional action, that person could flee to the city of refuge and live there. If the violence was intentional, he was not eligible to be protected in that city.

Q 90: Who was the avenger of blood?

A 90: In ancient systems, the avenger of blood was the nearest kinsman to the victim. He had the charge to avenge the death.

Q 91: How long did the manslayer have to remain in the city of refuge?

A 91: The manslayer could find safety in the city of refuge for as long as the high priest lived who was in office at the time of the slaying. Once the high priest died, all manslaughterers were pardoned and free to return home.

This law foreshadowed Jesus. He is our great High Priest. When He died on the cross, we were pardoned of our sins, free to return to God our Father without any fear of punishment.

PROPERTY BOUNDARIES

God forbids the moving of boundary stones

Read 19:14.

Q 92: What was the purpose of a boundary stone?

A 92: Boundary stones marked the allotted inheritances which were to be passed down from generation to generation. If someone moved a boundary stone to enlarge his territory, it would cause the shrinking of a family’s God-given inheritance.

WITNESSES

The Lord gives Israel the regulations concerning witnesses in court proceedings.

Read 19:15–21.

Q 93: Why were the punishments in Israel so strict—eye for eye, tooth for tooth, life for life?

A 93: God wanted these punishments to serve as curbs against violence in Israel. They also reflect Jesus' golden rule: "As you wish that others would do to you, do so to them" (Luke 6:31). If a person thought about this rule before acting on their anger, they would be less likely to commit the crime.

GOING TO WAR

The Lord gives instructions for His people in warfare.

Read chapter 20.

Q 94: When Moses speaks of making a treaty with neighboring nations, is he contradicting God's command to utterly destroy the Canaanite nations in verses 10–12?

A 94: No, this applies to nations outside the borders of the Promised Land, as verse 16 shows.

ATONEMENT FOR UNSOLVED MURDERS

God sets out rules for when a murder victim is discovered and the perpetrator of that crime cannot be determined.

Read 21:1–9.

Q 95: Why did God require a sacrifice for an unsolved murder?

A 95: Through this requirement, God was showing the value He placed on human life. The sacrifice shows that the deed must be punished and though the guilty party may escape earthly justice, he will not escape God's judgment unless his sin is atoned for by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. There is no such thing as a perfect crime because God is the witness and judge of every sinner. Thankfully, Jesus is the Savior for every sin and every sinner.

MARRYING A CAPTIVE WOMAN

Rules for Israelites who marry a captive woman.

Read 21:10–14.

Q 96: What is the purpose of these rules?

A 96: Ancient nations treated captives as slaves, property to be treated any way the owner chose. God set a higher standard for Israel.

Captives were to be treated with kindness and respect, since they, too, are God's beloved creatures.

THE RIGHT OF THE FIRSTBORN

God protects the rights of the firstborn.

Read 21:15–17.

Q 97: Why was this rule important?

A 97: Israelite fathers were sinners who might show favoritism of one son over the other. Usually, this favoritism was based on the merits of the younger son, or the husband's preference for one wife over another. God provides stability for the families in Israel and demonstrates that His grace is for all people without showing favoritism or demanding our merits to earn His favor.

A good biblical example of this is from Genesis, where Jacob married two sisters: Leah and Rachel. Jacob loved Rachel and made an agreement to work seven years for her hand, but her father, Laban, (Jacob's uncle) deceived him and gave Leah as his first wife. He only gave Rachel to Jacob after another seven years of work. Jacob greatly favored Rachel's sons Joseph and Benjamin over his ten older sons. It caused great jealousy, hatred, violence, and conflict within the family.

A REBELLIOUS SON

God sets a standard of punishment for persistently rebellious children who refuse to repent and honor their parents.

Read 21:18–21.

Q 98: Why were there such strict rules for rebellious children?

A 98: God established parents as His representatives on earth and gave us the Fourth Commandment, "Honor your father and your mother" (Exodus 20:12), to cement that relationship. It is the foundation of our society. Of course, God does not give parents license to mistreat and abuse their children through this rule. This is meant to protect Israelite society, especially when children reached their teenage years or early adulthood and were involved in violence and crime. Consider Proverbs 1:10–19 and the gangs who cause such suffering in our cities. This regulation served to prevent roaming gangs in Israel.

A HANGED MAN IS CURSED

Executed criminals are not to be left hanging on a tree.

Read 21:22–23.

Q 99: How does this relate to Jesus?

A 99: Jesus took our sins and guilt upon Himself and was cursed as He hung from the tree (the cross). Yet, His body was hurriedly removed from the cross and laid in Joseph's tomb before the setting of the sun, as this passage requires.

VARIOUS LAWS

God gives several rules that reinforce His desire for Israel to be a nation set apart from all other nations.

Read 22:1–12.

Q 100: What benefit would Israel receive from following God's direction for lost things in verses 1–4?

A 100: We can imagine the goodwill this would foster in every Israelite toward his brother. What a wonderful society Israel would have been if they had obeyed God. What a glorious home we will enjoy in eternity when we all love our neighbor as ourselves.

Q 101: What was so bad about cross-dressing?

A 101: God made clear distinctions between male and female. Our society's desire to blur those distinctions and encourage people to be transgender defies God's creative authority, and harms those individuals who are battering themselves against the gender God gave them. Changing to something other than that which God created us to be can never result in peace and self-acceptance—only receiving God's grace through Jesus Christ can do that.

MARRIAGE VIOLATIONS

God lays out regulations regarding marriage, promiscuity, rape, adultery, and incestuous adultery.

Read 22:13–30.

Q 102: Why was God so strict about sexual fidelity?

A 102: God established marriage as the foundation and cornerstone of society. He created sex for marriage, to bind husband and wife together into one flesh and to provide a mother and father to the children conceived through marital sex. Sexual sin outside of that relationship harms all those involved and weakens the foundation of society. Such sin is certainly forgivable through the blood of Jesus Christ, but life is more full when we follow God's design.

EXCLUSION FROM THE ASSEMBLY

God excludes people of some nationalities from worshiping with the Israelites.

Read 23:1–8.

Q 103: Why did God restrict certain nations from worshiping with Israel?

A 103: God was always concerned about true worship and the harmful influence unbelievers would have on His people, leading them away from God to worship false gods or demons.

UNCLEANNESS IN THE CAMP

The Lord requires proper sanitation in times of war.

Read 23:9–14.

Q 104: Why did God make such strict rules for sanitation in camp?

A 104: God wanted Israel to be mindful that He is with them at all times and in all places—so they don’t grow accustomed to thinking God is absent. We, too, need to remember that God is always with us; He is a very present help in times of trouble, as Psalm 46 says. Such mindfulness will tend to keep us away from temptations that would endanger our faith and eternal salvation.

MISCELLANEOUS LAWS

A series of rules that help guide Israelite life.

Read 23:15–25.

Q 105: How did verses 24 and 25 play out in Jesus’ ministry?

A 105: In Matthew 12:1, Jesus’ disciples plucked heads of grain in the fields on the Sabbath because they were hungry. The Pharisees accused them of violating the Sabbath—not because they were stealing someone else’s grain, but because they were working (harvesting) on the Sabbath.

LAWS CONCERNING DIVORCE

God lays out laws concerning divorced women.

Read 24:1–4.

Q 106: How did Jesus view Moses’ certificate of divorce?

A 106: This law did not indicate that divorce was acceptable to God. It recognizes the hard-heartedness of Israelites who will choose divorce even though God forbids it. This law had to be given to protect the wives of those hard-hearted Israelites. It forced husbands to think twice before divorcing their wives because there would be no going back and remarrying. It also forced the husband to have a substantial reason to divorce his wife.

MISCELLANEOUS LAWS

Many of these laws are meant to protect the weak from the strong and to maintain true righteousness and justice in Israel.

Read 24:5–25:4.

Q 107: Why did these laws need to be in place?

A 107: Sinful humans who are wealthy, prominent, or powerful are tempted to exploit their weaker neighbors. Centuries later, the prophet Amos preached against the breaking of these laws as the wealthy and powerful drove the widows into poverty and destitution and bribed the judges to rule in their favor (see Amos 2:6–16).

LEVIRATE MARRIAGE

Sometimes, husbands died childless. These laws were meant to provide heirs to preserve the husband's name and to pass on family inheritances.

Read 25:5–10.

Q 108: Where do we find Levirate marriage in place in the Old Testament?

A 108: In Genesis 38, Jacob's son Judah failed to give his youngest son to his daughter-in-law Tamar for fear that he would die like his two older brothers who had married her. Judah ended up becoming the father of her child, who was in the line of Jesus Christ (see Matthew 1:3).

The Book of Ruth is about a Moabite widow whose Israelite husband had died. Ruth was redeemed by her kinsman-redeemer, Boaz, and the couple were in the ancestral line of Jesus Christ (see Matthew 1:5).

MISCELLANEOUS LAWS

God forbids Israel to use unfair weights and measures and orders them to destroy the Amalekites.

Read 25:11–19.

Q 109: What did the Amalekites do that God required Israel to annihilate them?

A 109: While Israel was traveling from Egypt to Mount Sinai, this nation of Esau's descendants attacked the back of the Israelite company (Exodus 17:8–15). Perhaps the Amalekites were trying to drive Israel away from their two oases. Since they attacked God's people, God was holding them accountable.

In 1 Samuel 15, God commanded King Saul to fulfill this passage and annihilate the Amalekites and their livestock. When Saul spared the king and all the livestock, God rejected him and anointed David king in his place (see 1 Samuel 15, especially verse 28).

FIRSTFRUITS AND TITHES

God instructs the Israelites to give their firstfruits and tithes with thankful, joyful hearts.

Read 26:1–15.

Q 110: What was the purpose of the liturgy God gives to the Israelites and demands they repeat word for word when they offer Him their offerings?

A 110: God wants His people to recognize that He brought them into the Promised Land. He wants His people to enjoy its fruits with thanksgiving, mindful of God's grace and love for them. So, in this liturgy, they recite their fathers' slavery in Egypt and how God brought them out of slavery to this good land.

Q 111: Which wandering Aramean was their father?

A 111: Jacob, Abraham's grandson, lived in Aram for twenty years, working for his uncle Laban, his wives, and his herds of livestock. Later, God renamed Jacob *Israel*.

FOLLOW THE LORD'S COMMANDS

The people declare that the Lord is their God, and He has chosen them as His people.

Read 26:16–19.

Q 112: What is the significance of "this day" in verse 16?

A 112: Recall that Moses is giving his farewell sermons. He and Israel are about to go their separate ways—he to death and heaven, Israel to the Promised Land under Joshua. So on these final days together, Moses will renew the covenant between Israel and God in chapter 29.

This finishes Moses' second sermon.

ISRAEL RATIFIES THE COVENANT

Moses begins his third and final sermon.

THE ALTAR ON MOUNT EBAL

In Deuteronomy 11:29 God first mentioned Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. In chapter 27, He provides the liturgy to be spoken on these mountains. In chapter 28, He sets two paths before Israel: the blessed path of faith and obedience and the cursed path of unbelief and disobedience.

Read 27:1–8.

Q 113: Why did God require an altar to be built on Mount Ebal, the mount of curses?

A 113: The altar reminded Israel of God's mercy and grace in accepting a sacrificial victim to bear the curse for their sin. As Israel is reminded of the consequences of disobeying God, the altar reminds them that God is gracious, loving, and forgiving to all who repent.

CURSES FROM MOUNT EBAL

God now provides a liturgy for the Levites and the people to recite the benefits of obedience and the punishment for disobedience.

Read 27:9–26.

Q 114: How do these curses show the necessity of the Christ?

A 114: All of us break God's commandments and deserve to fall under His curse. But Christ Jesus took our curse and sins upon Himself and paid the full price for our sins on the cross. In Jesus Christ, we are free of any fear of punishment.

BLESSINGS FOR OBEDIENCE

The Lord promises amazing blessings when Israel obeys His commands.

Read 28:1–14.

Q 115: What practical value can these promises have for us today?

A 115: God is not promising to make us wealthy, powerful, and affluent if we keep His commandments. He promises to provide our needs and protect us from eternal, spiritual harm. God frees us from concern about our daily bread so we can focus on serving our neighbor and practicing that love which is the heart of obeying God's commands.

It also helps us persevere in doing good works when it feels like no one appreciates it and we receive no benefit for obeying—because we focus instead on God’s promise and look to Him patiently.

CURSES FOR DISOBEDIENCE

Moses describes the curses and consequences of rejecting God and disobeying His commands. Notice, there are four times as many curses in this section as there are blessings promised in the previous passage.

Read 28:15–68.

Q 116: Why does Moses go into such a detailed and horrendous description of life under siege in verses 53–57?

A 116: Sadly, all these things will happen in Israel’s future when they turn from God to worship the false gods of their neighboring nations and mistreat one another. The point is to make Israel realize, in the future, that their suffering is not random chance but directly from the hands of their God for their sinful disobedience. It is a call to repent and seek God’s forgiveness through the coming Christ.

As we contemplate this horrible suffering, we should think of the endless agony of hell and how our Savior endured agony on the cross that we might be set free by repentance and faith.

RENEWAL OF THE COVENANT

Moses renews the covenant God made with Israel at Mount Sinai in Exodus.

Read chapter 29.

Q 117: Why was it important for Israel to renew the covenant?

A 117: The parents of this generation made the original covenant at Sinai. It would be easy for their children to think the covenant and its demands did not apply to them. Moses reminds them they are accountable and need to live according to the covenant too.

Q 118: Why does Moses mention the future destruction of the land of Israel, making it look like another Sodom and Gomorrah?

A 118: Moses wants the surviving Israelites in the future to recognize their destruction and captivity was not the result of chance, but God’s direct punishment for their disobedience. It is not wise to try to interpret our relationship (or that of any one else) by the circumstances of our lives—just as people interpreted Jesus’ crucifixion as evidence that He was a law-breaker and blasphemer. But in times of suffering and affliction, it is good to confess our sin and unworthiness and turn to Christ for rescue and salvation.

PROSPERITY AFTER RETURNING TO THE LORD

God promises mercy and restoration when Israel repents of their sin and returns to Him.

Read 30:1–10.

Q 119: What great comfort do these verses offer Israel?

A 119: Despite the terrible sins Israel will commit and the horrendous destruction and exile it will suffer, God will not entirely forsake it. He promises to be merciful. Throughout the rest of the Old Testament, we see chapters of blessings, curses, and restoration fulfilled for Israel.

But the promise is also for each of us. As long as we draw breath, it is never too late for God's Law to open our eyes in recognition of our guilt and sin or for the Gospel to turn our hearts to the Lord in true repentance, and trust in Jesus Christ. When the Spirit guides us to repentance and faith, we will be restored, forgiven, and granted eternal life, and we will have peace with God for Jesus' sake.

THE OFFER OF LIFE OR DEATH

Moses gives one final plea for Israel: choose life rather than death!

Read 30:11–20.

Q 120: What does it mean that the commandment is “not too hard” and not “far off” (v. 11)?

A 120: Sometimes, we wrongly conclude that God demanded impossible perfection from Israel in the Old Testament and they were doomed to fail. But Moses shows this is not true. Indeed, the Israelites were sinners like all people, but God provided them a means of repentance, faith, and forgiveness through the sacrifices He established for them, pointing ahead to Jesus' great sacrifice on the cross. The same is true for us. God does not demand us to live perfect lives to qualify for heaven but that we trust in Him, repent of our sins, and live in Christ's forgiveness and pardon.

TRANSFER OF LEADERSHIP FROM MOSES TO JOSHUA

With three final actions, Moses concludes his work as Israel's leader.

JOSHUA TO SUCCEED MOSES

In his first action, Moses hands the reins over to Joshua.

Read 31:1–8.

Q 121: Why does Moses point out that God Himself will go over the Jordan River before Israel?

A 121: The Israelites could easily have put their faith in Moses rather than God. Then they would be fearful when they had to cross over without Moses at their head. But Moses reminds them God has always been the one leading Israel: freeing them from Egypt, providing and guiding them through the wilderness wanderings, and giving them victory over Og and Sihon.

Notice that he also stated this same promise to Joshua in the presence of all the Israelites. In a very touching reading from Joshua 1:16–18, the Israelites promise to obey Joshua and encourage him with the promise of God's presence throughout the conquest.

THE READING OF THE LAW

Moses wrote the words of God's Law and gave it to the priests, commanding them to read it to all the people every Sabbath year (seventh year), that all God's people may hear and remember.

Read 31:9–13.

Q 122: Why was it important for the Word to be read every seven years?

A 122: New generations would arise who had never heard it or witnessed God's mighty deeds. Also, people are prone to forget.

ISRAEL'S REBELLION PREDICTED

While God commissions Joshua, He announces to Moses the future disobedience of Israel.

Read 31:14–29.

Q 123: Why did God command Moses to write a song based on His revelation of Israel's coming disobedience?

A 123: A song is more easily memorized than mere spoken word. This song would testify against Israel, calling on them to repent of their sins and return to God with confession and faith.

THE SONG OF MOSES

Moses writes a song at God's direction.

Read 31:30–32:47.

Q 124: What is the theme of Moses' song?

A 124: The theme of the song is that Israel will fall into sinful, stubborn rebellion and suffer greatly for their sins. But God will have mercy upon them, restore them, and save them from their enemies.

MOSES TO DIE ON MOUNT NEBO

God calls Moses to climb Mount Nebo to see the Promised Land, and then die because he and Aaron did not treat God as holy at the waters of Meribah-kadesh.

Read 32:48–52.

Q 125: Did God refuse to forgive Moses for his sinful anger on that day so long ago?

A 125: No, God forgives all the sins of the faithful. But our sins have consequences. And on that day, when God told Moses and Aaron to speak calmly to the rock to reflect His boundless patience and love, Moses and Aaron spoke in anger and misrepresented God to Israel. God would not relent in His decision for Moses to die instead of crossing over the Jordan to serve as an object lesson that God does not change.

MOSES BLESSES THE TRIBES

Moses' final act is to give a blessing to each of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Read chapter 33.

Q 126: What is the point of Moses' blessings?

A 126: Moses' blessings are a Gospel promise to follow up the song of Moses, which was predominantly Law that exposed the consequences of Israel's coming disobedience. Though he speaks of Israel's future in the Promised Land in these blessings, he is ultimately pointing to God's presence among them as the promised Christ and the eternal promised land Christ will give to all believers.

THE DEATH OF MOSES

God shows Moses the Promised Land from the mountain, then Moses dies.

Read chapter 34.

Q 127: What does it mean that Moses’ “eye was undimmed, and his vigor unabated”?

A 127: God gave Moses the physical strength, health, and stamina to faithfully lead Israel through the wilderness. It also hints that Moses would have been able to lead Israel into the Promised Land if he had not disobeyed God. Just like Israel’s coming destruction and captivity would not be a result of the natural cycles of nations, Moses’ inability to lead Israel into the Promised Land had nothing to do with his advanced age or failing health—but strictly because he struck the rock when he was commanded to speak to it.