

Bible Study Course

Deuteronomy

Introduction

The name “Deuteronomy” is taken from the Greek, and means “The Second Law”, or “The Repetition of The Law”. The Hebrew title is taken from the first sentence of the book and means, “These are The Words”. The beauty of Deuteronomy is hardly anywhere excelled, nor its direct simplicity of language.

In many ways this book of the Pentateuch is different from the other four books. It is what the Gospel of John is to the other Gospels, a spiritual interpretation and underlining of what has gone before. Deuteronomy is prophetic. It is not mere teaching and regulations, but it is the setting forth of the heart of the matter, the inner principle of the law. It is not the mere repetition of the law for a new generation, but an interpretation of its true meaning. It goes beyond even that, for it is the interpretation of their past, present and future, their calling and destiny as the people of God.

We should note that, apart from the Psalms, it is the most quoted book in the New Testament (quoted or alluded to 96 times approx.). In the Old Testament it is quoted approximately 356 times, and is closely bound up with Leviticus 61 times, and Numbers 74 times. The Lord Jesus in the temptation used Deuteronomy three times when He answered Satan.

With Deuteronomy, the five books of the Hebrew “Torah” (Law) are completed. The foundation upon which the whole Old Testament was to be built was finished with this book.

Authorship and Date

There has been much controversy as to the authorship and date of Deuteronomy, but it is manifestly the work of Moses, if not exactly as we now have it, basically his work. See Deuteronomy 31:24. Some believe that later scribes edited Deuteronomy and that the form in which we now have it dates from Ezra’s day. Others believe that it is a “pious fraud” written either in the time of King Josiah and was the book of the law “found” in the temple (See 2 Kings 22:8) or was written in the post exilic period. It is hard to believe that our Lord Jesus answered the Devil three times by quoting from a “pious fraud”, without Satan raising the point! Furthermore, both Peter and Stephen refer to Moses as the author of Deuteronomy. See Acts 3:22-23; Acts 7:37. It seems therefore, reasonably clear that Moses was the author of this book and also as reasonably clear that there are a few additions, particularly the account of Moses’ death. This was probably written by either Joshua or one of the Levites.

The eight discourses were obviously first given orally, see 1:3, and then written in book form, 31:9, 24

It was written in the uplands of Moab, overlooking the Promised Land in the month before Moses died, approximately 1400 BC when he was 120 years of age. He must have known that Israel was soon to pass over Jordan, and that he, therefore, had little time available. Deuteronomy is the work of a man deeply wrought upon by God.

The book covers the 40 years between the exodus from Egypt and the crossing of the Jordan, and is given in retrospect. It would have taken Moses about 5 weeks to rehearse. See Deut 1:3. “In the 40th year, the 11th month, the 1st day. Josh 4:19. “In the 41st year, the 1st month, the 10th day, Israel crossed the Jordan.

Key to the Book

In spite of its Greek name “Repetition of the law”, the key to Deuteronomy is not the Word of God, nor the Law, but the essential element and quality that He is forever seeking, and which alone can truly answer Him – Love. This has hardly been mentioned in the Bible up to this point, although implied and illustrated. The one exception is Exodus 20:6

Everywhere we find now that the basic and necessary quality which God looks for in His own is Love. See Deut 5:10; 6:5; 7:9; 10:12, 18, 19; 11:1, 13, 22; 13:3; 19:9; 30:6, 16, 20. We discover, moreover, that behind all God's ways and dealings with His own is in His love. See Deut 4:37; 7:6 – 13; 10:15; 23:5; 33:3. From all this it is clear that the only thing that can satisfy God is love, and that divine love alone can keep us in the will and the ways of God. We ought to note that with the word "love", a number of other words are associated: -

"Obey", "cleave", see e.g. Deut 10:20 cp v.18, 19

"Fear", "serve", "keep".

Note e.g. Deut 10:20 cp. Deut 10:12, 19; 11:1, 22; 13:4; 30:20

Moses was now an old man with a long history of experience and observation. He had seen not only the acts of God, but supremely he had understood the ways of God. His life had been an instruction in God's ways. Now at the end of his life, by the grace of God, and through the Holy Spirit, he puts his finger on the vital constituent without which all is meaningless. He rehearses their history in the light of divine love. He repeats the Law with this new emphasis and depth.

Notice also how the Name of the Lord is mentioned in relation to everything and everyone in this book. His Name is continually reiterated. This too is linked with love. Deut 5:11; 6:13; 10:20; 12:5, 11, 21; 14:23, 24; 16:6, 11; 18:5, 7, 19, 20, 22; Deut 26:2; 28:58; 32:3

Outline of the Book

We need to bear three things in mind: -

1. There was, with the exception of two men, a completely new generation. Hence the need of the review.
2. The emphasis upon the Land and the Lord's purpose. This is the context of the book. See Deut 4:20, 21, 37, 38; 6:23
3. A specific place in the land is continually referred to, from chapter 12 onwards, as the only place acceptable to God. 12:5, 11, 13, 14; 16:6, 11,16; 31:11

I. History reviewed 1:1 – 4:43

- a) The sovereignty of the Lord over their whole history
- b) The Lord's Lordship over His people (their life, their home, their work, their movements etc.)
- c) The absolute necessity of faith in the Lord (the need to trust the Lord and his ability).
- d) The Lord, the meaning of their life. (He delivers them, He defeats their enemies, He provides for them, He guides, He interprets, He instructs.)
- e) The key to their history is the love of God (His faithfulness, His mercy, and His jealousy over them).

II. The Law Reinterpreted 4:44 – 26:19

- a) Love is the key not only to the giving of the law, but also to the keeping of it. See 5:10; 6:5-7; 7:9, 13; 10:12, 15; 11:1, 13, 22.
- b) Love is the answer to giving the Lord His rights. 13:3, 4; 15:12-18. (A picture of true service)
- c) We ought to note that underlying all the many laws to do with our relations to one another is this matter of love. Love for God must be expressed in love for our brother, and, and even the stranger in our midst. Divine love is the strength of the corporate life.
- d) Note: -

1. The repetition of the Ten Commandments. Deut 5

Their value summed up and the heart of the matter emphasized.

2. The privileges and the perils of election. Deut 6-11

To be the elect people of God has both its glorious privileges and its very grave responsibilities. Love alone can keep us in the ways of God.

3. The dwelling place of God. Deut 12-16

The desire of God to dwell amongst His people is born of His love for us. Mark the place of worship – the one sanctuary which He has chosen (the oneness of Christ) and the purity of worship – holiness.

4. The Love of God expressed in the execution of justice and the administration of Government Deut. 16: 18 – 26

All these many laws embody and express the love of God. We do not often associate justice and government with divine love, but true justice and government are for our good. Behind the whole concept of such justice and government is the love of God.

III. The Covenant renewed 27 – 30

- a) The stones containing the Law were to be set up on Mt. Ebal. We then have the solemn warning as to blessing and curse Deut 27-28
- b) To go on with the Lord means blessing, increase, instruction etc.
- c) To go back from the Lord is to lose all the meaning of one's life.
- d) The renewal of the Covenant Deut 29-30
- e) Note carefully Deut 30:15-20

IV. The Farewell of Moses

- a) The song of Moses 31 – 32
- b) The blessing of Moses 33
- c) The death of Moses 34

Message of the Book

This is the summing up of the Pentateuch, and the setting forth of that one basic element which will give rise to everything else. That basic element is love. Without that kind of love all our worship, living and service becomes a caricature of the real thing. God can never be satisfied without this love, even if everything else is in order. It is the essential element, which alone can answer Him. 1 Cor 13 is the best summary of Deuteronomy; it encapsulates the purpose of God and the service of God. Cold formal obedience, a mere technical knowledge and exactness, cannot ever satisfy the heart of God, nor reach His end.

Recommended books

Notes on Deuteronomy

C.H. McIntosh

Halford House Tapes

BS 162

Deuteronomy

Bible Study Course
Books of the Bible: Deuteronomy

Questions

1. What is the main message of the Book of Deuteronomy? (Write a few sentences) Why do you think this is so important? Give references, if you can to support your reasons.
2. Can you find the outstanding prophecy in Deuteronomy concerning Christ?
3. Why is the book of Deuteronomy so important in the Bible?
4. Read chapter 20:1 – 20. What lessons could Christians find there about spiritual warfare?
5. Read chapter 7 and 9:1 – 15. State in a sentence why God requires the destruction of the Canaanite nations. Can you draw any lessons from this, for the Christian life?
6. Read 7:6 – 10; 9:6 – 29. Do you find anything there that tells you of God's attitude to His people? Do you find anything surprising in His attitude?
7. Read 7:21 – 8:10. What can you find out about spiritual growth in this passage?
8. Read 31:14 – 32:53. Write a paragraph on the faithfulness of God to His own purposes.
9. Chapters 29 and 30 tell us something about covenant relationship and responsibilities. Say something about the work of Christ for us, as prefigured in:
 - a) 29: 12 – 15 (the gospel for the Gentiles)
 - b) 30: 5 – 6 (Col 2:1 -11)
 - c) 30:19
10. Read chapter 4: 31 – 43, and 19: 1-21. Does this speak to you, in any way, about the work of Christ, on behalf of sinners?
11. In Deuteronomy, we find that Moses makes the following speeches:

1) 1:5 – 4: 40	5) 31:1 – 23
2) 4:44 – 26:19	6) 31: 24 – 29
3) 27:1 – 28:68	7) 32: 1 -47
4) 29:1 – 30:20	8) 33: 1 – 29

Give a title to each of these speeches, and write one or two sentences giving some idea of what Moses is saying.

e.g. 1) 1: 5 – 4: 40

The History of God's people reviewed.

In this speech Moses reminds Israel of the way in which God has led them, reminding them of His sovereignty as well as His love, patience and faithfulness to His promises, in spite of their unfaithfulness to Him. Moses impressed upon the people that such a God is utterly to be trusted and that obedience to Him will mean great blessing, for them.

12. Examine the following verses. Deut 12: 5, 11 – 13, 17 – 18, 21; 14:23 – 25; 15:20; 16:2, 6,7,11,15, 16; 17:8; 18:6, 7; 26:2; 31:11. Where was this place that the Lord was going to choose? What is the significance of this for Christians today? Give scripture references in your answer.