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## The Book of the Covenant: Deuteronomy



**T**he story goes like this: during the reign of King Josiah in Jerusalem (640–609 B.C.), someone, probably working in the temple, found a copy of a book, and the book was read before King Josiah. “Now it happened, when the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, that he tore his clothes” (2 Kings 22:11, NKJV). Why? Because he realized that he and his people were not obeying what was written in the book.

Then, on the basis of that book, called the “Book of the Covenant” (2 Kings 23:2, NKJV), Josiah began a great reformation. We can read about that reformation in 2 Kings 23.

What was the book that had such an impact on the king and his nation? It is believed to be Deuteronomy, our study for this quarter.

The fifth and last of the five books of Moses, Deuteronomy—a name that comes from the Latin word *deuteronomium* (which means “second law”)—could be summarized as follows:

Having left Egypt and having entered into the covenant at Sinai with the Lord, the children of Israel—instead of going directly to Canaan—wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. When the 40 years were finished and the Hebrews were finally about to cross over to the Promised Land, Moses spoke to them in a series of speeches. The essence of those speeches was: *You’re now about to enter the Promised Land. Finally! Don’t forget what the Lord has done for you, and don’t forget what He asks of you now,*

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*which is to love Him with all your heart and soul and to reveal that love by obedience to all His commandments, all according to the covenant.*

To stress the importance of the covenant, Moses repeated to the people the Ten Commandments, the legal foundation of their obligations in the covenant that the Lord had first cut with their fathers, and, again, was doing so—but now with them right on the borders of Canaan.

Hence, we ask: Might there be parallels with what the children of Israel, on the borders of the Promised Land, faced—and what we, today, right on the border of the Promised Land (only a much better one), face as well?

Thus, the topic for this quarter is called “Present Truth in Deuteronomy.” And that’s what we’re going to look at: present truth messages that we can take from God’s words to His covenant people.

In this quarter, we will look at Deuteronomy topically, covering such themes as the everlasting covenant, law and grace, what it means to love God and your neighbor, and—most important of all—how the book of Deuteronomy reveals to us the love of God, which was most powerfully made manifest in the death of Jesus on the cross and His resurrection.

Sure, a vast time and cultural divide separates our church today from the church in the wilderness. But perhaps what we have in common *with them* might be more than what divides us *from them*. For example, could not the following words be spoken to us as well?

“Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should act according to them in the land which you go to possess.

“Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people’” (Deut. 4:5, 6, NKJV).

Notice, it wasn’t the laws themselves that were their “wisdom and understanding” before the nations—but their *obedience* to those laws. Certainly, there’s a message for us here, just one of many, as we will see, in the book of Deuteronomy.

*Clifford R. Goldstein is editor of the Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide and author of Baptizing the Devil: Evolution and the Seduction of Christianity.*

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*Deuteronomy reveals to us the love of God, which was most powerfully made manifest in the death of Jesus on the cross and His resurrection.*

# How to Use This Teachers Edition

**“The true teacher is not content with dull thoughts, an indolent mind, or a loose memory. He constantly seeks higher attainments and better methods. His life is one of continual growth. In the work of such a teacher there is a freshness, a quickening power, that awakens and inspires his [class].”**

—Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 103.

To be a Sabbath School teacher is both a privilege and a responsibility. A privilege because it offers the teacher the unique opportunity to lead and guide in the study and discussion of the week’s lesson so as to enable the class to have both a personal appreciation for God’s Word and a collective experience of spiritual fellowship with class members. When the class concludes, members should leave with a sense of having tasted the goodness of God’s Word and having been strengthened by its enduring power. The responsibility of teaching demands that the teacher is fully aware of the Scripture to be studied, the flow of the lesson through the week, the interlinking of the lessons to the theme of the quarter, and the lesson’s application to life and witness.

This guide is to help teachers to fulfill their responsibility adequately. It has three segments:

- 1. Overview** introduces the lesson topic, key texts, links with the previous lesson, and the lesson’s theme. This segment deals with such questions as Why is this lesson important? What does the Bible say about this subject? What are some major themes covered in the lesson? How does this subject affect my personal life?
- 2. Commentary** is the chief segment in the Teachers Edition. It may have two or more sections, each one dealing with the theme introduced in the Overview segment. The Commentary may include several in-depth discussions that enlarge the themes outlined in the Overview. The Commentary provides an in-depth study of the themes and offers scriptural, exegetic, illustrative discussion material that leads to a better understanding of the themes. The Commentary also may have scriptural word study or exegesis appropriate to the lesson. On a participatory mode, the Commentary segment may have discussion leads, illustrations appropriate to the study, and thought questions.
- 3. Life Application** is the final segment of the Teachers Edition for each lesson. This section leads the class to discuss what was presented in the Commentary segment as it impacts Christian life. The application may involve discussion, further probing of what the lesson under study is all about, or perhaps personal testimony on how one may feel the impact of the lesson on one’s life.

**Final thought:** What is mentioned above is only suggestive of the many possibilities available for presenting the lesson and is not intended to be exhaustive or prescriptive in its scope. Teaching should not become monotonous, repetitious, or speculative. Good Sabbath School teaching should be Bible-based, Christ-centered, faith-strengthening, and fellowship-building.