

Winchester Evangelical Church
Bible Study - 5. Deuteronomy

Key Word : Obedience

Key Verses : Deuteronomy 5:29 - Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children for ever!

Deuteronomy 10:12-13 - And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to observe the Lord's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?

Deuteronomy 11:26-28 - See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse – the blessing if you obey the commands of the Lord your God that I am giving you today; the curse if you disobey the commands of the Lord your God and turn from the way that I command you today by following other gods, which you have not known.

Deuteronomy 28:1 - If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully follow all his commands that I give you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations on earth.

Message : The true motive for obedience - Because of all God has done, and the necessity of obedience - To remain holy before a holy God

Deuteronomy is the fifth book of Moses. The name means 'second law'. This is really a mistranslation of 'copy of the law' (see 17:18 - 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 Levitical priests.). These are not new laws, but the preaching of the original law given to Israel at Sinai 39 years before.

There is now a new generation of Israelites, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb and Moses believes it is necessary to repeat all the laws for these people as they are about to enter the Promised Land in about a month.

These addresses were first delivered orally, and then written:

(1:3) 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.

(31:24) Moses finished writing in a book the words of this law from beginning to end.

The prophets, the Apostle Paul and Jesus quoted from this book. It was the source of all Jesus' quotations of Scripture given when he was being tempted in the wilderness.

Many have tried to discredit the book. Some arguing it was written 600 years after Moses' death and was to glorify the priesthood at Jerusalem. In particular, it was produced to establish Jerusalem as the central place of worship. It is interesting that with the emphasis of these people on Jerusalem as being the only acceptable place to worship God, there is no mention of Jerusalem in any of the five books of the Pentateuch.

This book is largely a sermon, or set of sermons, preached by Moses. It is motivational, urging Israel's faithful obedience to the covenant laws of Sinai. Moses is focused on convincing the people to trust and obey and to conquer the land. They refused to enter the Promised Land 40 years before.

In 33:16 we have the only other reference, after Exodus 3, to Moses' burning

bush in the Old Testament.

It also has the great prediction about a coming Prophet-Christ (18:15-19) - The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him. For this is what you asked of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said, 'Let us not hear the voice of the Lord our God nor see this great fire any more, or we will die.'

The Lord said to me: 'What they say is good. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites, and I will put my words in his mouth. He will tell them everything I command him. I myself will call to account anyone who does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name.'

In concluding the Pentateuch, Deuteronomy draws together the patriarchal promises, the history of the exodus and wilderness, and the laws given at Sinai.

This book is also important for understanding Old Testament theology and the theological unity of both Testaments. It recognises the need for God to act within the heart, if Israel is to achieve faithful obedience to God's covenant.

Moses told the people to: (11:18-20) Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the door-frames of your houses and on your gates

This is where the Jewish idea of phylacteries or Tefillin came from. They are a set of small black leather boxes containing scrolls of parchment inscribed with verses from the Torah or Pentateuch. They are worn by observant adult Jewish males during weekday morning prayers.

This book is more than merely a recapitulation and review of the law given at Sinai. It has been said that ‘it reviews the past with an eye to the future.’ Moses has already seen that the people keep turning from God, so he knows that for this new generation everything depended on their obedience - life itself, possession of Canaan, victory over foes, prosperity, happiness.

Deuteronomy is probably the key book underlining the reforms of King Josiah in 2 Kings 23, when he led the people of Judah back to God, after the Book of the Law had been found in the Temple as they were cleaning it out.

Moses pointed out that God longed for obedience (5:9), because they were his own (1:3, 9:1), because he loved them (4:37, 7:7-8), and desired to preserve and prosper them (4:1,40, 5:29, 6:2-3, 14); and that out of gratitude to God for his amazing grace, mercy and privilege, they should render such obedience (4,7-8, 5:6, 6:33).

Is this not how we should act knowing how much the Lord Jesus Christ has done for us?

There are eight sermons or discourses, with a final chapter on the death of Moses:

1. *Retrospect (chapters 1 to 4:43)*

Moses reminds the people what happened when the twelve spies were sent into the Promised Land 40 years ago - That was at Kadesh-Barnea - he also commented on their wanderings.

2. *Review (chapters 4:44 to 26)*

Moses reviews the moral, civil and ceremonial laws - Following the giving of the Ten Commandments Moses says (5:22) - and he added nothing more. Then he wrote them on two stone tablets and gave them to me. -

This shows the completeness and finality of the Ten Commandments.

3. *Warning (chapters 27 to 28)*

The ceremony that was to be held on entering the Promised Land - From one mount they were to pronounce the blessings of God that come from obedience to his word, and from the other they were to pronounce the curses if they were to disobey God

4. *Covenant (chapters 29 to 30)*

The renewal of the covenant - These were the conditions under which Israel entered the Promised Land. In 30:6 there is an emphasis on circumcision of the heart - **The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live.**

5. *Counsels (chapters 31:1-23)*

Including passing the baton of leadership to Joshua. Sadness in these verses - as God tells Moses he is going to die, which he already knew, but also that the people would disobey God and he would have to 'hide his face' from them.

6. *Instruction (chapter 31:24-29)*

Passing the laws that Moses had written down to the Levites - These laws were to be kept in or by the Ark of the Covenant - the most holy item in the Tabernacle. They were God's words.

7. *Song (chapters 31:30 to 32)*

A Psalm for the Israelites to sing to remind them of what God is like - **We will look at it more in a moment.**

8. *Blessing (chapter 33)*

A prophetic speech - echoing the blessing of Jacob on his sons before he

died.

9. *Death of Moses (chapter 34)*

A lonely death but with a vision of the Promised Land - Also (34:7) -

Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died, yet his eyes were not weak nor his strength gone.

We are just told that 'Moses died as the Lord had said.' - Another rendering is 'Died by the kiss of God'.

It has been pointed out that Genesis starts with the 'Kiss of God' - breathing into Adam and the Pentateuch ends with the 'Kiss of God' as Moses dies.

Questions on Deuteronomy 32

- 1) What did Moses say about God? (Deuteronomy 32:1-4) Great, Rock, perfect works, just ways, faithful, upright
- 2) How did Moses explain how Israel acted toward God? (Deuteronomy 32:5-6) - shamefully, warped and crooked generation - no longer children of God
- 3) How should the people remember what God was like? (Deuteronomy 32:7-8) - Ask the elders - those from past generations
- 4) How did God see his people? (Deuteronomy 32:9-14) - Apple of his eye (The pupil - a sensitive part of the eye to be looked after)
- 5) How did Israel walk away from God in? (Deuteronomy 32:15-18) - Rejected God, forgot God, and went after foreign gods, idols and demons
- 6) What did God say in response to Israel's rejection of Him? (Deuteronomy 32:19-27) - A list of calamities but also - He would hide his face from them.
- 7) What did God say about vengeance? (Deuteronomy 32:36-39) - God is just and the only true God - vengeance is his and he will repay
- 8) How is vengeance taken out against the enemies of God? (Deuteronomy 32:40-43) - He will judge the nations that harm the Israelites - he will destroy them and shed their blood
- 9) What did Moses say God's words were to Israel? (Deuteronomy 32:45-47) - They were not idle words but life, itself

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with

everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord. On the contrary:

'If your enemy is hungry, feed him;
if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.
In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.'

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:17-21)