

# Deuteronomy

Vineland Park Baptist Church

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## LESSONS FROM THE PAST

After 40 years of wandering in the desert Jehovah has brought the Israelites to the Plains of Moab where Moses delivers about five sermons. This is an important distinction in that in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers it is “Then the LORD spoke to Moses saying...” But in Deuteronomy it is Moses speaking to the people. Of course it is God speaking through Moses but that is a difference.

It was Moses who God appeared to on Mount Horeb in the burning bush and commissioned him to go tell the Pharaoh of Egypt to “Let My people go!”

Through the ordeal of ten plagues, the last plague which killed the first-born son in every household in Egypt, including Pharaoh’s son, that did not have blood on the doorposts, the sign that the death angel could “Passover” that house.

The Israelites cross over the Red Sea as Moses, directed by the LORD, raises his rod over the sea and the sea parted and the people went over on dry land. Pharaoh’s army followed after them and the sea closed in on them and all the Egyptians drowned.

The Israelites then make a short eleven-day trip to Kadesh-Barnea on the east of the River Jordan. Twelve men, one from each tribe, are sent in to spy out the land. When they return only Caleb and Joshua encourage the people to enter the land. The other ten were terrified of the inhabitants and persuade the people to refuse to cross over the Jordan.

Num 13:30-33

<sup>30</sup> Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, "Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it."

<sup>31</sup> But the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they *are* stronger than we." <sup>32</sup> And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, "The land through which we have gone as spies *is* a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it *are* men of *great* stature. <sup>33</sup> There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight."

Because of their refusal to obey the LORD they wander about in the desert until this generation dies in the wilderness.

Heb 3:16-19

<sup>16</sup> For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, *was it* not all who came out of Egypt, *led* by Moses? <sup>17</sup> Now with whom was He angry forty years? *Was it* not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? <sup>18</sup> And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? <sup>19</sup> So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. NKJV

Moses knows that he will not be allowed to enter into the Land of Canaan and so as a good leader he is going to prepare the people. This generation was not born when the Israelites came out of Egypt and they need to be taught some important lessons, not the least being the Law.

“Deuteronomy” means “second law.” The word itself is a mistranslation of the Greek translation of the OT, the Septuagint, meaning “a copy of this law.”

Second Law implies a new law but Deuteronomy is more of a commentary on the Law given on Sinai.

## Did Moses really write Deuteronomy?

We won't spend much time on the arguments that Moses could not have written all of Deuteronomy. Moses claims to be its author and Jesus attributes the book to Moses.

Mark 10:1-6

Then He arose from there and came to the region of Judea by the other side of the Jordan. And multitudes gathered to Him again, and as He was accustomed, He taught them again. <sup>2</sup> The Pharisees came and asked Him, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce *his* wife?" testing Him.

<sup>3</sup> And He answered and said to them, "What did Moses command you?"

<sup>4</sup> They said, "Moses permitted *a man* to write a certificate of divorce, and to dismiss *her*." <sup>5</sup> And Jesus answered and said to them, "Because of the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. [Deut 24:1-4]"

John 7:16-19

<sup>16</sup> Jesus answered them and said, "My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me. <sup>17</sup> If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or *whether* I speak on My own *authority*. <sup>18</sup> He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him. <sup>19</sup> Did not Moses give you the law, yet none of you keeps the law? Why do you seek to kill Me?" [Deut 33:4]"

Another issue is raised by those who say that Moses could not have written the entire book because it tells of his death. Well Moses wasn't a witness to what he wrote in Genesis either! The only people who have a problem with Moses as the author are those who would deny Holy Spirit revelation. If God can reveal to Moses how the universe came into existence it is no hard thing to reveal to Moses how he will die.

## The relevance of Deuteronomy to the Christians today

“The casual reader, however, unacquainted with the treasures of this important biblical book, may well ask how its message from the distant world of antiquity can possibly be applicable to contemporary life. How can the extended migration and ultimate settlement of a large tribe from one part of the ancient world to another in the second millennium BC, be remotely significant in the closing years of the second millennium AD, with its technological highly sophisticated largely urban society. However incredible it may sound, the message of this book is arrestingly relevant in this admittedly different world because it deals with timeless truths as well as contemporary issues.”

### *Timeless truths*

It is not relevant merely because it happens to raise moral and social issues which are markedly applicable to modern society. It is of crucial importance because it expounds some key biblical themes which are *always* relevant to the life of God’s people and to the world in which their witness is set. Late twentieth-century society needs Deuteronomy’s doctrine of God, Revelation and Grace.”

The Message of Deuteronomy, Raymond Brown, Inter-Varsity Press. 1993, page 19

One of the things that every teenager will try to pull on his or her parents when they want to do something that they shouldn’t do is to say “But, daddy times are different from when you were my age.” My son tried that only one time.

Yes, Bobby, times are different but people are the same; times may change but we are still sinners.

Good judgment comes from experience; experience comes from poor judgment.

One of the most difficult things for a young person to learn is the difference between experience and opinion. Everyone may have an opinion; but you have to live a few years to gain experience.

That will be the key to this study. It will be successful if we take the timeless truths of God’s Word and apply them to how we live our lives as believers in Christ Jesus.

***Hear now, O Israel, the decrees and laws I am about to teach you. Follow them so that you may live and may go in and take possession of the land that the Lord, the God of your fathers, is giving you. {4:1}***

DO YOU LIKE TO STUDY HISTORY? We would all be better served if we would learn about the past and act in ways to preserve the good and avoid the ill.

It doesn't matter if the history is global, national, local, or even family (personal), the principle is the same. Why do we keep on making the same mistakes that others before us have made?

In the broadest sense, history is HIS-story. God is working out His purpose in the generations of souls that have been and will be until He concludes the world.

The life of Moses will come to its end. God, through Moses, is preparing the Israelites to enter the land of promise. Moses will not be going with them because of the "provocation."

Moses and the Israelites are "beyond the Jordan, in the land of Moab," or in the Plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho. {Numbers 36:13}

They are finally about to cross over Jordan into Canaan and begin to possess the land that was given to them by God.

Moses will not be allowed to enter Canaan because of his rashness but he will get a look at it from atop Mt. Pisgah.

Deut 34:1-4

Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is across from Jericho. And the LORD showed him all the land of Gilead as far as Dan, <sup>2</sup> all Naphtali and the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Western Sea, <sup>3</sup> the South, and the plain of the Valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, as far as Zoar. <sup>4</sup> Then the LORD said to him, "This *is* the land of which I swore to give Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your descendants.' I have caused you to see *it* with your eyes, but you shall not cross over there."

## 1. The Setting

## Deuteronomy 1:1-8

### Deut 1:1-8

These *are* the words which Moses spoke to all Israel on this side of the Jordan in the wilderness, in the plain opposite Suph, between Paran, Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Dizahab. <sup>2</sup> *It is eleven days' journey* from Horeb by way of Mount Seir to Kadesh Barnea. <sup>3</sup> Now it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first *day* of the month, *that* Moses spoke to the children of Israel according to all that the LORD had given him as commandments to them, <sup>4</sup> after he had killed Sihon king of the Amorites, who dwelt in Heshbon, and Og king of Bashan, who dwelt at Ashtaroth in Edrei.

<sup>5</sup> On this side of the Jordan in the land of Moab, Moses began to explain this law, saying, <sup>6</sup> "The LORD our God spoke to us in Horeb, saying: 'You have dwelt long enough at this mountain. <sup>7</sup> Turn and take your journey, and go to the mountains of the Amorites, to all the neighboring *places* in the plain, in the mountains and in the lowland, in the South and on the seacoast, to the land of the Canaanites and to Lebanon, as far as the great river, the River Euphrates. <sup>8</sup> See, I have set the land before you; go in and possess the land which the LORD swore to your fathers – to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – to give to them and their descendants after them.'

Brother Gables, in his studies of the "Life and Ministry of Elijah," noted the similarities between Elijah and Moses. E.g. Mount Horeb (Sinai); the cleft of the rock; how Elijah and Moses appear with Jesus Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration.

From a commentary on Elijah:

### 2 Kings 2:11

Indeed, as to Elijah and as to Enoch, it is written in the sacred books that they disappeared, but so that nobody knew that they died.'

That Enoch was actually translated, is placed beyond controversy by the testimony of the apostle. And the same conclusion is inferentially drawn in the analogous case of Elijah. Dr. Hall's observations on this translation of Elijah are too appropriate and beautiful to be disregarded, - 'Long and happily had Elijah fought the wars of his God; and now, after his noble and glorious victories, God will send him a chariot of triumph. How full of heavenly joy was the soul of Elijah while he foreknew and looked for this instant happiness! Jordan must be crossed by Elijah in his way to heaven. There must be a parallel between the two great prophets that shall meet Christ at Tabor-Moses and Elias.

Both received visions on Horeb; to both God appeared there-in fire and in other forms of terror; both were sent to kings-one to Pharaoh, the other to Ahab; both revenged idolatries with the sword-the one upon the worshippers of the golden calf, the other upon the 400 Baalites; both divided the waters-the one of the Red Sea, the other of Jordan; both must be fetched away beyond Jordan-the body of Elijah is translated, the body of Moses is hid. What Moses doth by his rod, Elijah does by his mantle; he only bids the waters stand aside, and they give way to his last walk, that he might with dry feet mount up into the celestial chariot.'

(from Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright © 1997, 2003, 2005, 2006 by BibleSoft, Inc. All rights reserved.)

It is only eleven days' journey from Horeb (Sinai) to Kadesh-Barnea on the rolling plains of Moab, east of the Jordan - only eleven days - yet, because of their rebellion, the Israelites wandered another 38 years in the wilderness.

Many believers today are still "wandering in the wilderness" because their priorities allow God to be less than first in their daily routine.

Moses began to explain this law, saying... 1:5

The word "expound" or "explain" refers to writing. Apparently Moses wrote down what God told him and then Moses had this word distributed throughout the camps of the Israelites.

## 2. LEARNING from FAILURE

Deuteronomy 1:6-46

Moses recalls the cause of their wanderings in the wilderness. They were supposed to march directly to Canaan and possess it. Moses reminds them of their rebellion. Moses also takes responsibility for his own rashness.

The biblical term is the "provocation."

### PROVOCATION

Anything that provokes, excites, incites, or stimulates. The reference in Heb 3:8,15 to "the provocation" (KJV), or "the rebellion" (NKJV), is a quotation from Ps 95:7-11. This passage points back to a specific time when the Israelites provoked God by their rebellion against Moses during the Exodus (Ex 17:1-7). The name of that place was called MASSAH (testing, temptation) and MERIBAH (strife, contention). The word provocation generally describes the ungrateful spirit and rebellious conduct of Israel that stirred the Lord's anger.

(from Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright © 1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers)

The historical record of the provocation is in Exodus 17:1-7 & Numbers 20:1-13.

#### Ex 17:1-7

Then all the congregation of the children of Israel set out on their journey from the Wilderness of Sin, according to the commandment of the LORD, and camped in Rephidim; but *there was* no water for the people to drink. <sup>2</sup> Therefore the people contended with Moses, and said, "Give us water, that we may drink."

So Moses said to them, "Why do you contend with me? Why do you tempt the LORD?"

<sup>3</sup> And the people thirsted there for water, and the people complained against Moses, and said, "Why *is* it you have brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?" <sup>4</sup> So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me!"

<sup>5</sup> And the LORD said to Moses, "Go on before the people, and take with you some of the elders of Israel. Also take in your hand your rod with which you struck the river, and go. <sup>6</sup> Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock in Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink."

And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. <sup>7</sup> So he called the name of the place Massah {burden} and Meribah {bitter}, because of the contention of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?"

#### Num 20:1-13

Then the children of Israel, the whole congregation, came into the Wilderness of Zin in the first month, and the people stayed in Kadesh; and Miriam died there and was buried there.

<sup>2</sup> Now there was no water for the congregation; so they gathered together against Moses and Aaron. <sup>3</sup> And the people contended with Moses and spoke, saying: "If only we had died when our brethren died before the LORD! <sup>4</sup> Why have you brought up the assembly of the LORD into this wilderness, that we and our animals should die here? <sup>5</sup> And why have you made us come up out of Egypt, to bring us to this evil place? It *is* not a place of grain or figs or vines or pomegranates; nor *is* there any water to drink." <sup>6</sup> So Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and they fell on their faces. And the glory of the LORD appeared to them.

<sup>7</sup> Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, <sup>8</sup> "Take the rod; you and your brother Aaron gather the congregation together. Speak to the rock before their eyes, and it will yield its water; thus you shall bring water for them out of the rock, and give drink to the congregation and their animals." <sup>9</sup> So Moses took the rod from before the LORD as He commanded him.

<sup>10</sup> And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock; and he said to them, "Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock?"

<sup>11</sup> Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank.

<sup>12</sup> Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them."

<sup>13</sup> This was the water of Meribah, because the children of Israel contended with the LORD, and He was hallowed among them.

There are two other references to the provocation:

Ps 95:7-11

<sup>7</sup> For He *is* our God,  
And we *are* the people of His pasture,  
And the sheep of His hand.  
Today, if you will hear His voice:  
<sup>8</sup> "Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion,  
As *in* the day of trial in the wilderness,  
<sup>9</sup> When your fathers tested Me;  
They tried Me, though they saw My work.  
<sup>10</sup> For forty years I was grieved with *that* generation,  
And said, 'It *is* a people who go astray in their hearts,  
And they do not know My ways.'  
<sup>11</sup> So I swore in My wrath,  
'They shall not enter My rest.'"

Heb 3:8-15

<sup>8</sup> *Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion,  
In the day of trial in the wilderness,  
<sup>9</sup> Where your fathers tested Me, tried Me,  
And saw My works forty years.  
<sup>10</sup> Therefore I was angry with that generation,  
And said, 'They always go astray in their heart,  
And they have not known My ways.'  
<sup>11</sup> So I swore in My wrath,  
'They shall not enter My rest.'*

<sup>12</sup> Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; <sup>13</sup> but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. <sup>14</sup> For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, <sup>15</sup> while it is said:

*"Today, if you will hear His voice,  
Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."*

Paul tells us that the “rock” was Christ. It is Christ who sustains us and it is utter rebellion to give credit to anyone or anything besides Jesus Christ! This is also a warning against presumption.

#### 1 Cor 10:1-13

Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, <sup>2</sup> all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, <sup>3</sup> all ate the same spiritual food, <sup>4</sup> and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. <sup>5</sup> But with most of them God was not well pleased, for *their bodies* were scattered in the wilderness.

<sup>6</sup> Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. <sup>7</sup> And do not become idolaters as *were* some of them. As it is written, “*The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.*” <sup>8</sup> Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; <sup>9</sup> nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; <sup>10</sup> nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. <sup>11</sup> Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

<sup>12</sup> Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. <sup>13</sup> No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*.

As to the provocation itself, there is a difference of opinion as to whether it was Moses striking the rock twice or assuming that he had the power to bring water out of the rock that was the “provocation.” I take the position that it was Moses’ anger and speaking as though he could bring water out of the rock. The LORD told Moses to speak to the rock but he struck the rock twice! But it seems to me that it was what Moses said more than what he did.