

June 3, 2019
Sunday Evening Service
Series: Deuteronomy
Community Baptist Church
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To Ponder . . .

Questions to ponder as you prepare to do a “drone view” of Deuteronomy.

1. Does it matter that Deuteronomy appears to be in the same form as ancient treaty documents?
2. How many somewhat major themes run concurrently through this book?
3. About how many years passed after God gave the first promise to Abraham and Moses giving these speeches?
4. What one truth from Deuteronomy impacted you the most?
5. How has the study in Deuteronomy effected your walk with the Lord?

THE WORDS **Deuteronomy 1:1-34:12**

The Hebrew word for Deuteronomy means, “the words.” In this book we have the words of Moses which he received from God. The opening words of the book give us the title and the theme. *These are the words of Moses.* Beginning with 1:6 and running all the way through the end of chapter 33, nearly all the words were spoken by Moses.

We began to study this wonderful book together January 14, 2018. For the past year and a half we have systematically studied and learned important principles that serve as a foundation, guide, and necessary instruction for our relationship with the God of Moses, the God of Israel, God our Creator, Heavenly Father and Savior from sin.

I think it will be to our benefit to do a complete review of the book as a way to end this study. A broad overview will likely be beneficial because there are certain themes that keep popping up in the book. Those themes hold important keys for us in our desire to love God with all our heart and to love our neighbor as ourselves. Granted, we will be looking at a huge amount of information as we take a “drone” view of the entire book.

The General Outline.

In many ways Deuteronomy is formed like some of the ancient treaties of which we have some scant evidence. Like those treaties that typically contained a Preamble so does Deuteronomy (1:1-5). Likewise there is Historical Prologue (1:6-4:49). Then we also find the listing of General Stipulations (5:1-11:32) and listing of Specific Stipulations (12:1-26:19). Also included in ancient treaties might be something similar to the Blessings and Curses (27:1-28:68) we find in Deuteronomy. This book even includes a section much like the old Document Clause (31:9-29), and finally a listing of Witnesses (32:1-47) to the treaty.

Of course, Deuteronomy is not just another ancient treaty. It is not even a treaty between God and His people. This book is the inspired Scripture from God. It is a record of the covenant He made with His special, chosen people. As such, it is always a benefit to consider a rough outline of God’s message. The outline of Deuteronomy serves as kind of a road map through the book.

The outline of God’s covenant can look like this:

Preamble (1:1-5).

First Speech: Historical prologue (1:6-4:43).

Israel’s history from Mt. Horeb to the Jordan River (1:6-3:29).

Israel before the Lord (4:1-40).

Israel’s cities of refuge (4:41-43).

Second Speech: Stipulations of the Covenant Treaty (4:44-28:69).

Introduction of the law and testimonies (4:44-49).

Law applied to everyday life (5:1-11:32).

Ten Commands (5:1-5).

The Greatest Command—love God supremely (6:1-25).

Limitations in keeping the Commands (7:1-26).

Remember God (8:1-20).

Remember past judgment for sin (9:1-10:11).

Show love for God by obedience (10:12-11:32).

Specific covenant stipulations (12:1-32).

Ratification of the covenant (27:1-26).

Blessings and curses of the covenant (28:1-68).

Third Speech: Terms of the Covenant (29:1-30:20)

Review of historical setting and warning against sin (29:1-29).

Promise of restoration after sin (30:1-10).

Covenant is either life or death (30:11-20).

Conclusion (31:1-34:12).

Charge to Joshua and care of the Law (31:1-29).

Song of Moses (31:30-32:47).

Moses' pending death (32:48-52).

Moses' blessing (33:1-29).

Moses' death (34:1-12).

But the important part we need to consider in this brief study is the repetition of key themes in Deuteronomy. When a particular theme appears multiple times in a book or lecture or study, we ought to be wise enough to conclude that the author is telling us that these are important ideas. Such is the case in Deuteronomy. God has arranged this book with nine key themes that He repeated throughout it.

First is the fact that God is unique. He is different from all other gods and certainly from all people. He is unique in that He is near to His people in order to hear us when we call on Him. *“For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him?”* (4:7). Unlike the fake gods, our

God does not need to be awakened, nor is He ever away from the “phone.” “Call and He will hear” is an astonishing privilege.

Furthermore, God is unique in the way He has given specific rules to His people. *“And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today?”* (4:8). His law is right. His law is known. His people only need to obey it.

God is unique in that He is spirit, unlike the wooden and stone gods of the pagan’s imagination. *“Therefore watch yourselves very carefully. Since you saw no form on the day that the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire”* (4:15). This trait is intentional to keep His people from making images that depict Him. It is an especially wonderful trait to us who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

The true God of the Hebrews and Christians is unique in that He is a jealous, consuming God. *“For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God”* (4:24). While at first they sound horrible, “jealous” and “consuming fire” are good traits that demonstrate God’s uniqueness. He will not tolerate His people creating or worshiping fake gods.

Finally, because He is unique, there is no god like our God. *“Did any people ever hear the voice of a god speaking out of the midst of the fire, as you have heard, and still live? Or has any god ever attempted to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs, by wonders, and by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great deeds of terror, all of which the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? To you it was shown, that you might know that the LORD is God; there is no other besides him”* (4:33-35). God called attention to His unique interaction with His people. And still there is no god like our God to be engaged in the lives of His people. How many times do you hear testimony about how God has arranged circumstances, changed the way people think or act, granted wisdom or peace in times of trouble? God is still unique in the way He interacts with us.

Because God is unique, we should not be surprised to see in this book the repeated theme that God’s people are unique. That means that there are no other people like Israel in history. *“And the LORD*

has declared today that you are a people for his treasured possession, as he has promised you, and that you are to keep all his commandments, and that he will set you in praise and in fame and in honor high above all nations that he has made, and that you shall be a people holy to the LORD your God, as he promised” (26:18-19). The nation of Israel is and will be God’s uniquely chosen people above all nations. Therefore, they should be a holy people. Should it not also follow that because we Christians are God’s chosen people, we too should be unique in our holiness?

That was certainly the case for the Israelites. They were unique because they are holy, being God’s treasured possession. “For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth” (7:6). The nation, the whole mass of people, were God’s choice. He was not obligated or required to choose to make a nation of people for Himself. But God chose to do so. As such, they must also be God’s treasure.

Because God chose to create Israel and because they are His treasured possession, it only seems right that they would be unique because God loves His people more than all other people. “Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it. Yet the LORD set his heart in love on your fathers and chose their offspring after them, you above all peoples, as you are this day” (10:14-15). God sets His heart on His people according to His own choice, own decision. He who created, sustains, and owns all things, chose to own a unique people.

Of course people with such unique privileges are going to live unique lifestyles. This fact is indicated in some of the apparently odd rules that God gave to His people. “You shall not eat anything that has died naturally. You may give it to the sojourner who is within your towns, that he may eat it, or you may sell it to a foreigner. For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. You shall not boil a young goat in its mother’s milk” (14:21). Many of God’s laws simply point out the uniqueness of God’s people. Therefore, many of God’s laws don’t apply to people who are not among His chosen.

Another theme repeated throughout Deuteronomy is the truth that God’s promises are unique. The unique God gave unique promises to His unique people. First, He promised to give a good land

to His people. “And they took in their hands some of the fruit of the land and brought it down to us, and brought us word again and said, ‘It is a good land that the LORD our God is giving us’” (1:25). The produce was obvious evidence of the goodness of the land. Some of the spies understood and believed that God would do what He promised. Most did not trust God’s promise.

God promised wealth that His people did not need to earn. “And when the LORD your God brings you into the land that he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you – with great and good cities that you did not build, and houses full of all good things that you did not fill, and cisterns that you did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees that you did not plant – and when you eat and are full” (6:10-11). God promised to give material possessions into the people’s hands. God promised to give all the produce in the land to His people.

And more than the existing blessings in the land, God also promised to give a land full of natural resources. “For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing out in the valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper” (8:7-9). The material things and produce in the land at the people’s initial possession would be consumed. But the land provided all the resources for continued wealth because that was what God promised.

God also promised a land for which He cared for personally. “But the land that you are going over to possess is a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water by the rain from heaven, a land that the LORD your God cares for. The eyes of the LORD your God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year” (11:11-12). Remember that rain and sunshine which are necessary for produce are under God’s control. That particular piece of property had God’s special attention. God promised that He cared for it and that *His eyes are always upon it*.

The fourth obvious theme in the book points out God’s faithfulness to His promises. Moses reminded the people that God’s promise began with Abraham. “See, I have set the land before you.

Go in and take possession of the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give to them and to their offspring after them” (1:8).

God gave the first promise to Abraham somewhere around the time of 2090 BC. That was 645 years before the exodus. Which means that it was 685 years before this speech. God repeated the promise to Isaac and Jacob (a period of 200 years). The last of Jacob’s sons (Levi) died in 1790 BC, which would have been 345 years before the exodus. Those were long time spans in which God spoke very little. Could the people believe that God would actually keep His promise after almost seven centuries?

He did, because God’s character requires Him to be faithful. *“Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations” (7:9).* Because He is God, He is faithful. Those who love Him can trust Him. We might wonder if those who do not love God even have a right to mention His faithful character.

God promised to be faithful even though it required miracles for Him to do so. *“Know therefore today that he who goes over before you as a consuming fire is the LORD your God. He will destroy them and subdue them before you. So you shall drive them out and make them perish quickly, as the LORD has promised you” (9:3).* He had demonstrated His faithfulness by miracles multiple times from the exodus through the 40 years wandering. If the people had a hard time trusting God’s faithfulness in the context of miracles, how much would they trust Him without the miracles? That is a good question for us.

The fifth theme is God’s power to carry out His promises. In this book, we find evidence that God cared for His people even when they were careless toward Him. The book kind of began with God’s instruction to Moses, *“You have been traveling around this mountain country long enough. Turn northward” (2:3).* And we also read in that same context, *“For the LORD your God has blessed you in all the work of your hands. He knows your going through this great wilderness. These forty years the LORD your God has been with you. You have lacked nothing” (2:7).*

On one hand, the people were wandering around and around because they disobeyed God from the outset and refused to enter the Promised Land. And so they were wandering around while God was killing them off slowly. On the other hand, while the people had disobeyed God, still God blessed them greatly – even in their wandering.

Also, it was by God’s power that He made small people great. *“It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt” (7:7-8).*

And it was by God’s power that He would deliver the Promised Land over to His people. *“The LORD will drive out all these nations before you, and you will dispossess nations greater and mightier than yourselves” (11:23).* God has the power to do everything He ever promised to His people.

The sixth theme is found in the repeated admonition to love God. That is the clear intent of the “Great Command.” This is supposedly one of the most important statements to Jews. *“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” (6:4-5).* Sadly they attempted to keep the command according to their own wishes and desires.

Love of God is really not an option for God’s people. God requires it. We are not His people apart from loving Him. *“And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the LORD, which I am commanding you today for your good?” (10:12-13).*

Obvious in the book is the thought that to love God is to obey Him. *“You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear him and keep his commandments and obey his voice, and you shall serve him and hold fast to him” (13:4).*

How do the people know what is required to obey God. That is the seventh theme in the book. Throughout Deuteronomy, we find

statement after statements revealing God's law for His people. In that context, we learn that God's law was intended to give life. *"And now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the rules that I am teaching you, and do them, that you may live, and go in and take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you"* (4:1).

God did not give His people burdensome rules just to make life uncomfortable. Unlike the works, laws, rules created by the Pharisees and lawyers, God's law has a very positive purpose. God's rules pointed toward life. Physical, psychological, emotional quality of life is a practical outcome of knowing and obeying God's law. More important, eternal, abundant life is the result of realizing that we cannot keep God's law and need a Savior to cover our offenses. And maybe the most important aspect of the law is that God has used this vehicle to reveal His character.

Those truths help us understand how incredibly important God's law is. And because it is so important, we learn from this book that the people were supposed to protect God's law. *"You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you"* (4:2). God prohibits making additions to God's law because to attempt to add to God's law infects God's law and makes it "not God's law." God's rule and plan are clear enough without additions to help. Our duty is to sort out the difference between our additions and deletions and God's law.

Knowing God, trusting God, knowing your relationship with God, remembering God's faithfulness, remembering demonstrations of God's power, loving God and knowing God's law is going to result in proper worship of God. That brings us to the eighth theme in Deuteronomy – instruction for proper worship of God.

God warns His people to guard against false worship. *"Take care lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them"* (11:16). This simple warning reminds us that there will be plenty of false worship to observe in the world and that is dangerous. False worship is dangerous because our hearts can be easily deceived. The deceptiveness of the heart was demonstrated so well hundreds of years later by the offspring of these people. The Pharisees and lawyers in Jesus' day were astonished that He exposed them as false worshipers who served other gods. Their gods were

their made-up rules, which means that their gods were themselves. They were very satisfied to replace worship of the One true God with worship of their traditions. And almost everyone was deceived into thinking that they were right and Jesus was wrong.

To keep His people from falling into the deception of false worship, God gave specific rules for true worship. His people should not copy the pagan way. *"You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them"* (5:8-9a).

Furthermore, when they worship, His people should demonstrate giving their best in worship. *"The firstfruits of your grain, of your wine and of your oil, and the first fleece of your sheep, you shall give him"* (18:4). *"And behold, now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground, which you, O LORD, have given me." And you shall set it down before the LORD your God and worship before the LORD your God* (26:10).

Part of the danger of falling into false worship was the habit of hanging out with people who did that. God warned about the danger of bad influence in relationships. *"You shall make no covenant with them and show no mercy to them. You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, for they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods. Then the anger of the LORD would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly"* (7:2b-4).

The final theme repeated in Deuteronomy is God's plan for His servant Moses. We find a repeated promise that flowed from a problem that Moses tended to rehearse. Time and again Moses said something like, *"Even with me the LORD was angry on your account and said, 'You also shall not go in there'"* (1:37). *"But the LORD was angry with me because of you and would not listen to me. And the LORD said to me, 'Enough from you; do not speak to me of this matter again'"* (3:26). *"Furthermore, the LORD was angry with me because of you, and he swore that I should not cross the Jordan, and that I should not enter the good land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance"* (4:21).

Notice in all of these statements Moses' confession was that "God was angry with me" (1:37; 3:26; 4:21). Because God was

angry, God refused to let Moses go into the land (1:37; 3:26; 4:21). God was angry because the people caused him to sin (1:37; 3:26; 4:21). And maybe worst of all, God wouldn't even let Moses complain about it (3:26). For balance, maybe we should read God's view of the problem. The punishment was *"Because you broke faith with Me in the midst of the people of Israel at the waters of Meribah-kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin, and because you did not treat Me as holy in the midst of the people of Israel"* (32:51).

Again, God didn't make empty promises. At the end of the book, we read how God also fulfilled this promise. *Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho. And the LORD showed him all the land, Gilead as far as Dan, all Naphtali, the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the western sea, the Negeb, and the Plain, that is, the Valley of Jericho the city of palm trees, as far as Zoar. And the LORD said to him, "This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, 'I will give it to your offspring.' I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not go over there." So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD"* (34:1-5). God kept His promise to let Moses see the land. But God also kept His promise to have Moses die.

Deuteronomy reminds us of God's character, of His mighty works, of His perfect law, of God's faithfulness to His promises. We have a much better understanding about God having studied the book. We should also conclude with a much better understanding about ourselves because of our study.