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Deuteronomy Introduction



Deuteronomy - Steve Gregg

Deuteronomy, a historical supplement to the book of Numbers, provides invaluable insights into Moses' teachings on God's laws and his relationship with the Israelites. In this book, Moses urges obedience to the covenant law and warns against departing from it, promising blessings for adherence and curses for disobedience. The book includes a song, preaching love of God and encouraging the protection of the weak and helpless. New Testament writers draw on the book for inspiration, associating Moses with the figure of the Messiah.

Transcript

Alright, we're going to look at this introduction to the book of Deuteronomy, the last book of the Pentateuch, for us to study together here. The name Deuteronomy is not the same name that the Hebrews use in the Hebrew Bible. As we've seen every time with all of these books of the Pentateuch, each one has a different name in the Hebrew Bible than the name that we have come to know it by.

And in the Hebrew Bible, the name of each book, at least of the Pentateuch, generally comes from the opening line. In many cases, it's the opening word of the book. And in this case, it's simply from the opening phrase, the word Debarim, which means words.

And so the opening words, of course, of the book are, these are the words which Moses spoke to Israel. So from the phrase, these are the words, the word words is taken as the primary Hebrew title for the book. Now, the word Deuteronomy comes from Deuteros, which means second, and Namos, which means law in Greek.

And this is the name of the book that was given in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, back in the third century B.C. When the Jewish committee in Alexandria decided it was important to translate the Hebrew scriptures into the language that more people were understanding and speaking in their day, which was Koine Greek. And so the Bible is translated into Greek in the third century B.C. That translation is called the Septuagint, and they gave Greek names to the books. And it's from those Greek names that we take our English ones.

The Greek name was Deuteronomy, which is like Deuteronomy. And they took that from what most scholars would say was a mistranslation of the Hebrew. In Chapter 17, verse 18, where it's talking about a time when Israel would have kings, it anticipates that.

And in Chapter 17, verse 18, says it also should be when he, that is, the king sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law. Now, in the Hebrew, it says a copy of this law, but in the Septuagint, they translated a Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy.

And that literally is a second law. But of course, the king was not supposed to write a second law. He was simply write for himself a copy of the law of Moses.

His writing it out by hand would, of course, cause him to learn it more thoroughly. And so he was to make his own personal copy for reading. And so that somehow the Greek translation translated that copy of the law as a second law and gave the name Deuteronomy to the book.

So most scholars are not really pleased with the name Deuteronomy as the name of the book. Actually, these are the words of Moses would be a much better title and much closer to what the Hebrews call the book. Now, when you come to these old books of the law, the question that modern Christians naturally have is, well, is what is the relevance of this book to me? Why? Why should I say these old laws, an old covenant that no longer pertains? You know, historical narrative about stories that are really ancient and really foreign and really different and strange.

Why should I study this part of the Bible? Now, Deuteronomy is one of the most influential books that has ever been written. For one reason, of course, it's one of our two main sources are one of our two only sources for the so-called Ten Commandments. The term the Ten Commandments actually comes from the book of Deuteronomy, where Moses makes reference to the Ten Commandments.

And I don't know if I want to think it's in chapter four, but I don't want to take time to look it up right now. But of course, the Ten Commandments are originally given in chapter 20 of Exodus, but they're not there referred to as the Ten Commandments. That expression that we have come to use comes actually from Deuteronomy, as we should say, as we study it.

Four thirteen is what it's called. Okay, thanks. Right.

Thank you. Yeah. Chapter four, verse three says, So he declared to you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform.

That is the Ten Commandments. I think that's the first time the expression of the Ten Commandments occurs. And you might say, Well, what's so why is that so important to observe? And the reason is because the commandment has been given.

If they're not numbered, might be given as eleven or so. And we know that the Roman Catholic Bible has put like what we would call the first two commandments into one. And then they divided the Ten Commandment into two and so forth.

And one could, if they wish to make it eleven or whatever. But the Bible makes it very clear that God intended to be an even ten. And that's how many there are.

But the Ten Commandments have become the basis for ethical and legal codes for Western civilization, at least for thousands of years. And we don't take them for granted. In fact, that we forget that our entire society is informed by those commandments which were first given in Exodus.

And then in chapter five, they're listed again. And so Deuteronomy is one of the two places that we have the Ten Commandments given to us. And that the influence of those Ten Commandments cannot be exaggerated.

In addition to that, we have what Jesus called the Great Commandment, and it comes from Deuteronomy. In Deuteronomy chapter six and verse five, what the Jews call the Shema. It says in verses four and five, Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, Yahweh is one.

You shall love Yahweh your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might. Now, that's a very familiar verse to Christians, and it should be because Jesus gave it as the first and great commandment of the law. It is not found in the other books of the Pentateuch, and therefore, Deuteronomy is the book that supplies us with the Great Commandment, as well as with the Ten Commandments.

And as I said, the Jews call that the Shema. The first word in that in verse four is Shema, which means Hear, Hear O Israel. And the devout Jews actually speak the Shema every morning and every evening, and they begin the synagogue services by recitation of it.

Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one, and you shall love the Lord your God. And so Jesus indicated that that particular statement is probably the most important statement in the whole Old Testament, and it, like the Ten Commandments, is found in Deuteronomy. Only unlike the Ten Commandments, it is found exclusively in Deuteronomy.

That is originally, I should say, because it is quoted later. One other value of the book of Deuteronomy is that it provides a historical supplement for the book of Numbers. Some of the stories in Numbers and even in Exodus of the wilderness wandering are recounted in the speeches that Moses gives in this book, and it supplies details that you wouldn't find simply in the stories in Exodus or Numbers.

In fact, sometimes the information seems to be so different that you wonder if it's contradictory, but it's not. It simply gives more of the story, a little bit like the four Gospels supplement each other, or like the books of Chronicles supplement the history in

Samuel and Kings. If you haven't studied Samuel and Kings and Chronicles, you may not realize that.

But the book we call First Chronicles is parallel to First and Second Samuel, and the book we call Second Chronicles is parallel to First and Second Kings and gives additional information about the same historical period and the same personages and so forth that are described in Samuel and Kings. We have more information about many of them in Chronicles, and that's true of Deuteronomy supplying historical supplements also for the stories that we've already studied in Exodus and Numbers. There was a time when Israel had forgotten the law for generations.

It's hard to imagine, but it was true, and it was during the time of the kings of Judah. Josiah, one of the few good kings that Israel had, tried to bring about reform in Israel, and he did bring about reform. It was too little and too late.

The nation was already on the path to destruction. And although Josiah did succeed in bringing about reforms in the nation, he didn't save the nation, finally, because after his death, they went back to their own evil ways. But his reforms probably did preserve the nation a little longer than it would have otherwise.

And those reforms were brought about through, apparently, the book of Deuteronomy, because in Josiah's day, the temple had fallen out of repair for many years, and so he was putting a lot of money into refurbishing and restoring it. And Hilkiah, the old priest, actually found a copy of Deuteronomy in the temple archives, and they didn't know what it was. They were so unfamiliar with the law that when they found the scroll of Deuteronomy, they didn't even know what it was.

And the priest read it to see what it was, and he realized it was something important, so he took it to the king. And King Josiah read it, and he realized that Israel had neglected this law against the warnings that are so often given in Deuteronomy, and had experienced the judgment of God and was in danger of worse judgments from God. And therefore, Josiah feared God, and he called the nation to repentance, and he began to get rid of all the idols in the high places and so forth that were in Judah at the time.

And it was this book, Deuteronomy, that brought about those reforms. You see that in 2 Kings 22-23. Now, Jesus apparently really liked the book of Deuteronomy.

When he was tempted by the devil in the wilderness, he quoted scripture three times. There were three temptations. He quoted scripture each time to refute the temptation and to overcome the temptation.

Each time, he actually quoted from Deuteronomy. He didn't quote from any other book. Altogether, in his ministry, Jesus quoted Deuteronomy ten different times, and that's quite a few for the shortness of the account that we have of Jesus' life.

We only have about 40 days of his life recorded. They span about three and a half years, probably, but there's probably 39 or 40 actual days that are on record of the life of Jesus. And in that time, we have ten different times that he quoted Deuteronomy.

Obviously, it weighed heavily in his thinking. The New Testament quotes Deuteronomy over 80 times. There are only six books of the New Testament that don't quote Deuteronomy at all.

That means there's 21 books of the New Testament that quote Deuteronomy. And it is quoted more times in the New Testament than any other Old Testament book besides the Psalms and Isaiah. When it comes to favorite Old Testament books to New Testament writers, the one they quoted the most often was Psalms.

The second was Isaiah, and the third was Deuteronomy. And so, it's interesting that this book, not even the first time that the laws are stated, because many of these laws in Deuteronomy were first stated in either Exodus or Leviticus, or even in Numbers sometimes. And yet, this book figured so prominently in the thinking of the New Testament writers.

Obviously, they saw it as relevant. We sometimes think, well, this is the Old Covenant. We live under the New Covenant, so we don't have anything to gain by reading the law.

Well, the disciples apparently didn't realize that. The Old Testament was the only Bible they had, and they made very good use of it. And they saw virtually all of their teachings.

All the teachings that Jesus gave, all the teachings that the Apostles gave. They were able to cite Old Testament authority for them. Jesus brought a New Covenant, but he didn't bring new truths, really, that were not found in the Old Covenant.

Even his teaching about loving your enemies and so forth, that people think of as a radical departure from Old Testament religion, was not a departure. You find the need to love your enemies in the Old Testament as well, to command it. Really, what Jesus and the Apostles taught were the things that had been the mind of God all along.

Things that are actually in the Old Testament and in the law, but which the Jews of their time had neglected, twisted, or watered down with their traditions. And so Jesus and the Apostles actually restored and recovered truths from the Old Testament and recognized which ones were the weightier matters of the law and which were not. So we find that the Old Testament, and Deuteronomy in particular, was a great source of New Testament truth for the New Testament writers.

It must have been if they quoted it 80 times or more. Paul made some specific use of this book in some interesting ways. He made spiritual applications of two passages that we might not have thought to make such applications.

They were passages, both of which talk about farming laws and the use of animals. If anything would seem not relevant to urban and suburban people today, in modern times, it would seem to be these laws about animals and animal treatment. It says in Deuteronomy 22:10, you should not plow with an ox and a donkey together.

That's obviously just a commandment about how you plow your fields. You don't put an ox and a donkey together under one yoke and plow with it. Well, the Apostle Paul was no doubt alluding this in 2 Corinthians 6 and verse 14 when he said, Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers.

Unequally yoked like a donkey and an ox under the same yoke. Because a donkey was an unclean animal to the Jews. An ox was a clean animal.

Christians are clean. Unbelievers are unclean. You don't yoke the clean and the unclean together, Paul said.

And he was no doubt spiritualizing this particular law. Another case that always strikes me as similar in Paul is how he took Deuteronomy 25 and he did this twice, the same passage. Deuteronomy 25:4 says you should not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.

Now that obviously means that while the ox is pulling the millstone around to crush the grain, that the ox should be allowed to feed itself. It should not be muzzled while it works. And Paul quotes that twice.

He actually quotes that verse in 1 Corinthians 9:9 and also in 1 Timothy 5:18. And in those places he applies it to Christian ministers. In fact, in 1 Corinthians 9:9 he quotes, as it is written, you should not muzzle the ox that treads out the grain. Then he says, Does God care for oxen or does he say this altogether for our sakes? And then he goes on to say, Well, he's talking about those who work in the who labor in the gospel, that they're like oxen, they're their servants and they need to be able to eat.

So he's actually makes an appeal for the support of Christian workers from this. But you can see these are laws that we might not have gotten anything out of because we don't have cattle. We don't have plows.

We don't tread out grain. We don't have millstones in our homes. And so we might think, Oh, this is not relevant.

But Paul actually saw in these commands about animals, even something of the heart of God and a principle spiritual principle that he thought applied to us. So that means that there may be far more in the law and in Deuteronomy than we would see on the surface that the Holy Spirit can show to a spiritual believer like Paul himself. There are things that the book of Deuteronomy said about curses that Paul also made use of in Deuteronomy 21:23.

He said, Cursed is everyone who does not abide by everything written in this law and in Deuteronomy 27:26. It says, Cursed is everyone who's hanged on a tree and Paul takes both of those statements in Galatians chapter three, verses 10 through 13, and he points out that everyone who's under the law is under a curse because Deuteronomy says, Cursed is everyone who does not abide by everything written in the law.

But they said Jesus became a curse for us because it says, Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree. So he's basically saying that Jesus took upon himself the curse of the law for us. And interestingly, he found a way to do so without sinning.

You know, the curse of the law essentially is upon those who sin most of the time. It's you sin. You come under God's curse.

Now, how could Jesus come under a curse for us without himself sinning? How could he bring the curse of the law on him? Well, there is one curse in the law in Deuteronomy that came on a person through no fault of his own. And that was if he was hanged on a tree. And so by Jesus being hanged on a tree, he did not commit a sin by hanging on a tree.

There's no command. I shall not hang on a tree. A man hanged on a tree was always hung there by someone else.

And so Jesus absorbed the law's curse by being by coming into that condition of the law's curse of being hung on a tree. And so Paul makes what we might consider a rather esoteric theological point, depending entirely on these statements in Deuteronomy. Also, in Romans 10:8, Paul felt that the doctrine justification by faith can be found in Deuteronomy.

Now, you wouldn't expect to find such a doctrine in a book of the law, since we usually think of the law as something contrary to justification by faith. But Paul didn't see it as contrary at all. In fact, he quite naturally felt that he could support his doctrine from the law.

And in this case, from Deuteronomy itself. In Romans 10:8, Paul said, but what does it say? Well, actually, you need to read a little bit. Yeah, we can do this.

I want to read earlier. Let's read a little earlier. Verse five.

For Moses writes about the righteousness, which is of the law. It says the man who does these things shall live by them. Now, that's not from Deuteronomy.

That's Leviticus. But he says, but the righteousness of faith speaks in this way. Now, he contrasts Leviticus with what he's about to quote in Deuteronomy.

Leviticus says the man who does those things shall live by them. So, Paul saying this is

what justification by the law would require that you have to live by the law completely. But the righteousness of faith or justification by faith speaks in this way.

And now he's quoting from Deuteronomy, chapter 30, verse 14. Do not say in your heart. He's not quoting exactly.

It's kind of a quote from the Septuagint. I believe it's not. It doesn't read quite the same way that it reads in our Hebrew version.

But do not say in your heart who will ascend into heaven. That is to bring Christ down from above. That's Paul's commentary in parentheses there.

Or who will descend into the abyss. That is to bring Christ up from the dead. But what does it say? The word is near you, even in your mouth and in your heart.

Paul says that is the word of faith, which we preach. That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you'll be saved. Now, you might wonder how Paul sees this passage in Deuteronomy is teaching justification by faith, because it doesn't mention justification or faith.

But if you look over the passage in Deuteronomy 30, you'll see Deuteronomy 30 in verse 11 through 14. For this commandment, which I command you today, it is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off. It is not in heaven that you should say who will ascend into the heavens.

For us and bring it down that we may hear it and do it. Nor is it beyond the sea that you should say who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us that we may hear it and do it. But the word is very near you in your mouth and in your heart that you may do it.

Now, obviously, this reads a little differently than the way Paul quotes it, because Paul's quoting, I believe, the Septuagint instead of saying who will go across the sea in the Septuagint is who will descend into the abyss to the depth. Forget it. But what Moses is saying is this.

You, you Israelites have no excuse to be disobedient to God's laws because it has come right to your backyard. He has brought it right to your door. You know, other nations might not be able to get it like you can.

They don't. They might have to ascend into heaven to bring it down. But God brought it down to you.

They would have to cross the ocean to get it from you, but you don't have to cross any oceans. It's right here. You know, you can't argue that the law is inaccessible to you.

You can't say, well, who's going to go to heaven and bring down the law of God or who's going to cross the sea to some foreign nation and bring the law back to us. You don't

have to talk that way. God already brought it down.

He brought down to your land where you are. You don't have to travel to get it. It's not inaccessible.

Therefore, you have no excuse. He says the law is very near to you. It's in your mouth and in your heart.

Now, Paul takes that and he says, well, that's kind of a similar principle for us. We don't have to achieve great things to to to reach Christ. Christ, we don't go to heaven and bring Christ down.

Once he's dead, we don't have to go into the abyss and bring him back from the dead. These would be hard things to do. To be saved.

But God has already done all the hard things. He has brought Christ down to us. He has brought Christ up from the dead.

All that remains for us is to believe in our hearts and to confess with our mouth. He says. So he's kind of making an application of Deuteronomy a little differently than Moses did.

But he's in principle not really very different because Moses is saying, if you want to keep the law, God has made it easy for you. And Paul is saying, if you want Christ, God has made it easy for you. He sent Christ down.

You don't have to go into heaven to bring him down. God initiated that. He sent Jesus.

Once Jesus said you didn't have to bring him up from the dead. God did that. God did all the hard stuff.

The easy part is yours now just to believe and to confess. And so using this passage in Deuteronomy, Paul amazingly really makes an argument for justification by faith for the fact that we don't have to work to make salvation available to us. God has done all the heavy lifting.

Also, Deuteronomy. Unlike most of the books of the book has a direct prophecy about Jesus. Now, the Pentateuch has a lot of types of Christ.

We know in Exodus and Leviticus and even in Numbers, we find numerous types and shadows of Christ. But as far as direct prophecies about Christ, there's not many. You have a couple, at least three or more, at least in the book of Genesis.

But I'm trying to think if there's any direct prophecy about Christ in Exodus, Leviticus or Numbers. If there is, it's not coming to my mind. Lots of types and shadows.

But one of the great prophecies about the Messiah is found in Deuteronomy chapter 18

and verse 15 and it is quoted twice in the New Testament. Peter quotes it in his sermon in Acts chapter 3 and Stephen quotes it in his sermon in Acts chapter 7. And that is simply a prophecy that Moses gives in the context of urging Israel to avoid sorcerers and soothsayers and mediums and other occult means of supernatural guidance in Deuteronomy 18 verses 9 through 14. He urges them to avoid entirely all forms of divination.

And fortune telling and things like that. They won't need that. God will always speak to them by his messengers who will be prophets.

And in specific, it says verse 15. Yahweh, your God, will raise up for you a prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren, him you shall hear. Now, this could be understood rather generically in that Moses would be saying, well, I'm going to die shortly.

But instead of going to fortune tellers, God won't make that necessary. He'll send prophets like me. There'll be a prophet like me instead of a fortune teller to go to whenever you need someone.

And of course, Joshua was probably a prophet. He's not really called a prophet, but he wrote scripture, it would appear. So he probably was an inspired man.

Certainly, God spoke to him. So I guess that makes him a prophet. He spoke to him in Joshua chapter 1 very clearly and later in the book as well.

So one could say this prophet like Moses would be Joshua. The only problem with seeing it that way is that Joshua probably wrote the last words of Deuteronomy because they were written after Moses died. Moses is the author substantially of Deuteronomy, but most scholars believe that someone else and probably Joshua wrote the words at the end after Moses death is recorded.

And what's interesting is in Deuteronomy 34:10, whoever wrote it, whether it was Joshua or someone after his time wrote these words after recording the death of Moses, he says in Deuteronomy 34:10. But since then, there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom Yahweh knew face to face in all the signs and wonders which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt before Pharaoh and by all the mighty power and all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel. So at the end of Deuteronomy, it says that that prophet like Moses, who Moses predicted would come, had not yet come.

At what point those last verses in Deuteronomy were written, we cannot be sure, but we can at least understand that it was written no earlier than Joshua. And if Joshua wrote them, he did not regard himself to be that prophet that Moses spoke about. But the New Testament writers do recognize the coming of that prophet in Jesus, of course.

Now, in the Gospels, we sometimes have people saying of Jesus or or even of John the

Baptist. Are you that prophet? Like in John chapter one, when the delegation came to John the Baptist, said, Are you the Messiah? No. Are you Elijah? No.

Are you the prophet? And he said, No. The prophet means the one that Deuteronomy predicted. Deuteronomy 18:15.

And he said, No. When Jesus said the five thousand, the people said, Surely this is that prophet who is to come. And at Caesarea Philippi, Jesus said, Who do men say I am? And well, they said one of the prophets.

But there were a number of times that people spoke of the Messiah or of a coming figure who they didn't always identify with the Messiah in their mind. But with that profit and that was the profit that Moses predicted. Now, the New Testament writers did associate that profit with the Messiah being the same person.

And in Acts chapter three, verse 22, three, 22, Peter said, For Moses truly said to the fathers, The Lord, your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever he says to you. And it should come to pass that every soul who does not hear that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.

So Peter, of course, is taking that profit to be a reference to Jesus. He said that any Jew who does not listen to Jesus as Moses predicted will be cut off from the people. That is, a Jew who does not believe in Jesus is not part of the people of Israel anymore.

Cut off from the people. And Peter quotes Moses as his authority on that. In Acts chapter seven, Stephen is preaching his sermon.

And in verse 37, he said, This is that Moses who said to the children of Israel, The Lord, your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear. So obviously, the early Christians believe that that prophet that Moses spoke of was identical with the Messiah.

Moses didn't say it would be the Messiah, but he did say there'd be a prophet like him. And and there had not arisen a prophet after Moses until Jesus came, who did the signs and wonders and who spoke to God face to face as Moses had until Jesus came. So we see that there's a lot of relevance that the New Testament writers see in the book of Deuteronomy in a lot of ways.

Now, the authorship of every book is significant, especially for biblical books, because it's important to know whether a book was written by somebody who was inspired or not. A book doesn't become inspired simply by someone putting it within the Bible, and Christians often don't think that through as much as they probably should. We just said, Well, if it's between the leather covers, it must be inspired.

Well, how did it get in between the leather covers is the question. Why is it there in other books or not that were written? What constitutes a worthy addition to the canon of Scripture? And when the Old Testament scriptures are being considered, the answer is obviously has to be written by an entire an inspired prophet. The New Testament was written by apostles, but the Old Testament was written by inspired prophets, and therefore, a book like Deuteronomy or any other book has to be considered.

Was it written by an inspired prophet or not? And you know, because from our introduction to the Pentateuch, I pointed out that modern scholarship likes to dispute the traditional authorship of many Old Testament books, especially the ones that show clear supernatural evidence of prophecy in them. For example, Isaiah and Daniel, two of the books that have the most stunning predictive prophecies. Modern scholarship likes to say they were written after the fact, written by not the people that they're claimed to be written by and so forth.

Likewise, for over a century now, about a century and a half, at least, modern scholars have been toying with the idea. In fact, modern scholars, many of them just assume the idea to be correct, that Moses didn't write the Pentateuch, didn't write any of these books that we're reading, that they were written much later than this, perhaps in the seventh century or later, B.C. And still, I mean, that's still seven centuries after Moses. And so they don't really recognize Moses as the author.

But there's no compelling reason to go their way. Modern scholars just have their own prejudices, just like everybody else does. And their prejudice is against the supernatural.

And their prejudice is against the authority of virtually any biblical book. And therefore, they question that Moses wrote it. Now, if Moses didn't write it, then we have no reason to believe it's inspired at all.

If Moses, if this was written by other people who claimed Moses as the author, because the book certainly does claim Moses as its author, well, then it was written by people who lied and who were not inspired. And the book is of no value to us, or at least of limited value to us. But the book is not ambiguous as to its author.

Throughout, we have Moses being the one who's said to be giving the sermons in the book. The book begins with the words, these were words which Moses spoke to Israel. And not only did he speak, but he also wrote, it says in chapter 31, verse nine, it says, So Moses wrote this law and delivered it to the priests.

Verse 22 says, Therefore, Moses wrote this song the same day and taught it to Israel. Verse 24 says, So it was when Moses had completed writing the words of this law in a book when they were finished. So, I mean, the book clearly makes reference to Moses as its author.

If it was not written by Moses, not only was it not known to be written by some inspired man and therefore doesn't belong in the Bible, but whoever wrote it was a liar and claimed to be Moses and was not. Furthermore, later books of the Old Testament often quote from Deuteronomy and attribute it to Moses, as, for example, First Kings chapter two, First Kings chapter two and verse three says, And keep the charge of the Lord your God and walk in his ways to keep his statutes, his commandments, his judgments, as it is written in the law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn. Now, though it doesn't mention Deuteronomy, it talks about keeping the law so that you may prosper.

And that is what Deuteronomy promises to the Jews. If they if they will keep his law, that they will, in fact, prosper as a result. And in First Kings chapter eight and verse 53, Solomon's praying and he says, For you separated them from among all the peoples of the earth to be your inheritance as you spoke by the hand of your servant Moses, when you brought our fathers out of Egypt.

O Lord God. Well, obviously, this is making a reference to the Pentateuch as a whole, not simply the book of Deuteronomy. But again, Moses is recognized in the Old Testament by the authors as as the author of the whole Pentateuch, including Deuteronomy.

Jesus and the New Testament are quoted directly from Deuteronomy and applied it to Moses. We saw a moment ago we read Peter's words in Acts chapter three said, For surely God spoke through Moses and they quoted Deuteronomy chapter 18. Jesus mentioned that the law about divorce that's found in Deuteronomy 24 was also from Moses.

Jesus was clear on that. In Matthew chapter 19 verses seven and eight, they said to Jesus, Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce and put her away? They're referring to Deuteronomy 24. And Jesus said, Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives.

But from the beginning, it was not so. He recognized that that law about giving a writing of divorce in Deuteronomy was from Moses. Jesus confirmed that Moses had done so.

We saw Acts three, 22 through 23, a moment ago, where again, we have Moses named as the author of material that we find in Deuteronomy. Also in Romans chapter 10 and verse 19, it says, But say, but I say, Did Israel not know? First, Moses says, I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation. I will anger you by a foolish nation.

That's Deuteronomy 32, 21. So Paul says, Moses says this. So we have Peter with Jesus and Peter and Paul, all quoting from Deuteronomy saying that Moses wrote it.

And therefore, to the Christian, that should settle the matter. Moses is the author as with the rest of the penitent. Now, the setting of the book is on the plains of Moab across the

Jordan from Jericho, an expression that we read many times in the latter part of the book of Numbers.

And also we find it at the beginning of Deuteronomy. It says these are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel on this side of the Jordan in the wilderness, in the plain opposite et cetera, et cetera. And it goes on to talk about the location being five on this side of the Jordan in the land of Moab.

And we've seen that place identified a number of times previously in numbers as the place where Israel was camped just before they crossed over to invade the promised land and to conquer Jericho, the first city they were across from Jericho across the Jordan River. The time of it was somewhere between 1450 and 1400 BC. The reason I give that kind of range is because different conservative, conservative scholars give different dates for the exodus ranging.

There's about a \$50, \$50, about a 50 year range of difference between some of the estimates. It's not important to me to nail down the exact date. Obviously, in general, what we call the 15th century BC, it is 39 years and 11 months after the exodus.

So almost 40 years, if you like, just one more month, we'll make it 40 years. And that's how long Israel was to remain in the wilderness before conquering the land. So we're right on the edge of them ending their wilderness sojourn and going into the promised land.

We're told in chapter one and verse two, that the distance from Mount Horeb or Mount Sinai to Kadesh, which is where they had sent the spies from and where they could have gone into the promised land if they had not rebelled earlier from that distance from Horeb to Kadesh is 165 miles or 266 kilometers. And we're told in chapter one, verse two, that that's an 11 days journey on foot. That is, they could have gotten there in 11 days from Mount Sinai.

But instead, they wandered for 38 more years after they left Mount Sinai. And they were slow travelers because they were slow learners. And that's why they didn't get there in 11 days.

They got there in 39 years instead. By the way, Horeb is the term that's always used for Mount Sinai in the book of Deuteronomy. We've seen previously, originally, when we first encountered Mount Sinai in the book of Exodus, we found that it was alternately called Sinai in Horeb.

But in Deuteronomy, it's always called Horeb. At the time that Deuteronomy is written, Moses' death is imminent. He actually dies at the end of the book.

And the book is mainly comprised of his final sermons, which might have all been given within a day or two of each other. We don't know. But the entire book could have

occurred within the last few days of his life.

And then he dies at the end. His death is said to be imminent in chapter 31, verses 1 and 2. And of course, we do find his death recorded in chapter 34. And as soon as he died, Israel crossed the Jordan River under Joshua's leadership.

And even at this time, Joshua had already been appointed to replace Moses. So we'd say Moses was perhaps what we call a lame duck leader, but he's not really a lame duck at all. He's still the prophet of God.

His successor is already in place, but everyone's going to respect Moses until he's gone. And so these are the final days of Moses' life. Now let's talk about the contents of the book of Deuteronomy.

The book of Deuteronomy actually looks backward at the history behind them and looks forward at the conquest ahead and how they will live in the land. Essentially, the first 11 chapters are retrospective. They look back at what God has done for Israel in the past since they left Egypt.

And it is history with a purpose. It is the purpose of reminding them that the thing that God has promised to do for them in the future resembles very much what he's already done for them in the past. He often shames them for their earlier lack of faith when they would not go into Canaan when their fathers, this is the second generation here, but when the first generation would not go into Canaan because of the giants there.

We're going to read in the first chapters about how the Edomites conquered their land from giants who were there and the Moabites conquered their land from giants that were there before them. In other words, God was able to give the land he gave to Moab and to the Edomites despite the hostility of giants that were there at the time. And yet Israel had not been able to trust God to defeat giants for them.

But looking backward, the first 11 chapters pretty much. And then from chapter 12 to the end, kind of looking forward at the coming into the land and how things will be then. Actually, some of the rules that were given in Leviticus or in some of the earlier books are slightly modified in Deuteronomy chapters 12 and following because, well, they're going to be a new circumstance, new situation.

The laws that were given before were suitable for people wandering in a desert. And some things are changing when they move into a settled situation. The outline of the book, we've got an introduction in the first four verses of chapter one, and we have essentially three discourses of Moses.

Some would say four. It depends on how you group the final material. The first discourse is short chapters one through four.

Essentially at the near the end of chapter four, there's a the appointment of three cities of refuge on the east side of the Jordan. And that's not technically part of the discourse. And the last few verses of chapter four also introduced the next discourse, which is chapter five, essentially through twenty six.

The second discourse of Moses much, much longer, like twenty one chapters of twenty two chapters, as opposed to four chapters for the first one, and it largely reviews their history and laws that God had given them previously. Some new laws are given as well, but there's a lot of review and expansion on the covenant stipulations that God had given them. Chapters twenty seven and twenty eight are a strong warning about the need to be obedient to the covenant and the law not to depart from it after Moses is gone and the blessings that will come upon them from God.

If they are obedient and the curses which are enumerated in much greater detail than the blessings are, if they would depart from God's covenant, there'd be great curses upon them. And these blessings and curses are found in chapters twenty seven to twenty eight. The third discourse is a couple of chapters long, twenty nine and thirty make up the third discourse of Moses, largely reaffirmation of the covenant before Moses leaves.

He confirms the covenant and then the rest of the material could be called appendices. Some would make them a fourth discourse of Moses. I don't suppose there could be any objection to doing that.

I mean, they are Moses speaking and but and yet each of them has its own separate character. You know, you could group them all into a fourth discourse or you could see them as some do as appendices to the book. Like you've got your third discourse essentially done.

Then there's some other interesting miscellaneous stuff to include, as in chapter thirty one. Most of it is instructions for priests, Levites and Joshua, special instructions about what they shall do about reading the law every seven years to all the people and so forth. And then there's appendix to, I would call it the song of Moses, certainly a discrete section by by itself.

Chapter thirty one thirty through chapter thirty two is a song that Moses wrote and apparently saying that is that we could say his swan song he sang before he died and he it was instructional and warning to Israel about their future is a prophetic song. And then there's another probably best seen as another appendix, Moses final blessing of the people in chapter thirty three. And then the final closing would be the death of Moses, which is what chapter thirty four is concerned with.

And so that's what we'll find in the book. Now, if you turn the sheet over that I've given you, I need to quickly go over some things here since night since the middle 1950s. Bible

scholars have tended to look at the structure of Deuteronomy through the grid of a theory presented by a man named G.E. Mendenhall in 1954.

He studied ancient Hittite suzerainty treaties. Now, we don't even know the word suzerainty, most of us, but it's a good word. Suzerain, a suzerain is a great king who conquers lesser kings and puts them under tribute.

And therefore, the lesser kings who are under a suzerain are called vassals. You probably more familiar with the word vassal than suzerain. At least I grew up knowing what a vassal was, but not what a suzerain was.

But these are two things like each other, sort of like a king and subjects, a suzerain and his vassals. A suzerain was a great king who had conquered lesser kings and they were his vassals. He put them under tribute and there were in the days of the Hittites in the second millennium BC, which is the period of time that Moses lived.

Some of these treaties have been discovered and these suzerainty treaties are really a treaty between the suzerain and his vassals, defining what he expects of them and what he will provide for them in terms of the covenant they have if they remain loyal to him. And almost all Old Testament scholars now just assume that Mendenhall is correct, that this resembles an ancient suzerainty treaty and that God is like the suzerain and Israel is a vassal and that Deuteronomy takes the same form as these old treaties do. Now, it's possible to over to exaggerate the similarities.

The similarities in the structure of Deuteronomy are not precisely exactly parallel to those of the Hittite suzerainty treaties, though there's also much later Assyrian suzerainty treaties and some scholars have tried to say it resembles those. Deuteronomy's structure isn't exactly like either the Hittite or the Assyrian suzerainty treaties, but much closer to the Hittite ones. And that has something to say about the early composition of the book, if correct.

That is, if the book was composed to resemble an ancient suzerainty treaty between God and Israel, then the fact that it resembles the Hittite suzerainty treaties of the second millennium B.C. would place its writing most naturally in the time of Moses, which would go against modern scholarship's ideas that was written much later, like in the seventh century B.C. and what we call the Assyrian period. It's some of these people who want to late date Deuteronomy who try to say that it resembles more the Assyrian suzerainty treaties, but it doesn't. It resembles more the Hittite ones.

Now, I'm not 100% enamored with the whole suzerainty treaty comparison anyway, but I'm not a scholar and I don't, you know, these are things that scholars are interested in. But it might have some edifying value to consider it briefly, that when a great king would conquer lesser kings and put them under tribute, they'd make a covenant where the greater king would be the protector and in some ways the provider for those loyal

vassals that were in covenant with him. And the vassals, of course, had to be 100% loyal and law abiding.

And this certainly does resemble the relationship that God had with Israel. Israel was a kingdom, but God was the great king who was over them. They certainly had to pay tribute to him.

That's what their tithes were for. He made laws for them. He required loyalty from them.

He promised to give them things if they were his loyal people. He was in a covenant relationship with them. So, I mean, it's appropriate enough.

I don't know how artificial it is to try to force this into that pattern, but there is a general typical pattern that the Hittite suzerainty treaties followed in terms of their composition. They begin with just a preamble explaining what it was, such as we might see the opening verses of Deuteronomy chapter one as a preamble. And then the suzerainty treaties would have a historical prologue where it summarized the historical relations between the suzerain and the vassals.

And we certainly have something like that in chapters one through four, where Moses summarizes the history of God's dealings with Israel in the wilderness and his making a covenant with them and protecting them and doing all kinds of things like that. And then there'd be a section of general stipulations of the treaty. That is what's required of the vassals, followed by a section more specific stipulations of the treaty, like the sort of a summary of the general stipulations comes first, followed by a more detailed and specific treatment of these.

Stipulations in Deuteronomy chapters five through 11 could be seen as these general stipulations and chapters 12 through 26 is the more specific stipulations of the treaty. Then the treaties would have some kind of arrangement made for how copies would be preserved and how the treaty would be perpetuated and continued through generations. And chapter 27 of Deuteronomy is often seen as corresponding to that aspect of such a treaty.

Now, suzerainty treaties also had enumerated blessings or benefits that the suzerain would give to the vassals if they were obedient, but also punishments and curses that would come upon them from the suzerain if they were disobedient. And we have in chapters 27 and 28 of Deuteronomy, just that. Especially chapter 28, the blessings and the curses, the way I've got it listed there.

I've numbered it wrong. Chapter 28 in its entirety is blessings and curses. I put there on the notes 28 verses 15 through 16.

That's just the curses. The blessings are in the first 14 verses. And then the last part of the treaty would contain various review and summary of the whole thing and provisions

for the continuity of the treaty.

And many people see chapters 29 through 34 as generally corresponding to that. Now, to my mind, there is a general, you know, correspondence and maybe sufficient to warrant the idea that God intended or Moses intended to write this book as if it were God's suzerainty treaty with Israel. It's hard to say because this was written at the end of Moses' life, and it would take some ingenuity, of course, to arrange the material deliberately into a complex structure like that when it's actually recorded as if it's just discourses that Moses gave, which he could have given off the top of his head, that it's organized as it is.

Well, I suppose one could say that Moses didn't organize it in his present form. Maybe Joshua or someone else took the speeches that Moses gave him and later organized the chapters as they are. So that would resemble a suzerainty treaty.

But in any case, I don't know that it's the most important thing, although it's the thing that scholars are most fascinated with when they study Deuteronomy, partly because it was a theory that arose rather newly in the past 60 years. And boy, all the scholars have just jumped all over it, this suzerainty treaty thing. Now, we don't have to talk about all this, but in your notes, I gave you a list of some of the parallels between what's called the Book of the Covenant in Exodus chapters 21 through 23 and Deuteronomy to give examples of how Deuteronomy repeats and expands on some of the stuff that we've already seen.

The law of Hebrew servants is in Exodus 21 and in Deuteronomy, and the laws of murder, kidnapping, marriage to a woman that's been seduced, oppression of weak and helpless people like orphans and widows and strangers, the laws of charging interest on loans, of taking pledges from the poor for collateral for a loan, the law of the firstborn, laws about eating meat not properly butchered, the laws about false witnesses and what their penalties will be when they're found to be false, the demand for impartial justice in the courts that is not favoring the rich or the poor, but just being just, the need for kindness to your neighbors, including your enemies, the Sabbath year, the Sabbath day, oaths should be taken only in the name of Yahweh, three annual festivals, and the law of firstfruits, and don't boil a kid in his mother's milk. These are all different laws you find in Exodus chapters 21 through 23, which have parallels, they're repeated, they're expanded on in Deuteronomy. So you can see how Deuteronomy takes the old law, repeats it, and applies it.

In fact, the way that Deuteronomy typically does it, it will state the law briefly, and then it will preach on it. That is, Moses will state the law that they already have received, then he'll give a sermon or an expansion or an exhortation about that particular law. In your notes, I've given you some examples, some passages of examples of that pattern.

That's kind of a normal pattern in Deuteronomy to do. So that the law is repeated, but

not just loaded, not just as a law code, but it's been degraded in as texts and sermons that Moses preaches about. Now, there's certain common words that you'll find just very thick in the book of Deuteronomy, words like love, especially the love of God for Israel is mentioned first in Deuteronomy.

There's no mention of God's love for Israel or his love for man. In Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus or Numbers, but in Deuteronomy, God speaks frequently of his love for Israel. And it's in Deuteronomy that he commands that Israel love him.

It has been said that there is no other ancient religion known to man where the God of that religion commands his worshippers to love him. Most pagans feared their gods, but loving their gods was not something expected or probably even possible to do. Their gods were monsters.

Their gods were demons. But God requires his people to love him. And love is a very important word in Deuteronomy.

Again, it's the first book to mention God's love. And it's also the book that commands people to love him. The reference to hearing or hearkening to God, very common, serving, fearing and cleaving to and walking in the ways of Yahweh are themes that come up again and again.

Words that you'll find over and over again. Words like covenant, abomination, your gates, meaning a reference to your cities are going to be just really thick. Vocabulary to those vocabulary words a lot as we read through Deuteronomy.

Some phrases and I've only given a few of them. There's a lot of phrases that get repeated in Deuteronomy that are very common. I mean, probably repeated 10 times or more in the book.

Like the expression, the place that Yahweh will choose or the alternate, the place that Yahweh will make his name to dwell. That's a phrase that we find many times referred to. It does not identify where that will be.

If this had been written after David's time, it would have been speaking of Jerusalem. And certainly they would have said so. But the fact that Jerusalem didn't become a Jewish city until David's day, 500 years after this or more, 600 years even after this means that they couldn't identify where that would be.

But there's a reference to that place where Yahweh will choose to make his name dwell. The references are being redeemed from the house of bondage or redeemed from Egypt. Very common repeated phrase.

Also, the remembrance that you were slaves in the land of Egypt keeps being brought up a lot. You were slaves in Egypt. Learn a lesson from that.

There's a lot of references to the land which Yahweh your God is giving you as an inheritance or alternately the land which Yahweh your God has given you to possess. That phrase is very common. Also, the expression that you may prolong your days in the land comes up lots of times, which, of course, has the implication that they might not.

He always says, do this so that you may prolong your days in the land, which is to say, if you don't do what I say, you won't prolong your days and you won't be there for long. And this, of course, echoes what we've seen in Leviticus and what we've pointed out previously, that Israel's claim to the land was not unconditional. There's not some unconditional claim that Israel has the land.

God always told them what terms. He was giving them the land upon and that if they would violate those terms, they would be thrust out of the land. And so again and again, he says, do these things and obey me and keep my covenant so that you can prolong your time on the land.

So, of course, the implications for today about that are always interesting because there's dispute over the claim to the land of Israel today. And many Christians would say that they have a divine claim on the land. Maybe they do.

Maybe they don't. But we wouldn't know it from just saying so. We'd have to look at Deuteronomy and see whether they've kept the terms that God said would be the terms of them being able to the land or not.

It's not enough just to say they got it. The question is, has God promised it to them in their present condition? Anyway, that's our introduction to the book. We'll start with chapter one when we come back from a break and move through it as we have the previous books.