

ROUTE 66: The Book of Deuteronomy

Let's turn in our Bibles, this morning, to DEUTERONOMY... The LAST of the FIRST FIVE BOOKS of the Bible—the FIVE BOOKS of Moses... sometimes called the Pentateuch...

If you HAVEN'T BEEN with us, I ALWAYS like to encourage folks to INVEST THE TIME, and GO BACK and study through our PREVIOUS MESSAGES on your own...

The Children of Israel have been BROUGHT OUT OF Egypt—in the Book of Exodus...

They have CAMPED BEFORE MT. SINAI FOR A YEAR—in LEVITICUS—they're given the LAW, the SACRIFICES, the PRIESTHOOD, the TABERNACLE...

And then—LAST WEEK, in Numbers—we saw them LEAVE SINAI, and go through their WILDERNESS WANDERINGS for about 40 years... and NOW, they are camped JUST ACROSS the Jordan River from Jericho in the Promised Land...

Deuteronomy presents a SERIES OF SERMONS... that—essentially—act as Moses' 'Farewell Address' before he passes from the scene...

And, this is given to the SECOND GENERATION of the Children of Israel, after the FIRST GENERATION had to DIE-OFF during their wilderness wanderings... BECAUSE they didn't have the FAITH to TRUST GOD and ENTER the Promised Land...

But, it's FROM this—that it is ADDRESSED to the SECOND GENERATION—that it TAKES ITS TITLE... the name "Deuteronomy" comes from the Greek, and means "The Second Law"...

And MUCH of the text **IS** that... It is Moses REVIEWING, or TE-TELLING the HISTORY of the Children of Israel, and the Mosaic Law to the SECOND generation...

Now... even though MUCH of Deuteronomy **IS** a REVIEW... it should **NOT** – in ANY way – cause us to regard this as either redundant, or superfluous... In fact, the book of Deuteronomy has been called "*The Most Spiritual Book in the Old Testament.*"

It's been suggested that... Deuteronomy relates to the 4 PRECEDING BOOKS—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, & Numbers—the WAY John's Gospel relates to the OTHER gospel accounts

Like John, Deuteronomy PROVIDES **SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE** to the previously revealed **HISTORICAL FACTS**... ALL of the DOMINATING THEMES of the PREVIOUS books are here...

In Genesis, it was CHOICE, or ELECTION... In Exodus, it was REDEMPTION, or DELIVERANCE... In Leviticus, it was HOLINESS... In Numbers, it was DIRECTION, or GUIDANCE... They're **ALL BROUGHT TOGETHER** in Deuteronomy...

It's ALSO interesting that... With the exception of PSALMS... Jesus quotes MORE from Deuteronomy than ANY other book of the Old Testament... And, significantly, He QUOTES from Deuteronomy at some EXTREMELY important moments in His ministry...

When teaching on divorce, Jesus QUOTES Deuteronomy... When teaching on church discipline, He quotes Deuteronomy... When teaching on FALSE PROPHETS, He quotes Deuteronomy.

In fact, when Jesus is tempted by Satan in the wilderness... ALL THREE of His **"It is written"** statements come from Deuteronomy...

David Guzik writes: *"It seems obvious that Jesus meditated on Deuteronomy because—in answering Satan—the Savior quoted from it three times."*

John Trapp said Deuteronomy: *"was [the] silver brook... [from] which the Lord Christ, our Champion, chose... three smooth stones, wherewith he prostrated the Goliath of hell in that sharp encounter."*

The book is **ALSO** quoted... Romans, 1st Corinthians, Ephesians, 2nd Timothy, Titus, 1st Peter... There are about THIRTY DIRECT QUOTES from Deuteronomy in the New Testament, and about **EIGHTY** different allusions to this book.

Now, it's ALSO believed that – in 2nd Kings 22 and 2nd Chronicles 34 – when a priest by the name of Hilkiyah finds what is called ***"The Book of the Law of the Lord given by Moses."***

Hilkiyah TAKES this book to the king, the king READS it... repents, gathers the people together, he reads the book, and REVIVAL breaks out...

It is COMMONLY BELIEVED that the specific BOOK—or SCROLL—that Hilkiyah found was Deuteronomy... My POINT is... Deuteronomy is an **EXTREMELY important book**...

Now, like the PREVIOUS BOOKS we have looked at... that Moses is the one writing this book has never *really* been contested...

Chapter 1, Verse 1, opens with: ***"These are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel..."*** – And, in Chapter 31—near the END of the book—we read: ***"Moses wrote this law and delivered it to the priests..."***

His **NAME** appears about FORTY TIMES throughout the book... AND the FIRST-PERSON PRONOUN used in the text would support his authorship, as well...

By the way: JESUS recognized Moses as the author of this book, as does Peter & Stephen...

The book was probably written about 1400 B.C. – Chapter 1, Verse 3, says that it was the **FIRST DAY** of the eleventh month in the **FORTIETH** year...

We KNOW that the Exodus took place around 1440 B.C.... So, here it is... 40 years later... that would DATE the book around 1400 B.C.

The Book COVERS a little less than a **TWO-MONTH PERIOD**—INCLUDING a thirty-day period of mourning for Moses' death...

And, the Book of Numbers flows very SEAMLESSLY into Deuteronomy... The LAST VERSE of Numbers puts Israel: "*in the plains of Moab by the Jordan, across from Jericho.*"

And Deuteronomy OPENS by telling us this book was written when the Children of Israel were **IN** the Plains of Moab, "*on THIS side of the Jordan in the wilderness...*"

So, Moses is about 120 years old... The children of Israel have WANDERED for about 40 YEARS... The FIRST GENERATION has DIED OFF... the Promised Land LAY AHEAD...

And—even though God has forbidden Moses to ENTER the Promised Land (we talked about that last week)—he has a STRONG SENSE OF ANTICIPATION on behalf of the people...

They're facing a real TURNING POINT in their history... There will be NEW enemies... NEW duties... NEW temptations... NEW leadership... BUT, a **NEW LAND**...

Remember the Abrahamic Covenant? – What **GOD** had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob **HUNDREDS OF YEARS BEFORE** is about to come true!

From the opening verses of this Book, we can SENSE Moses' anticipation... He says—in Chapter 1, Verse 8—"*I have set the land before you; go in and posses the land which the Lord swore to your fathers – to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob...*"

The book CONCLUDES with Moses STANDING on Mount Nebo, looking across the land... And God says to him: "*This is the land... which I swore to give Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob...*"

So, THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT acts like BOOK-ENDS to the Book of Deuteronomy...

Almost THIRTY-FIVE times, Moses will tell the people to "**go in and possess**" the land. – THIRTY-FOUR times, he says this is the land which God is giving them...

For all intents and purposes, Deuteronomy is the proclamation of a **SECOND CHANCE** for the people of Israel... It had been a **LACK OF FAITH** that PREVENTED THEM from inhabiting the land forty years earlier...

And—as we READ through the opening Chapters—we're **reminded** that... the MAJORITY of these listeners had NOT been there to WITNESS what had happened at Sinai...

MOST of THESE people had been BORN & RAISED during the wilderness wanderings... So, Moses reminds them that:

- God is a **UNIQUE GOD**—He's the God of heaven & earth; He is a spiritual Being...

- That they are a UNIQUE and CHOSEN people... UNIQUELY LOVED by God...
- That they have a UNIQUE COVENANT WITH God...

In Chapter 5—as Moses rehearses the law for them—he says, in Verse 2: ***“The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord DID NOT make this covenant with our FATHERS, but with US... those who are HERE TODAY, all of us who are alive...”***

In other words... Moses is making sure **THEY** understand... That even though they are the NEXT GENERATION... **The covenant was for THEM!**

The covenant wasn’t something that had simply been with their ancestors... God was ALIVE, and so the covenant was **WITH THESE PEOPLE**...

Moses also realizes that one of the GREATEST CHALLENGES they face when they come into the Promised Land will be to take-up the pagan worship practices of the inhabitants of the land... This is an idea that is repeated OVER and OVER throughout this book...

So, Moses is CONCERNED with perpetuating **their understanding**... of **THEIR COVENANT RELATIONSHIP with THEIR God**...

He CALLS the people to **REMEMBER** the Lord’s FAITHFULNESS... and to challenge THEM to be **OBEDIENT** to the Lord...

In fact, we could say that one of the OVERARCHING THEMES of Deuteronomy is **OBEDIENCE THROUGH REMEMBERING**...

The word **“REMEMBER”** appears MORE TIMES in Deuteronomy than all of the PREVIOUS BOOKS of the Bible COMBINED...

In what is PROBABLY **THE** CENTRAL PASSAGE to the Book of Deuteronomy, Moses says—in Deuteronomy Chapter 6—: **“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God... is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.”**

This is the passage that Jesus—FAMOUSLY—quotes from when asked: **“Which is the first commandment,”** or **“the great commandment in the law.”**

This passage... has become known as the *Shema*... It is SO CENTRAL to the Jewish faith that—according to Eugene Merrill: *“to this... day the observant Jew will recite the Shema at least twice daily.”*

Shema is the Hebrew word for ‘listen.’ – BUT, like a LOT of words in the Greek or Hebrew language: *“The word “listen” means more than simply “hear.” It... includes responding to what you hear. In English we would say “obey.” It [describes]... a wholehearted commitment... that involves our wills and our emotions, our minds and our hearts.”*

Listen to how this passage goes on... [I'm gonna read several Verses]... Moses says: **“These words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”**

“So it shall be, when the LORD your God brings you into the land of which He swore to your fathers—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—to give you large and beautiful cities which you did not build, houses full of... good things... when you have eaten and are full... then beware, lest you forget the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt...”

“You shall fear the LORD... and serve Him... You shall not go after other gods... You shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God... And you shall do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD, that it may be well with you, and that you may go in and possess the good land of which the LORD swore to your fathers...”

“When your son asks you in time to come, saying, ‘What is the meaning of the testimonies, the statutes, and the judgments which the LORD our God has commanded you?’ then you shall say to your son: ‘We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand; and the LORD showed signs and wonders before our eyes...”

“Then He brought us out from there, that He might bring us in, to give us the land of which He swore to our fathers... And the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God—for our good always—that He might preserve us alive, as it is this day. Then it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to observe all these commandments before the LORD our God, as He has commanded us.”

And, you know... As I **READ THESE VERSES**... I think that there are a **COUPLE OF LESSONS** for us **TODAY**... **FIRST OF ALL**... We need to “pass on” the things the Lord has done for us **TO OUR CHILDREN**... And, I would say **ESPECIALLY US FATHERS**!

But **SECOND**... We can sometimes be like the Children of Israel—who **SUFFERED** from a **SHORT-TERM MEMORY**...

We’ve said on so many occasions, we have a tendency to **FORGET** the things we should **REMEMBER**, and **REMEMBER** the things we should **FORGET**...

But, this is why we need to **STUDY** the Word of God... Peter said: **“I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you **KNOW** and are established in [them]... Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you...”**

In **FACT**, he said, *‘Even after I’m dead!’* – **“I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease!”** – You may feel like I **REPEAT MYSELF A LOT**... But, it’s because we **NEED** it...

When Jesus gave us the ordinance of Communion, he said: *“Do these things to REMEMBER Me...”* – We have a TENDENCY to FORGET the things the Lord has done for us... So, MOSES is ADDRESSING this very thing in the Book Deuteronomy...

The Book breaks down into **THREE BASIC PARTS**:

- **Chapters 1—11** summarize **ISRAEL’S STORY**...
- **Chapters 12—26** contain more **LAWS** about worship and civil life...
- **Chapters 27—34** offer **ENCOURAGEMENTS** for Israel to listen... and love, God...

William Hendriksen breaks-down Deuteronomy THIS way... He says: Chapters 1—4—emphasize how the *“The Lord your God has dealt graciously with you...”*

Chapters 5—26—the emphasis is: *“Observe, therefore, His law...”*

And then, in Chapters 27 and 28—the emphasis is on *“That you may be blessed, [and] not cursed.”* – So—very succinctly—this is the OVERALL MESSAGE of Deuteronomy:

“The Lord your God has dealt graciously with you” ... “Observe, therefore, His law” ... “That you may be blessed and not cursed” ...

CHAPTER 7—deals with the Israelites being a **CHOSEN PEOPLE**...

CHAPTER 8—contains warnings of **FORGETTING THE LORD**...

CHAPTER 9—rehearses their **REBELLIONS**...

CHAPTER 12—deals with Israel having **ONE, CENTRAL PLACE OF WORSHIP**...

CHAPTER 13—deals with the **PUNISHMENT OF FALSE PROPHETS**...

In **CHAPTER 16**—the **PASSOVER IS REVIEWED**...

CHAPTER 20—deals with **PRINCIPLES CONCERNING WARFARE**...

CHAPTER 22—deals with **LAWS OF MORALITY**...

Now, **CHAPTER 17** is interesting, because... it sets forth certain **PRINCIPLES to GOVERN THEIR EVENTUAL KINGS**...

Of course, this MEANS... God KNEW that Israel would have a king... In fact, it was God’s PLAN all along for Israel to have a king...

Contrary to popular belief, when Israel DEMANDS A KING (in 1st Samuel)... the PROBLEM ISN’T that they ask for a king... it’s that they ask for a king like the nations AROUND them...

David Guzik writes: *“[Here], God looked forward – some 400 years forward – to Israel’s future... whenever Israel did not have a king, [it] was not a time of national glory (like the Book of Judges). God wanted Israel to have a king, but of His own choosing, and at His timing. Saul was an example of a king... chosen by the nation and at their timing; David is an example of a king chosen by God and in His timing.”*

The Bible Project writes: *“Elders, priests, and kings [of Israel] were all placed under the authority of the covenant... which God would enforce by sending prophets to keep them*

accountable. In contrast to Israel's neighbors—who thought of their kings as divine and a law unto themselves—Israel's leaders were all subordinate to the law as well as the prophets.”

So, let's just CONSIDER these REQUIREMENTS FOR KING in Israel... Chapter 17, Verse 16 says: **“He shall not multiply horses for himself,”** the Lord says, **“nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses... Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away; nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself.”**

Again—I hate to DO it, but—David Guzik points out that King Solomon became *“a notorious breaker of these commands. He had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots... and Solomon had horses imported from Egypt... He surpassed all the kings of the earth in riches... He had seven hundred wives... and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart [from following the Lord].”* – So, EXACTLY what God SAID would happen is what happened!

Interestingly, Verse 18 ALSO says: **“It shall be,”** that—whoever is king— **“when he sits on the throne... he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book...”**

And, the actual WORD for *“Deuteronomy”* is a COMPOUND WORD, made of TWO words that mean **“copy”** and **“law”**...

Now, ANOTHER PASSAGE that is QUITE CENTRAL to the Book of Deuteronomy is Chapter 18, where the Lord promises to raise up A PROPHET for Israel LIKE MOSES...

We have talked—in previous studies—about how... *“of all the Old Testament figures that foreshadowed Jesus... Moses prefigured Him most closely.”*

- Moses and Jesus were both miraculously preserved at birth...
- Moses is rejected by Israel at his “first coming”...
- God sent Moses to deliver His people out of bondage... God sends Jesus to deliver us from bondage...
- Moses brings the Old Covenant... Jesus brings the New Covenant...

And—in Deuteronomy Chapter 18—God says: **“I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him.”**

Earl Kalland wrote: *“[This prophecy]... was seen as a messianic prediction... [and]... This interpretation was widespread in NT times, being mentioned in the NT and among the Essenes as well as... the Jews, Gnostics, and others.”*

By Chapter 28, Deuteronomy starts to be **SUMMED UP**... And—in Chapters 29—34—we have the CONCLUSION... In TWO PARTS, really... First) **The Covenant is renewed in Moab**... and then—SECOND) **We have Moses' farewell and death** ...

Toward the END of **Numbers**, last week—we saw that Moses would NOT BE ALLOWED to enter the Promised Land... He MESSED-UP A PICTURE that God was painting of JESUS...

See, the “Rock” that followed them in the wilderness—which God brought forth WATER from... 1st Corinthians Chapter 10 tells us “**was Christ...**”

Well, that Rock **ONLY** needed to be STRUCK ONE TIME... Now, all we have to do is SPEAK to the Rock, and—by FAITH—Jesus will give us life-giving water...

But Moses MESSED-UP this picture by **STRIKING THE ROCK TWICE**... And he’s NOT allowed to go into the Promised Land... STILL, God tells him—in Chapter 30—

“Go up [on]... Mount Nebo... across from Jericho; [and] view the land of Canaan, which I give to the children of Israel as a possession... and DIE on this mountain...” –

“**BECAUSE**,” He says: “...you trespassed against Me... [and] did not hallow Me in the midst of the children of Israel. Yet you shall see the land before you, though you shall not go there, into the land which I am giving to the children of Israel.” – So, in Chapter 34:

“Moses went up... And the LORD showed him all the land...” – And “said to him, “This is the land of which I swore to give Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob... I have caused you to see it with your eyes, but you shall not cross over there.”

And, what a MOMENT this must have BEEN for Moses... after ALL HE’S BEEN THROUGH.

Verse 5 says: “Moses... died there in the land of Moab... And [the Lord] buried him... but no one knows his grave to this day.”

Now—interestingly—Jude 1:9 says that Michael the archangel and the devil **CONTENDED** about “**the body of Moses...**” – And, the REALITY is, we don’t really know WHAT that is even a REFERENCE to... I mean, CLEARLY, it HAPPENED...

But, Deuteronomy 34 is the LAST PLACE Moses is actually “seen” in scripture... Except, of course, his appearance on the Mount of Transfiguration with Jesus and Elijah.

Now, people ask all the time: “*Well, if Moses DIED... who wrote the concluding portion of the Book of Deuteronomy?*” – And, I’d say JOSHUA...

In Chapter 31, Joshua is **INAUGURATED** as the NEW LEADER over Israel... And, I’d say HE—most likely—writes the concluding portion once Moses passes from the scene

Now, BACKING-UP just a little... In Deuteronomy Chapter 30—as Moses reaches END of his FINAL ADDRESS—he says to the people: “*I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, [that] I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore **CHOOSE LIFE**... that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He [is] your life... and that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them.*” – Now...

I KNOW that I'm going to make some enemies around the room—or perhaps online—but... This passage has KIND OF been “commandeered” and “politicised” as an anti-abortion slogan...

But—CONTEXTUALLY—THIS PASSAGE, and the slogan “choose life” has NOTHING TO DO with that... What Moses is TALKING ABOUT in this passage about LISTENING TO GOD... and LOVING God... OBEYING GOD... that's what it means to “**choose life...**”

One author writes: “*Moses issues a final warning and an ultimatum... that Israel... should listen to and love God... If Israel... obeys God, things will go well [for them] and divine blessing will abound. If they do not listen... they will suffer from famine, plague, devastation, and ultimately exile from the land.*” – Another author writes...

“*Moses' heart was passionate because he knew that if this generation... did not obey the Law of God, then God's covenant would work AGAINST them and curse them. The Lord passionately pled through a passionate Moses, pleading for Israel to choose life!*”

PLEASE DON'T MISUNDERSTAND... You can be PASSIONATE about all the CAUSES that you want... But, can I just say... There is a VACUUM... a **DIRTH**... of TRUE, COMMITTED, CHRISTIAN PEOPLE in this world who are PASSIONATE about OBEDIENCE to God's Word! – And that is what WE—and this WORLD—need!

OBEDIENT PEOPLE to GOD'S WORD... **THAT'S** what it MEANS to “**choose life.**”

The book concludes with something of a ‘dismal’ prediction... God tells Moses that—after he dies— “**this people will rise and play the harlot with the gods of the foreigners of the land... they will forsake Me and break My covenant... many evils and troubles shall befall them... And I will surely hide My face in that day because of all the evil which they have done, in that they have turned to other gods.**”

So, Moses tells the people: “**I know that after my death you will become utterly corrupt, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you. And evil will befall you in the latter days, because you will do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger through the work of your hands.**”

Now, there's TWO REASONS I close on—sort of—this **BUMMER** of a note... ONE) The emphasis on them playing the harlot with “**the gods of the foreigners,**” and turning “**to other gods,**” really SETS-UP what we're going to talk about NEXT Sunday...

When we talk about “**The Divine Council, and Having a Deuteronomy 32 Worldview.**” – So, I encourage you to come **BACK** for that...

But ALSO... IN CHAPTER 30... Moses SAYS to the people that: “**It shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God drives you...**”

That, if they “return to the LORD... and obey His voice... with all your heart and with all your soul,” he says: “the LORD your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the LORD your God has scattered you.”

He says: “And the LORD your God will **circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.**”

Now, this is important! – In fact, I’m going to CLOSE by READING THIS EXCERPT from another author... Which—I think—*really* sums-up the IMPORTANCE of Moses’ proclamation here...

*“Moses says... that when Israel finds themselves sitting in exile, at any point they can turn back to their God. And—in response—God will... **“circumcise [their] hearts, so that [they might] love [the Lord] with [their] heart and soul and live.”** This vivid metaphor says something is fundamentally wrong with Israel’s heart; it is stubborn and hard—the same thing wrong with all humanity. Going all the way back to humanity’s rebellion in the garden, Israel has seized autonomy to define good and evil for themselves... they’ve ruined themselves and God’s world, but that’s not the end of the story.*

*Moses says that he knows that one day God is going to do something to **transform the hearts of his people, so that they can actually listen to and love God from the heart and discover true life. This is the promise of the new heart,** which is picked-up later by Biblical prophets—Ezekial and Jeremiah—(in reference to the New Covenant).”*

“Moses’ story [may] end, but the Biblical story is just beginning. The [first five Books of the Bible] set up these problems, but to find their resolution, [we] have to keep reading.”

So, come back NEXT WEEK... as **ROUTE 66 CONTINUES...**