

JOURNEY THROUGH THE BIBLE (33)

Moses' Farewell Addresses

Deuteronomy

The past several lessons in this journey through the Bible we have noted Israel in the wilderness. If you count their exodus from Egypt and time at Mt. Sinai, we have been dealing with this all of this year. In our last lesson we arrived at the border of Canaan at the end of their 40 years of wandering. So in this lesson we want to notice the farewell addresses of Moses as recorded in the book of Deuteronomy.

I. The Book of Deuteronomy

a. Facts about the book –

- i. This is the 5th book of Moses (the Pentateuch) and was the part of the Old Testament accepted by all Jews as authoritative.
- ii. The name means “second law”. Actually, it was the 2nd giving of God’s law to Israel. According to the LXX, Deuteronomy 17:18 uses the word (δευτερονόμιον, deuteronomion) instructing Kings “Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a **copy of this law** in a book, from the one before the priests, the Levites.”
- iii. It was first spoken by Moses as a farewell address (or series of addresses) (Deut. 1:1-3) beginning on the 40th year, 1st day of the 11th month. We are told toward the end of this book that he wrote the words (31:9, 24). Some sources attribute 3 speeches to Moses.
- iv. It is quoted or alluded to more than 80 times in the New Testament and one of the most prominent NT books. It is presented between the 3rd and 5th most quoted book (Psalms #1 & Isaiah #2, then Genesis & Exodus). One source placed Deuteronomy 3rd with 44 direct quotes. Some of the quotes from that list include:
 1. Deuteronomy 4:24 – the LORD your God is a consuming fire – Hebrews 12:29
 2. Deuteronomy 5:16 – “Honor your father and mother” – Matthew 15:4 (3x in NT)
 3. Deuteronomy 5:16-21 – parts of the 10 commandments repeated numerous times in the NT including – Romans 13:9, Matthew 19:18-19, etc.
 4. Deuteronomy 6:5 – love God with all your heart, soul & strength – Matthew 22:37
 5. Deut. 6:13, 16 & 8:3 – Jesus answering Satan’s temptations, “It is written” – Matthew 4:4-11
 6. Deuteronomy 18:15 – the LORD would raise up another prophet (like Moses) – Acts 3:22 – Peter applied this to Jesus.
 7. Deuteronomy 25:4 – not muzzle the ox – 1 Corinthians 9:9, etc.
 8. Deuteronomy 30:11-14 – this commandment is not too mysterious or far off – Romans 10:6-8.

b. Brief outline of Deuteronomy

- i. Moses’ first speech – recounting their history from their Exodus of Egypt to the defeat of Og and Bashan (in the 40th year) – 1:6-4:40. 1:1-5 - introduces his speech.
- ii. Second speech – a reminder of God’s laws when they inherited the land – 4:44-28:68, 4:44, “Now this is the law which Moses set before the children of Israel.”

- iii. Third Speech – a renewing of their covenant (29:1-30:20). 29:1, “*These are the words of the covenant which the LORD commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel.*”
- iv. 31-24 – final blessings and events.
 - 1. Joshua appointed to take Moses’ place 31:1-8- Moses is 120 years old.
 - 2. 31:9-13 – the law was to be read every 7 years.
 - 3. 31:14-32:47 – YHWH declared to Moses that Israel would rebel against Him. He had Moses write a song
 - 4. 31:48-52 – Moses is told to go up on Mt. Nebo where he would view the land and then die.
 - 5. 33 – Moses’ final blessing to each tribe and to Israel.
 - 6. 34 – Moses dies on Mt. Nebo. The people do not know where he is buried. Read 6-12.

c. Continually, the message of this book is a call for loyalty to God.

- i. Several sources describe this book as a treaty between God and Israel. There seems to be evidence that the structure of Deuteronomy is similar to treaties between a vassal state and its overlord, conqueror or successor (specifically mentioned is the Hittites around the same time).
- ii. Throughout the book of Deuteronomy there is continued emphasis on Israel keeping God’s commandments and statutes. Consider the following (from the NKJV).
 - 1. The word commandment (command) is found 132x in 99 verses in the book (Most are directly related to YHWH, while at times Moses is commanding something - but even then, he is acting on behalf of God. – Deut. 27:1,10
 - 2. The word statutes is found 29 times. A word meaning an authoritative rule or regulation
 - 3. The word law is found 23 times – in reference to the laws of God.
 - 4. The word judgment is found at least 22 times describing God’s instructions (established practices, customs) to Israel. It is OFTEN joined with commandments and/or statutes.
 - 5. The word testimonies (a solemn declaration) is found 3 times (Deut. 4:45, 6:17, 20). All 3x it is mentioned with statutes (2x – w/judgments, 2x – w/commanded).
- iii. The covenant between God and Israel –
 - 1. Deuteronomy 29:1 notes that the people were to make a covenant with God (a contractual agreement (or treaty) that calls for binding action between the two parties). It was an extension of the covenant they made with Him at Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19:5). The word “covenant” is found 27 times in Deuteronomy.
 - 2. Covenants were important in scripture:
 - 1) Genesis 6:18 finds God establishing His covenant with Noah (implying one had already been made – e.g. Genesis 3:15);
 - 2) Genesis 9:9ff – the rainbow was a sign of the covenant;
 - 3) Genesis 15:18 – God made a covenant with Abram to give him the land of Canaan to His descendants. It is THIS covenant that applied to Israel in our context.
 - 4) Later, this covenant will be referenced by Solomon as he dedicates the temple (1 Kings 8:23)

- 5) And later by righteous king Josiah of Judah who restores true worship one last time before they were taken away captive (2 Kings 23:1-3ff).
3. Moses is reminding Israel that they belong to YHWH and are obligated to faithfully serve Him. In fact, they HAVE entered into that covenant with Him (Exodus 19:8, 24:3, 7). Sadly, the admonitions are peppered with the knowledge of what they would do.
- iv. According to the Unger Bible Dictionary, describing the book of Deuteronomy, we note the following:
 1. **Treaty Form.** Second millennium b.c. Near Eastern treaties imposed upon a vassal by an overlord or a great king such as a Hittite ruler had a remarkably consistent form: (1) a preamble, identifying the author of the covenant; (2) historical prologue stating previous relations between the two parties (if any), and past benefactions by the overlord; (3) basic and detailed stipulations stating the obligations imposed by the sovereign ruler upon the vassal; (4) deposit of a copy of the covenant in the vassal's most sacred repository; (5) periodic public reading of the covenant by the vassal; (6) witnesses, generally the gods of the countries involved; (7) curses for breaking the covenant; (8) blessings for keeping it; (9) a formal oath of obedience; (10) a solemn ratification ceremony; (11) a formal procedure for acting against rebellious vassals. Covenants coming from first millennium b.c. sources are the same except that they do not have the historical prologue.¹
 2. **Compare this to Deuteronomy:**²
 - 1) Preamble – Deuteronomy 1:1-5
 - 2) Historical prologue – Deut. 1:6-3:29. Moses recounts Israel's wilderness wanderings
 - 3) Basic stipulations toward their ruler – Deut. 4-11 -
More specific stipulations – Deut. 12-26
 - 4) A copy to be deposited at a sacred place – Deut. 31:9, 26-27 – the book of the law was to be placed beside the Ark
 - 5) Provisions for public readings of the law – Deut. 31:10-13 – every 7 years, at the feast of Tabernacles, the law was to be read (likely this book).
 - 6) Witnesses to ensure this – Deut. 31:26 – the book itself served as a witness against Israel.
 - 7) Curses for breaking the covenant – Deut. 28:15-68
 - 8) Blessing for keeping it (submission) – Deut. 28:1-14
 - 9) A formal oath to be obedient – Deut. 29 describes the covenant they were to make with God. Deut. 29:1-2, 9-14, etc. While the formal oath of acceptance is not specified in Deuteronomy, we find several occasions where Israel made such an oath to God - see Exodus 24:7,

¹ Unger, M. F., & Harrison, R. K. (1988). [Deuteronomy, Book Of](#). In *The new Unger's Bible dictionary* (Rev. and updated ed.). Moody Press.

² Ibid

Joshua 24:24. Clearly, what Moses spoke in some of these final chapters was intended as an oath they were to make.

10) A ratification ceremony was to take place after they crossed the Jordan – Deut. 27:5-7 (1-10)

11) Warnings about their rebellion – Deut. 30:17-19

d. Passages of note

- i. We have noted several key texts from Deuteronomy already as we made NT observations and other points. But here let's notice a few more specific observations.
- ii. Deuteronomy 4:1-2 – do not add to or take away from His commanded words.
- iii. Deuteronomy 4:7-8 – what great nation is there that has God so near to it...
- iv. Deuteronomy 5:29 - *Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!* Spoken as Moses recounted YHWH's thunderous voice speaking the 10 commandments. The fear Him and ask Moses to speak on their behalf.
- v. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 – Hear YHWH (He is ONE – the ONLY God), love Him and teach it to your family!
- vi. Deuteronomy 8:1-6 – YHWH led them in the wilderness and provided for them and allowed them to hunger so that they would know that they needed not “*bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.*”
- vii. Deuteronomy 10:12-21 as Moses begins to remind them of various laws, he begins by calling upon them to fear, with in, love and serve YHWH with all your heart and soul...
- viii. Deuteronomy 12:5 – God had a place in mind where He would dwell with them
- ix. Deuteronomy 29:29 – “*The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.*”
- x. Deuteronomy 30:1-3– when they repent God will bring them back. In the later chapters of this book, YHWH tells Moses the people are going to rebel and He will punish them (various curses are mentioned). He is even told to write and teach them a song about it – Deut. 32:1-43). We see this rebellion throughout the history of Israel. But when they return there is the promise of redemption. That is the promise of 30:1-10.
- xi. Deuteronomy 30:15-19 – choose life.
- xii. Deuteronomy 34 – Moses sees the Promised land from Mt. Pisgah and dies. Note the farewell description attributed to him in vs. 8-12.

This is a summary of the book of Deuteronomy. I want to devote one more lesson to this book by making application to us today. We find here Israel preparing to enter the Promised Land after 40 years of wanderings. Moses has prepared them as best he can. His advice worked, but only for a short time. But that does not change the impact that his message has toward true disciples of God (and Jesus). As you examine your life in Jesus, are you faithful? Think about it!