

**Message #2****Deuteronomy 1:1-5**

One of the most famous events in all of sports occurred at the Rose Bowl on January 1, 1929. The University of California was playing Georgia Tech. Midway through the second quarter a Georgia Tech player fumbled and Roy Riegels from the University of California picked up the fumble and ran 69 yards the wrong way.

During the half time, Roy Riegels was devastated for what he had done to the team. He did not want to go back out to the field for the second half. Roy said to Coach Price, “Coach I can’t do it. I’ve ruined you, I’ve ruined myself, I’ve ruined the University of California, I couldn’t face that crowd to save my life.” Coach Price put his hand on Roy’s shoulder and said, “Roy, get up and go back out there—the game is only half over.” In other words, the coach said to Roy, you get a second chance.

God reveals Himself to be a God of second chances. In fact, He reveals Himself to be a God of many chances. Thank God in life there is a second half, because many of us made wrong decisions during the first half.

It was that way with Israel. After God brought Israel out of Egypt, she went the wrong way. She did not obey God. In fact, she did just the opposite of what God wanted her to do. But God, in His amazing grace, gave her another chance. He brought her back to the land again. That second chance is the whole emphasis of the book of Deuteronomy.

**Remember this, when it comes to any area of life, disobedience to God’s word will slow us down. It will slow down our development and it will slow down God’s blessings.**

**Whatever God’s plan is for Israel or for a nation or for a church or for any individual, the plan may be achieved or altered depending on the response of His people to His word.**

**If God’s people are serious about knowing and obeying God’s word, they will experience and see God do some amazing things in the shortest amount of time.** If His people are not serious about knowing and obeying God’s word, they will wander around for years going the wrong way not really knowing what could have been and they may actually miss out on what could have been.

All people have choices regardless of age. One may choose to forget the word of God and travel down his own road. Many people do. Many people govern their lives without much thought about God or His word. One may go to a job or a college and never give God’s word much of a thought. People may pursue whatever they want and don’t think they need to be serious about the Bible.

What those people will eventually discover is that they wandered through life trying this and that and then one day the years will have flown by and they will not ever really know what God wanted them to do.

Now the problem that many of God's people have is that they go for years without actually knowing the word of God. They travel through life with fears and doubts, and through bad teaching they follow their religion and rituals and denominations and laws and legalism and catechisms. The real problem is, those things will not ever take God's people into the blessings of God.

What Moses demonstrates here in his final days on earth is this:

**IF GOD'S PEOPLE WANT TO EXPERIENCE GOD'S GREATEST BLESSINGS AS FAST AS THEY CAN IN LIFE, THEY NEED TO BE CAREFULLY TAUGHT THE WORD OF GOD AND THEY NEED TO OBEY IT.**

This point is a central point of the book of Deuteronomy. The minister has the responsibility to carefully and accurately teach God's word to God's people. The minister is to be a communicator of God's word, not an innovator. A minister must realize the message is not his, it is God's. If His people heed that word, they will head straight into the blessings of God. That point may be seen in the opening verses of Deuteronomy.

There are six introduction observations we want to see as this important book opens.

**INTRODUCTION OBSERVATION #1** – These are the words Moses spoke. **1:1a**

It is important to see how this book begins. It does not begin by saying “this is the law of Moses.” It begins by saying, “these are the words of Moses.” Moses is a man of God and he is going to speak God's word to God's people. This is what God's people need to hear.

They need to hear words. The vast majority of this book contains the words spoken by Moses. These words are his last words and these words are inspired words. Carefully notice the importance of words. It isn't the concepts that are inspired; it is the very words that are inspired.

Moses spoke these words “to all Israel.” This prepositional phrase “to all Israel” occurs some twelve times in the book of Deuteronomy. What that certainly means is that everyone in the nation regardless of age or gender needed to hear these words.

This, frankly, is what church should be doing. It should be carefully teaching people the words of the Bible.

By the way, the people of Israel did not say let's have a bunch of Sunday school classes and home cell groups or home tent groups and have someone lead the study. At this point in time, all the people went to hear Moses speak the word of God.

Now we certainly see a critical point of how God communicates to His people right here. He has a man of God communicate the word of God and when this happens, the people need to be there to hear it. They need to take in the words of God and apply it to their lives.

Moses was an amazing man of God. He saw God do things no other man in existence has ever seen God do. New Testament writers mention Moses more than any other person in the Old Testament.

Although no man will ever reach the Moses status, the fact is God still uses men to proclaim His word and people need to hear God's word. This point has not changed since the days of Moses.

Carefully observe what Moses did. **Verse 1** says Moses spoke. **Verse 3** says Moses spoke or proclaimed. **Verse 5** says Moses expounded. The word "spoke" in **verses 1** and **3** is *dabar*, which refers to giving a speech or discourse (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 187). The word "expound" in **verse 5** is *be'er* which means to give careful explanation and declaration (*Ibid.*, p. 100).

What these words mean is that the way God communicated His word and will to His people was through a man selected by God who had the responsibility to carefully, accurately and verbally expound and explain the word of God.

When a man of God carefully and accurately and verbally expounds the word of God and God's people go to hear it, they are actually putting themselves on a path of great blessing.

**INTRODUCTION OBSERVATION #2** – These words were spoken to Israel while she was in the wilderness on the other side of the Jordan. **1:1b**

God's word is for God's people. God does not give His word to entertain the heathen world. He gives His word to instruct His own people. Can you imagine God telling Moses, I want you to take My word and make it seeker friendly so the heathen world will like it. Neither God nor Moses had time for such nonsense.

Israel was on the verge of being in the Promised Land and God wanted His people to grasp the geographical location where this is actually happening.

There are a list of places mentioned here that we don't know too much about. We know where the Jordan River is and we know where the Arabah is located, but other than that we are somewhat in the dark.

The Arabah still goes by the same name—Wady-el-Arabah. It is located in a valley that extends from the Sea of Galilee to south of the Dead Sea, all the way to the Red Sea.

**But what all these places do tell us is that Israel was near the Promised Land but was not in the Promised Land.**

Israel was in the Arabah, opposite Suph, between Paran (desert area between Mt. Sinai and Kadesh-barnea) and Tophel (15 miles SE of Dead Sea) and Laban and Hazeroth and Dizahab (perhaps on the eastern Sinai coast).

We may not be able to pinpoint exact locations, but what this does reveal is that these places were specific and real. This is not abstract data. These are precise places. **God sovereignly leads people and directs them in life to specific places and if His people want His blessings, they need to obey Him.**

These were specific places where Israel was camped at the time Moses made the address. By naming these places, it is clear that the word of God was important to every person regardless of where they lived. All needed to hear this.

She was on the verge of crossing the Jordan and taking the Promised Land. It has been well observed that there are over 200 references to the land in the book of Deuteronomy (i.e. 1:7). She was on the verge of taking this land in the final days of the life of Moses.

But the reality is, she still doesn't have that land even now. Why? Why is it that Israel does not have all that land and has been wandering around for 2,700 years? The reason is that she would not obey the word of God.

There are churches all over the world today. There are churches in cities and in suburbs and in the country. There are big churches and medium churches and small churches. What all those churches need is for someone to carefully and accurately expound the Scriptures.

**INTRODUCTION OBSERVATION #3** – This location was just 11 days journey from where God originally gave the law at Mt. Horeb. **1:2**

**Mt. Horeb and Mt. Sinai are names used interchangeably for the same location (Ex. 34:2, 27; Deut. 5:2).** Horeb is the favorite name for Mt. Sinai in the book of Deuteronomy. It is used some nine times as compared to one use of Sinai (Deut. 33:2). The book of Exodus uses the name Sinai 13 times and Horeb three times. The book of Numbers uses the name Sinai 12 times and zero times does it call it Horeb.

**God wanted these people to think about the fact that Mt. Sinai, where He first gave Israel His word, was only 11 days journey from the Promised Land.** At the time Moses presents God's word to them in Deuteronomy, they were only 11 days of travel away from the specific location where God initially gave His word to Israel after she crossed the Red Sea.

The distance from Horeb (Sinai) to Kadesh-barnea to the Promised Land is 140-150 miles. So by traveling an easy 12 ½ miles per day you would be there in 11 days.

Kadesh-barnea is mentioned because this was the place where God originally brought Israel to begin taking the land. But the nation listened to ten unfaithful spies and would not listen to Joshua and Caleb, which began their years of wandering (Numbers 13-14).

Now some have suggested that these 11 days have to do with camel riding. If you rode a camel from Horeb to Kadesh-barnea, it would take 11 days. But there is nothing to suggest that. In fact, most of God's people did not have camels. Men, women and children could travel 12 miles a day in 5-6 hours. If you did a mile every 30 minutes, that is two miles per hour. So in six hours one could easily travel this total distance in 11 days.

Now if you were God's people listening to this and you are now looking at the Promised Land where God initially wanted to take you, when He parted the Red Sea, and did some simple math, you would think, "you mean we are only 11 days from the spot where God gave us the law to lead us to this land?" The answer is yes. Well what in the world went wrong? What went wrong is Israel would not obey God. If you don't obey God, you slow down your progress and you slow down God's will for your life.

**INTRODUCTION OBSERVATION #4** – Moses is speaking these words in year 40. **1:3**

God really wants to emphasize the time element in this. Now we learn here that Moses is speaking to God's people in year 40, which is 1406 BC. So what that specifically means is that **they could have been in this land in 11 days, but instead they wandered around in a wilderness for 40 years.**

**Through their disobedience these people of God turned a quick 11 day trip into a long 40 year nightmare. DISOBEDIENCE WILL ALWAYS SLOW YOU DOWN AND KEEP YOU FROM GETTING WHERE GOD WANTS YOU TO BE AS QUICK AS YOU CAN.**

As Dr. C. I. Scofield said, "a journey which should have required eleven days was prolonged to forty years" (*Scofield Study Bible*, NASV, p. 258).

What went wrong? What went wrong is that the previous generation stopped reverencing God, stopped listening to the word of God being taught by a man of God, and they stopped obeying the word of God. Remember this; **disobedience to God's word never pays with God's blessings.**

As a result of disobedience, God had Israel wander in the wilderness for 40 years when they could have been in the Promised Land in 11 days.

Don't make the same mistake. If you will reverence God and be serious about hearing and learning and obeying the word of God, God will lead you to tremendous blessings. But if you don't, you will wander around through life and 40 years later will think I missed out on what could have been.

If there is a message young people need to hear, it is this. **The fastest way for you to experience all of God's blessings in your life is to obey the word of God.** You probably won't get those blessings overnight. Metaphorically speaking, it may take 11 days, but at least you won't be wandering around for 40 years.

The tragedy today is that most people won't choose to do this. Most people don't even care if they actually and accurately hear the word of God. What they will discover is 40 years will fly by fast and then they will wonder where the time went and what all did I miss.

**INTRODUCTION OBSERVATION #5** – Moses mentions two victories God recently gave to Israel. **1:4**

This is fascinating because Moses brings his application into the present with a recent illustration that these people would have experienced. These were not distant tales from the past, but by obeying God, they had experienced great blessings in the present. Israel was afraid that the Canaanites would crush them so God reminded them that He gave them victory over two powerful, godless, pagan kings, who lived north and east of the Jordan.

When Israel obeyed God, God gave them victory. Moses reminds God's people that just recently Sihon and Og had been defeated (Deut. 2:26-3:11; Num. 21:21-35). God gave His people victory over intimidating Amorites. Heshbon was located 7.5 miles south of Amman, Jordan. Ashteroth is about 22 miles east of Sea of Galilee. Edrie is about 60 miles south of Damascus and 15 miles south of Ashteroth.

As they were on the verge of entering the Promised Land, they needed to remember this. God goes with His people and He watches out for His faithful people. As they obey Him, He gives them victories and blessings. These two victories proved it.

**INTRODUCTION OBSERVATION #6** – Moses undertook the responsibility of expounding God's word across the Jordan. **1:5**

The people of God were not yet in the Promised Land. In fact, it is clearly stated that Moses was "across the Jordan in the land of Moab." **Moses believed the most important thing he could do for the people of God was to expound the word of God.**

The Hebrew word "expound" (be'er) is a very rare word. As we pointed out from Mr. Gesenius, it means to give careful explanation and declaration. Brown-Driver and Briggs add that it is an explanation or declaration that makes something very clear or plain or distinct so that the people may understand (Brown-Driver-Briggs, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 90).

Now Moses is not too far away from dying and yet **he believed the best thing he could do for people was to carefully expound the Scriptures and make those Scriptures come to life for the people so they could accurately understand them.**

It is a shame that ministers do not understand this point. The most important thing they can do is to carefully and accurately expound the word of God and feed the sheep of God the word.

Their job is to carefully and accurately study to rightly divide Scripture so that they can make it very clear and plain for the people to understand. This is what will make people successful.

Their job is not to entertain or impress or dazzle. Their main job is not to drink coffee and share stories. Their job is not to present culturally relevant topics on political or moral issues, or create programs to market the church. Their job is to carefully and accurately expound the word of God for the people of God just like Moses did.

Moses knew that before people can accurately obey the word, they must accurately understand the word. Moses knew the key to God's blessings is obedience and it was his job to make certain that they had a clear and accurate understanding of God's word.

Now perhaps you are here today and you have made a mess of things in your life. You have wandered through life in many instances have gone the wrong way. Deuteronomy teaches that God is a God of second chances.

Your life is not over yet. You have time to experience the blessings of God. Take in His word and obey it and those blessings will be yours.