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Deuteronomy Overview



Bible Book Overviews - Steve Gregg

In this comprehensive overview, Steve Gregg explores the significance and content of the fifth book of the Pentateuch, Deuteronomy. As a restatement of the earlier laws given by Moses, the book reminds the Israelites of the importance of living according to God's laws. The book features extensively in both Old and New Testaments, with New Testament writers quoting Deuteronomy for its spiritual principles and laws. Despite the book's seemingly outdated laws, it carries relevant moral and spiritual principles that the Holy Spirit can reveal.

Transcript

Tonight we're going to have an introduction and an overview of the book of Deuteronomy. And some of you have been here for most or all of the previous book introductions. You know that several months ago we began going through the Bible, one book a month.

The idea is that you could be reading these books during the month between our meetings. We only meet once a month, so there's a lot of time in between these gatherings to read the books. In fact, you could read several books of the Bible in the time in between.

But we're assuming that if you want to read through the Bible at this rate, we're going to take each month an introduction to one of the successive books. So we've had, this is our fifth time, and we're in Deuteronomy, which is the fifth book of the Bible. The book of Deuteronomy, of course, is the final book of what we call the Pentateuch.

The Pentateuch is a Greek word that means five books, and that's what Christians have referred to as the, that's the term given to the first five books of the Bible, the ones that Moses wrote. And Jews speak of the same books as a collection they call the Torah, which means law or instruction. So what the Jews call Torah, Christians often have called the Pentateuch.

You don't have to know either of those words, but it's helpful to know in case I happen to use them when I'm talking about. The fifth book of this collection is the last book of

Moses, and it is Deuteronomy. The word Deuteronomy is not really the original name of the book.

In Hebrew, the book is called Debarim because that Debarim in Hebrew means words. And the opening line of Deuteronomy 1.1 says, these are the words. And the books of the Old Testament, especially the books, I should say the books of the Torah, in the Hebrew Bible are given titles that are based on the opening words in each book.

So Genesis is called In the Beginning. Exodus is called Now These Are the Names in the Hebrew Bible. This book is called Debarim Words because that's one of the first words in the book.

Now, why don't we call it Debarim? Well, a long time ago, the Old Testament was translated out of Hebrew into Greek. And the translators who translated it into Greek named this book Deuteronomy, which is Deuteronomy in second. And nomion is from the Greek word nomos, which means law.

So it means second law or more like a restatement of the law. And if you read the whole Pentateuch, you'll find that almost most of the things you find in Deuteronomy, you found them already before, perhaps in Exodus or Leviticus, because Exodus and Leviticus contain the laws that were given to Israel while they were encamped for one year at the foot of Mount Sinai. But this book is 40 years later or 39 years later, and they're no longer at Mount Sinai.

They're encamped in Moab across the river from the promised land, the Jordan River, which is the eastern boundary of Israel. They were on the eastern side, but they had not yet entered the land of Canaan, as it was then called. It came to be called Israel once they dominated it and set up their society there because they were Israel.

They were the children of Israel. The man, Israel, Jacob and his offspring came and they dispossessed the Canaanites. So the land that had been called Canaan became called Israel.

But that was later. That was in the time of Joshua, which is the next book in the Bible. We're not talking about that tonight.

This is the final words of Moses before Israel crossed the river to conquer the land of Canaan from the Canaanites. And Moses himself did not get to cross. That was already told to him in the book of Numbers.

He had disobeyed God in a matter that we might consider to be a small matter, considering all that he had suffered faithfully for God. And, you know, one time God told him to speak to the rock so that water would come. And instead of speaking to it, Moses struck it with a rod, which is not exactly what God told him to do.

And because he didn't do what God told him to do, God said, OK, you're not going to lead these people into the promised land. And Moses kind of challenged God on that a couple of times. I asked God to reconsider.

And each time God said, no, you've done this thing I told you not to do. You're not going to leave. You're not going to go in.

I'll let you see the land. I'll let you look across the river and see it. But I won't let you go in.

And the final time that Moses begged God to let him see it, God said, don't speak to me about this anymore. And so Moses resigned himself to ending his long life, which was 120 years long, in Moab with only a view across the river of the promised land. But the people of Israel at this time were the second generation after the Exodus.

The generation that came out of Egypt in the Exodus had all died. That is, all those who were over the age 20 at the time of the Exodus. And there were only two exceptions.

Only two people from that first generation went into the promised land. That was Joshua and Caleb. But apart from that, neither Moses nor Aaron nor Miriam or anyone else from that generation that came out of Egypt was allowed to go in.

But all those who were 20 years old or younger at the time of the Exodus were qualified, if they were still living, to go into the promised land at this time. So there was really nobody over 60 years old in the whole country at this point, because everybody 40 years earlier had been 20 or younger. And now we've got a youngish nation with only two old guys in it, Joshua and Caleb and Moses, but he's not going.

And so before he dies, and he does die in the final chapter of Deuteronomy, in chapter 34, before he dies, he addresses the nation. Now, this is a new generation. He had given all those laws in Exodus and Leviticus to the earlier generation when they came out of Egypt.

But now this is their kids. And, of course, they've spent 39 years together since they came out of Egypt, but actually 39 years and 11 months. So almost 40 years.

And I'm sure that the Israelites, even the younger generation, had plenty of time to be instructed in many of the laws during the time. But Moses, of course, wants to make sure before he dies that he leaves them with a complete set of laws that he's reminded them of so that they don't forget them. Because forgetting the law would result in them displeasing God and breaking his covenant, and then God would have to judge them.

And God warned them again and again, don't copy the ways of the heathen. When you go into Canaan, don't let the Canaanites stay because you'll learn their ways and they'll not have to bring judgment on you like I brought judgment on them. So Moses realizes

that the very survival of this generation as a new nation depends entirely on their keeping the laws of God, and therefore he gives these speeches.

There's really a number of longish speeches in Deuteronomy. Some of them are just catalogs of laws, just like Leviticus and parts of Exodus were, but they are laws given in speeches that Moses gave. When we have the law given in Exodus and Leviticus, these were written down.

And so the Jews had them in writing. But remember, most people couldn't read and frankly didn't have anything to read anyway, because there's 3 million of these people and there's no copies of the books. I mean, you can't reproduce books without a printing press.

And therefore, most of the people, though they were obligated to keep the law, couldn't read it. They didn't have a copy of it at home to read. So it's very important for Moses to make sure that this was all repeated in detail for them.

And that's what this book is about. That's why the Septuagint, the Greek translation of this book, called it the second law, but really meaning a restatement of the same law in most cases. There are some new laws included in Deuteronomy that you don't find in the earlier works, but you're going to find, if you've read the previous books of the Pentateuch, a lot of familiar stuff in Deuteronomy, including a retelling of the stories.

Because in Moses' speeches, he doesn't only give new laws or repeat old laws, he reminds them of their journeys. He reminds them of this last 40 years and the things they had done wrong and the judgments that God had had to bring on them in many cases. He wants them to remember their history, because their history is instructive as well as the laws that God's given.

Because God has not only spoken to these people laws to obey, but he has interacted with them. He is a God who deals with them in history. And therefore Moses wants them to be reminded of the fact that God, when they worshiped Baal-peor, God had to judge a bunch of them, set a plague among them.

When they worshipped idols, they didn't worship a gold serpent, but when they worshipped idols and the real serpents came and bit them, Moses had to raise up a bronze serpent. And as they looked at the bronze serpent, this is in the book of Numbers, they were healed. The story of Balaam comes up for retelling as well.

And the way that God led them through the wilderness so that they hopefully don't forget these important stories or the laws that God gave them. That is what the concern of the book is. So it really is about 40 years later, at the beginning of Deuteronomy, it's about 40 years later than the end of Leviticus.

And the book Numbers was in between, and Numbers doesn't cover all those years. I

mean, it really is all we have about those years, but there's not an awful lot of information. The book of Numbers covers a lot of the things that the early period of wandering and then a little bit at the end, but it leaves about 38 years out just because, well, it's summarized for us.

There's a list in Numbers of the various places they camped and moved from during that 38 years, but not much detail except for a few significant stories. Moses retells some of them. He doesn't always tell the same details.

That's one of the issues that comes up with Deuteronomy when you study it, that he tells some of the stories you already read earlier, and yet the details are a little different. Some people find them difficult to harmonize. They can be harmonized, and we won't try to find all those and harmonize them tonight, but just realize that this is what the nature of the book is.

It's essentially almost entirely spoken sermons by Moses, and that's not true of the earlier books in the Pentateuch. Now, when you read these laws that God gave to Israel, they seem archaic. They seem foreign.

They are strange. For example, in Numbers, we found that there's this law called the ordeal of jealousy where if a man suspected his wife had been cheating on him, but he couldn't prove it, he'd take her to the temple, and there's this strange ritual they do, and if she was guilty, then it would show up in symptoms that would happen in her body, and if she was innocent, there would be no such symptoms. It's weird stuff.

It's very clear that through the law, there's rituals concerning lepers, and there's these ways in Leviticus 13 and 14 to diagnose leprosy, and if a person recovers from leprosy, for them to be restored to society, to go through this weird ritual of killing birds and pouring out the blood and all this kind of stuff. In fact, the whole sacrificial system which dominates the law is weird to us because it involves all this rigamarole. You don't only kill an animal and burn it.

You have to do things with the call above the liver and the fatty lobe under the tail and these other parts of the animal. You have to wave them before God and things like that. These things seem really removed from us culturally and religiously.

We don't practice any of these things, nor are we supposed to, but it'd be a mistake to think that these books are not deeply relevant to us as Christians. They're relevant to us in a different way than they were relevant to the Israelites because the Israelites were under these laws, and they had to keep them. We are not under these laws, but the laws were instructive.

According to Hebrews, these laws were a type and a shadow of spiritual things. Frankly, Deuteronomy has many ways in which it stands out among the books of the Bible as one

of the most significant. For one thing, the Ten Commandments are found only two places in Scripture listed.

One is when they were originally given in Exodus chapter 20, and the other is when they're listed again in Deuteronomy chapter 5. Now, the Ten Commandments, as we know, have become the foundation of British common law and of American law from the beginning. Western civilization is largely built upon the Ten Commandments. We take them for granted.

You should not murder, you should not commit adultery, you should not steal. We just figure anyone would know that, wouldn't they? Isn't that just being decent? We know that because we live in cultures that have been influenced for hundreds of years by these Ten Commandments. And, you know, we have no idea what it would be like to live in a culture that wasn't influenced by them unless you go someplace like India or to some tribal group in Papua New Guinea or somewhere like that where they've never had any exposure to the Bible.

You find that human nature does not naturally know, necessarily, the things that God revealed there, but which our whole society has been blessed by, the knowledge of these things. And so just by containing the Ten Commandments and being one of the only two places in the Bible that lists them, Deuteronomy becomes significant that way. Although, of course, we don't depend entirely on Deuteronomy for our knowledge of them since they're in Exodus, still, you'd think that something as important as the Ten Commandments would be listed in more places than just two.

And yet, they are only in two places. One of them is in Deuteronomy. But the most important command, when Jesus was asked, what is the greatest of the commandments, he said the greatest of the commandments is the Shema.

Now, Shema is a Hebrew word that means here. And the Jews call it the Shema because it begins with the word here. And frankly, it is part of every synagogue service.

When Jews get together on the Sabbath at the synagogue, they recite the Shema. And they always have. And the Shema is actually Deuteronomy, chapter 6, verse 5. Hear, O Israel.

They call it the Shema because it starts with hear, Shema. Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength, and all your mind.

Now, that law, Jesus said, is the great commandment, the greatest of all commandments. He said there's another like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

And that comes from Leviticus. But certainly, when asked what the great commandment was, the first thing that came to Jesus' mind was something in Deuteronomy. As a matter

of fact, Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy 10 times in the recorded stories of Jesus, which is a lot.

I mean, we only really have 39 days of Jesus' life recorded. You know that. Jesus' lifetime was probably about 33 years in length.

But only a few days of his life were actually recorded. And about 39 is what's been calculated. So, in that period of time, with that little tiny bit of information we have about the mystery of Jesus, we have 10 different times he quoted Deuteronomy.

It means that that was a significant book to him. In fact, when Jesus was tempted in the wilderness by the devil, as it's recorded in Matthew 4 and Luke 4, he quoted Scripture three times to resist the temptation Satan gave him. All three times he quoted from Deuteronomy, interestingly enough.

He had a big Bible with 39 books in it. You'd think he could quote a selection of passages from other parts of the Bible. He could have, except Deuteronomy was enough.

For all three temptations, Deuteronomy had something to protect against the deception of the devil. Deuteronomy had the materials that Jesus used. It's very important to have an influential book.

As a matter of fact, just like the books of Chronicles supplement the stories in 1 Samuel and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings, you know that the books of Chronicles parallel those. 1 Chronicles parallels 1 and 2 Samuel. And 2 Chronicles parallels 1 and 2 Kings and supplements them.

It gives details that are not found in the earlier books. So, Deuteronomy is like that with the book of Numbers. The book of Numbers has stories about the wilderness wanderings.

And in Deuteronomy, as Moses retells those stories, new details are revealed to us that we wouldn't have known. So, just as Chronicles supplements the other historical books, Deuteronomy supplements the historical stories in the book of Numbers. There was a great revival in Judah in the Old Testament times after the nation had lapsed into horrendous idolatry.

If you read the Old Testament through, you find that the Jews, although they were told to have no other gods besides Yahweh, they nonetheless did have lots of gods. They disobeyed God regularly. They worshipped Baal, they worshipped Molech, they worshipped Chemosh, they worshipped just about any god they could borrow from other nations, all the pagan gods and so forth.

And they tended to do this more often than to worship only Yahweh. And even when they worshipped these other gods, they just added those gods to their pantheon. They worshipped God too.

They still went to the temple and worshipped God at the temple, but they also worshipped on these high places, these shrines, these groves, these pagan deities as well. Which was absolutely unacceptable, of course, to God, but he didn't always lower the boom on them instantly. He'd send the prophets, and the prophets would tell them to stop doing that or else they'd suffer for it, and they usually wouldn't stop, and so God would judge them.

But in the midst of this history of idolatry in the Old Testament, you find one very bright spot in the life of King Josiah, who actually brought a reformation in Judah. And he tore down all the idolatrous places and the high places, and he tore down the altars, and he cleaned house, is what he did. He realized that Israel had lapsed into tremendous disobedience against God, and he feared God.

But how did he know that? Because he found the book of Deuteronomy. You know, it's interesting when you read the story about this revival, which is in 2 Kings 22 and 23. 2 Kings 22 and 23 tells about this revival.

When King Josiah sat on the throne, there was a priest named Hilkiah, and he was kind of refurbishing the temple. The temple had fallen out of repair because, frankly, the Jews weren't that zealous for worshipping God at the temple, and they were worshipping other gods. And so it just needed repair, so this guy, this priest Hilkiah, was given a charge over the project of refurbishing the temple.

And as he was going through the old storerooms and stuff, he found this scroll. It happened to be the scroll of Deuteronomy. And when he said, what's this? He looked at it, he didn't even know what it was.

Imagine the Jews coming to the point where they didn't even know what the law was when they found it. There must have been at least two generations that had neglected it entirely, so that there's a generation that doesn't even know. They find it and say, what is this? And when Hilkiah read it, he said, whoa, this is important.

And so he took it to Josiah the king, and it was read to him. And Josiah was reading it, and he tore his clothes, which is a very Hebrew way of showing angst and, frankly, fear of God and of judgment. He tore his clothes and said, wow, we are under God's curse.

All the curses in this book have come upon us. Now, Deuteronomy has the curses of God in it in chapters 27 and 28, and that's what he was reading, apparently. Because he saw that this book was from God, although he had been unfamiliar with it.

Even the old priest was unfamiliar with it. Now, their duty was to read the law to the gathered assembly of Israelites every seven years. That was commanded in the law, that they should read it every seven years to the whole gathered assembly.

They apparently neglected that many, many, many times. Saw that a generation or two

had passed without even hearing the law. So it seemed a strange thing to them when they found it.

It's hard to imagine. Can you imagine a future generation in America of young people, maybe not yet born, maybe our great-grandchildren or so, who have never seen the Bible? Someone finds the Bible and says, what do you suppose this is? It's interesting. I wonder what it says.

It's like, what is this? Never seen one before. Our country was based on biblical, religious enlightenment, and yet there could easily come a time when a generation not too far into our future has never heard a thing from the Bible because it's been banned or neglected or whatever. That's how it was when Josiah found the book of Deuteronomy.

It inspired a great revival because he read Deuteronomy and realized that the curses of the book had come upon them. He realized they needed to repent. They needed to clean house.

So he tore down the idols and the shrines and all those things. He got rid of all the sodomites. The Bible says there were sodomites.

He didn't let that keep going on. There are all kinds of things that he did to try to reform Israel. He did a good job, but it was too little too late.

Within a short time afterwards, Judah came under the judgment for these things because it was a shallow revival. Not for Josiah himself. He obviously was deeply moved and very sincere, but as far as turning the hearts of the people back to God, apparently not so much.

So they returned to idolatry after Josiah died. But his generation was no doubt spared from immediate judgment because of the book of Deuteronomy. It's a very important book.

It's one of the most influential books in the world, as a matter of fact, is Deuteronomy. I said that Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 10 times. The New Testament as a whole quotes Deuteronomy about 80 times.

That's a lot of quoting of Deuteronomy. Paul quotes it a lot. The other writers of the Bible quote it.

The writer of Hebrews. And so 80 different times this book is woven into the fabric of the New Testament. Even though it's an Old Testament book that's mainly about laws that don't apply to us in the New Testament, yet the truths of it carry over in many respects, sometimes in a very different way.

For example, let me show you a couple of examples of how this is so. If you look at

Deuteronomy chapter 22, Deuteronomy chapter 22, verse 10. Moses said, you shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together.

Now, if you were an Israelite living under the law, what would that mean? It means you don't plow with an ox and a donkey together. Now, ordinarily, your plow would be pulled by two animals. You'd put a yoke over their neck so their combined strength could be used to pull the plow.

You need two animals under that yoke. And, you know, if you had one ox and you had one donkey, you might say, well, better to have two donkeys or two oxen, but hey, I'll just put a donkey and an ox here, and maybe that'll work. But he said, no, you can't do that.

You can't plow with an ox and a donkey together. Well, why ever not? Why would that be forbidden? You might say, well, probably because it just wouldn't work out very well. Donkeys are stubborn.

Oxen are more willing to submit and things like that. You just, the donkey would probably hold it back. The donkey would just stand there and not submit, and then the ox couldn't do it.

Well, that may be true, but that hardly is worthy of making a law against it. It's one thing to say, you know, if you're smart, you probably won't put a donkey and an ox together because it won't work out really well. But that's not what it says.

It says you shall not do it. This is forbidden. But how does the New Testament apply that? If you look at 2 Corinthians 6, in verse 14, Paul said, Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers.

For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness, and what communion has light with darkness? Now, he said, Christians should not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. What's that mean? It means we should not, using the figure of speech of a yoke, we should not be plowing or wearing the yoke alongside an unbeliever. Why? Well, obviously it doesn't work out that well.

If you've got a business partnership or a marriage or something like that where you're bound in some kind of obligation to work alongside an unbeliever or to live and conduct things together in concert with an unbeliever, well, some of your convictions and theirs won't jive. And therefore, they'll probably prevent you from being able to do what you want to do in many cases. But really, I think the issue here is the matter of clean and unclean.

The reason you don't put an ox and a donkey under one yoke and plow with them together is because one is a clean animal and one's an unclean animal. And what God was trying to communicate in that law in Deuteronomy, what Paul understood it to mean

is the unclean animal represents the unbeliever. The clean animal represents the believer.

And you don't yoke together a believer and an unbeliever under the same yoke. By the way, there's quite a few different places in the Pentateuch, and especially the way it is applied in New Testament passages, that would suggest that the clean and unclean distinction between animals, between clean and unclean animals, is intended to be a type, a symbol, a shadow of the difference between godly and ungodly people. For example, Jews and Gentiles.

And when Peter was on the rooftop in Joppa, he had a vision of a sheet lowered down by its four corners with all kinds of unclean animals in it. And Jesus said, Arise, Peter, kill and eat. And Peter said, I don't eat unclean animals.

I've never eaten anything unclean. I'm a good Jew. I'm kosher.

And Jesus said, What I've cleansed, you don't call it common or unclean. And when he mused about that, it became clear to him, he's talking about Gentiles, unclean animals. Eating unclean animals is something Peter would not do because he was a good Jew.

He also, as a good Jew, wouldn't associate with unclean people, like Gentiles. And this was exactly what the meaning of the vision was about. Because as soon as he had seen the vision, God spoke to him and said, Listen, there's a Gentile who wants you to come over and preach to him.

I want you to go. And when Peter got to Cornelius's house, this is all in Acts chapter 10, he said, You know, it's unlawful for me as a Jew to come into the house of a Gentile like you. But God showed me not to call any man unclean.

Really, God told him not to call those animals unclean. What I've cleansed, don't you call unclean. But he understood that represents these people that I thought were unclean.

Likewise, you don't put a clean and unclean animal under the same yoke. You don't put a believer and an unbeliever under the same yoke, so to speak, which simply is a meaning of not binding an unbeliever and a believer together to work on the same project together. Most people apply that to marriage, and I think rightly they should.

But that's not all. I mean, in 2 Corinthians 6, where Paul says, Don't be unequally yoked together with unbelievers, he's not specifically speaking in the context of discussing marriage, though he's speaking more generally, a principle that would apply to marriage, but it also apply to other situations where you're somehow tying your service to God to the cooperation of unbelievers. There's a lot of Christian ministries actually that solicit support from unbelievers.

I don't think they should. There's a lot of social action that Christians get involved with,

joining together with unbelievers in it, because you'll find unbelievers who care about some of the same social things that Christians care about. And so they'll have an organization like Americans Against Pornography, or Americans Against Abortion, or Americans Against Some Other Thing, and not everyone who's an American who's against those things is a Christian.

There's a lot of unbelievers who reject Christ. Certainly Mormons, Jews, Muslims, maybe even some atheists would be against abortion for just sensible reasons. But Christians are not supposed to be changing society in the name of Americans against something, but we're supposed to do what we do in the name of Christ.

When we yoke together with unbelievers in a project like that, it may get the job done, and I think that's how pragmatists think. If we get unbelievers involved, there'll be more money, more resources, we'll be more effective, we can lobby Congress, we can, you know, we can assail City Hall, we'll swell our ranks by getting all these other people who aren't Christians involved in this agenda with us. Yes, you may, if you're a pragmatist.

I don't think God is a pragmatist. I think God's a purist. I think it's better to work with a smaller number of people who all represent Christ, even if it's doing the same project, because then whatever is accomplished is accomplished in the name of Christ and for his glory.

When you do it with unbelievers, then, you know, the glory doesn't go to God specifically. It goes to this coalition of people, some of them Christians, some not. There's a lot of ways in which people yoke themselves together with unbelievers, which I think would be pretty much forbidden in this.

But see, Paul gets this whole idea from this law in Deuteronomy that just says, don't plow with an ox and an ass together, which is an interesting thing. It sounds like just an agricultural rule, although it's hard to know why it would be a rule at all. But it's a rule because God had a principle involved.

You don't mix what is clean and unclean together, and especially in a project like plowing. You don't put an unclean animal and a clean animal together to do the work. And Paul says, yeah, you don't, you, a Christian, don't get unequally yoked with unbelievers.

You need to be yoked with believers. What we do, we should do in the name of Christ so that Christ gets the credit for whatever is done. And anyway, it's a principle that Paul draws from a law that you might not have gotten from that.

But Paul is seeing in Deuteronomy and in the laws of the Old Testament, spiritual principles. Another case also from Deuteronomy that Paul draws spiritual principles from is in Deuteronomy 25.4. So, in Deuteronomy 25.4, Moses says, you should not muscle an

ox while it treads out the grain. Now, technically, that's another agrarian law.

When you tread out the grain, this is probably referring to when they're grinding the grain, pulling a millstone, these huge stone wheels that they used to roll over the grain to crush it and grind it into meal. They would use an animal, an ox, to pull this heavy stone around in a circle to crush the grain on the lower millstone. But the law says when you have an ox serving you in that way, you don't muzzle it.

Now, why in the world would you muzzle it? Oxen don't bite. You might muzzle a dog if you're not sure if it's going to bite somebody. You put a muzzle on it.

Why would you muzzle an ox? Obviously, to keep it from eating. You would muzzle an ox if you don't want to share the grain with the ox. Here's the ox doing the work, but you're not letting him eat any of it.

And that just doesn't seem fair. And so God says, don't muzzle the ox when it's treading out your grain. Now, Paul quotes this twice in the New Testament.

And it's interesting because in 1 Corinthians 9, the first place he quotes it, he quotes it and then he says this very interesting question. He says, For it is written in the law of Moses, you shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain. We just saw that in Deuteronomy 25, 4. Then Paul says, is it oxen that God is concerned about? Well, in that law, it sounds like it is.

It sounds like God's into animal rights. I mean, well, the animal should have the right to eat while it's working. It doesn't seem fair to not let the ox eat while it works.

And Paul says, yeah, it does say that. But is God really concerned about oxen? And he implies the answer is no. This has a deeper meaning.

This has an application to people, just like the plowing with an oxen ass together applies to people. So does this apply to people? Paul goes on. He says, or does he say it all together for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of this hope.

If we, Paul and his companions, have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things? The context of 1 Corinthians 9 is he's talking about the privilege of people in the ministry to live from the support of the ministry. That the minister is, as it were, treading out the grain. He's laboring.

And you don't put a muzzle on his mouth so that he can't eat. And Paul uses that as an argument for supporting the ministry. And he does the same thing with the same verse.

He quotes it again in 1 Timothy 5.18. And he makes it very clear what he's talking about here. In 1 Timothy 5.18, he says, For the scripture says, You shall not muzzle an ox while

it treads out the grain. And the laborer is worthy of his hire.

Now, the laborer is worthy of his wages is actually a quote from Luke, from what Jesus said. So he quotes Deuteronomy and he quotes Jesus. But what is he actually talking about here? Well, the previous verse tells us, Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor.

Which means support. He also talks about honoring widows who are needy, which means support them. Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine, for the scripture says, You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.

So Paul sees these Old Testament laws in Deuteronomy, which we might be prone to simply see as rules for an agrarian society, unlike the society we live in. I don't have a cow. I don't have a couple of millstones where I grind my grain into flour.

I don't plow a field. Hardly anyone here probably ever has done that. We're living in an entirely different society.

I can't even relate with this. This is not even relevant to me. I don't plow.

I don't have ox and donkey at home to not yoke together or whatever. But you see, they do apply to us because the law, though its initial application was to an agrarian farming society. Paul says, no, there's spiritual lessons here.

You need to see there's a spiritual side of the law. Paul said in Romans chapter 7, the law is spiritual. And so even though a lot of the laws that God gave didn't seem spiritual, they seemed very mundane, yet Paul saw them as spiritual.

And he was filled with the Holy Spirit. He was an apostle, ordained by Christ to teach. And he saw things that you and I might not see if he didn't show us.

Or if we did, we might wonder if we're right or not. But he didn't say it, so it's authorized. So Paul made spiritual applications of Deuteronomy.

He also based a really important teaching on a verse in Deuteronomy that's not found anywhere else in the Old Testament. And that was a strange verse that appears seemingly out of no context at all. In Deuteronomy 21 and verse 23, well, verse 22 and 23, it says, If a man is committed a sin deserving of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain overnight on the tree.

But you shall surely bury him that day, so that you do not defile the land which the Lord your God has given you as an inheritance. For he who is hanged is accursed of God. Why is a person who got hanged accursed of God? As opposed to someone who got stoned to death? Actually, the law prescribes stoning for most capital crimes.

If you were a witch, you might be burned. If you were an adulterer or a murderer, you'd be stoned to death. If you were an idolater, you'd be stoned to death.

But if you're hung on a tree, you're cursed, especially. I think that anybody who was killed as a violation of law could be said to be cursed in some sense. But why is this particular case? And by the way, in the Old West, people, horse thieves were put to death by hanging on a tree.

That means they hang from the neck until dead. What this is talking about is not hanging a person to kill him. You've killed them a different way, and now you hang his body up for display.

You see that done sometimes in the wars in the Old Testament. In order to show additional indignity to your enemy when you've killed him, you hang up his dead body for the vultures to eat or to bring shame to him. People want to be buried, at least in the ancient Middle East.

They certainly did. I think most still do. When my body's dead, put it out of sight.

Put it under the ground. Give me a dignified burial. But if you really wanted to shame somebody, you didn't give them a decent burial.

You killed them, probably by stoning in most cases, and then you'd hang up their body on display. And that's what it actually pictures here. If you put him to death and you hang up his body, well, you've got to take it down before sundown because you're going to defile the land, and whoever is hanged on a tree is cursed.

So we're not even talking about someone who's hanged by the neck until he's dead. We're talking about a dead body that's been killed by some other means, being hung up on display. And that's not the only time that you find that strange law in Deuteronomy.

If you look at chapter 27 and verse 26, well, I mean, that was the only time I mentioned the tree, but this is another curse that Paul joins the two together. He says, Cursed is the one who does not confirm all the words of this law. Now, there's two things that Paul joins together in Galatians.

The statement, Cursed is he who's hanged on a tree, and cursed is he who doesn't confirm all the things in the law. And it's interesting what Paul does with these two because I don't think I would have thought of this. I'm guessing you probably wouldn't either.

And we trust that Paul, being an inspired apostle, was seeing something there that God really intended, but which might not have been noticed by anyone except an inspired apostle. After all, the other apostles never brought this particular point up. In Galatians chapter 3, verse 10, Paul says, For as many as are of the works of the law are under the

curse, for it is written, Cursed is everyone who does not continue all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

That's actually a quotation of Deuteronomy chapter 27, verse 26. But then he continues, But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident for the just shall live by faith. Then it goes on in verse 13, Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us, because it is written, Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.

Now, Jesus was hanged on a tree, or on a cross, anyway. And so he says, There's a curse on everyone who doesn't keep everything in the law. Well, unfortunately, that's all of us.

All of us have some things that the law says that we haven't obeyed. And if there's a curse on anyone who doesn't fulfill everything that the law says, well, then we're all under the curse of the law, because that curse is pronounced in the law on anyone who doesn't keep the whole law. Since we haven't kept the whole law, we're under that curse.

But Paul says, Ah, but there's another thing in Deuteronomy that gets us out of this as Christians. Because there's also this statement, weird as it is, in Deuteronomy, it says, Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree. Jesus hung on a tree.

Therefore, he came under the curse of the law. And as such, he was our representative. God made him the representative of all humanity.

And he took the curse of the law on himself by hanging on a tree. Now, this is an interesting way that Paul's thinking. In fact, many people can't figure out how he is thinking about this.

But here's what I think Paul's saying. Of course, what Christ went through in his crucifixion is seen to be on our behalf as our representative. And we, you know, we were crucified in Christ.

We were raised in Christ. We're ascended to heaven and seated in the heavenly places in Christ. Christ, as our representative, has gone through all this.

And we in him have gone through all that, too. So if he came under the curse of the law, so did we. But what's interesting is, for Jesus to take the curse of the law on himself from us, how could he come under the curse of the law without becoming a lawbreaker? How could a man become cursed under the law without breaking the law? If Jesus had broken the law, he'd be a sinner, and he couldn't die for us.

He'd be cursed by the law, to be sure, because he hadn't kept it any more than we have. But Christ did accept the curse of the law in a way that didn't involve him in sinning. Because a man who's put to death and hung on a tree hasn't done anything.

He didn't hang himself on a tree. That's something done to him. And the fact that there's this obscure statement in Deuteronomy that says, Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree, means that by Jesus hanging on a tree, technically, that curse comes upon him.

It's a curse of the law. And that means he could come under the curse of the law without actually breaking the law. The man who you kill and hang on a tree hasn't done anything to contribute to his being hung on a tree.

That's been done after he's dead. It's not even something that he could be held responsible for. If Jesus had broken the law, that'd be one way he could take the curse of the law on him, but it'd be for himself as a lawbreaker.

Thank you, honey. But Paul sees this as a way that an innocent man might bear the curse of the law. Jesus was innocent.

He was not a lawbreaker, but by being hung on a tree, the curse of the law came on him anyway, and that on our behalf. So that Paul says, we have brought the curse of the law on ourselves by our disobedience to the law. Christ has taken that curse that rested upon us and taken it on himself by being hung on a tree.

The curse came on him, an innocent person, but it's the curse that the law prescribed in the case of someone hung on a tree. It's a little strange way of thinking. Paul may have been influenced partly by his rabbinic background.

This is the way some rabbis would sometimes apply scripture, but more than that, as an apostle, Christ had opened the apostles' understanding that they might understand the scriptures. So I believe that Paul has seen something that, as far as we know, no one else who wrote any scripture saw. Probably Moses didn't even know this.

When Moses said, cursed is he that hangs on a tree, he probably had no idea. Why is that? It wasn't until 1,500 years later that Paul sees, oh, that's so Christ could die in that manner and thus bring the curse of the law on himself. Anyway, it's a major part of Paul's description of how Christ's death has brought about our cleansing and our forgiveness and our freedom from the curse of the law.

But it comes straight out of a strange and obscure statement in Deuteronomy. Also, Deuteronomy contains a very significant prophecy about the Messiah. Now, the law of Moses wasn't primarily made up of prophecies.

As you read through the five books of Moses, there are some prophecies about the Messiah there, but that's not primarily what they're about. They're mainly laws, stories and laws. But there's a very overt prophecy about the Messiah in Deuteronomy 18, and it's significant enough that two different New Testament writers quote it, or two, I should say, two New Testament preachers, Stephen and Peter, in the book of Acts.

They both quote this. In Deuteronomy 18, if you look at earlier, verse 9, the prophecy is in verse 15, but in verse 9, which leads up to it, it says, When you come into the land which the Lord your God is giving you, you should not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. There should not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire.

That's a euphemism for burning a live child to the demon god, Moloch, which some Jews did, including one of the Jewish kings, Manasseh. He caused his son to pass through the fire. That expression was a technical term for sacrificing a live baby in flames to a demon god named Moloch.

It says none of you shall do that. It's forbidden, obviously. Anyone should know that without being told.

Or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritualist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the Lord, and because of these abominations the Lord your God drives them out from before you. Now, this leads up to the prophecy he's going to give in verse 15, but you might understand the thinking of the Jews at this time.

Ever since they escaped from Egypt, they've had an inspired prophet of God, Moses, to communicate to them what God wanted them to do. He gave them the laws, and he would adjudicate cases. If they had issues between each other and they'd bring it to court, Moses, or one of his lieutenants that he appointed to represent him, would give the judgment on things.

Now he's going to die. He's going to die shortly after he gives these speeches in Deuteronomy. Now who's going to tell them what to do? How are they going to know what God wants? Well, the temptation will be perhaps to go to witches, just like King Saul later did.

He couldn't get a word from the Lord, not through the Urim and the Thummim, not through dreams, not through prophets, and so he said, find me a medium, find me a witch. And that's perhaps the temptation people would have if they want to get information from a supernatural source, and God's just not speaking. There's no prophet of God around.

What do you do? Well, look for someone who reads tea leaves, or a palm reader, or an astrologer, or go to a medium and call up the dead and ask them. This is what the pagans did. And God's, Moses is saying, I'm going to be gone, and you're going to probably be tempted to go to these other pagan sources of guidance and insight, but don't do it.

That's an abomination to me. But then he answers what they'll have instead. In verse 15, the Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren, him you shall hear.

Now, he mentions this again in verse 18. He says, I will raise up for them a prophet like you. God's speaking to Moses saying this.

The Lord said to me, he says, I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brethren, and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And then it says, and it shall be that whoever will not hear my words which he speaks in my name, I will require it of him. Now, Moses says, I'm going to be gone, but God's going to send you another prophet.

And he'll be the one you really have to listen to. If you don't listen to him, God's going to require that of you. He's going to judge you for that.

Now, when Moses left, there was another inspired man that took the lead of Israel, and that was Joshua. And one might think that this is a prediction, that once Moses is gone, Joshua will be a prophet like Moses, a leader of Israel, and Joshua did hear from God. I like to just read the first chapter of Joshua, see how God spoke to him and gave him these oracles and promises and so forth.

So, in a sense, Joshua could be seen as the short-term fulfillment of this. But even Deuteronomy, the writer of Deuteronomy, who records the death of Moses, whoever wrote the last chapter wasn't Moses because it's written about the death of Moses. And he indicates that after he talks about the death of Moses, it says in verse 9, this is the very closing verses of Deuteronomy, 34, 9 and following, Now Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him, so the children of Israel heeded him and did as the Lord commanded Moses.

Now, from that verse you think, oh, okay, so this prophet like Moses that was going to lead them and they have to listen to, that's apparently Joshua, the spirit came upon him because Moses laid hands on him. But then look at the next verse, 10, But since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses. Now Moses said, God will raise up a prophet like me.

And the writer of the last chapter after Moses died says, Since then there has not arisen a prophet like Moses. In other words, the prediction Moses made has not come true yet at the time this was written. Now who wrote it? I don't know who wrote the last chapter.

Moses wrote the book in general, but someone appended the story of Moses death at the end. And whoever did so at least lived in the time of Joshua because that's who took over as soon as Moses died. And obviously some time had passed when this last chapter was written, some time had passed since Moses death.

He says, Since that time there has not yet. Sounds like there's been some passage of time. He says, Even though Joshua was immediately on the scene, he wasn't the guy.

Moses said, The Lord your God will raise up a prophet like me, but that hasn't happened yet. The writer of the last chapter tells us. And the Jews understood that that prophet that Moses predicted was yet to come.

Now they didn't all have the same opinion about that prophet because there's not much said. Moses had just said, God will raise up a prophet like me and you better listen to him. And the writer of Deuteronomy 34 says, It hasn't happened yet.

So the Jews anticipated the coming of that prophet. Now Christians came to understand that that prophet was in fact Jesus who is also the Messiah. But in the Jewish imagination, the rabbinic speculations, they weren't so sure that that prophet was the Messiah.

They thought maybe the prophet is one person, the Messiah is somebody else. And so when John the Baptist came on the scene, you might notice in John chapter 1, the delegation from the Pharisees came and asked John who he was. And it says in John 1, 19.

Now this is the testimony of John. We're talking about John the Baptist here. When the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, who are you? He confessed and did not deny, but confessed, I'm not the Messiah.

I'm not the Christ. Then they said, well, what are you then? Are you Elijah? And he said, I'm not. Then they said, are you the prophet? And he answered no.

And they said, well, then who are you? He said, I'm the voice of one crying in the wilderness. Notice they're trying to figure out who he was. You must be someone significant if you're baptizing people and calling the nation of repentance.

You look like Elijah kind of out here in the wilderness with your long hair, long beard and all that stuff. Are you him? No, you're not the Messiah nor Elijah. Well, are you that prophet? What prophet? They're referring to the prophet that Moses said would come.

It's clear that at this point in time, John the Baptist minister, it was 1400 years after the death of Moses. And the Jews still knew that that prophet had not yet come. They knew there was still a coming prophet.

They didn't know it would be the same person as the Messiah. But Jesus was that prophet and the Messiah. You see, Jesus was the fulfillment of all the prophecies in the Old Testament about the leader that God would send.

The shepherd, the Messiah, the king, the prophet. There's all these different Old

Testament images of someone who's going to come. And they're all one person, Jesus.

Now we can see that Joshua, who by the way, his name is the same as the name Jesus. Joshua is the Hebrew word for Jesus. Yesus.

Yesus is the Greek name, Jesus. Joshua is the Hebrew form of Yeshua. These two men had the same name.

But also Joshua in the Old Testament was a type of Christ. There's a sense in which Joshua was an inspired prophet that took Moses' place and led Israel just like Moses said. But he wasn't the ultimate fulfillment.

Joshua was only a type of Christ. The real fulfillment was in Joshua's namesake, Yeshua HaMashiach, Jesus the Messiah, who is also that prophet. And we see that the New Testament writers had no question about this in their minds.

In Acts chapter 3, Peter's second sermon after the Day of Pentecost, his great sermon on the Day of Pentecost is in chapter 2. But in the very next chapter we have another sermon Peter preached in Acts chapter 3. And he says in verse 19 and following, Acts 3.19. Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that the times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of the restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all the prophets since the world began. 4, verse 22. 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, and whatever he says to you.

And it shall come to pass that every soul who will not hear that prophet shall be utterly destroyed among the people. Now Peter is saying that prophet has come and you're required to obey him. Moses said whoever does not listen to the words of that prophet when he comes, he's doomed.

He'll be cut off from his people. Peter is saying you Jews need to follow Christ now, he's your Messiah. He's the prophet that Moses said would come.

And if you don't, you're going to be cut off from Israel. God's putting together a new Israel made up of people who follow the Messiah. And if you don't join that group, you won't be part of it.

You'll be cut off from the people. That's what he says. In Acts chapter 7, we have Stephen's sermon.

And in verse 37, Acts 7, 37, Stephen 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 you see that the early Christians had no doubt, Peter, Stephen, and no

doubt others that we don't have recordings of them talking about this. They applied Deuteronomy 18, the prophet like Moses who had come to Christ.

Now in your notes, there's a discussion of the authorship of Deuteronomy. I'm not going to go over that. We've talked about the authorship of the Pentateuch in our previous sessions.

You can look at that on your own if you want to. When we encounter a large book of the Bible, a lot of times it's intimidating because we think, I could never master that whole thing. There's 34 chapters.

The material is difficult enough. If it was five chapters, I might have trouble with it. But 34, I'd just be lost in all this.

And it's always helpful, I think, with a larger book to be able to divide it into its parts so you can see it in its pieces. And so that's what I like to do. Just divide it up into smaller segments.

And you can take them bite by bite, just a little bit at a time, and see where the transitions are from one thing to another. The first four chapters, for the most part, are occupied with what we call the first discourse of Moses, which is a historical review. He basically goes through some of the lessons they were to have learned in the wandering in the wilderness, which is just behind them, which they've just done.

Now, before he goes into this, there's a few verses at the beginning, sort of a four-verse introduction to the book, in verses one through four. And this discourse of Moses, it's not the longest one in the book. It is actually rather short compared to some.

But it ends in chapter four, verse 40. And that, as I say, is a historical review. As you read that, you're going to be reading some of the same stories you read about in the book of Numbers, really.

But there will be new details. You'll get some insights into them that aren't found when you read them in the book of Numbers. Just like when you read the different Gospels, you'll read the same story of Jesus feeding the 5,000 in all four Gospels, or the story of Jesus in the Transfiguration in three of the Gospels.

They have different details. They don't contradict each other, but they supplement each other. And so, this historical discourse will supplement some of what you've read in Numbers.

There's a very short section near the end of chapter four, verses 41 through 43, that tells us that Moses established three cities of refuge on the eastern side of the river. Now, the cities of refuge, as you may recall from the earlier books in the Pentateuch, are cities that were really a place to flee to if you killed somebody accidentally. If you killed

somebody on purpose, there's nowhere to go.

You're going to be put to death. Murder had the death penalty on it. But if it was an accident, if you had no malice toward the person, and you didn't intend to kill him, and some accident happened, the example is given of a man who swings an axe to chop wood, and the head flies off the axe, unbeknownst to him, and hits somebody else in the head and kills him.

Well, you weren't an intentional murderer, and someone who unintentionally killed somebody could flee to a city of refuge. If he didn't go there, he could be put to death. But if he got to the city of refuge, he'd get a fair trial.

The judges there would hear his case, look at the evidence, and decide whether he was an unintentional murderer or an intentional murderer, whether it was with malice and forethought that he killed somebody or it was an accident. If they determined he did it on purpose, they don't let him stay in the city of refuge. He's thrown outside, and the avenger of blood then can find him and kill him.

If they determined that he was, in fact, unintentional in the matter, then they let him stay in the city of refuge, and no one can attack him there. He's safe. He can live the rest of his life there.

In fact, he has to live the rest of his life there. If he goes outside the city, he could be put to death by those who are looking for him. But in the city of refuge, they couldn't come in.

He had to be there until the end of his life or alternately until the death of the current high priest, which is a strange condition, until the death of the high priest. After all, you might go into the city of refuge at age 30, and you've got a lot of years to look forward to being stuck in the city of refuge, and then the high priest dies the next year, and no one can kill you. But why would the death of the high priest have anything to do with you being free to go? I suspect that although there's no explanation of that in the law, I suspect it has to do with the New Testament, the fact that Jesus, our high priest, died in our place, and that releases us from the bondage and the penalties of our sins.

And so the death of the high priest perhaps prefigures Christ's death as the high priest. The New Testament doesn't tell us so, but I think that's my own theory, and it makes sense to me. If it doesn't make sense to you, you can make up your own theory.

The main thing is there were six cities of refuge, because the Israelites settled on both sides of the Jordan River. Three of them were on the east side, and later there would be three on the west side. In Moses' lifetime, he only set up the three on the east side because that's where he was.

He never went across the river. He never went into the Promised Land. It was Joshua who

led the people in the Promised Land after Moses died, and Joshua established three cities of refuge in the land on the west side of the river.

But in the verses 41 through 43 of chapter 4 of Deuteronomy, Moses establishes three cities of refuge on the eastern side of the Jordan River for the tribes that were over there. Then in just chapter 4, verses 44 through 49, it's just kind of an introduction to the next discourse. Discourses follow hot and heavy on each other.

There's not a lot of narrative in between the discourses. And so you might have thought it'd be good to put the chapter division here. By the way, in case you don't know, the chapter divisions were not original in the Bible.

The writers of the Bible did not divide it into chapters and verses. Those were added much, much later. And therefore, it's possible that some mistakes were made in deciding where the chapters should end.

I think chapter 4 should have ended at verse 43, but it didn't. So verses 44 through 49 then are the introduction to the next discourse, which occupies several, many chapters. Chapters 5 through 26.

This is a long discourse, like 22 chapters long. And basically, it's long because it goes through so many of the laws that were already mentioned in the earlier part of the Pentateuch, in Leviticus and in Exodus. As a matter of fact, about half of the laws that are found in Exodus 21 through 23 are also found in this discourse.

There's a repetition of about 50% of the material from Exodus chapters 21 through 23. Now, those chapters, in case you don't remember, immediately followed the Ten Commandments. In Exodus chapter 20 at Mount Sinai, God gave the Ten Commandments.

The next three chapters, 21, 22, and 23 in Exodus, are what they called the Book of the Covenant. And it was just a bunch of individual laws, each verse a different law, which tended to kind of unpack the Ten Commandments and apply them to different life situations. So you had scores of individual laws in Exodus 21 through 23.

About half of those laws reappear in this discourse that Moses gives here in chapters 5 through 26. Then when you get to chapter 27, chapter 27 and 28 underscores the penalty and the curse that will come on Israel if they don't keep these laws. In chapter 27, Moses told the children of Israel that when they come into the land, which they would not do until after he died, but he gives them instructions about this, that certain tribes are supposed to stand on Mount Ebal, and the other tribes, the other six tribes, are supposed to stand on Mount Gerizim.

Now, there's a valley between these two mountains in the Promised Land. He said, when you go in there, I want these six tribes to stand on Mount Ebal, these six to stand on

Mount Gerizim, I want the priests to stand in the middle in the valley, and the priests are supposed to read out curses. Cursed is everyone who sleeps with his father's sister or whatever, and the people are supposed to say, Amen.

So the priests are supposed to list a whole bunch of curses. Cursed is the man who does this, cursed is the man who does that, basically enforcing many of the laws. Certainly it's a small selection of them, but the idea here is that this is a big ceremony which, you know, occupies all the people in one big gathering on these two mountains, and they're all affirming that they accept this code, that if you don't do this, you're going to be under a curse.

Cursed, now what does cursed mean? Well, in this case, it means cursed by God. People who don't believe in God, I guess they could say curses, you know, foiled again, but curses are the opposite of blessings. If God is happy with you, he brings blessing.

If he's unhappy with you, he brings curse. Now the curses that God said would come upon them are enumerated as well as the blessings in chapter 28. Chapter 27 talks about them standing on these two mountains and the priests saying curses, everyone does this, and the people all say Amen, and that's how it goes in chapter 27.

But in 28, which is an extremely long chapter, the first 14 verses, God enumerates the blessings that will come upon them if they are obedient to these laws. In chapter 28, verses 1 through 14, Moses says, okay, if you keep all these commandments and do them and obey my covenant and so forth, then you'll be blessed in just about every way imaginable. You'll be blessed in the city, you'll be blessed out of a field, you'll be blessed in your wife's womb, you won't miscarry babies, even your animals will not miscarry, you'll have fruitful crops, fruitful livestock, there'll be no drought, I'll give you early in the latter rains in their seasons and your crops will produce and no enemies will come and attack you, or if they do, they'll flee, they'll come one direction, you'll chase them off 10 directions, you'll scatter them because God will be on your side and you will never be defeated by your enemies.

I'll take away sickness from the land, all kinds of good things. But after he says that, then in verse 15, to the end of that chapter, which is a very long chapter, he says, but if you don't keep my covenant, if you don't obey these laws, if you ignore these things and are disobedient, then you'll be cursed in the city, you'll be cursed in the field, you'll be cursed in the fruit of your womb, and you'll be cursed, you know, and he names all the same realms where they would be blessed, you'll be cursed in those realms, and he goes on and he says, and they'll drive you out of the land and they'll take it from you, and he goes into real great detail how when you're under siege from your enemies, you'll be so starving for food that you'll even eat your own children and stuff like that, it's a pretty unpleasant scene. Moses wants to drive this through their heads.

I'm not going to be around, but I want to give you a nice picture of what will happen to

you if you forget what I've said and don't obey it. And sure enough, these things did happen. Because they did forget and they did disobey.

In the Old Testament they happened twice and once more later in the New Testament times. The kingdom divided into two and the Northern Kingdom came under all these curses in 722 BC. The Southern Kingdom came under these curses in 586 BC and all these things happened that God said would happen to them.

Later the nation recovered, God gathered the nation back from Babylon, and hundreds of years later when Christ came, the Jews for the most part rejected him then too and were unfaithful to the covenant. Remember it was Deuteronomy said, I'm going to send another prophet like me and if you don't listen to him, it's coming down on you heavy. They didn't listen to him, so they broke the covenant again.

And then in 70, the Romans besieged Jerusalem and eventually destroyed it and did all the same things the Babylonians had done 600 years earlier. So God was not just blowing smoke here when he made these threats. And Israel three different times violated his covenant so severely that he brought all these curses on them.

The first two times in the Old Testament, there was enough of a remnant left over that they could start again after the Babylonian exile. But once Jesus came, after the believing remnant came to Christ, that rest of the nation that rejected Christ came under this very curse. And the curse of Deuteronomy is what Malachi refers to in the very last words of the Old Testament.

And so the Old Testament closes with a reminder about this curse. You may know this passage in Malachi 4, verse 4 through 6. This is how the whole Old Testament closes. Remember the law of Moses, my servant, which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel with the statutes and judgments.

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers and the hearts of the children to the fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse. That word earth can be translated land.

If you have the new American standard, it would translate it as land. Lest I come and strike the land, I will turn the hearts of the fathers and the hearts of the children to the fathers. What curse? The curse of the law.

The curse that Deuteronomy laid out. If you don't listen to him, if he does not succeed in turning the hearts of the children to their fathers and the hearts of the fathers to their children, if that doesn't happen, I, God, am going to have to come and strike the land with a curse, just like Moses said I would. And verse 28 is still out there at the time that the Old Testament closes.

And God says, now before I come and bring this curse, before I come with a terrible day of the Lord, I'm going to send Elijah the prophet to help prepare, to rescue you guys from your wrong-headedness and turn the hearts of fathers back to their children and so forth. Now, this verse in Malachi was alluded to in Luke chapter 1 in the story of John the Baptist's parents. John the Baptist's father was Zechariah the priest and he met an angel in the temple.

And the angel said, Zechariah, you and your wife are going to have a baby. You're going to call him John. And he said, and he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children.

He's actually quoting from Malachi. He actually says, he, John, will come in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children. Now, he doesn't quote the rest of the passage.

He kind of paraphrased it and he says, and the disobedience to the wisdom of the just. But the point is, he partially quotes Malachi as being about John the Baptist. When in fact, Malachi says it's about Elijah.

But Jesus said, in Matthew 11, if you can receive it, John is Elijah who is to come. John was the Elijah who is to come. Malachi was predicting John the Baptist.

He called him Elijah because John comes in the same kind of spirit and the same kind of power as Elijah. That's what the angel said to Zechariah. Your son, John, will come in the spirit and power of Elijah.

So, he's going to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children. Or if he fails, like it says in Malachi, I'm going to have to strike the earth with a curse. So when John the Baptist came, he was preaching that that curse was imminent.

If they didn't repent. He called the nation to repentance. He said Jesus is coming with an axe in his hand and he's poised at the root of the trees and if there's fruitless trees, he's going to cut them down and throw them into the fire.

He's got his fan in his hand to separate the wheat and the chaff in Israel. The faithful remnant is the wheat that he'd preserve in his barns. The chaff are the apostates who don't respond to John and Jesus.

And he says they're going to be burned up like chaff. And he's talking about the disaster that was coming upon them because of the curse of Deuteronomy 28, which they can now very much deserve. But they were given one last chance to avoid that.

Elijah, John came to turn them. If he did not, Malachi said, then God would have to inflict this curse that he had threatened. So that's in Deuteronomy 27-28.

Then in the third discourse of Moses is chapters 29 and 30. And there he just reaffirms

that they are God's covenant people and they affirm it too. He actually calls upon them to... It's sort of like when a couple, maybe many years into their marriage, and maybe there's been some problems in their marriage.

Maybe it hasn't been so good all the time. Maybe they feel like they haven't really kept their promises as much as they should. Once in a while you hear people say, we're going to have another ceremony and we're going to renew our vows.

Well, why? You made the vows 20 years ago. What's wrong with them? Well, we're going to renew them because we kind of haven't kept them. And we want to make sure that we make it public that we're committed to keeping them.

And we want to restate them. Well, that's cool, I guess. You don't find anyone in the Bible doing that.

But there's kind of the parallel to that in Deuteronomy chapter 29 and 30 where they reaffirm their vow to God to keep the covenant. So those chapters are like a, we could call it renewing their vows to God and God's vows to them. Now, the rest of the chapters we could refer to as appendices because after the covenant has been renewed, really that's the climax of Moses' ministry.

We find in chapter 34 he dies, but the chapters between that climax, chapters 31, 32, and 33, and really 34 too, which has his death, are sort of like tagged on, sort of miscellaneous material. It's kind of an anticlimax after chapter 29 and 30. But you'll find that this is true of quite a few of the books of the Bible.

Judges are going to be that way. Judges are going to tell the story up through Samson. And then there's going to be like four or five chapters at the end that kind of are appendix.

And you find the same thing at the end of 2 Samuel. The story of David tells his story almost to the end, and then it goes back and tells some earlier things, some miscellaneous details. That's kind of the way the biblical writers often wrote.

They'd tell their story, but at the end of their book, they'd have this appendix where they kind of filled in some things that maybe were passed over without comment earlier, but are worth mentioning before they close. And so we have in chapter 31, verses 1 through 29, an appendix where certain instructions specifically are given to the priests and to the Levites and to Joshua, where Moses exhorts the priests about their duties and the Levites, and he exhorts Joshua, who's going to be his successor. And that's in chapter 31, verses 1 through 29.

Then in the remainder of chapter 31 and on through chapter 32, we have what's called the Song of Moses. And this is a song, God told him, sing this song to the children of Israel. And it's a song about how God had been good to them and how they had not been

good back to God, how God had been faithful, but they had been unfaithful, and how God had rightful reason to be upset with them because they thumbed their nose at God in such a disrespectful way, and that he, it goes on to predict, you know, judgment coming upon them because of that.

Now, the purpose of the song, he wanted them to memorize the song. Well, why is it a song? Why not a sermon? How many sermons can you quote verbatim that you've heard? How many songs can you sing verbatim? Quite a few, no doubt. When you set something to music and to poetry, it's something that's, in a sense, more memorable.

I can give all the words to several hundred songs just standing here from memory. There's not several hundred chapters of the Bible that I could recite from memory. You might think there are, but there are not.

You know, just sermons are not as memorable verbatim as songs are and poetry is. And one reason is, even if you memorize a whole speech, like you're in drama class, you have to memorize a long soliloquy or something that, you know, you're playing Brutus or Cassius or someone in Julius Caesar, you have to memorize these speeches. But you never really know, did I leave a word out? Am I forgetting something? Is it all there? Am I missing something? But when you sing a song, you know if there's something missing.

Like there's a word that goes there. What am I forgetting here? You know, I mean, there's a rhythm, there's a certain number of syllables per line, and that feature makes it more memorable. In the Jesus movement back 50 years ago, we used to sing a lot of scripture.

I guess because we weren't that creative in lyrics, a lot of people in the Jesus movement were musicals. So they'd take a verse like Psyche verse the kingdom of God or any number of other verses, and they'd set them to music. And we sang them from memory.

We learned from memory. We sang the Jesus movement's scores of verses. We learned from memory easily because we sang them.

Would not be as easy to just kind of sit down and read them and memorize them and not forget them. But music is memorable. And that's, I think, why this Song of Moses was a song.

They were supposed to learn it and remember it and probably sing it from time to time to themselves because it was a song reminding them of the faithfulness of God and of their unfaithful response to God and of the judgment that came upon them. Because when this would actually happen, they were supposed to remember why it happened. Moses predicted this would happen.

I remember that song my parents taught me, and it said this was happening. So that Song of Moses is there, largely occupying chapter 32. And then in chapter 33, we have

Moses blessing individually each of the tribes of Israel.

Now this chapter is very similar, or at least will remind you of Genesis chapter 49. In Genesis chapter 49, each of the tribes of Israel were individually addressed by Jacob as he was dying. Jacob was the father of all 12 tribes.

And as he was dying, he addressed each tribe, and he made some kind of a remark about their future or their ranking among themselves. He made some kind of determination or some kind of prediction about each tribe. Some of them very hard to figure out because they're poetic, and some of them it's really hard to know what's really meant by them.

But others are pretty clear, like Judah, for example. In Genesis 49.10, Jacob said that the scepter will not depart from Judah until he to whom it belongs has come. And to him shall the gathering of the people be.

Meaning Jesus, the scepter will be in the tribe of Judah until Jesus, who came in the tribe of Judah, comes to take it. There's prophecies like that about the different tribes in Genesis 49. You got the same kind of thing in Deuteronomy 33.

It's just each tribe is mentioned individually, and something is said about them, predictive or interpretive of their significance. And so that's what you'll find in chapter 33. And then chapter 34 is quite short.

But it's obviously written by another hand. It wasn't written by Moses because it describes Moses' death. And it clearly describes his death, not prophetic.

It's not like Moses said, well, okay, I'm getting a vision of my death. I'm going to write it as though it's already happened, then I'll die. It's not like he wrote it predictively because the person who wrote it looks back on it and says since Moses died, there has not yet arisen a prophet like him.

So obviously somebody is looking retrospectively back at the death of Moses and some period of time has passed. So you've got someone else other than Moses wrote that last chapter at a later date. How much later, we don't know.

But this is how the book divides up into its segments. Basically, there's three major discourses, the middle one being much longer than the others. And then there's also the blessings and curses, sort of a separate unit.

And you've got, of course, the song of Moses as a separate unit. And then the blessings on the 12 tribes and all that. So this is how the book shakes off.

Now, one thing I want to observe just before we're done here, we are essentially done, but this is something that it would be irresponsible for me not to mention this because

modern Bible scholars all pretty much recognize something about Deuteronomy that was not recognized until the 1950s. In fact, the year I was born, 1953, the scholars didn't have these thoughts, but since then, they have. And you will never read a commentary on Deuteronomy or hear a scholarly treatment of the book without noticing this.

In 1954, there was a scholar named G.E. Mendenhall who published two articles in *Biblical Archaeology*, I'm sorry, the *Biblical Archaeologist*, this is the magazine. And he pointed out in these articles similarities between the structure of Deuteronomy and Hittite-Susurrante treaties in the second millennium BC. That would be between 1000 and 2000 BC, which is the very time that Moses lived.

Now, I just used a word you probably don't know, maybe several, Hittite and Susurrante. Hittites, of course, were one of the tribes in Canaan that had to be dispossessed and they have a civilization that archaeologists have been able to document, like 1500 years of Hittite civilization has been documented archaeologically. A major, major Middle Eastern group of people.

But the Hittites in the second millennium BC had these treaties that they entered into with other nations. They're called Susurrante treaties because in these treaties, there were two parties. One was a Susurran, the other was a Vassal.

Now, you might be familiar with the word Vassal, perhaps more than Susurran. These are like master and servant. Susurran and Vassal.

Only they're nations, not individuals. If the Hittites conquered some lesser people, they made a treaty with them. Where the Hittites were their Susurran, sometimes called the great king over them.

And the ones that they had conquered are the Vassal state. Usually what this meant is the Vassal has to give them money. When you conquered a foreign land, you put them under tribute.

The Romans did that. In fact, when Jesus was here, Palestine was under tribute to the Romans. They were Vassals of Rome.

These great empires, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, the Hittites, they all had this tendency to swallow up smaller societies around them and incorporate them into their empire. And as they did, these smaller societies remained distinctive societies, even with their own rule and things like that. But they had to pay tribute to the one who had conquered them and otherwise be loyal to him in certain ways.

They could not side with his enemies in a war or things like that. That would be considered to be a violation of the treaty. It was really just a way, a treaty in which two nations or two powers would come into a special relationship where one was the suzerain, the other was the vassal, which meant one was the lord and the other was the

slave or the servant.

Now, suzerainty treaties among the Hittites, which is the time before Moses came and during the time Moses was there because it was Joshua after Moses conquered the Hittites in Palestine. This was the culture of the period that Moses lived in. And they have these treaties that archaeologists have dug up.

They've got many examples of these treaties that the Hittites made with vassal states that they conquered. And all of these treaties follow a certain pattern. And in 1954, Mendenhall pointed out Deuteronomy follows the same pattern as a suzerainty treaty.

Now, what this would mean is that in writing Deuteronomy, it was basically saying that God is the great king and Israel is the vassal of God. And in a familiar form, it's like this is the treaty God made with Israel. I'll be your great king if you keep these conditions and you'll be my vassal and so forth.

And there are certain elements that are always in a certain order in these pagan treaties. And I've listed them for you. The first element of a suzerainty treaty was a preamble that basically said what it was, followed by a historical prologue which kind of summarized historical relations between the two parties that led up to this treaty being made.

Then there's the general stipulations of the treaty, which are what's required of the vassal and what the suzerain will do for the vassal state. Because basically when one nation became the vassal of another, both of them were going to benefit in some way. When Rome conquered Palestine, Palestine had to pay tribute to Rome.

But also, they were now an ally of Rome. So if Palestine had been invaded by the Arabs or something like that, the Roman armies would be there at their disposal to help them. So there's like a mutual support, although one is the ruler and the other is the vassal.

So these are the general stipulations of the treaty. Then in each treaty, there's arrangements for how this treaty will be perpetuated, how copies will be made, how they'll be stored, how they make sure that the treaty is preserved for future generations. Then these suzerainty treaties all have a list of blessings on the vassal if they are obedient to the treaty.

And a list of curses that will come upon them if they're disobedient to the treaty. And finally, the last part would be a review and provisions for the continuity of the treaty into future generations. Now, this scholar who came up with this observation, this is after a lot of Hittite treaties have been found.

You have to realize that Hittites, scholars didn't even know about the Hittites' existence until late in the 19th century. The Bible mentioned them a lot. The Bible makes many references to Hittites, but they couldn't find any archaeological proof that such people ever existed.

And up until the 19th century, critical scholars who didn't believe the Bible was true thought that the Bible made these people up, that these were like the Lilliputians in Gulliver's Travels, a fictional people. Hittites, oh yeah, sure, they really existed. No, that's just what people, that's what the Bible made up to talk about in their stories.

But then they found the archaeological proof of the Hittites. Like I said, now they've documented from archaeology 1,500 years of Hittite civilization, but that, a very recent archaeological development. And it was only because of that that it's so recent that they discovered the Hittite treaties.

And then, of course, scholars, once they looked at them, began to look at Deuteronomy and say, hey, this is written as if it is a suzerainty treaty, as if there's this subtext to the whole way the book is written out, the way it's constructed. It's like God is saying, I'm your conqueror, I'm your suzerain, you're my vassal. And the way that he set this covenant up is in the standard form of a treaty such as they would find in a secular arrangement between two kingdoms, between one that's the great king and one is the vassal state.

Anyway, you might say, well, why is that important? It may not be very important at all. It's one of those scholarly things that everyone who teaches on Deuteronomy has to mention to show that they're up to date with what scholars are saying. It doesn't have a lot of practical value, but it does tell us this.

It does seem to be deliberate, and it does seem to place Deuteronomy in the time frame of the Hittites, which is when the Bible actually places it. And there are critical scholars who have always argued that Moses didn't write Deuteronomy. It was written centuries later by Jewish priests in a post-exilic period, just a few centuries before Christ.

In other words, there are people who've questioned whether Moses really wrote Deuteronomy or whether it's a product of a much later age. But the fact that it follows so closely the pattern of the Hittite treaties from the second millennium BC, that is between 1000 and 2000 BC, means that it is almost certainly a product of that period of time and that the parallels between those treaties and Deuteronomy is a deliberate thing, that God, through Moses, intended to set this up like a treaty between him and Israel and followed the familiar pattern of treaties. But this would not be so if it was written centuries later, because frankly those Hittite treaties wouldn't apply.

No one would be familiar with them a century or two later than that. So, in other words, this particular fact, which is a little obscure, is one of the sort of incidental confirmations that the book was written in the time of Moses and supports the biblical teaching that Moses wrote it, which maybe you or I have never had any doubts about that, but liberal scholars do doubt it. Liberal scholars do suggest that Deuteronomy was not written by Moses.

I told you when we were in Genesis that the liberal theory is that the Pentateuch was not written by Moses, but it was four different traditions that were from separate sources, and they were passed down orally for hundreds of years, and finally someone sort of patched them together in an unwieldy sort of way, mixed them together. There's this Yahwist tradition, there's an Eloist tradition, there's a priestly tradition, and a Deuteronomistic tradition. And Deuteronomy is considered to be essentially the book that came from this Deuteronomistic tradition, which they consider to be the latest of the four, much later than Moses' time.

A thousand years after Moses' time is when they put it. But Jesus said Moses wrote it. Paul said Moses wrote it.

The Jews and conservative Christians have always believed Moses wrote it. So the liberal scholars are kind of coming against what Jesus and what the conservative Christians have always believed. But this new discovery, essentially new in my lifetime, more or less confirms that Deuteronomy, because it resembles the treaties of that period, that particular period, that it really does come from that time period, and not from a thousand years later.

Anyway, the main thing that you should know when you read Deuteronomy is that it was an important book to Jesus. It was an important book to Paul. Jesus felt it was important enough that he could quote it to Satan, to drive Satan away in the time of temptation.

And Paul found spiritual applications even to the most mundane, agrarian kind of rules that you find in Deuteronomy. Paul saw spiritual meanings in them. And so as you read Deuteronomy, pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

He might show you things like what Paul saw. I mean, Paul didn't make this up. He saw it because the Holy Spirit opened his understanding to understand the Scriptures, and we have that same Holy Spirit.

So God can make application to you. The one thing you don't want to do is read Deuteronomy as a bunch of rules that Christians are required to keep, because these are laws and we live under a new covenant. These laws are not the code of conduct for new covenant people, but they're not irrelevant either, because there are spiritual and moral principles in them that do carry over.

Remember, this is the law that Jesus taught from and that the apostles taught from. So obviously, though it may seem very foreign to us, and it is, it nonetheless is relevant in its own way, but the Holy Spirit is the one who has to show what that way is, because it's going to be spiritual, not ritual or legalistic.