

THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY

THE DIVINE FAITHFULNESS

I. LOOKING BACKWARD (1-11)

- A. Review of the Way Since Sinai- 1-3
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II. LOOKING FORWARD (12 - 34)

- A. Final Rules and Warnings to Israel (Before entering the earthly inheritance) - 12-30
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The Hebrew name for this fifth writing of Moses is “Haddeb-harim” which means “the words.” The name being taken from the opening: verse of the book, “*These are the words Moses spoke to all Israel in the desert east of the Jordan.*” This name “Haddeb-harim” sufficiently marks off the special character of Deuteronomy from the more definitely historical and legislative books, which precede it. The history and legislation of the earlier books are reviewed in Deuteronomy, but only as a basis for the words of admonition which are recorded here. In the truest, deepest and profoundest sense, Deuteronomy is a book of words. The words spoken by Moses and recorded in this book are some of the weightiest and wise words ever uttered.

Our title “Deuteronomy” is taken from the Greek, “Deuteros Nomos” which means “Second Law.” This is the title given to it by the Septuagint translators around the third century B.C. (The Septuagint is the translation of the Old Testament into Greek.) They gave it the name “Deuteronomy” probably because in this book we have the second giving of the law, or rather a new expounding of it, to the new generation of Israelites, who grew in the wilderness and needed to have the law repeated and expounded to them before entering into Canaan.

A Book of Transition

Deuteronomy is a book of transition. It marks a transition in a fourfold way.

First, it marks the transition to a new generation. With the exception of Joshua, Caleb and Moses, himself, the old generation, which came up out of Egypt and was numbered at Sinai had all died off in the wilderness and a new generation had grown up.

Second, it marks the transition to a new possession. The wilderness pilgrimage was given place to national occupancy of Canaan.

Third, it marks a transition to a new experience, to a new life, houses instead of tents, settled habitation instead of wandering and instead of the wilderness diet, the milk and honey, the corn and wine of Canaan.

Fourth, it marks a transition to a new revelation of God. The revelation of His love. From Genesis to Numbers, the love of God is never spoken of but here in Deuteronomy, we have wonderful references to His love (i.e. 4:37, 7:7-8, 10:5, 23:5). Deuteronomy is a wonderful book of transition. We would do well to study it in this regard.

Structure and Contents

The structure of Deuteronomy is simple, clear and impressive. The first eleven chapters are all retrospective; a consideration of past events. The remaining twenty-three chapters are all prospective; a looking to the future with expectation and anticipation. In view of the transition now upon them, the people are to look backward and then forward and they are to ponder both as in the sight of God.

Deuteronomy then divides into two parts. Part one, chapters one through eleven, looks backward. In this part, we have retrospection and reflection. Part two, chapters twelve through thirty-four looks forward, in this part, we have anticipation and admonition. This is not to say in the retrospective part there are not passing references to the future or in the prospective part there are not references to the past. But, ordinary reading will expose that in both parts such references are merely incidental to the main course of the lawgivers dissertation. See the outline included for the structural analysis and commit the main divisions to memory.

Central Message

As we already have seen in our consideration of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, each has a central message or significance. This is also true of Deuteronomy. It is brought out in both parts of the book.

In God's gracious, wise and righteous dealings with the nation in the past and his renewed pledges to the nation concerning the future it can be seen that Jehovah has been and ever will be faithful to His promise, His purpose and His people. Thus, the central message of Deuteronomy is "THE DIVINE FAITHFULNESS" and what a source of comfort it is to us in days like our own when things sometimes seem to have run completely out of control.

God is still on the throne
And He will take care of His own
His promise is true
He will see us right through
God is still on the throne.

The Basic Things of Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy is a discourse and we shall best get the gist and drive of the book by picking out and clearly noting the several Basic Pronouncements in it. It is these pronouncements upon which all the other teachings are built. There are six in all.

#1 The Basic Fact

The first is a pronouncement of the “Basic Fact” that Israel’s God is one Lord. This was the basic fact of Divine Revelation to Israel and was to be the first article of their religion. Deuteronomy 6:4.5 *“Hear O Israel; the Lord your God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.”* This is also the basic fact on which Christianity is built. Israel’s God is our God, There is no other. Jesus himself tells us so in Mark 12: 28-30.

In this foundational pronouncement, we find that God is alone the true God. He is the absolute infinite one on who all depends, who all must ultimately obey and who alone is the true object of creature worship. Therefore, to Him undivided devotion and love are due.

#2 The Basic Truth

The second is a pronouncement of “Basic Truth.” Deuteronomy 6:23 says, “But *He* (God) *brought us out from there to bring us in and give us the land that he promised on oath to our forefathers.*” This is a threefold statement of truth. First, the fact, “He brought us out.” Second, the purpose behind the fact, “to bring us in.” Third, the reason behind both the fact and the purpose, “He promised on oath to our forefathers.”

In the fact, we see God’s Power, “He brought us out.” In the purpose, we see God’s Grace, “to bring us in.” In the reason, we see God’s faithfulness, “He promised on oath to our forefathers.” This threefold statement of truth is both basic and summary and gives us the whole story of truth in one sentence. By the Power of God there is deliverance from bondage. By the Grace of God, there is a new experience of Holiness and spiritual fullness. Why? Because God is always faithful to His promise, His purpose, and His people in every age. (See 1 Thessalonians 5:24.)

#3 The Basic Requirement

Third, is the pronouncement of “The Basic Requirement” which God makes of Israel in Deuteronomy 10:12-13, “ *And now, O Israel what does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and to observe the Lord’s commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good.*”

Right at the beginning of this pronouncement of the basic requirement are the two little words “And now.” These two little words are significant because they help bring this book of Deuteronomy into focus. Up to this point, the people have reviewed the faithfulness of God in His wonderful dealings with Israel right down from the time when they entered into the covenant with Abraham, finally, bringing them again to the gateway of the promised inheritance. Then, having reviewed all this Moses says, “And now.” If you consider carefully what is taking place, Deuteronomy is the “and now” book.

And now at this point what is it that is required of them- Obedience. Loving obedience, this flows from the grateful consciousness of a covenant relationship and fellowship with the glorious and faithful God.

A closer look will reveal that obedience is the outstanding lesson of this book. It is the keynote of almost every chapter. It has a threefold reason behind it. Because obedience is so important, let us briefly consider this threefold reason.

First, God is to be obeyed because of what He has done (chapters 1-11). Second, God is to be obeyed because of what He is in Himself (6:4-5)—the one and only Lord. Third, He is to be obeyed because of the perfection of His Law (4.7-8). (Please carefully consider these Scriptures.)

This is the threefold reason for Israel’s required obedience. Can anything less be required of us considering all the exalted privileges we have in Christ (privileges that Israel long ago never knew). Carefully ponder these words of Jesus, “*Whoever has my commands and obeys them he is the one who loves me. If anyone loves me he will obey my teaching*” (John 14:21, 23).

Oh that it will always be our foremost desire to hear God’s word and lovingly obey it.

#4 The Basic Pledge

The fourth basic pronouncement in this discourse given by Moses is the pronouncement of the Basic Pledge. This pledge that God can and will be gracious to Israel on the ground of the earlier and greater Abrahamic covenant. Deuteronomy 30:20b, *“And He will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.*

It is important to understand that Israel entered Canaan (The Promised Land) under the conditions set forth in the Sinai or Mosaic covenant, the precepts, term, and issues of which are rehearsed to the new generation of Israel in this book of Deuteronomy. The extreme penalty for violation of the Sinai Covenant threatened both in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 is the dispersion of Israel and the desolation of Canaan (see Leviticus 26:32, 33 and Deuteronomy 28: 63-68). And we know that Israel did foul the covenant and the threatened penalties were affected.

But, the thing to grasp here is this, that the Sinai Covenant is not the last word between God and His chosen people, Israel. No, there is another covenant relationship between God and Israel which stands outside and goes beyond the Sinai Covenant, a covenant to the force of which there is no end: that is the Abrahamic Covenant. Nothing can destroy this covenant between God and Israel because it was sealed with blood. It was confirmed with Divine oath (God’s promise to fulfill). Not even can Israel’s unfaithfulness nullify it! It is an unconditional, everlasting covenant to Abraham and his posterity.

Now, Israel has never yet possessed Canaan under the unconditional Abrahamic Covenant. Nor has Israel ever possessed the “whole” land as it was given to Abraham (see Genesis 15:18). But only the portion assigned in connection with the Mosaic Covenant (see Numbers 34: 1 -12). The point we want to stress here however, is that the Abrahamic Covenant lies behind and stands outside and goes beyond the Sinai or Mosaic Covenant. This is why despite Israel’s failure, God’s covenant relationship with Israel continues.

It is highly significant that in each case where the extreme penalty for violating the Sinai Covenant is mentioned namely, the dispersion of Israel and the desolation of Canaan, there is an immediate follow up reference to the Abrahamic Covenant. This shows that even when the Sinai Covenant has exhausted itself in its final penal infliction on Israel, God can (and will) still be gracious to Israel on the ground of the earlier and greater Abrahamic Covenant. For example, Leviticus 26:33, *“I will scatter you among the nations and will draw out my sword and pursue you. Your land will be laid waste and your cities will lie in ruins.”* Verse 42, *“I will remember my covenant with Jacob and my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham and I will remember the land”* (See also Deuteronomy 4: 27-31).

It is in connection with this basic Abrahamic pledge that we have the crowning demonstration of the divine faithfulness to Israel. Nothing can nullify the Abrahamic Covenant for Jehovah himself accepts

responsibility for the fulfillment of the whole covenant. He undertakes for the people's part of the covenant as well as His own.

In connection with the regathering of Israel yet to be, we read in Deuteronomy 30:6, "*The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul and live.*" God will do for them and in them by His Spirit what they have pitifully failed to do under the Sinai Covenant. Thus the basic pledge is: That God can and will still be gracious to Israel on the ground of the earlier and greater Abrahamic Covenant. In these parting counsels of Moses there is a living message of God's faithfulness to His people today. It is the same God who pledges (on the ground of the Abrahamic Covenant) to us the spiritual seed of Abraham.

#5 Basic Differences

In our consideration of the basic facts and truths given through the lips of Moses in this venerable Book of Deuteronomy, we need to note certain Basic Differences, which it emphasizes between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant (Old Testament and the New Testament).

Place vs. Person

One of the great differences between the Old Testament and the New Testament is that in the former the emphasis is upon place where as, in the latter the emphasis is upon a person. Under the old dispensation, there was one special place of sacrifice, of worship, of the Divine Presence. For instance, in Deuteronomy 12:10-14 we read, "*When ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the Lord your God giveth you to inherit... There shall be a place which the Lord your God shall choose to cause His name to dwell there.*" (Please read the entire passage for clarity.)

This emphasis on a place gave focus to the religious life of the nation of Israel. It fostered a sense of national unity. It was suited to the nature of the old dispensation and without a doubt it took a deep hold on the thought of the people. To the old time Hebrew, nearness to Jerusalem and to the Temple came to mean nearness to the special presence of God. The Gentiles, living in the lands beyond, were the "far off ones." It is this thought which lies behind such verses as Isaiah 49:1, 57: 19, Acts 2:39 and Ephesians 2:17.

In the New Testament, this localization of the Divine Presence and of worship is gently but, completely superseded. The emphasis is transferred from a place to a person. It is no longer a material temple and a locality but, a spiritual presence having the attribute of universality. This transference of emphasis may be seen in our Lord's dealing with the Samaritan woman at the well of Sychar. The woman said to Him, "*Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and ye say*

that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship". The Lord said, "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father: But the hour cometh, and now is when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." Then the woman said, "I know the Messiah cometh which is called Christ: when He is come He will tell us all things". The woman herself thus looked off from place to person and her words invoke the wonder-inspiring, reply, "I that speak unto thee am He." The Greek literally translated is: I AM who am speaking to thee. It is no longer God in a Temple but in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The same transition from place to person is seen in Acts 8 in the account of the Ethiopian eunuch. The man had been to the right place, Jerusalem. He had been there for the right purpose, worship. He was reading the right book, the Scriptures (vv 27-32). But, he was returning unsatisfied. He needed the new emphasis on the person. God sent Philip for this very purpose. *Then Philip opened his mouth and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.* The Ethiopian learned the secret of salvation and satisfaction that day and *went on his way rejoicing.*

The utterance of our Lord before His Ascension is a final, renewed emphasis on this change from place to person; "*Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the age.*" The emphasis here is upon the person and is the strongest possible. It is the God-man speaking. "I AM"-- with you. The great "I AM" with His Divine omnipresence, His Divine omnipotence, and His Divine Omniscience is with each of His blood-bought people. He delights to be with the poorest and humblest of us; and He will never leave us or forsake us, for He is with us "to the end"

#6 Basic Choices

In the Book of Leviticus, we find that the first giving of the law wound up with a solemn warning of the punishments which would follow Israel's unfaithfulness to the covenant (see Leviticus 26). The same kind of ending marks the second giving of the Law in Deuteronomy. A glance back at the broad outline of Deuteronomy will remind us that the second giving of the Law in Deuteronomy (chapters 12-34) is itself in two parts. In chapters 12 to 30, we have the main rehearsing of the law, while in the remaining chapters 31-34 we have, in a more personal sense, the last words and acts of Moses before his passing from the earthly scene. Now this second giving of the law, running from chapters 12 through 30 winds up in chapters 27 to 30 with renewed and most solemn warnings regarding the alternatives before the nation of Israel, here Israel is called upon to make some Basic Choices.

Set before them were choices between obedience and disobedience, blessings and curses, prosperity and destruction, life and death. But, their ultimate choice (the choice which would determine all other choices) was either to follow the Lord or forsake Him. And this is the ultimate choice each and every one of us must make. In Joshua 24:15, Joshua is speaking to the second generation of Israelites and to all who would be of the spiritual seed of Abraham, "*Choose you this day who you will serve*". Oh, may your reply ever be, "*As for me and my house we will serve the Lord.*"

The following is a summary of the six basic things upon which all the other teachings of Deuteronomy are built. We would do well to become very familiar with them.

1) **Basic Fact:** Israel's God is one Lord.

2) **Basic Truth:** He (God) brought us out to bring us in because He promised on oath to our forefathers.

3) **Basic Requirement:** To fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways *and* to love Him with all your heart and soul and strength.

4) **Basic Pledge:** God can and will be gracious to Israel on the ground of the earlier and greater covenant with Abraham.

5) **Basic Differences:** Deuteronomy emphasizes the differences between the Old Covenant and the New, the Old Testament and the New Testament.

6) **Basic Choices:** Set before Israel was a number of basic choices all of which would be decided by their ultimate choice to either follow the Lord or forsake Him.

Yes, Deuteronomy is a book of words and they are indeed some of the wisest and weighty words ever spoken. If we study them carefully, they will bring us great spiritual enrichment.