

Deuteronomy
September 7 2008
Introduction
Deuteronomy 1-3

I. The Importance of the Book

The Hebrew title for the book is “These Were the Words,” or basically the first phrase of the book, as was typical for naming the books of the Pentateuch. Our title comes from the Vulgate, which took the Greek title from Septuagint. Deuteronomy in Greek means “second law” or “repetition of the law” (or less literally “the law again”). It comes from a mistranslation of Deut. 17:16 which should be something like “copy of the law”:

Deut 17:18

18 When he takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law, taken from that of the priests, who are Levites.

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In many ways, Deuteronomy is the most important of the OT. The rest of the Pentateuch leads up to it. The history books have their roots in it. It is the foundational book of the OT.

The book is a series of sermons by Moses recounting the past and getting the Israelites ready to enter the Promise Land.

II. Outline of the Book

Typically the book is divided by these sermons:

Deuteronomy

Part 1: Moses' First Speech "What God Has Done for Israel" (1:1—4:43)

Part 2: Moses' Second Speech "What God Expects of Israel" (4:44—26:19)

Part 3: Moses' Third Speech "What God Will Do for Israel" (27:1—30)

Part 4: Historical Appendices (31-34)

III. The Beginning

Deut 1:1-5

1:1 These are the words Moses spoke to all Israel in the desert east of the Jordan — that is, in the Arabah — opposite Suph, between Paran and Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth and Dizahab. 2(It takes eleven days to go from Horeb to Kadesh Barnea by the Mount Seir road.) 3 In the fortieth year, on the first day of the eleventh month, Moses proclaimed to the Israelites all that the LORD had commanded him concerning them. 4 This was after he had defeated Sihon king of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon, and at Edrei had defeated Og king of Bashan, who reigned in Ashtaroth. 5 East of the Jordan in the territory of Moab, Moses began to expound this law, saying:

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Verse 1: As we read through the book, the words of Moses and the words of God will be hard to distinguish. Indeed, we should not try to distinguish them if there is any confusion.

Verse 1: How Moses addressed two to three million people is not clear. Some suggest that Moses spoke to the elders who carried the message back to the people. In this way, Moses spoke to the people...but perhaps with God's help, he spoke to all of them at once.

Verse 1-3: Although this passage might appear to be a geography lesson, it is not really possible to tell exactly where Moses is standing when he is speaking. Here are some of these places:

Arabah – Between Dead Sea and Gulf of Aqaba

Suph – Place unknown (means reeds)

Paran – Probably wilderness of Paran

Tophel – Northern boundary of Wilderness of Paran

Laban – Probably, identified with Libnah which is a little west Kadesh Barnea

Hazereth – In the wilderness of Paran

Dizahab – some place probably east of Hesbon

Horeb – Typically this is the title in the book for Mt. Sinai

Kadesh Barnea – well known is in the far south part of Israel

Mt. Seir – Probably just another name for the kingdom of Edom

Verse 3 This is the only exact date in the book. This means that the Israelites left Egypt 39 years and 10 ½ months earlier. They left in the middle of the first month of the first year.

IV. Deut. 1:6-18: Exodus 18 and 33

Deuteronomy provides a summary of the historical events of Exodus and Numbers. While the summary clearly parallels the events of the prior books, the chronology is sometimes a little difficult to follow. For example, verse 6 would appear to relate to Ex 33:1 when the tribes are ordered to leave Mt. Sinai. Then we see the establishment of authority levels in Israel which appears in Exodus 18. (In this case, Exodus 18 probably follows the directive to leave Mt. Sinai in Exodus 33:1 but before they actually left.) In Hebrew, the “past” tense is difficult to tell when the associated event occurred.

Why does Moses start the book by noting the creation of additional authorities in Israel?

V. Deut. 1:19-46: Numbers 13-14

The great failure!

After speaking about authority in Israel, Moses proceeds to speak about what has arguably been the tribes' greatest failure. Why is this mentioned so early in his sermon? Should he attempt to be more positive?

VI. Deut. 2:1-23: The Past

For what work of God on your behalf are you most thankful? Why are you thankful? Why did God do this amazing work for us?

VII. Deut. 2:24-3:22: The Future

Finally, we see a glimpse of the future for the Israelites. They conquer two nations and then divide up the land.

While the past cannot be changed, regardless of our faith today, today can be a new beginning for us if we follow God fully.

Deut. 2:24 until the end of the chapter chronicles the defeat of King Sihon and parallels the account in Numbers 21:21-32. Deut. 3:1-11 chronicles the defeat of King Basham and parallels Numbers 21:33-35. Deut. 3:12-21 shows how the land divided up between Gad, Reuben, and the half tribe of Manasseh.

VIII. Deut. 3:23-29: Change in Leadership

Deut 3:23-29

23 At that time I pleaded with the LORD: 24 "O Sovereign LORD, you have begun to show to your servant your greatness and your strong hand. For what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do the deeds and mighty works you do? 25 Let me go over and see the good land beyond the Jordan — that fine hill country and Lebanon." 26 But because of you the LORD was angry with me and would not listen to me. "That is enough," the LORD said. "Do not speak to me anymore about this matter. 27 Go up to the top of Pisgah and look west and north and south and east. Look at the land with your own eyes, since you are not going to cross this Jordan. 28 But commission Joshua, and encourage and strengthen him, for he will lead this people across and will cause them to inherit the land that you will see." 29 So we stayed in the valley near Beth Peor.

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Moses refers back to his indiscretion that resulted in him not being allowed to come into the Promise Land. Beyond punishing Moses, what value was there to God in not allowing Moses to come into the Promise Land?

Discussion: Why does Moses come back to his own sin here? He has just pointed out how the Israelites of this generation had obeyed fully after the last of the earlier generation had died out. He is pointing out that they must be vigilant to always obey God.

How do you think that Moses felt as he said these words?

IX. Pattern of these Opening Introductory Chapters

Notice the pattern of the opening of the book...its true introduction.

1. First words
2. Establish of additional authority figures
3. Reminder of the past (and how it is fixed)
4. Promise of the future (if we follow him)
5. Pasting of Moses from leadership

Next week, we will return to the covenant...what the Israelites have been given to follow. The promise will continue if they keep the covenant. If they do not keep it, they will loose the promise. (NOTE: There are some promises of God that are not alterable, but even then they might not play out as we might hope they would...such as the Jews loosing the Promise Land temporarily.)