

## Introduction to Deuteronomy

- The 5<sup>th</sup> book of the Old Testament and the Pentateuch (Torah)
  - Importance in the New Testament
    - One of the four most quoted/referenced books in the New Testament (the other three being the Psalms, Isaiah, and Genesis)
    - Jesus references Deuteronomy twice as often as any other book in the Pentateuch
      - He resists Satan using Deuteronomy (Matthew 4)
      - He quotes the greatest commandment from Deuteronomy 6:5 (Matthew 22:36ff)
    - The concepts in Deuteronomy are extremely important to our understanding of the Bible
      - Deuteronomy 6:4-5
        - The “Shema” (Hear and obey what is heard, Hebrew)
        - “The greatest commandment”
      - Deuteronomy 21:23
        - He who is hanged on a tree is “accursed” of God
        - Refer to Isaiah 53
          - Verse 4
            - Smitten carries the idea of “beaten”
            - Afflicted carries the idea of “cursed” or “defiled”
          - Verse 10 – This pleased God
        - John 19:31 – they could not leave the bodies overnight
      - Deuteronomy 10:16
        - Circumcision of the heart
        - Romans 2:28-29 – Paul uses this reference as well
- Title
  - Deuteronomy – English
    - Transliteration of *Deuteronomium* of the Latin Vulgate, which was dependant on the Greek Septuagint’s *Deuteronomion*
    - The Greek title was based on its translation of Deuteronomy 17:18 – “this second or repetition of the law,” though the original Hebrew text means “a copy of this law,” not “second law”
  - “These are the words” – Hebrew
    - More accurately reflects the contents of the book
    - Not only the words of Moses (v.1) but also the words of God (v.3)
    - In addition, it is not merely a copy of the law, but a restatement and perhaps even an expansion of the original covenant given about 40 years earlier at Mount Sinai
- Authorship
  - Some believe that Deuteronomy was written by another person or people (perhaps even prophets) sometime during the reign of Josiah (Assyrian treaties, etc.)
  - However, Deuteronomy claims to be from Moses, and unless overwhelming evidence exists to the contrary, its claim must be taken seriously
  - The concept of inspiration must be weighed – it seems difficult to rationalize the possibility of a pseudo-authorship which, by inspiration, claims to be Moses (very deceptive)
  - Many other arguments could be made to support Moses as the author of Deuteronomy and an early date for its composition
  - Consider that Jesus believed that Deuteronomy was written (said) by Moses
    - Mark 7:10

- Luke 20:28
  - Consider the passages quoted by Jesus earlier (Matthew 4, etc.)
    - If Jesus quotes these as scripture, He must believe in their integrity
    - The book claims to be the words of Moses – Jesus must believe this also
  - When we begin to question any aspect of the Bible, we begin to question all of it – this is why many people try to unravel the “corners” of the Bible, because they know that to disprove any of it would be to disprove all of it
- Structure
- Three speeches, a song, and two poems (chapters 1-4, 5-28, 29-30; 31; 32 and 33)
  - Duane Christensen’s macrostructure (each part could be read continuously)
    - The Outer Frame: A Look Backward (chapters 1-3)
    - The Inner Frame: The Great Peroration (chapters 4-11)
    - The Central Core: Covenant Stipulations (chapters 12-26)
    - The Inner Frame: Covenant Ceremony (chapters 27-30)
    - The Outer Frame: A Look Forward (chapters 31-34)
  - Structured around the Decalogue (Ten Commandments), note especially chapters 6-26, which are organized according to its arrangement
  - Also similar to vassal treaties of the ancient Near East (the oldest treaties found are Hittite treaties from the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C.), which explain the relationship between the conquering nation and the vassal (smaller) nation, and the duties of the smaller state, though obviously the book of Deuteronomy is more than a vassal treaty, as it emphasizes concepts such as loyalty and covenant obedience
  - Deuteronomy has also been compared to law codes such as Hammurabi’s Code
- Contents – Major Themes
- The God of Israel is the only God and Lord of the covenant
    - Deuteronomy 4:28-35
    - Deuteronomy 32:37-39
  - God binds Himself to His people by covenant
    - Demonstration of his faithfulness and love
    - Chooses Israel because He loves them – not because they are faithful
    - Deuteronomy 7:6-9
    - Deuteronomy 9:5-6
  - The covenant requires obedience from Israel
    - Obedience is for Israel’s own benefit
    - Deuteronomy 6:24
    - Deuteronomy 10:12
    - Note especially chapters 6, 8, 11, and 13
    - Consider that the God of the Old Testament is often misconstrued as wrathful and hateful, etc. In reality He is the same God of the New Testament
  - God is the Lord of History
    - God can and does work out His will
    - Note the constant references to the promises to the patriarchs
    - Deuteronomy 7:17-24
  - The relationship between God and Israel could be described as one of love
    - God loves Israel (Deuteronomy 7:8)
    - God demands love from Israel (Deuteronomy 6:5)
    - Love is a decision, not an emotion, and is often paralleled with obedience, servitude, and reverence (see Deuteronomy 5:10; 10:12-13)

- The land of Canaan is an important focus
  - Contrast between the wilderness (past) and the good land (future) in front of them
  - Note that their reception of the land was conditional – that is, Israel needed to obey if it was to receive the blessing of the land
  - Through God's grace, the people received it (Deuteronomy 9:4-6)
- The call to mission
  - Israel should be a model to other nations
  - Israel also was to act as a witness to the character of God (through their obedience, especially) – Deuteronomy 4:6-8
  - Special emphasis on the necessity of being loyal and faithful in critical situations, especially when things are changing around one
  - See this in Israel's history (2 Chronicles 15:9)
- There is also a close relationship between the themes in Deuteronomy and those in the Psalms