

## SESSION #11

### DEUTERONOMY

Let's start with a question: What do you think was Jesus' favorite book of the OT? When I first heard that question I thought that the answer would be Isaiah, or maybe the Psalms. But actually if you just take it on the basis of which book He quoted from the most, then Deuteronomy would have to win the contest as being Jesus' most favorite. He quoted from this book more than from any other book of the OT.

So someone has suggested that there is a very important connection between the message of Deuteronomy and the person of Jesus. Otherwise, why would he quote this particular book as much as he did? Let's take a look at the name of this book first of all. What does it mean?

Well, if you break it in two – Deutero: two; nomy: law. The second giving of the Law. Now it isn't that there was one law given in Exodus at Mt. Sinai and here's a whole different Law. It's a repetition of what had earlier been declared to Israel, that older generation. But what had happened to them? They died! They have attended funerals every day for 40 years. Can you imagine? And now they're all gone.

Now you've come to the book of Deuteronomy and the new generation needs to hear the same truth that their parents once heard and disbelieved. And so there's a second repeat, as it were, and it's called Deutero-nomy, Deuteronomy.

Like Leviticus, there's very little action here. It turns out to be something like a memory book. There are some snapshots here that are put into a memory book for the nation of Israel by Moses, kept in their archives forever as a memory book of the nation.

It's mostly Moses' farewell message to the nation on national television, if you will, as he gets near the end of his leadership role. It's his last will, his testament, his farewell speech to the people.

By this time, the whole nation is poised on the edge of the Promised Land and so Moses gives this long speech to help them remember some of the things that are going to be most important for them.

He reviewed Israel's past. And then he looks ahead to the future.

His review of their past is quite easily stated: "*when you obeyed God, you were blessed; when you disobeyed God, you were punished.*" It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out what the best conclusion would be. "*Therefore – what? – obey God.*" It's a simple statement. There are lots of chapters that work it out, but that's basically what he's saying in a nutshell. The new generation need to know this basic truth: when you obey God, you're blessed; when you disobey God, you'll suffer the consequences.

So he looks backward for about a third of the speech – chapters 1 through 11. He looks forward for two-thirds of the speech – chapters 12 through 34. So even as an old man he isn't doing just a backward look at the good old days, reminiscing. He's a man of leadership who looks forward as well, and prepares the people for moving ahead.

And as he does so he underlines this theme: divine faithfulness. And he will tell this new generation over and over again something they must never forget: God is faithful. He's a wonderful faithful God. And for the very first time in all of the Bible you read the words, "God loved you". That precious phrase first comes here in the book of Deuteronomy.

The key verse is chapter 6 and verse 23. Moses reiterates what God did. The *fact* is that God brought us out of slavery by his own power. The *purpose* is that he might bring us in to the Promised land. That's an evidence of his grace. We don't deserve to be in the promised land after the way we have behaved as a nation. But God's grace will be seen here.

And then the *reason* is to give us the land which he swore to give to our fathers. He's going to keep His promise because He is a faithful God. That's why He is doing what He's doing. There are 3 other essential lessons which are highlighted for us in 8:2-3.

He says, *“Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the desert these 40 years to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. He humbled you causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.”*

Three essential lessons are packed into those two verses: humility, spirituality, and faith. We don't have time in this survey course to explore these. I just drop them on your heart and suggest that you can take time somewhere along the way on your own journey to explore those essential lessons.

Ravi Zacharias suggested that without these 3 essential lessons, we move away from Deuteronomy to dangerous autonomy. And unless we absorb those 3 lessons and build them into the fabric of the way we live the Christian life, we will become like the disobedient people of God – autonomous, living outside of His commands and His blessing.

There's a comparison between this book and the book of Acts largely because each of these books are the fifth in their testament. This is the 5<sup>th</sup> in the OT, Acts the 5<sup>th</sup> in the new.

And both are transition kind of books. Deuteronomy provides a transition from Egypt to Canaan and the book of Acts provides a transition from the Gospel records of the life of Christ to the epistles, the letters, describing how we work out the life of Christ in church life in particular.

So both transition books of both testaments have quite a lot of similarities. For the NT book of Acts, the people of God moved to a new experience. For Deuteronomy it's a new generation that now rises and God works with them to give, in both cases, God's people a second chance as it were.

A note then about covenants as we come towards the end of the Pentateuch. Moses warned the people in this last speech of his that they would experience disaster if they disobeyed God.

And he reminded them about the covenant made between them and God at Mt Sinai which they said they would keep. The people did break this covenant and as a result they were later punished and they were later scattered. There were some very severe consequences for their disobedience. And that was a result of this particular covenant made between God and the people at Mt Sinai which was an “*if...then*” conditional covenant.

But notice that even though they broke this covenant and the terms of this agreement they did not, and could not, affect the Abrahamic Covenant. Because the Covenant God had made with Abraham was a unilateral promise of God and therefore He would still maintain a covenant relationship with His people because of what He had promised to Abraham.

No wonder Moses records God as being a faithful God. And so does the NT, doesn't it? Phil. 1:6 tells us, “*He who has begun a good work in you, will – what? – will bring it to completion.*” He will bring it to completion. Why? Because you're so wonderful? Ah, no. He will bring it to completion because He is a faithful God who will keep His promises.

Now let's review the Pentateuch very quickly. The book of Genesis gave us not just the genesis of all things but especially the *origins of the nation*, God's nation, God's people. And we began to see in the book of Genesis God's plan for how He would live with humanity.

Then the Book of Exodus, the *deliverance of that nation* and the beginning of nationhood in a very real sense for them because of God's power exercised on their behalf.

Leviticus – the *life of the nation*. The life of the nation was in view here because God was in view here. And His life was holy. God's person, then, a holy Person and our necessity to be like Him.

Numbers – a *testing of the nation*. A test which they failed, but which God in His providence overruled for the next generation and still carried them forward.

And the book of Deuteronomy, the *reminders to the nation* from the farewell speech of Moses. God's principles again seen very clearly in this second reminder of the laws of Moses.

Those are the first 5 books rather quickly. Let me give you one quotation from Thomas Mann which provides a good summary:

*"...the Pentateuch has portrayed Yahweh as a deity in search of community, a God whose primary purpose is the restoration of the order among creator, creature, and world that existed before the first human beings broke the first commandment. The Pentateuch is a narrative description of that process of restoration... At the end of the Pentateuch, that community—as a possibility—is now complete."*

And there is now existing in history and in the pages of Scripture a community that God has molded and with whom God is working and living among, that will be that kind of restoration community through whom God will work so that He can begin to restore all of humanity and all creation. For that is His cosmic plan. There's a good conclusion we would do well to read, in Deut. 30:19-20.

Moses declares, *"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 the length of your days..."* Ah, that's a good word for God's people of any generation.

We begin the books of history in our next session, beginning with Joshua.

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