

The Importance Of Deuteronomy

Gary McDade

As sparkling shafts of light radiate the beautiful magnificence of an elegant gem when gently rotated in the hand of a jeweler, turning the pages of the book of Deuteronomy reveals the great value of this book of the Bible. Spend a few moments considering the importance of Deuteronomy.

The Author

The inspiration for each of the forty authors in the Bible comes from the Living God. Respected verses in this connection include II Timothy 3:16-17 and II Peter 1:20-21. As you know, the former passage says, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." And, the latter reads, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." The author of the book of Deuteronomy who was inspired by God is Moses.

The placement of Moses' writing at the head of the sixty-six books of the Bible establishes the formidable character of the man Moses. If ever there was a profitable character study of a man serving with distinction under duress Moses would qualify with distinction. He was met with crisis in his birth, as he reached manhood, and as he led a stubborn and rebellious people to a land of great reward long promised as a crowning achievement of the last third of his eventful life. The size of the nation he led is extrapolated from the number of men twenty years old and upward who were able to go forth to war. That number alone is 603,550 (Num. 2:32).

The martyr Stephen told of his birth and formative education, "In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months: And when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own son. And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds" (Acts 7:20-22). Out of these roots grew not only one of the greatest leaders in Israel's history but one of the greatest leaders in all the world's history. Until "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" Moses was incomparable in character and as a lawgiver. Regarding his character Numbers 12:3 says, "(Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.)" Regarding his role as a lawgiver God spoke to Moses, "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he

shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him” (Deut. 18:18-19). The fact that none

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would exceed Moses until Christ is affirmed by the apostle Peter in Acts 3:22-23, “For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.” The importance of the book of Deuteronomy is seen in the importance of its author Moses. Stretching across all the corridors of time and looking into the depths of eternity we find the redeemed of earth’s long story singing the song of Moses and the Lamb, “And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints” (Rev. 15:2-3).

The Timing

The word “Deuteronomy” means the second giving of the law. The law meant here is the Ten Commandment Law from Exodus 20. A new generation of Israelites had survived the wilderness wandering, and to them the great lawgiver Moses repeated the law in three comprehensive speeches.

First Speech: Rehearsal of the Past (Deut. 1-4).

Second Speech: Regulations of God (Deut. 5-26).

Third Speech: Responsibilities of Israel (Deut. 27-31).

These three speeches are followed by a ***Conclusion: Reflections of a Leader (Deut. 32-34).***

The unfaithfulness of the former generation of Israelites had yielded their demise. The hard-earned lessons from one of their greatest sins, which was murmuring, would be rehearsed before the prize would be awarded. Looking back to that fallen generation we recount the word of God to them.

“And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me. Say unto them, As truly as I live, saith the Lord, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you: Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of

you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me, Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I swear to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun. But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised. But as for you, your carcasses, they shall fall in this wilderness. And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness. After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise. I the Lord have said, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die” (Num. 14:26-35).

Approximately forty years had passed and that which the Lord had promised had come to pass, that is, their unfaithful, murmuring “carcasses” had indeed fallen and their bodies had been buried in the Wilderness of Sin. Therefore, the “rehearsal of the past” Moses presented to their descendants would obviously sink down deeply into their hearts and the impression upon their minds would last throughout that generation of people. Moses’ successors would write, “And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the Lord, that he had done for Israel” (Josh. 24:31). But, at the moment of the delivery of the discourse of Deuteronomy Moses would rise to the occasion and say, “Notwithstanding ye would not go up, but rebelled against the commandment of the Lord your God: And ye murmured in your tents, and said, Because the Lord hated us, he hath brought us forth out of the land of Egypt, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us. Whither shall we go up? our brethren have discouraged our heart, saying, The people is greater and taller than we; the cities are great and walled up to heaven; and moreover we have seen the sons of the Anakims there. Then I said unto you, Dread not, neither be afraid of them. The Lord your God which goeth before you, he shall fight for you, according to all that he did for you in Egypt before your eyes; And in the wilderness, where thou hast seen how that the Lord thy God bare thee, as a man doth bear his son, in all the way that ye went, until ye came into this place. Yet in this thing ye did not believe the Lord your God, Who went in the way before you, to search you out a place to pitch your tents in, in fire by night, to show you by what way ye should go, and in a cloud by day. And the Lord heard the voice of your words, and was wroth, and swore, saying, Surely there shall not one of these men of this evil generation see that good land, which I swear to give unto your fathers, Save Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him will I give the land that he hath trodden upon, and to his children, because he hath wholly

followed the Lord. Also the Lord was angry with me for your sakes, saying, Thou also shalt not go in thither. But Joshua the son of Nun, which standeth before thee, he shall go in thither: encourage him: for he shall cause Israel to inherit it. Moreover your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, and your children, which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil, they shall go in thither, and unto them will I give it, and they shall possess it. But as for you, turn you, and take your journey into the wilderness by the way of the Red sea. Then ye answered and said unto me, We have sinned against the Lord, we will go up and fight, according to all that the Lord our God commanded us. And when ye had girded on every man his weapons of war, ye were ready to go up into the hill. And the Lord said unto me, Say unto them, Go not up, neither fight; for I am not among you; lest ye be smitten before your enemies. So I spake unto you; and ye would not hear, but rebelled against the commandment of the Lord, and went presumptuously up into the hill. And the Amorites, which dwelt in that mountain, came out against you, and chased you, as bees do, and destroyed you in Seir, even unto Hormah. And ye returned and wept before the Lord; but the Lord would not hearken to your voice, nor give ear unto you. So ye abode in Kadesh many days, according unto the days that ye abode there” (Deut. 1:26-46).

How many times do you suppose these people had heard their parents tell them this same story? They were convinced of its truthfulness. And, now coming from God himself they—at least that generation—would never forget it. Deuteronomy is important because of its timing.

The Teaching

The parents of those who would now be inheriting the Promised Land had fallen in the Wilderness of Sin. They had taught their descendants powerful lessons but of a negative nature, that is, how *not* to behave before God. This generation of people received special attention from Moses regarding their responsibility to instruct their children in a positive way about faithful service to God. In Deuteronomy 6, Moses admonished them in the section of his presentation where he emphasized the Regulations Of God (Deut. 5-26) to diligently teach their own children the will of God. He wrote, “Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it: That thou mightest fear the Lord thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son’s son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged” (vv. 1-2). The ability to pass this teaching on to succeeding generations would come in the form of diligent living and teaching before God. Moses instructed the children of Israel to diligently teach the commandments of God and diligently keep the commandments of God. In verse 7 he said, “And thou shalt *teach them diligently* unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in

thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up”; and in verse 17 he said, “Ye shall *diligently keep* the commandments of the Lord your God, and his testimonies, and his statutes, which he hath commanded thee.”

Teach Them Diligently

They were to be motivated by the love of God. This is the passage our Lord quoted when pressed by the lawyer questioning him and tempting him concerning the greatest commandment of the Law. Moses insisted, “And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (v. 5). Jesus returned the minds of the people of his day to this long established principle interwoven into the fabric of a humble relationship with the living God (Mt. 22:35-37). Never were the commandments of God intended to be only superficial or merely outward signs of submission absent the need to truly possess a humble and grateful heart. Moses urged, “And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart” (v. 6). How God’s will would get into their hearts in the first place would be through the diligent teaching coming from the parents.

A serious warning came with reaching their long awaited home in the Promised Land. When at last they would enjoy the ease the land afforded Moses cautioned, “Then beware lest thou forget the Lord, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage” (v. 12). The greatest enemy of learning is forgetting. Moses said, “Beware lest thou forget the Lord!”

Moses foresaw a time when their children would not be as vividly impressed with the knowledge of God’s will as this generation was, and he commanded them saying, “And when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord our God hath commanded you? Then thou shalt say unto thy son, We were Pharaoh’s bondmen in Egypt; and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand: And the Lord showed signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes: And he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he sware unto our fathers. And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day” (vv. 20-24). The teaching to be delivered was not a burden but was “for our good always.” The book of Deuteronomy is important because it lays the groundwork for understanding the teaching process God expected to continue and the value of it toward the ultimate salvation of his people not only in the “land which flowed with milk and honey” but for all time.

Keep Them Diligently

The teaching would serve as a permanent reminder to keep the commandments of the Lord in a diligent manner, as if bound as “a sign upon thine hand, and they

shall be *as* frontlets between thine eyes” (v. 8, emphasis added). More was required than a knowledge of God’s will only as if the application of the teaching to their lives was somehow secondary, but doing what God commanded them to do was essential. Moses said, “And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day. And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as he hath commanded us” (vv. 24-25). Their righteousness was not only in being properly taught and knowing God’s will, they could not be righteous without that knowledge, but their righteousness would be realized in “*observing and doing* all these commandments before the Lord our God.” Herein the importance of the book of Deuteronomy is realized. How desperately this ancient message is needed today. The church of our Lord is struggling to maintain fully organized congregations supervised by godly elderships (we are told that about half do not even have elderships), many pulpits have taken on the coloring of the world as direct Bible references have become a scant trend, studies emerging from the godless world detailing alcohol and drug abuse, immorality in all its forms, and the break up of the home are mirrored in the Lord’s church! The key word is diligence in the things of the Lord, specifically teaching and doing his revealed will.