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Deuteronomy: A Book of Instruction

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Deuteronomy

A Book of Instruction

by Harold L. Willmington

Several examples let us know that the Book of Deuteronomy is especially loved by the Saviour and particularly hated by the Devil. First, our Lord began His ministry by quoting from Deuteronomy on three occasions to successfully refute three vicious temptations by the Devil. Compare Matthew 4:4 with Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:7 with Deuteronomy 6:16; and Matthew 4:10 with Deuteronomy 6:13.

The book of Deuteronomy is second only to Isaiah in its majestic description of both the Person and plan of God. In fact, in a single chapter Moses summarized God's divine Person, plan for and ministry to Israel.

God's Person—"Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord (6:4).

God's plan—Israel's ministry to

God. Israel was to love the God of the Word. "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (6:5). They were to love the Word of God. "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: 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 thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates" (6:6-9).

God's ministry to Israel—"And he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he swore unto our fathers" (6:23).

In the next chapter, God explains the reason behind His gracious ministry to Israel. "The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out of a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt" (7:7-8).

Deuteronomy was one of the first books to be attacked under the guise of higher criticism at the end of the nineteenth century. Deuteronomy is far more than a mere repetition of the Law of Moses. It is rather a rehearsal and reminder of that Law, for many of the younger Israelites had never heard it before, having been born since Mount Sinai. In Genesis we read of Israel's election. In Exodus, of her redemption. In Leviticus, of her sanctification. In Numbers, of her direction. In Deuteronomy, of her instruction.

Deuteronomy includes the second of two important conditional covenants in the Bible given by God to man. The

first was the Edenic, promising Adam fruitfulness for obedience, and death for disobedience (Gen. 1:26-31; 2:15-17). The second was the Palestinian Covenant, promising Israel permanent status in the land for obedience, and captivity for disobedience (Deut. 28:1-30:20).

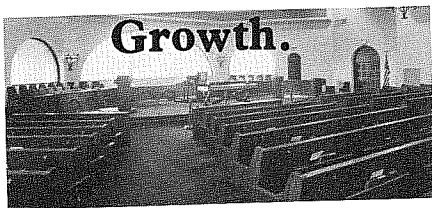
Deuteronomy lists four key prophecies: the victorious entrance of Israel under Joshua into Canaan (7:2; 9:1-3; 31:3,5); the sin of Israel while in the land (31:16-18,20,29); the exile from the land (4:26-28; 7:4; 8:19,20; 28:36,41,49-50, 53,64); and the return of Israel back to the land (4:29; 30:1-3,10).

Here we also read of the first official promise by God to provide kings to rule over Israel (17:14-20). Furthermore, in the next chapter (18:15-19) the first prediction of Christ's prophetic ministry is given. Prior to this, both his kingship (Gen. 49:10) and priesthood (Gen. 14:18-20) had been alluded to.

The three words *do*, *keep*, and *observe* are found 177 times in Deuteronomy. Moses, like James, desired that Israel "lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (James 1:21-22).

The Book of Deuteronomy says, in effect, to Israel, look back, look in, look up, look forward, and (lest you sin) look out! The book closes with the second of two great prophetic blessings upon each of the 12 tribes of Israel. (Compare Gen. 49 with Deut. 33). Deuteronomy is the eighth longest book in the Bible, with 34 chapters, 959 verses, and 28,461 words. It is quoted from or alluded to 208 times in 21 New Testament books. The events span approximately one month (1405 B.C.).

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