

1. We've been taught from childhood the idea of those who fail to learn history will repeat the same mistakes. We study history to learn from it. Not to memorize facts, but just to avoid making the mistakes others have made. We can also study history to encourage us. It's like realizing, if they can do this, why can't we? We also study biblical history as to learn what God does and does not want us to do based on historical evidence. My point is one way to learn God's will for our lives is by studying biblical history. When we read of successes and failures in the bible, they not just written for us to memorize history. They're written as patterns for how God wants us to live out our lives for His glory. My lesson title last week was, "I believe in Jesus, now what?" My lesson theme for this lesson is about the importance of studying biblical history as evidence of how we are to live the type of life God wants us to live.
 - a) Deuteronomy Chapters 2 and 3 is literally Moses reciting a history lesson to the second generation of Israelites. Moses wasn't speaking just to say we accomplished this or that. He wrote this under God's inspiration so that we can learn from that history. Yes, we can say the whole bible is written that way, but these two chapters are specifically written on the topic of reciting history for them and us to learn from. Again it isn't to learn a bunch of historical facts, but a lesson in how God wants us to proceed in life as His disciples as well as lessons in not repeating bad mistakes. To keep it simple, if we believe Jesus is God and He's in charge of our lives as well as the idea that God the Father raised Jesus after He did die, consider this lesson a blue print in "what's next".
 - b) To make it even simpler, the last lesson was I believe in Jesus, now what? This lesson is a part 2 of "I believe in Jesus, now what?" The part 2 is to learn from history so we can learn what it is God wants us to learn so we can use our lives to make a difference for Him.
2. With all that said, let me summarize the key facts of these two chapters: Let's start with the fact that the Israelites are now at the end of their 40-year journey from Egypt to Israel. They're not in the land of Israel yet, but "parked" just east of that land. Deuteronomy is effectively one speech given by Moses to tell us, "Here is what God expects of you as you live in the land that I will give to you and your children." As I said in the last lesson, the key to understanding what the idea of the Promised Land is to believers is that it is not about literally living in Israel, but living the type of life that God desires we live here on earth as we use our lives to make a difference for Him.
 - a) With that concept in mind, these two chapters are reminders of "How did we get here?" In these chapters Moses reviews the fact that the Israelites had to go around two areas of land that God said didn't belong to them. The Israelites common ancestor Abraham had other descendants who were not Israelites. It would be like saying, "That land over there belongs to your cousins so don't mess with it, even though you greatly outnumber them and can defeat them if it was My will." Even though their descendants be a problem for your descendants would later in history, it is not God's will for you to have that land.
 - b) The point is the Israelites in that journey had to travel around two specific sets of sections of land that were not part of the Promised Land as God says that area doesn't belong to you so deal with it. The text even tells how giants lived in the territory of your "cousins" and God allowed your cousins to defeat those giants. The point to learn is just as He was with them in their victories, so God will be with us in our victories that He wants to lead us to in our lives. Another point to realize here is that if God created the world, they we have to realize He's in charge of it. Therefore if He says this piece of real estate belongs to them, and that piece of real estate belongs to us, we have to accept that it is God's will for us and them to have whatever it is God wants everyone to have. The point for us is that life is a lot less complicated if we realize things that happen to us in hindsight are God's will if we realize He exists and is in control of all things, good and bad.

3. OK, I accept the idea that God's in charge of my life and allows bad things to happen ultimately for His glory. I accept the idea that He allows tragedies to occur for reasons we can't explain. As I once heard someone say, when I get to heaven and I ask "OK God, why did you allow this or that to happen, the only thing that will come out of my mouth is Oh, as in oh, that's why you allowed this or that to occur." However, tell me why I should study these specific chapters about how the Israelites traveled around certain territories to get where they are at that moment? For starters, to remind us that God is in charge and He ultimately decides where it is He wants us to go in life so we can make a difference for Him. Just as these Israelites needed to be reminded of their history before they enter the Promised Land, the way God gives us guidance as to what it is He wants us to do for Him is to give us history lessons. In other words, if you pray something like, "OK God I want to use my life to make a difference for You", God's response is then, before you do that take a little time, learn from history so you can see how others have made a difference for Me. To say it even one more way, take a little time every day to read one's bible not learn facts, but to learn how God wants us to apply what that bible teaches us to our lives so we can use it for His glory.
- a) The next part of this chapter recalls a story told in Numbers Chapter 21 of another nation outside of Israel who refused to allow the Israelites to cross their territory. God allowed it to occur as He wanted the Israelites to defeat this nation. This history lesson is retold here in order to encourage the Israelites to fight as they enter the Promised Land. The point for you and me is history can teach us lessons to encourage us to go forward. It's kind of like just as they did this a long time ago, so God wants to work through us to face what we'll have to face in our own lives as we use them for His glory.
4. Speaking of these two chapters, it's not all about how they traveled to where they are now. We also get a second reference to Moses own desire to see the Promised Land itself. As I said in the last lesson, God told Moses that he couldn't enter that land when he hit a specific rock instead of just speaking to that rock. The idea is Moses "blew the model" that we just speak to Jesus and not strike Him dead over and over again for our sins. Because Moses failed to trust God in what it is that He desires we do, Moses too was prevented from entering that land. That fact is brought up again in Chapter 3. I believe as another reminder that there are consequences when we fail to do God's will for our lives. This part of the chapter describes an event that will occur at the end of this book when God shows Moses the land of Israel from a mountaintop just outside of Israel.
- a) The point for you and me is obedience to God's laws based solely on willpower can lead us to observe what living the life God desires of us can be like, but to actually live how it is that God desires we live, requires us to have God lead us (think Holy Spirit). The point is we can never be fully pleasing to God based on willpower. We have to go as He leads us and not just go do something based on our strength. So how do we know what is His will for our lives? Usually by trial and error. By studying history (big hint) to learn how He has worked in the past and learn from that history as examples of how it is God wants us to make a difference for Him in the world around us. Then we make the best decisions we can based on what is in front of us and go forward knowing we desire to do His will for His glory. Speaking of history, it's time to start on the verse-by-verse commentary as we have a long way to go through these two chapters.
5. Chapter 2: Then we turned back and set out toward the desert along the route to the Red Sea, as the LORD had directed me. For a long time we made our way around the hill country of Seir.
- a) We last left off in Chapter 1 of Moses giving this "history speech" to the second generation of Israelites who are parked just outside of Israel. Some in the audience were not born at the time of these events and some were just kids. It's like explaining, "To understand why you are where you are, first you need to understand how you got here." The literal point is after God gave me the 10 Commandments, we started the long period of wandering in the middle of "nowhere" as we pretty much waited for your parents generation to die off so God can use you to accomplish what they failed to do. God wants to accomplish what He wants, and if we fail to follow to Him, He'll lead someone else to do His will.

- b) Visualize this large group of people, of probably a few million traveling in the middle of the wilderness, almost endlessly. I can hear them thinking, "That rock we just past looks familiar. I know we've been here before". It reminds me about something I learned about raising children: They grow in "upward circles". It means they don't change overnight, but overtime one can watch their interests change as they grow up. My point is God had this second generation "grow in circles" by learning from their parents and learning to be lead by God so they (and us) can use their lives for the greatest purpose one can imagine: Using our lives to make a difference for God that has benefits for all of eternity.
6. Verse 2: Then the LORD said to me, ³ "You have made your way around this hill country long enough; now turn north. ⁴ Give the people these orders: `You are about to pass through the territory of your brothers the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir. They will be afraid of you, but be very careful. ⁵ Do not provoke them to war, for I will not give you any of their land, not even enough to put your foot on. I have given Esau the hill country of Seir as his own. ⁶ You are to pay them in silver for the food you eat and the water you drink.' "
- a) The short version of these verses is, "As you travel to where I want you to go, you will not travel through the land I gave to "your cousins". The common ancestor of all the Jewish people is Abraham. Through his wife Sarah, he had twin sons late in Abraham's life. One of the two sons was the grandfather of the 12 tribes of Israel. The other twin son was Esau who is named here as the one given this piece of land east of Israel. Realize that a biblical nickname for Esau is "Edom" which simply means red.
- b) But weren't the Edomites a problem for the Israelites later in history? If you know you're history, King Herod at the time of Jesus was an Edomite. My question is why would God not have the Israelites wipe out this group considering the damage the Edomites did later in history to the Israelites? The answer is "God is God". If we accept the fact that God did create the world, then He, not us decides who gets to live where. If God says this group is the one's who settle "here", who are we to argue? Yes for example, King Herod killed all little children who lived in Bethlehem at the time of Jesus birth. My point is God allows free will ultimately for His purposes. Yes many people suffer due to free will. If it wasn't for the fact there is an eternity where God makes all things fair, this life is very unfair.
- c) Coming back to these verses, the point is the Israelites had to stay on the main highway and travel around Esau's territory to get to where God wanted them to go. OK John, so the Israelites had to go around them, how does any of that ancient history affect my life today? The idea is to remind ourselves that sometimes God will lead us to do things we may not be crazy about doing, or "taking the long way" to get to where He wants us to go in life. The idea is that if we accept the idea of God being in charge, then we have to be willing to listen to what He desires of us and go the way He wants us to go in life despite the consequences of those actions. Again, the idea is to look at the situation in front of us, make the best decision possible and go where we believe God is leading us in life.
- d) Finally, I want you to notice Verse 6. It says the Israelites are to pay them for the food and water they buy from them as they travel around this territory. I thought that God rained down manna from heaven for food and provided water for all of them as they traveled through that 40-year period. What's this reference to buying food about? What I suspect but can't prove is that God is "maturing them". Think about raising children. When they are young, we have to hand feed them. Then we let them feed themselves. As they grow up, we hope they learn to work to gather their own food to be self-sufficient. I sort of see the same pattern here as God is helping this second generation grow up by having them buy food as well as just providing "manna from heaven". If you've never read about what is manna, it literally means, "what is it"? It's a food God literally provided by having it fall from heaven during that wilderness period. (See Exodus Chapter 16.)
- e) With that said, we now continue Moses' history lesson. A point to catch here is if we're willing to trust God, He'll provide for us as He leads us where He wants us to go.

7. Verse 7: The LORD your God has blessed you in all the work of your hands. He has watched over your journey through this vast desert. These forty years the LORD your God has been with you, and you have not lacked anything.
- a) First notice the phrase "These forty years" in the second sentence. That is a reminder that Moses is reciting history at the end of the journey and not as they go through it. It comes back to what I said in the introduction that those who fail to learn from history will repeat its mistakes. As the Israelites traveled for those 40 years, they didn't lack anything that is needed to survive. In other words, "why stop trusting God now, when He has gotten you this far in life?" If we're still living at this moment and are able to read this lesson, stop to consider that if God wanted you dead a long time ago, you'd be dead. The fact that we're here reading means that God still wants to use us for His glory.
 - b) To say all of this, another way, Moses is telling these Israelites, I know it's been a rough journey, but here you are alive, at the end of it. You didn't lack anything you needed to get to this point. God didn't get us to where we are now, just so we can go earn a living or just "sit there" and deal with our problems. No matter what our situation, God wants to use it for His glory. If we're too sick to do much, pray for others. If we are given time to use in the day, let's use some of it for His glory. So what do I do specifically? Pray about it. Ask God, "How can I use my life for You?" I'm convinced God can't resist that prayer and His way and on His timing, He'll lead you as He's lead me and as He's leading all the Israelites at this point. To sum it up, "God got us to where we are now, so let's continue to follow Him so we can use our lives for His glory."
8. Verse 8: So we went on past our brothers the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir. We turned from the Arabah road, which comes up from Elath and Ezion Geber, and traveled along the desert road of Moab. ⁹ Then the LORD said to me, "Do not harass the Moabites or provoke them to war, for I will not give you any part of their land. I have given Ar to the descendants of Lot as a possession."
- a) Time for another loose translation: Then the Israelites past another piece of real estate. At that point, the Israelites had to travel around it, as God stated that this piece of real estate belongs to a group called the Moabites. That piece of land was called "Ar". It was already given to the descendants of Lot. If you don't know, Lot was Abraham's nephew. He's the one that survived the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. To make it brief, he went on to have a grandson named Moab. The Moabites got this land.
 - b) What is implied is that the Israelites were much larger in number than the Moabites. If the Israelites wanted to, they could have wiped out this group by sheer force. However, God told the Israelites to go around this territory. This story is also told in Numbers 21. The point again, is if this is God's world then He and He alone decides who gets to live where. Yes, the Moabites were a problem to the Israelites later in history, but God's will is God's will and we have to accept it.
 - c) I want us to think about all these verses another way. Have any of us ever met a Moabite or an Edomite today? No, as these nations were eventually destroyed by the Romans to a point where they no longer existed as groups. Yet the Israelites survive to this day. What is the difference? God's unconditional promise to the Israelites that they'd have the land of Israel. Despite all the suffering the Jewish people have had to go through over the last few millennia, God kept them around while other nations have been destroyed. If one ever wants a simple proof that the bible is God's word, study Israel's history as a nation as proof of God's existence. But what about the fact the Israelites have collectively rejected Jesus? As I said, God's unconditional promises are God's unconditional promises. If I can trust God's unconditional promises to the nation of Israel, then I am also able to trust His unconditional promises to me about my salvation through what Jesus did for me.
 - i) OK, I admit I got off on a tangent there. In the meantime, back to Moses' speech:

9. Verse 10: (The Emmites used to live there--a people strong and numerous, and as tall as the Anakites. ¹¹ Like the Anakites, they too were considered Rephaites, but the Moabites called them Emmites. ¹² Horites used to live in Seir, but the descendants of Esau drove them out. They destroyed the Horites from before them and settled in their place, just as Israel did in the land the LORD gave them as their possession.)
- a) First, the parenthesis here in this text is from the English translation, and is not part of the original text. It is placed in parenthesis as it is describing something past tense. With that said, let me talk about the text itself, and then I'll come back to the past tense aspect.
 - b) What Moses is essentially saying is "In the land where the Edomites lived (again, Edom is a nickname for the descendants of Esau), there were giants living there. We'll get a clue in Chapter 3 coming up how big these giants were. The point here is if God made it possible for the Edomites to conquer giants, God is going to make it possible for us Israelites to go and conquer the giants who live in the land of Israel. You may recall that when the spies came back from spying out the land of Israel (see Exodus 13), they reported that there are giants living in that land. Remember that the purpose of this speech given by Moses here is to encourage the Israelites to go forward into the land of Israel. The point here is if the Edomites can conquer their giants, God will make it possible for the Israelites to deal with the giants who live in the land of Israel.
 - c) Most of you can see where I'm going with this: All of us at some point in our lives have to face our own "giants". It could be the loss of a job, or a terrible disease or a loss of a family member. The point is just as God has guided others to face their giants so He'll guide us to give us eternal victory over whatever giants we must face in our lives. Since I'm stating the obvious here, I'll move on to my next point.
 - d) With all that said, let me come back to the "parenthesis". There are two views on this: One is that it was edited in later, by say Joshua after the Israelites had conquered the land. The other view is that Moses was so confident this second generation was going to do what it is God wanted them to do, Moses wrote it "past tense" as if to say, I'm so positive you will do God's will and conquer those giants, I'm writing it as it already happened. Personally I lean toward the second view, but we can ask Moses ourselves one day and find out.
10. Verse 13: And the LORD said, "Now get up and cross the Zered Valley." So we crossed the valley. ¹⁴ Thirty-eight years passed from the time we left Kadesh Barnea until we crossed the Zered Valley. By then, that entire generation of fighting men had perished from the camp, as the LORD had sworn to them. ¹⁵ The LORD's hand was against them until he had completely eliminated them from the camp.
- a) If you haven't noticed by now I made a conscious decision to avoid a "geography lesson" to not explain the details of the specifics of the geography east of Israel. I sort of figured if one is interested in the geography specifics, one can study those facts elsewhere. I believe my job is to explain the "why's" of this text, and that is what I'm focusing on here.
 - b) With all that said, the point Moses is making here is everything that has happened as he is describing in the first two chapters so far, was prior to the 38 years of "wandering around in the middle of the wilderness". As I stated in the last lesson, the wilderness period was such a waste of time, it is pretty much skipped over as to what the Israelites actually did in that time period. It's like saying, "What you did there was such a waste, I'm not going to spend any time describing it."
 - c) The main point here is that God wanted to wait until the previous generation died off in the wilderness before He was willing to work with the next generation to do what their parents were too afraid to do: trust God with their lives and be willing to follow Him to a point where they and us are willing to trust Him to overcome our fears about life. It's like the idea of taking a lifetime to learn to trust God as our old ways of thinking refuse to die off, so the "new man or woman" trusts God while the old one dies off.

11. Verse 16: Now when the last of these fighting men among the people had died, ¹⁷ the LORD said to me, ¹⁸ "Today you are to pass by the region of Moab at Ar. ¹⁹ When you come to the Ammonites, do not harass them or provoke them to war, for I will not give you possession of any land belonging to the Ammonites. I have given it as a possession to the descendants of Lot."
- a) Here we get another group of people and another section of land the Israelites had to go around in order to reach their destination. Notice the text states that one area of land was passed around by the previous generation and this section of land is passed by the current generation. It's like God is teaching each generation the same lesson: The idea that God is in charge of all things, including "who gets what piece of land". Yes this section of land is like the last one described a page back, belonging to another "cousin" of the Israelites. The Israelites had to respect God's will and go around this territory.
 - b) What God is trying to get across to them is the idea that if He created the world, He gets to decide who lives where. By having the Israelites respect God's will here, it gets them to trust Him more and give them the courage to go conquer the land of Israel itself. Like the last group mentioned, the Moabites turned will be problem for the Israelites later in their history. However, the point here is about trusting God even if it means traveling a long way around where they have to go.
 - c) As much as I want to avoid a geography lesson, let me just say that there were main roads in ancient times. This is God saying in effect, stay on the main road and don't be tempted to take a short cut across some land that it's not my intention for you to travel upon. The lesson for us is to realize that God has a plan for our lives. Sometimes that plan is boring and sometimes it requires going a long way out of our way to get to where He wants us to be in life. That's what the Israelites had to learn here and that's what He's teaching us.
 - d) Time for another bottom line statement here: The Israelites had to travel around a piece of real estate that was given to the descendants of one of Abraham's nephews. Yes those who lived there would be a problem for the Israelites down the road, but that would be "their problem" as the issue here is about obedience to God's will no matter what the cost.
12. Verse 20: (That too was considered a land of the Rephaites, who used to live there; but the Ammonites called them Zamzummities. ²¹ They were a people strong and numerous, and as tall as the Anakites. The LORD destroyed them from before the Ammonites, who drove them out and settled in their place. ²² The LORD had done the same for the descendants of Esau, who lived in Seir, when he destroyed the Horites from before them. They drove them out and have lived in their place to this day. ²³ And as for the Avvites who lived in villages as far as Gaza, the Caphtorites coming out from Caphtor destroyed them and settled in their place.)
- a) Time for more text in "parenthesis". Again, the parenthesis is not in the original text. It is written that way as if Moses went back later to add a footnote. My point here is simply to not be too concerned about the parenthesis in these four verses.
 - b) Let me make this text simple: The land the Israelites were going around also had giants in that land. The people that God gave this land to were able to conquer and wipe out those giants despite the fact they were giants. Those giants were given different names by other groups, but the point is they were defeated. The point is if God can give these groups the ability to defeat giants because it was God's will for them to win, don't you think God will also give you (the Israelites listening to Moses' speech) the ability to defeat the giants that their parents were too afraid to face?
 - c) A couple of questions came to mind: First, how did Moses know all of this? I suspect the answer is Moses was trained for 40 years to be the next king of Egypt. Egypt spent a lot of time conquering and being aware of their neighbors. Therefore, learning this history may have been part of Moses own history lesson growing up. The other possibility is with all the Israelites traveling in that area, someone could have reported back to Moses what did happen in the history as those who lived here bragged of their accomplishments.

- d) The other question I thought of is, "Is it fair to the race of giants that God wanted them dead just because He promised that section of land to someone else?" Keep in mind that God's will for say, territory is different than God's will for salvation. Salvation in the Old Testament is based on one's knowledge of what should be obvious, a single God created all things and how did we react based on that knowledge. Even if one believes in lots of gods, eventually one has to come to a single creator who rules over all of them. One of the great lessons to learn in life is that God is in control of our world no matter how hard we try to change that. Often that means accepting His will no matter how good or how bad it means for us individually. Once we do accept it, handling life becomes a lot easier if we accept that He is in control of all things whether we like them or not.
- e) The bottom line here with this text is both pieces of land that the Israelites had to travel around had giants living there at one time, but it was God's will for certain groups to have that land. Therefore God made it possible for the groups who were to have that land to go conquer those giants. Moses is giving this history lesson to encourage the Israelites to go face the giants who lived in the land of Israel before they conquered it. The reason He is giving us this history lesson is to encourage us to face the "giants" that we must face in our life, be it financial worries, cancer, dealing with people we don't like etc. The point is God's willing to provide us the power (think Holy Spirit) to face whatever challenges we need to face in our lives just as He provided to these Israelites millenniums ago.

13. Verse 24: "Set out now and cross the Arnon Gorge. See, I have given into your hand Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his country. Begin to take possession of it and engage him in battle.²⁵ This very day I will begin to put the terror and fear of you on all the nations under heaven. They will hear reports of you and will tremble and be in anguish because of you."

- a) As one reads this text, it is important to keep in mind it is "past tense". We're reading of Moses giving a history lesson to these Israelites. Remember that the main purpose of the speech is to prepare the Israelites to have the courage to take on the battles they'll have to fight when Joshua actually leads them into the Promised Land. The point of this section that runs through the end of the chapter is that not all the land east of the Jordan River is untouchable to conquer. The area of land promised to the Israelites actually goes all the way to the Euphrates River: In modern English, that means the land God did promise to the Israelites included parts of Lebanon and Iran. (I'm sure that news will go over well at the United Nations today.) What I'm saying is that the Israelites were told to go around certain pieces of land given to their distant cousins; other pieces of land were ok for them to conquer. We're reading of one of those sections to conquer here in these verses.
- b) Notice in Verse 25 it says that God will put "terror and fear of you" to those living in this specific area of the Israelites. Their enemies will be aware of the large number of Israelites traveling their way and be afraid of what a large number of people can do to them if they want to conquer that land. What that means for us is the thing we fear, we don't have to fear as God is "on the throne". Let me think of a tough example: Suppose we have to face cancer or live through a horrible disability. God is saying to us, He's still in charge and will give us the strength to face whatever it is we have to face. In fact, the enemy we face in effect fears us, as they know we represent God.
 - i) To put it simply, the worst thing that can happen to us is death. However for the Christian, death is not a loss, but a victory. In the meantime, if we face what we must face knowing God's in charge, He'll provide for us the power to go through whatever we have to face knowing that it will be for His glory as we go through that trial.
- c) What God is saying to these Israelites is people exist who don't want the Israelites there. (Gee, what's changed in all these millenniums?) Why the hatred? When we represent submission to God, most people will give Him lip service, but when it comes to actual submission, "no thank you". That's why our fears of submission have to be conquered.

14. Verse 26: From the desert of Kedemoth I sent messengers to Sihon king of Heshbon offering peace and saying,²⁷ "Let us pass through your country. We will stay on the main road; we will not turn aside to the right or to the left."²⁸ Sell us food to eat and water to drink for their price in silver. Only let us pass through on foot--²⁹ as the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir, and the Moabites, who live in Ar, did for us--until we cross the Jordan into the land the LORD our God is giving us."³⁰ But Sihon king of Heshbon refused to let us pass through. For the LORD your God had made his spirit stubborn and his heart obstinate in order to give him into your hands, as he has now done.
- a) Notice the Israelites didn't start conquering this one group right away. What these verses say in effect is "First we tried to be friendly with them. We offered to pay them by buying food and water from them and we promised to stay on the main road. Despite those nice terms, and despite the fact other groups (the nations the Israelites went around), they said no to those terms. Then Verse 30 effectively says God hardened their hearts so that way the Israelites had to go fight them. Again remember Moses is giving them a history lesson here, and he's describing what's happened past tense to encourage them.
 - b) First of other nations were willing to profit from the Israelites going around their country, why wouldn't this group do it? Today, you would think countries like Iran, Syria, Egypt and Lebanon would rather trade with Israel and profit from it then fight them. Why is it in effect that God hardens the hearts of people to hate the Jewish nation? Yes it is all these nations are Muslim and they hate them because they are Jewish. It is the hatred based on the fact they worship a different God and refuse to accept Islam. My point is if you believe the God we worship is real and is in charge of the world, one has to accept that just as He has hardened the hearts of this king in these verses, so he has hardened the hearts of those who fight against Israel today.
 - i) OK, so why does God harden hearts? Doesn't He want everyone to be saved? Yes He does, but it has to be "free will". My view is God takes those who already turn against Him in the first place and makes them more of what they want in the first place. It's kind of like, "OK, you want to turn from Me? Great, I'll make you more of what you to be so others will see what it will cost you now and eternally".
 - ii) The point for you and me is what we learn from history is there is a steep price to be paid in this life and the next life from refusing to help those who trust in God.
15. Verse 31: The LORD said to me, "See, I have begun to deliver Sihon and his country over to you. Now begin to conquer and possess his land."
- a) There is a false view in Christianity that we don't have to work for what we believe God is going to give us. For example, one can think we can just lie in bed and God will bring us food and we don't have to be productive members of society. (Yes of course if one's really sick, that is an exception.) The point is God wants to bless our lives, but we can't receive that blessing by just sitting there. Just as the Israelites had to conquer what God wanted to give them, so we have to go conquer what God wants to give us.
 - b) So does that mean we go to kill our neighbors because we like their stuff? Of course not. The point is God does want to bless our lives as we make a difference for Him, but if we just "sit there", we can never learn to fully trust Him as we face things that we think are too big for us to face in life. God's saying to us, we can have victory over whatever it is we have to face in life, but that victory can only come if we're willing to move forward and trust God to guide us to those victories.
 - c) The big question of course, is how do we know what is God's will? Let's be honest, God does not tell us to go conquer this piece of real estate or that group of people. So how do we know what is His will for our lives? Sometimes it's just to go forward, to look at the situation in front of us and make the best decisions possible assuming we don't sin to do so. I consider the ideal to do what we love to do, and use what we love to benefit God.

16. Verse 32: "When Sihon and all his army came out to meet us in battle at Jahaz,³³ the LORD our God delivered him over to us and we struck him down, together with his sons and his whole army.³⁴ At that time we took all his towns and completely destroyed them--men, women and children. We left no survivors.³⁵ But the livestock and the plunder from the towns we had captured we carried off for ourselves.³⁶ From Aroer on the rim of the Arnon Gorge, and from the town in the gorge, even as far as Gilead, not one town was too strong for us. The LORD our God gave us all of them.³⁷ But in accordance with the command of the LORD our God, you did not encroach on any of the land of the Ammonites, neither the land along the course of the Jabbok nor that around the towns in the hills.
- a) Meanwhile back at the literal battlefield, Moses is reminding the Israelites that he's talking to, that they won some battles in the recent past. Remember that a reason to study history is to give us the courage to face what we have to face. Even if you don't like history class, maybe you enjoy books or movies that inspire you to be a better person. That in effect is what Moses is doing here. Reminding the Israelites that just as God has lead them to win over another group of people, so God will be with you and me in whatever else He wants to lead us to victory over.
 - b) OK, what about our failures? What if we tried to do something recently and failed? Stop and think when you've grown the most: When we succeed or failure? Often God will use failure to teach us lessons. The bible is full of failure stories. They remind us to trust God and keep moving forward despite failures. Nobody is perfect in life and everybody goes through rough times. The key is to keep trusting God, keep moving forward and realize He's using those failures to teach us lessons.
 - c) With that said, let's look at Verse 34 again. It says that the Israelites completely destroyed a group of people, men, women and children. I can see soldiers fighting others, but why would God want the Israelites to destroy women and children as well. Isn't that cruel? First that is not an order repeated to us. It is a specific judgment against a specific group of people. The best analogy I can think of is "it's like when a horse breaks it's leg, then the most merciful thing one can do is kill that horse". Back in Genesis, God told Abraham He would give 400 years for the nations the Israelites were going to conquer to repent. If they didn't, then God was going to use the Israelites as judgment against them like a horse that has to be killed as it's the most merciful thing one can do. (See Genesis 15:16.)
 - i) If one studies the archeology of the civilizations that the Israelites conquered, you might even say, "Why did God wait as long as He did to conquer them?" Let's just say this culture did some very disgusting things and like that horse that broke it's leg, the most merciful thing God could do is wipe out that nation completely as it was beyond help. My point here is when we read of the Israelites killing every last man, woman and child, it's not something for us to repeat. It's a specific judgment on a specific group of people that were literally beyond help.
 - ii) Also remember that judgment, as a nation and eternal judgment are two separate issues. Those innocent children who are killed maybe in heaven, but as part of the nation that refuse to turn to God, they were part of that judgment.
 - d) If you can't tell by now, I'm doing my best to avoid having us memorize specific tracks of geography. Yes, one can study maps to see where the Israelites moved. One can see the areas they actually conquered and avoided. The text in this paragraph is pretty specific on the issue of the Israelites conquered this group and at the same time traveled around the area controlled by that group. If you can't tell by now, I'm much more interested in the "why" questions, then the "where or how" questions. To me, the important thing is what we can learn from this history, which is why I focus on those issues. My point is the history lesson we're getting here is to motivate us to face our own fears and realize God is there with us as we take on what it is we must face in our own lives to serve Him.

17. Chapter 3, Verse 1: Next we turned and went up along the road toward Bashan, and Og king of Bashan with his whole army marched out to meet us in battle at Edrei. ² The LORD said to me, "Do not be afraid of him, for I have handed him over to you with his whole army and his land. Do to him what you did to Sihon king of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon."
- a) I'm purposely including two chapters here in one lesson, as this is a continuous story of a history lesson. Bottom line is Moses is describing the Israelites conquered one group in the last part of Chapter 2 and he's describing the Israelites conquering another group in the first part of Chapter 3.
 - b) Stop and consider what it is that inspires us to do something great. For some it is movies or books where we see or read of others making a difference. For some it's learning of the history of other groups obeying God as the Israelites are doing here. Since these Israelites didn't have books or movies, this history lesson is a great way to inspire them to do what it is God wants them to do. That's why God encourages us to read our bible as well. It's not to memorize ancient historical facts. It's to be inspired so like these biblical characters we too can use our lives to make a difference for Him and face whatever difficult battles we must face in our own lives.
 - c) With that motivational speech out of my system, the literal point here is the Israelites in the recent past to their current point in history, conquered another nation. With that said we have more details of this battle in the next few verses.
18. Verse 3: So the LORD our God also gave into our hands Og king of Bashan and all his army. We struck them down, leaving no survivors. ⁴ At that time we took all his cities. There was not one of the sixty cities that we did not take from them--the whole region of Argob, Og's kingdom in Bashan. ⁵ All these cities were fortified with high walls and with gates and bars, and there were also a great many unwallled villages. ⁶ We completely destroyed them, as we had done with Sihon king of Heshbon, destroying every city--men, women and children. ⁷ But all the livestock and the plunder from their cities we carried off for ourselves.
- a) Like the battle in the last chapter, the Israelites killed every last person alive, and kept as a prize all the cities and the animals there. I already discussed why every last person had to be killed, so let me discuss this situation another way. What do you think the people who lived in the land of Israel were thinking when they got word back that the Israelites killed every last living person? Personally, I'd be scared to death and would rather surrender to them then continue to live how I'm living. The archeological evidence of those who lived in this area included sacrificing their children to their gods as well as performing sexual acts with animals. My point is one can understand how this group was "beyond help" as God is judging this nation for their acts.
 - b) OK, John, so thousands of years ago, there was cruelty and judgment. How does any of this affect my life today? The issue of this history lesson isn't to repeat what happened. It is to realize God's in charge and just as He inspired the Israelites to overcome their fears and conquer what needed to be conquered, so God wants to inspire us to trust Him and take on projects for Him as we face whatever we have to face in our lives.
 - c) There is also another purpose to this, and I'll get to that pretty quickly:
19. Verse 8: So at that time we took from these two kings of the Amorites the territory east of the Jordan, from the Arnon Gorge as far as Mount Hermon. ⁹ (Hermon is called Sirion by the Sidonians; the Amorites call it Senir.) ¹⁰ We took all the towns on the plateau, and all Gilead, and all Bashan as far as Salecah and Edrei, towns of Og's kingdom in Bashan. ¹¹ (Only Og king of Bashan was left of the remnant of the Rephaites. His bed was made of iron and was more than thirteen feet long and six feet wide. It is still in Rabbah of the Ammonites.)
- a) In these verses, God's still inspiring the Israelites to not be afraid of what they have to do. One of the kings they conquered in the past had a bed that was 13 feet by 6 feet. I think it was kept as a souvenir to inspire the Israelites not to be afraid of other giants.

- b) By the way, the bed does not mean the giant was "13 x 6", just that he was tall and owned a big bed because he was tall. Again, the key idea is simply that if God has gotten us this far in life, why are we failing to trust Him for the future? Yes times can be bleak now, but they've been bleak before and God's gotten us through them. I'm not saying we blindly go forward and not plan. I'm saying we trust God as we plan for our future and realize He's aware of every aspect of our life. If God knows all things and created the world we live in then we need to keep on trusting Him as we go forward. That in effect is the main point of the whole lesson. However, there are still some more verses left here and a few points to be made about those verses:
20. Verse 12: Of the land that we took over at that time, I gave the Reubenites and the Gadites the territory north of Aroer by the Arnon Gorge, including half the hill country of Gilead, together with its towns. ¹³ The rest of Gilead and also all of Bashan, the kingdom of Og, I gave to the half tribe of Manasseh. (The whole region of Argob in Bashan used to be known as a land of the Rephaites. ¹⁴ Jair, a descendant of Manasseh, took the whole region of Argob as far as the border of the Geshurites and the Maacathites; it was named after him, so that to this day Bashan is called Havvoth Jair.) ¹⁵ And I gave Gilead to Makir. ¹⁶ But to the Reubenites and the Gadites I gave the territory extending from Gilead down to the Arnon Gorge (the middle of the gorge being the border) and out to the Jabbok River, which is the border of the Ammonites. ¹⁷ Its western border was the Jordan in the Arabah, from Kinnereth to the Sea of the Arabah (the Salt Sea), below the slopes of Pisgah.
- a) The short version here is two and one half tribes saw the land they just conquered outside of the actual land of Israel and said in effect, "This is good land, we'll settle here." A point about these verses for you and me is the danger of compromising with what God desires for our lives. It's like God's saying, I want to bless you "this" much with your lives. But if you want to settle for only "that" much, I won't violate your free will." Remember that the idea of the Promised Land is to trust God with every aspect of our lives. If we only want to go "that far" with that trust, God says to us in effect, "OK, if that's all you want, I won't violate your choice, but I do want to bless you even more if you're willing to trust Me."
- b) I can give you territorial specific's here, but that's the underlying point.
21. Verse 18: I commanded you at that time: "The LORD your God has given you this land to take possession of it. But all your able-bodied men, armed for battle, must cross over ahead of your brother Israelites. ¹⁹ However, your wives, your children and your livestock (I know you have much livestock) may stay in the towns I have given you, ²⁰ until the LORD gives rest to your brothers as he has to you, and they too have taken over the land that the LORD your God is giving them, across the Jordan. After that, each of you may go back to the possession I have given you."
- a) Key point is Moses agreed to this compromise as long as those Israelites who wanted to settle here agreed to go fight with the other Israelites in the Promised Land itself. It's like God saying to us, "If that's all you want, great I'll give it to you, but I want you to know I can give you so much more. Therefore, enter and go fight in the Promised Land with Me so you can know what I (God) desires of your life."
- b) OK John, I get all of that by now. I'm not conquering any physical land. How does God want me to grow further? First understand that if "love" is part of God's nature, then He wants to express that love upon someone. He has chosen us to express that love upon. My point is ask God how He'd like to use us for His glory? Ask Him how we can use our lives to make a difference for Him? Ask Him what to do so we'll experience the Promised Land for our lives? Personally, I've found that God can't resist a prayer like that. Because we're turning our lives over to Him, He says effectively, "Thank You. I love to help those who are willing to trust Me with their lives." My point is I find God makes it obvious over time how we can use our time to make a difference for Him. Surrender to God is all about trusting He has a plan and He is guiding us through our lives for His glory.

22. Verse 21: At that time I commanded Joshua: "You have seen with your own eyes all that the LORD your God has done to these two kings. The LORD will do the same to all the kingdoms over there where you are going. ²² Do not be afraid of them; the LORD your God himself will fight for you."
- a) At this point we get another reference to Joshua. This is the guy Moses has been training to be the next leader. This is Moses reminding the Israelites, "I won't be with you as you go conquer the Promised Land, but I have been training a person who will lead you."
 - b) One of my favorite little expressions is, "Every Paul needs a Timothy and every Timothy needs a Paul". In the New Testament, Paul picked Timothy to train him to be a leader in his own world just as Moses picked Joshua to train." Just as most of us had people who've influenced our lives we should always be looking for others of the next generation to help them grow closer in their relationship with God.
 - c) For those who don't know the name Joshua is the Hebrew equivalent of the Greek name, "Jesus". I'm not saying Joshua is Jesus. I'm just saying their names are the same. Just as Moses is saying Joshua will lead the Israelites into the literal Promised Land, so Jesus will lead us to make a difference for God as we trust Him with every aspect of our lives which is what the Promised Land is for Christians. This is just one of thousands of ways where Jesus is hinted at all through the Old Testament.
23. Verse 23: At that time I pleaded with the LORD: ²⁴ "O Sovereign LORD, you have begun to show to your servant your greatness and your strong hand. For what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do the deeds and mighty works you do? ²⁵ Let me go over and see the good land beyond the Jordan--that fine hill country and Lebanon." ²⁶ But because of you the LORD was angry with me and would not listen to me. "That is enough," the LORD said. "Do not speak to me anymore about this matter. ²⁷ Go up to the top of Pisgah and look west and north and south and east. Look at the land with your own eyes, since you are not going to cross this Jordan. ²⁸ But commission Joshua, and encourage and strengthen him, for he will lead this people across and will cause them to inherit the land that you will see." ²⁹ So we stayed in the valley near Beth Peor.
- a) For the last part of this chapter and the last part of our history lesson, Moses is saying for the second time in Deuteronomy how he wants to see the Promised Land but can't as God punishes him for "hitting the rock that he's supposed to speak to. I covered that earlier in the lesson so I won't go there again. Moses is stating all of this again, as he is reminding the Israelites that God promised him he could see the land, but not enter it. Notice the "That is enough" phrase in Verse 26. This is God saying in effect, "Sometimes the answer is just no, sodeal with it."
 - i) It's a reasonable request for Moses to make. God lead him this far and he wanted to see what was promised to the Israelites. God was tough on Moses as when He says no, sometimes the answer is just no. As my wife taught me, "The definition of insanity is to do the same thing over and over again, expecting different results." That's why often God said "no stop asking me" to us.
 - b) The last part of the chapter describes Moses going up to a mountain peek that has a good view of all of Israel. Moses didn't actually go up there until the end of this book, but he's describing what God told him to do as if "it's a done deal". The point is if God desires we do something, the way we know He desires it, is He makes it possible for us to do it.
 - c) Then the chapter ends with another reminder to the Israelites to encourage Joshua as he'll be the next leader. The lesson is to remind us to encourage who's our appointed leaders whether we're crazy about the leader or not. For you and me, there are lots of people we didn't vote for, but God calls us to pray for them because they have been appointed as our leaders whether we like them or not. I figured if Paul can tell us to obey our government leaders in Romans 13 when Nero was emperor, we can pray for our leaders as well. We may not personally like them, but they're our leaders, and the bible says to pray for them.

24. OK, we've made through a two chapter, 12-page history lesson. The good news is I didn't bring up one specific location to memorize in this lesson. While learning geography is interesting to many people and is a good bible study to itself, it is more important to understand why Moses wanted to teach the Israelites of their history: To encourage them to do what God wants them and us to do in their lives. With that said, let me add a little encouragement in my closing prayer.
25. Heavenly Father, the greatest purpose we can have for our lives is to use it for your glory. Help us to learn from history so we don't have to repeat the same mistakes. Also let it encourage us as it encouraged this second generation of Israelites. May these stories inspire us to use our time to be led by Your Spirit to make a difference for You. Make it obvious to us what it is You want us to do as we submit our lives to you. We ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.