

Go Possess the Land: Deuteronomy 1's Opening Charge

Scriptures for Today: Deuteronomy 1:1-8

""Deuteronomy 1:1-8

These be the words which Moses spake unto all Israel on this side Jordan in the wilderness, in the plain over against the Red sea, between Paran, and Tophel, and Laban, and Hazeroth, and Dizahab. 2 (There are eleven days' journey from Horeb by the way of mount Seir unto Kadesh-barnea.) 3 And it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, that Moses spake unto the children of Israel, according unto all that the LORD had given him in commandment unto them; 4 After he had slain Sihon the king of the Amorites, which dwelt in Heshbon, and Og the king of Bashan, which dwelt at Astaroth in Edrei: 5 On this side Jordan, in the land of Moab, began Moses to declare this law, saying, 6 The LORD our God spake unto us in Horeb, saying, Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount: 7 Turn you, and take your journey, and go to the mount of the Amorites, and unto all the places nigh thereunto, in the plain, in the hills, and in the vale, and in the south, and by the sea side, to the land of the Canaanites, and unto Lebanon, unto the great river, the river Euphrates. 8 Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land which the LORD swore unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto them and to their seed after them.""

Introduction to Deuteronomy 1: Go Possess the Land

Deuteronomy opens with Moses' last sermons before Israel crosses the Jordan – to enter into the promised land or the land promised to them by God Almighty. But this is not just a history lesson — it's a bridge in the Bible's grand story.

- **Genesis** shows God creating the world, calling Abraham, and making promises that his seed would inherit the land (Genesis 12:7).
- **Exodus** shows God redeeming His people from Egypt with a mighty hand, giving the law, and commanding the building of the Tabernacle so He could dwell among them.
- **Leviticus** shows how a holy God makes fellowship with sinful man possible through blood sacrifices — pointing to Christ.
- **Numbers** shows God ordering His people, counting His warriors, but also records their unbelief and wandering in the wilderness for 40 years.
- **Deuteronomy** now stands at the edge of the promise. The old generation has died. A new generation stands ready. Moses preaches again — not new laws, but reminders and charges. Before Moses dies, he is commanding the people to do what God says. He shows them God's faithfulness in the past and calls them to trust God for the future.

This opening charge — “Go possess the land” — connects all the way back to Abraham’s promise in Genesis, explains Israel’s failures in Numbers, and points forward to Joshua’s conquest. This book is telling us about the past, the present, and the future.

It even points all the way to Jesus Christ, who gives His people a greater inheritance (far greater inheritance): not land in Canaan, but eternal life and the kingdom of God.

Outline of Numbers 36, Deuteronomy 1, Deuteronomy 2

Numbers Chapter 36:

- 1-6. The inconvenience of the inheritance of daughters is remedied by marrying in their own tribes,
- 7-9. lest the inheritance should be removed from the tribe.
- 10-13. The daughters of Zelophehad marry their father's brothers' sons.

Deuteronomy Chapter 1:

- 1-5. Moses' speech in the end of the fortieth year;
- 6-13. briefly rehearsing the history of God's sending them from Horeb;
- 14-18. of giving them officers;
- 19-33. of sending the spies to search the land;
- 34-40. of his anger for their inability to believe;
- 41-46. and disobedience.

Deuteronomy Chapter 2:

- 1-8. The story is continued, that they were not to meddle with the Edomites;
- 9-15. nor with the Moabites;
- 16-23. nor with the Ammonites;
- 24-37. but Sihon the Amorite was subdued by them

Focus on Deuteronomy 1:1-8

Deuteronomy 1:1–8 lays the foundation for the whole book. Israel is no longer at Sinai, no longer wandering in the wilderness — they are standing on the edge of promise. These opening verses show us God’s purpose: His people are called not to stay in circles of unbelief but to rise up and go forward into the inheritance already given.

If Deuteronomy 1 never happened, Israel would have remained in endless delay, circling the mountain until death. But here God says that they have dwelt long enough, turn you, and take your journey. His Word transforms a people from wanderers into conquerors. If I don't do what God says, we will be wandering around – not happening here.

They had to be willing to do what God said. The land was set before them by God’s promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but it still required faith and obedience to possess it.

This passage shows us that God's people live by His Word, not their own plans. It ties the covenant promises of Genesis, the redemption of Exodus, the holiness of Leviticus, and the ordering of Numbers into one charge: move forward. For us, the lesson is the same — God has not saved us to linger in unbelief or comfort. He has set before us the inheritance in Christ, and our calling is to believe, obey, and walk in it.

Exposition of Deuteronomy 1:1-8

Verse 1 — “These be the words”

""Deuteronomy 1:1

These be the words which Moses spake unto all Israel on this side Jordan in the wilderness, in the plain over against the Red sea, between Paran, and Tophel, and Laban, and Hazeroth, and Dizahab.""

God builds His people on **words**, not weapons. From **Genesis 1** (“And God said...”) to **John 1** (“In the beginning was the Word”), revelation precedes movement. Moses speaks **to all Israel**—not a private elite group, but the whole congregation—because the covenant truth binds the entire nation.

The setting (“on this side Jordan... in the wilderness”) reminds us God speaks **in the in-between**: not Egypt's slavery, not yet Canaan's rest, but the hard ground where faith must obey. The Word governs the people, in God's presence, in real geography and history.

They are on the East of the Jordan river. The West is the promised land, the land of Canaan. Their journey started with God parting the waters of the Red Sea. And now it's about to end with God parting the Jordan river. God is faithful from start to finish.

Paran and Hazeroth, mentioned right there in verse 1, are major stopping points in Numbers 10, 11, and 12 – the previous book. Tophel, Laban, and Dizahab are lesser known. God shows attention to detail here. He numbers places like He numbers people. Israel has a history of wandering – every stop was marked by either God's faithfulness or their unbelief.

God is doing the same in your life. For example, this church is a faithful location in your life. Stay with us. God is saying here in Deuteronomy: "I kept you through every step of this wilderness. Every mile marker, every camp, every failure, every mercy – I was there. And now I'm bringing you to the edge of promise."

Verse 2 — “Eleven days’ journey”

""Deuteronomy 1:2

(There are eleven days' journey from Horeb by the way of mount Seir unto Kadeshbarnea.)""

Make sure you see that right there. How many days journey was it? Eleven days. Yet, it took **forty years**. Why? In your life, the journey to get right is not that far away. Yet, it takes so long. Why? Because of unbelief. Because of the lack of faith.

This parenthetical dagger (the parentheses in the Bible are important) exposes **unbelief's cost** (Hebrews 3:19 – they couldn't enter in because of unbelief).

God's path is straight; sin draws circles. What should have been days became decades because hearts would not trust the God who split the sea. They saw the salvation of the Lord and their hearts still wouldn't trust God.

Sin delays blessing; providence or God's continuous guidance doesn't cancel our responsibility. Stop circling what God already cleared and just take it. Now, I want to stop for a minute on this verse. The places you see here are Horeb, Mount Seir, and Kadeshbarnea. This is important to understand.

Horeb is the place where God gave the law. It's another name for Mount Sinai. Mount Seir is the territory of Edom. Esau is Edom. God ordered the steps of His people through land that was not theirs. And then Kadeshbarnea is the doorway to Canaan. This is where the spies brought back evil report. Israel refused to enter. Think about that for your life. You are at the doorway. Will you take God's easier route by faith or will you take the wilderness route?

From the mountain where God gave the law to the doorway of the Land of promise is only 11 days by the way of Seir. The gap between PROMISE GIVEN and PROMISE ENJOYED was tiny but unbelief stretched it into 40 years. 11 days to 40 years because of unbelief. I lost a lot of time in my life because of unbelief. I am not doing that any more.

This verse is a devastating reminder that Israel's wandering wasn't because of distance – they were close, but because of disobedience. What should have been less than two weeks of marching became a lifetime lost.

Verse 3 – “The fortieth year... according unto all that the LORD had given him”

""Deuteronomy 1:3

And it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, that Moses spake unto the children of Israel, according unto all that the LORD had given him in commandment unto them;""

God dates His dealings with His people here. He's doing the same with you and your life. He knows what's happening at all times. The calendar is His.

After a generation fell, **the Word remains**. His Word ALWAYS remains. Moses speaks **all** that God gave—nothing more, nothing less (**2 Tim 3:16; 1 Cor 2:13**). This is preaching under authority, not opinion.

Bibliology—inspiration, sufficiency; Obedience—truth received, not revised.

Take a close look at the verse again. What's the significance of the fortieth year, the eleventh month, the first day of the month? Fortieth marks the completion of Israel's wilderness wandering. The first generation that didn't believe at Kadeshbarnea are dead. A new generation now stands ready. This is the turning point from judgment to promise. Same thing for you.

Eleventh month is just one month before, approximately, before Israel enters into Canaan. Joshua 4 happens in the first month of the forty first year. So, this is happening very close to them crossing into the promised land. God's promises are about to be fulfilled. First day of each month is often tied to big events in the Bible. It's a fresh beginning, a reset for the nation, a new month, a new mission, a new generation.

Verse 4 — “After he had slain Sihon... and Og”

""Deuteronomy 1:4

After he had slain Sihon the king of the Amorites, which dwelt in Heshbon, and Og the king of Bashan, which dwelt at Astaroth in Edrei:""

God anchors the charge in **recent victories**. He has already toppled kings and giants; therefore, Israel's fear is unbelief, not prudence. For example, Israel heard about the giants in Canaan and walled cities and they refused to enter. They thought it was TOO DANGEROUS so they turned back. You can compare that to where we are located.

Pam talked to a man at our bank the other day. He said I might visit your church. Where's it located? When she told him, he said you won't see me there. Afraid. Fear. Same thing. Prudence is reasonable caution like preparing wisely. But unbelief is fear that stops you from obeying God.

Like David recalling the lion and the bear (1 Sam 17), past grace fuels present courage. Think of what God has brought you through already in your life and don't be afraid.

Providence — God wins wars; Faith — remembers and moves. Put your faith in Him and get going. Don't be afraid.

The men mentioned in this verse: Sihon and Og. Sihon was a fierce king. Og was a giant with an iron bed about 13.5 feet long. Giants in the land are no match for God. These names show up in the Bible over and over again showing that God crushed these mighty kings. Trust God.

Verse 5 — “Moses... began to declare this law”

""**Deuteronomy 1:5**

On this side Jordan, in the land of Moab, began Moses to declare this law, saying,""

“Declare” = **explain/expound**. The same law, freshly preached to a new generation (cf. **Neh 8:8**). Nehemiah 8:8 says, "So they read in the book of the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." Moses is causing them to understand the law. He's on this side Jordan – not in the promised land. He's in the land of Moab.

If you know the Bible, you know Moses doesn't get to go to the promised land. Instead, Joshua leads them into the promised land.

Truth doesn't change, but hearers do. Are you hearing me? Are you learning ? Are you listening? Deuteronomy is not a **new** law; it is **renewed** exposition (it's repeating things in a new way) — Scripture applied to a people on the brink of the promised land.

The Word — clarity (makes things clear to us), exposition (explaining and understanding God's words – we follow in the footsteps of Moses here by doing the same thing); The Church's task (Matt 28:20) — teach them to observe. This is a commandment from Jesus. This is why I spend hours and hours preparing these sermons for you.

Verse 6 — “Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount”

""**Deuteronomy 1:6**

The LORD our God spake unto us in Horeb, saying, Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount:""

God rebukes **holy stagnation**. They have been there a long time because of unbelief. Now it's time to get out of there. It's time to believe.

Mount Sinai was glorious (Exodus 19–24). We see God descend in fire, thunder, smoke, and earthquake. He gave the 10 commandments. Israel saw His majesty – once in history, a Holy moment. but glory becomes disobedience when it **replaces** obedience. They didn't go from that glorious moment in obedience to God. They did the opposite. And they stayed there for a long time.

He didn't redeem them to camp indefinitely under a memory of fire; He redeemed them to **inherit the promised land**.

Holiness & Separation — not from movement, but **unto** God's will; Human Will — rise and go. You get the choice. God doesn't make anyone do anything. These people are now on the move because they believe. The previous generation did not believe. God says, "It's time to get moving through faith in Him."

Verse 7 — “Turn you, and take your journey... unto the great river”

""**Deuteronomy 1:7**

Turn you, and take your journey, and go to the mount of the Amorites, and unto all the places nigh thereunto, in the plain, in the hills, and in the vale, and in the south, and by the sea side, to the land of the Canaanites, and unto Lebanon, unto the great river, the river Euphrates.""

The command is **active** and the horizon is **broad**—plains, hills, valleys, coasts, Lebanon, Euphrates. Promise is **bigger** than comfort. For example, I could draw back in my life and stop doing this work. I could have a comfortable life. I could relax more. Play more. Eat more. Travel more. Vacation more. I could be very comfortable. But I choose God's promise. I'll choose His work and not my comfort.

This verse echoes the original **Abrahamic boundaries** (Gen 15:18). "Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates." God's people are not called to nibble at the edges of promise (let's just stay on the edge) but to walk the breadth of what He pledged. God said, "Hey, this is yours. Take it."

Kingdom & Inheritance—what God grants, His people must **enter**. For example, God wants to give you rewards in heaven for eternity for being a soul winner and a preacher of the Gospel. Will you take them or not?

Verse 8 — “Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess”

""**Deuteronomy 1:8**

Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto them and to their seed after them.""

Two halves of one reality here: **God gives; Israel possesses**. You see a sovereign promise (a guaranteed promise) and human obedience meet on the ground of faith. The first generation didn't see the promise because of faith. If that next generation didn't have that faith, they wouldn't have seen it. But the promise was good.

You see God's promises and the people meet on the ground of faith. They will only be fulfilled by faith. Do you see this?

The oath to the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who is Israel) stands; the children must step. Again, the oath stands and the children must step.

This is the entire Bible's rhythm: **Promise → Possession; Redemption → Obedience; Grace → Good works** (Eph 2:8–10). We do good works because of God's grace. But good works don't save us at all. We're saved by God's grace through faith. And then we should do good works because of God's salvation.

Salvation—gift, not wage; Faith's obedience—not to earn, but to enter. We obey the Gospel by believing. **Gospel lens:** As Canaan was set before Israel, **eternal life** is set before sinners in Christ; we don't achieve it—we **receive** it by faith alone, then we choose to **walk** in it or not.

Wander around or take the promises of God. Saved but wandering OR saved and working for God. You get that choice.

Doctrinal Truths in Deuteronomy 1:1–8 The Call to Possess

1. **Doctrine of God’s Word (2 Timothy 3:16; Deuteronomy 1:3).** Moses spoke “according unto all that the LORD had given him in commandment.” This shows that Scripture is not man’s wisdom but God’s revealed Word, authoritative and binding on His people.
2. **Doctrine of God’s Sovereign Promise (Romans 4:20–21; Deuteronomy 1:8).** The land was already “set before” Israel by God. His promises are guaranteed by His sovereignty, not dependent on man’s strength. Believers are called to receive what God has already secured.
3. **Doctrine of Unbelief’s Delay (Hebrews 3:18–19; Deuteronomy 1:2).** An 11-day journey turned into 40 years because of unbelief. Disobedience postpones blessing, not because God is unfaithful, but because man refuses to trust His Word.
4. **Doctrine of Forward Faith (Philippians 3:13–14; Deuteronomy 1:6–7).** “Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount.” God does not intend His people to remain stagnant. Faith requires stepping forward when God commands, leaving comfort zones behind.
5. **Doctrine of God’s Sure Victory (1 Corinthians 15:57; Deuteronomy 1:4).** Israel had already seen the defeat of Sihon and Og. God proves His power in advance, showing that no enemy can stand against His promise. Victory is secured before the battle.
6. **Doctrine of God’s Covenant Faithfulness (Psalm 100:5; Deuteronomy 1:8).** The promise was tied to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God’s covenant extends through generations; His Word never fails, and His people inherit blessings secured long before them.

Practical Applications for Deuteronomy 1:1–8 The Call to Possess

1. **Stop Sitting Still.** God told Israel, “Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount.” Don’t get comfortable in one stage of your Christian life. Growth means moving forward when God says go.
2. **Don’t Waste Years.** Israel turned an 11-day journey into 40 years because of unbelief. Disobedience will rob you of time you can’t get back. Trust God now — don’t delay obedience.
3. **Claim God’s Promises.** The land was already set before them. God’s blessings are not earned — they’re offered. Step out in faith and take hold of what He has promised.

4. **Remember Past Victories.** Israel had already seen God defeat Sihon and Og. Look back at what God has already brought you through, and let that fuel your courage for the next battle.
5. **Think Generationally.** God tied the promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The choices you make in faith today can echo in your children and grandchildren tomorrow.

Warnings and Encouragements From Deuteronomy 1:1–8

Warnings from Deuteronomy 1:1–8

1. **To linger is to lose.** Israel stayed too long at the mount when God said to move. If you cling to comfort instead of obeying God's call, you will miss what He has set before you.
2. **To doubt is to delay.** An 11-day journey turned into 40 years because of unbelief. Doubt may not destroy God's promise, but it will rob you of time, joy, and fruitfulness.
3. **To ignore God's victories is to invite fear.** Israel saw Sihon and Og fall, yet still hesitated. Forgetting what God has already done for you will cause you to shrink back instead of stand up.

Encouragements from Deuteronomy 1:1–8

1. **God calls you forward.** "Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount." Wherever you are, God has more growth, more battles, and more blessing ahead. Don't settle short of His will.
2. **God gives before you go.** "Behold, I have set the land before you." You're not striving to earn God's blessing — you're stepping into what He has already promised.
3. **God's covenant is unbreakable.** The land was sworn to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The same God who kept His word to them will keep His word to you. His promises are sure across every generation.

The Gospel Connection in Deuteronomy 1:1–8

God said, "Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess it." The land was not earned because the promised land was a gift. In the same way, eternal life is set before us in Christ. We do not work for it; we receive it by faith. Just as Israel had to step forward and enter, so the sinner must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved.

Notice that God initiated the promise to Abraham in Genesis 12. Abraham didn't ask for it. God promised it. The land was already theirs by God's oath. Their role was to simply believe that promise. Abraham believed and it was accounted unto him for righteousness. The Bible doesn't say Abraham asked for it.

Everlasting life is not something we ask God to grant. It is something He already promised in Jesus Christ. "And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life." We don't ask God to create salvation – we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and it that moment God gives it. The children of Israel didn't ask for the land – they believed. And God gave it to them by His promise.

Conclusion: The Power of Deuteronomy 1:1–8 The Call to Possess the Land

Deuteronomy begins with God calling His people forward. The land was already set before them – a gift sworn to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But they lingered too long at the mount, delayed too long in unbelief, and wasted years wandering when God had promised victory.

Every tribe had an inheritance. Every family had a place. And every believer was called to enter by faith.

So it is with us.

God has given us exceeding great and precious promises in Christ. He has called us not to sit still but to go forward – go ye therefore. The Christian life is not a waiting room but a journey of faith, and you are not forgotten. You are called, equipped, and sent.

One-Sentence Takeaway: If you belong to Christ, the land is set before you — so rise up, step forward, and claim God's promises by faith. Let's increase in number. Let's get people saved, baptized, and teach them all things. Let's get them to listen to God's words so they understand.

Let's pray.