

DEUTERONOMY (Teacher's Edition)

Part One: Moses' First Speech "What God Has Done for Israel" (1:1-4:43)

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AUTHOR-

We are going to miss him! This is the last book of Moses, written as the Promised Land lay ahead. He was 120 years old (see Deuteronomy 34:7).

WHEN THE BOOK WAS WRITTEN-

This book, which can well be called Moses' **farewell speech**, was written around 1400 B.C. on the plains of Moab, right before the new generation of Israelites began their entrance into the Promised Land. This book covers less than a two-month period, which includes the thirty days of Moses' death. This means Moses' closest friend **Joshua** probably wrote **chapter 34**.

ABOUT THE BOOK-

To begin with, it is apparent that Moses sensed that the people would face many new temptations as they settled in the land and established permanent dwellings among the pagan Canaanites. He also realized that his days as their leader were drawing to a close. He used this occasion to **remind the people** of their heritage as God's special people and to challenge them to remain faithful to God and His laws. Thus, the Book of Deuteronomy becomes a stirring conclusion to the life of this great statesman and prophet. One of the final verses of the book pays this fitting tribute to Moses' visionary leadership: "Since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face" (34:10). Because it is written in the format of a **series of warmhearted speeches**, Deuteronomy is unique among the books of the Bible. Following a brief introduction of Moses as the speaker, the book begins with a series of speeches and addresses from Moses to the people. These **speeches** continue through **chapter 33**, with only brief narrative interruptions of his spoken words. The final chapter departs from the speech format to report on Moses' death and the selection of Joshua as his successor.

In his addresses, Moses reminded the people of their days of slavery in Egypt and how God had delivered them safely through the wilderness to the borders of the Promised Land. He also restated the Ten Commandments and indicated that these great moral principles should **direct their lives**. As God's special people, they were to be **holy and righteous** as an **example** for surrounding pagan nations. Moses also warned Israel of the **perils of idolatry** and called the people to worship the one true God, who demanded their total commitment: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might" (6:4-5).

As he spoke to the people, Moses also repeated many of the laws and regulations that dealt with observance of the Sabbath, **proper forms of worship**, treatment of the poor, religious feasts and festivals, inheritance rights, **sexual morality**, property rights, treatment of servants, and the administration of justice. Finally, Moses ended his words of caution and counsel with a beautiful **song of praise** to God. Then he pronounced an individual blessing on each of the tribes of the nation that would go into Canaan with Joshua to possess the land.

The New Testament contains more than **80 quotations** from Deuteronomy, so it must be rated as one of the **foundational** books of the Bible. Jesus Himself often quoted from Deuteronomy. During His temptation, He answered Satan with four

quotations from Scripture. Three of these came from this key Old Testament book (Matt 4:4-Deut 8:3; Matt 4:7-Deut 6:16; Matt 4:10- Deut 6:13).

A BASIC ASSESSMENT OF DEUTERONOMY (BASIC THEMES)-

There are so many!

This great book possesses an individuality and impressiveness of its own. In Exodus-Numbers God is represented as speaking to Moses, whereas in Deuteronomy, Moses is represented as speaking **at God's command** to Israel (Deut 1:1-4; 5:1; 29:1).

One and perhaps the greatest, central thought of Deuteronomy is the unique relation which Yahweh as a unique God sustains with Israel as a unique people. "Hear O Israel; Yahweh our God is one Yahweh." The **monotheism** of Deuteronomy is very explicit. Following from this, as a necessary corollary almost, is the other great teaching of the book, the **unity of the sanctuary**. The motto of the book might be said to be, "**One God, one sanctuary**." Consider:

(1) Yahweh, a unique god. - **Yahweh is the only God**, "There is none else besides him" (Deut 4:35,39; 6:4; 32:39), "He is God of gods, and Lord of lords" (10:17), "the living God" (5:26), "the faithful God, who keeps covenant and loving-kindness with them that love him and keep his commandments" (7:9), who abhors graven images and every type of idolatry (7:25-26; 12:31; 13:14; 18:12; 20:18; 27:15), to whom belong the heavens and the earth (10:14), who rules over all the nations (7:19), whose relation to Israel is near and personal (28:58), even that of a Father (32:6), whose being is spiritual (4:12,15), and whose name is "Rock" (32:4,15,18,30-31). Being such a God, He is jealous of all rivals (7:4; 29:24-26; 31:16-17), and hence, all temptations to idolatry must be utterly removed from the land, the Canaanites must be completely exterminated and all their altars, pillars, Asherim and images destroyed (7:1-5, 16; 20:16-18; 12:2-3).

(2) Israel, a unique people. - The old Israel had become unique **through the covenant** which Yahweh made with them at Horeb, creating out of them "a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation" (Ex 19:6). The new Israel who had been born in the desert were to inherit the blessings vouchsafed to their fathers, through the covenant just now being made in Moab (Deut 26:16-19; 27:9; 29:1; 5:2-3). By means of it they became the heirs of all the promises given unto their fathers the patriarchs (4:31; 7:12; 8:18; 29:13); they too became holy and peculiar, and especially beloved of Yahweh (7:6; 14:2,21; 26:18-19; 28:9; 4:37), disciplined, indeed, but for their own good (8:2-3,5,16), to be established as a people, as Yahweh's peculiar lot and inheritance (32:6,9; 4:7).

(3) The relation between Yahweh and Israel a **unique relation**. - Other nations feared their deities; Israel was expected not only to fear Yahweh but to **love Him and cleave to Him** (Deut 4:10; 5:29; 6:5; 10:12,20; 11:1,13,22; 13:3-4; 17:19; 19:9; 28:58; 30:6,16,20; 31:12-13). The highest privileges are theirs because they are partakers of the covenant blessings; all others are strangers and foreigners, except they be admitted into Israel by special permission (23:1-8).

At the point of the writing of this great book, the children of Israel have now experienced four decades as people of a kingdom, destined for dominion, and after years in wilderness preparation and the death of their fathers in judgment, their maturity begins to show as a nation. As they are poised to enter the Promised Land, Moses vividly recalls God's **faithfulness and blessings** to them. Then, with the realization that their greatest temptation will be **to worship Canaan's gods** as they allow God's blessings to be **taken for granted**, the concept of covenant relationship **governed by commandments and statutes** is hammered at.

Obedience to God is equated with life, blessing, health and prosperity. Disobedience is equated with death, cursing, disease, and poverty. The covenant showed the way to live in fellowship that was abundant life with and in Him and with each other. A note should be made that the blessings were never meant for **social status or political dominance** or as guarantees of lavish financial reward for our obedience. All the blessings are for the ultimate fulfillment of the covenant blessing to the world in Genesis 12:3, "In you all the families of the earth will be blessed". Nations may be blessed through the people of the Kingdom- revealing **the character of God** in their **upright conduct** and **their generosity**.

This book shows God is faithful to His Covenant People, those whom He has called to **carry out His purpose of redemption** in the world. The Hebrews were chosen as God's instruments not because they were a worthy, powerful people, but because He **loved them** and **desired to bless** the rest of the world **through their influence** (7:6, 11). This is still God's purpose as He continues to call people to follow Him and commit themselves to His purpose in their lives.

One point so well brought out in this book and especially helpful to our NT generation is regarding the **role of the Law**.

Some people look upon the laws of God in the Old Testament as burdensome and restrictive. The Book of Deuteronomy, however, teaches that God's laws are given for our own good to help us **stay close to Him** in **our attitudes and behavior**. Thus, Moses called on the people to keep God's statutes, "which I command you today for your good" (10:13). The intention of God's law is **positive**; passages in the New Testament that seem to condemn the law must be interpreted in this light. It is the **misuse** of the law, **trusting it rather than God's mercy** as the basis of our salvation that we should avoid. God's law is actually fulfilled in the person of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (Matt 5:17, 20).

You might say God's Law is given to God's people **to guide them to blessing more than to control them**. As we are obedient to God, our lives will in turn be blessed and turned into a blessing for others.

A POSSIBLE KEY WORD-

To me, the key word deals with the point being made regarding: **COVENANT**. This is the primary theme of this book and should be in our lives as we realize

that in Christ we have a new one that is better and based on better promises (Hebrews 8:6-13).

KEY VERSE(S) AND CHAPTER(S)-

I can't believe I am doing this, but I have one key verse and TWO key chapters. My key verse is: **Deuteronomy 30:19-20**. My key chapters are: **Chapters 27 & 28**. The key verse sums it all up: make the choice to live, love, listen and hold on- **BECAUSE THE LORD IS OUR LIFE!** The two chapters represent the essence of what consequences for choice are. One incredible Scripture is in 27:9 that speaks to the formal ratification of the covenant: "Be silent, O Israel, and listen! You have now become the people of the Lord your God." Think about what these key Scriptures speak to us! There is a strong sense of urgency. The decision **to live or die is ours**. The indispensable conditions of our covenant relationship with God are **obedience and loyalty**. **Love, affection and true devotion** to the Lord must be the foundation of our lives. This book is a plea to obedience based on love and reverential fear.

JESUS REVEALED IN THE BOOK-

- ❑ Joshua is a type of Jesus
- ❑ Moses himself was a type of Jesus
- ❑ **In Deuteronomy 23:14, it is mentioned that God is walking among them in their camp- that was Jesus!**
- ❑ **Moses prophesied that Jesus would come: a prophet just like himself in Deut 18:15. Noteworthy is the fact Moses is the only person with whom Jesus compared Himself (John 5:46-47)**

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE BOOK-

- ❑ The continual references to the Holy Spirit being with the children of Israel and His leading and guiding them
- ❑ **All Moses' prophecies- about the Messiah (18:15), the dispersion of Israel (30:1), the repentance (v. 2) and restoration of Israel (v. 5), Israel's future national restoration and conversion (vv. 5-6), etc.**
- ❑ **Deut 34:9- Joshua was filled with the Spirit because of the laying on of hands!**
- ❑ Deut 34:12- the mighty power and awesome deeds done by Moses were through the Spirit

SOME TRUTHS AND APPLICATIONS-

Deuteronomy 2:14

Here is a radical truth: God will always bring you back to face any area of growth you have tried to skip!

Deuteronomy 30:11-20

Whatever action you may choose in life, you also choose its consequences. God cannot bless and prosper disobedience and unfaithfulness. And His commands are not hard to follow- He gives you all you need to be able to obey!

Deuteronomy 13:1-5

No matter how anointed someone is and what miracles they do, if they erode radical commitment to Jesus and turn you away from sincere faith, they are not of God. God actually allows this to test us, to see if we honor truth above all else.

Deuteronomy 8:10, 11, 16-18

The only reason you make money is because empowers you to do so. Don't take credit for His blessings. Fight pride and self-sufficiency! God tests us and develops us (as with the manna) by making us reliant on His provision.

Deuteronomy 12:4, 29-31

We are not to imitate the world in our worship of God. We should not seek the world on their methods of how they worship their gods to figure out ways to worship ours.

Deuteronomy 22:22

Flee from and detest adultery and honor marital fidelity. God detests adultery and will always judge it severely. There are no acceptable reasons for it!