

NCTM

Deuteronomy

Study Method 1

COURSE NUMBER EIGHT

Deuteronomy

Study Method One

INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

Welcome to Correspondence Course Number Eight. This Course is set out somewhat differently from some of our other Courses, in that Deuteronomy is a Book of thirty-four chapters. It would be an impossible task to set Chapter Assignments, so what we will do with this Course is to divide the Course up into nine Sections (i) the Introduction which is given in printed Notes, and (ii) eight further Sections, namely chapters 1–8; 9–16; 17–24; 25–34 of the Book of Deuteronomy.

Of course, the Book itself does not necessarily fall into these Sections, but the Student will have to do comprehensive Assignments for each Section. To aid him will be twenty-one audio-cassettes which virtually have forty-two Studies, only two of these being of the Introduction. The Student will find that listening to the cassettes will be very helpful, but this should also be augmented by reading a commentary, no matter how simple it may be.

Students are required to do an Essay for each Assignment of a minimum 2,000 words: set out neatly, a margin left in the left hand column, writing or typing only on one side, all pages numbered, and the front page containing only the name and address of the Student, together with the title of the assignment and the name of the Tutor. It is suggested that, since only *five* Assignments are required, they should be quite extensive, and indicate ample listening and extra reading.

HINTS FOR READING AND STUDY

You will be mainly listening to the Tapes sent to you, and you may wish to read a Commentary or two of those listed below in the Bibliography. When listening to tapes, have the Book of Deuteronomy open before you, and try to follow the Commentary on the Tapes. The best way of studying is to (i) read the passage yourself, at one sitting if possible; (ii) ponder what the passage is saying; (iii) listen to the Tape as you check it with the text; and (iv) where possible, make your own notes, keeping them in a file for later reference.

HOW TO GO ABOUT THE COURSE

As indicated above there is first the Introduction to be read and an Assignment completed and sent. Then there are four Sections of the Book of Deuteronomy to be covered. Whereas we normally send a Lesson, mark your assignment, and return it to you with the next Lesson, in this case we will set out the five Assignments required for the Book. You may send each Assignment on its completion and proceed with the next until all are completed.

Neat, clear presentation is necessary to facilitate your tutor's assessment.

Write legibly at all times.

Write on one side only of your paper.

Leave a 3 cm margin on the left side of your paper.

When using a typewriter, leave a one line space between lines.

Be careful to *read* and *answer* the questions.

Be sure that your answers are based soundly on Scripture.

Refrain from an *over-use* of Bible quotations as a substitute for expressing your own grasp of the subject.

Try to avoid 'parrot-fashion' repeating of words and ideas in the study materials.

Put your student number, your name and address, and your tutor's name on the back of the last sheet.

Further to this way of study, you can read extra material recommended in the Bibliography below. In it we have recommended certain bible helps. You do not have to buy these, but they certainly would be helpful. You will receive a certificate of Studies on completing this subject.

LINKS WITH YOUR TUTOR

You will be assigned your own tutor who will see you through this subject. You should feel free to ask for help where needed. Your tutor will return your assignments with comments which will be helpful. Marks will be given, and you will receive a Certificate of Studies on completing this subject.

GOING THE COURSE ALONE

Some students will wish to do this study entirely on their own. This means they will wish to receive the thirteen lessons and do the study without the aid of a tutor. No Certificate of Studies can be given in this case.

PERIOD OF STUDY

Certificate of Studies

It is recommended that you persist continually in study so that you finish the course as soon as possible, without, however, putting yourself under stress. A good aim is to complete the questions within one month, or two months at the most. In the event of your study being interrupted or delayed through circumstances, do not give up your course. *There is no time limit set for completion of the Certificate of Studies*, however, to gain maximum benefit from your studies, you should aim to complete this subject within two years. If for any reason you have to relinquish your studies, please let your tutor know.

Diploma of Theology

A Diploma of Theology will be granted to a student who completes eight subjects which cover the following six categories: Doctrine; Old Testament; New Testament; History; Christian Ministries; Practical Christian Living.

Subject Categories

1. The Knowledge of God	Doctrine
2. Salvation History	History
3. Practical Christian Living	Practical Christian Living
4. Galatians	New Testament
5. Ephesians	New Testament
6. Biblical Counselling	Christian Ministries
7. The Song of Solomon	Old Testament
8. Deuteronomy	Old Testament
9. II Corinthians	New Testament
10. Ecclesiastes	Old Testament
11. God's Covenant	Doctrine

A student is expected to complete the eight subjects in five years. Extension is available in extenuating circumstances. A Certificate of Studies will be awarded for each completed subject.

- Compulsory guidance and assessment by a tutor.

Bibliography

Note: The Commentaries marked with an asterisk would be good to use for a beginning.

*Christensen, D. L. *Deuteronomy 1–11*, Word Books, 1991.

* Craigie, P.C. *Deuteronomy*. New ICC. Eerdmans, 1976.

*Harrison, R. K. and Manley, G. T. *Deuteronomy*, The New Bible Commentary. Eerdmans's 1970.

*Kalland E. S. *Deuteronomy*. The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Zondervan

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*Thompson, J. A. *Deuteronomy*, Tyndale, 1974.

Von Rad, G. *Studies in Deuteronomy*. SCM, 1953.

Wright, A. E. *Deuteronomy*. Interpreter's Bible, Abingdon, 1953.

AUDIO CASSETTES

Introduction	ETS 68:1
Deuteronomy 1:1–18	ETS 68:2
Deuteronomy 1:19 – 2:15	ETS 68:2
Deuteronomy 2 & 3	ETS 68:3
Deuteronomy 4:1–20	ETS 68:3
Deuteronomy 4:25 – 5:1	ETS 68:4
Deuteronomy 5:2–33	ETS 68:4
Deuteronomy 5:16–21	ETS 68:5
Deuteronomy 5:22–33	ETS 68:5
Deuteronomy 5:32 – 6:9	ETS 68:6
Deuteronomy 6:10 – 7:11	ETS 68:6
Deuteronomy 7:12 – 8:20	ETS 68:7
Deuteronomy 9:1–8	ETS 68:7
Deuteronomy 9:6 – 10:22	ETS 68:8
Deuteronomy 11:1 – 12:14	ETS 68:8
Deuteronomy 12:15 – 14:21	ETS 68:9
Deuteronomy 14:22 – 15:11	ETS 68:9
Deuteronomy 16:1 – 17:7	ETS 68:10
Deuteronomy 17:8 – 18:13	ETS 89:10
Deuteronomy 18:15 – 19:21	ETS 68:11
Deuteronomy 20:1 – 21:23	ETS 68:11
Deuteronomy 22:1 – 23:14	ETS 68:12
Deuteronomy 23:15 – 24:13	ETS 68:12
Deuteronomy 24:16 – 26:11	ETS 68:13
Deuteronomy 26:12 – 27:10	ETS 68:13
Deuteronomy 27:11–26	ETS 68:14
Deuteronomy 28:1–24	ETS 68:14
Deuteronomy 28:15–48	ETS 68:15
Deuteronomy 28:15–57	ETS 68:15
Deuteronomy 28:58 – 29:29	ETS 68:16
Deuteronomy 30:1–10	ETS 68:16
Deuteronomy 30:11–20	ETS 68:17
Deuteronomy 30:21 – 31:30	ETS 68:17
Deuteronomy 32:1–14	ETS 68:18
Deuteronomy 32:15–36	ETS 68:18
Deuteronomy 32:39–52	ETS 68:19
Deuteronomy 33:1–11	ETS 68:19
Deuteronomy 33:12–25	ETS 68:20
Deuteronomy 33:26 – 34:12	ETS 68:20
Deuteronomy 34:1–8	ETS 68:21
Deuteronomy 34:9–12	ETS 68:21

Deuteronomy: Study Method I

Correspondence School Assignments

1. Assignment for the Introduction

(The Introduction in the Notes, and perhaps other books having been considered).

Write an Essay of a minimum of 2,000 words covering pages 1–6, discussing authorship, the structure of the Book and some of the themes which constitute the book.

2. Assignment for Chapters 1–8

(Take note of the notes ‘An Essay on Deuteronomy’ sent with the Introduction).

Write an Essay giving the context of Moses’ first exhortation (1:1 – 4:33) and the substance of it. Then examine the beginning of the second discourse (which will go through to 28:68) and evaluate the gifts (eg. ‘the law’) given to Israel and the beginning of the warnings.

3. Assignment for Chapters 9–16

Write an Essay evaluating the ministry of Moses as he reviews it to listening Israel, and discuss the demands—as will as the provisions—for communal living, holiness of life and rejection of contemporary idolatry and cultural mores.

4. Assignment for Chapters 17–24

Write an Essay which covers, in particular, the elements of prescribed, legitimate worship, the true and false uses of prophecy, and provisions for domestic living. Make comment on each of these in the light of the way we live in Australia, today.

5. Assignment for Chapters 25–34

Describe the ethics and injunctions for living that climax at 28:68, and then describe and evaluate Moses’ last address to the nation giving the essence of his song (chapter 32), and then his blessings. Conclude with a note telling what your Studies in Deuteronomy have meant to you.

CONTACT DETAILS

Address your materials to:

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COURSE NUMBER EIGHT

Deuteronomy

General Introduction

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY

The Book of Deuteronomy is generally known as ‘the fifth Book of Moses’, since it is the last of the five books—called ‘the Decalogue’—which have traditionally been ascribed to the authorship of Moses. We will later further discuss its title, authorship, time of writing, and so on. The word ‘Mosaic’ in our study will be an adjectival use of Moses’ name; that is, ‘Mosaic’ thinking, instructions, and so on. are those given by Moses. That is, there is a way of writing and exhorting which is ‘Mosaic’, even if it could be shown that the book was not written by Moses. In fact, we assume in our studies that it was written by Moses. It seems natural to conclude that the last chapter—chapter 34—was added by some writer or editor to complete the story and nature of Moses’ life and ministry.

THE TITLE OF THE BOOK

The Jews knew this fifth book of the law by the name ‘These Are the Words’ according to what is written at the beginning of 1:1. A shortened title was taken from 17:18, ‘Copy of this Law’. Our English title was taken from the Greek translation known as ‘the Septuagint’ or ‘the LXX’, where the title *deuteronomion touto*—‘this second lawgiving’—arose from the impression that the law was given in such books as Exodus and Leviticus, and that Moses was repeating much of it. This was not at all the case. We shall see when we look at the structure of the book, that Deuteronomy really represents a kind of treaty that Moses was setting out—a treaty by God for—and with—His people. Whilst this incorporates the law, it is more than just a codifying of it. Scholars have noted the many resemblances—and even parallels—of Deuteronomic phrases and language with those of the Book of Exodus.¹ Such language would be natural if Moses wrote the former books of the law. Some scholars see the five books as the works of a number of editors. Whatever may be the case, the book is essentially Mosaic.

¹ See *Deuteronomy* by J. A. Thompson (Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, IVP, London, 1979, pp. 26f.)

THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

It is good for us, firstly, to get an overall view of the book. It falls quite naturally into three sections, namely three addresses by Moses (1:1 – 4:43; 4:44 – 28:68; 29:1 – 30:20). Following these three sections there are (i) the last words of Moses about his completed ministry, his death and his charge to renew the covenant each sabbatical year (31:1–13); (ii) Moses' charge to Joshua regarding the people and settlement in Canaan (31:14–23); (iii) the beautiful Song Moses sang in witness to the people (31:30 – 32:47); (iv) God's words to Moses on Nebo (32:48–52); (v) Moses' blessing to the children of Israel (33:1–29); and (vi) the death and burial of Moses (34:1–12).

Having seen this overall structure, we need to see it in more detail. First, however, let us look generally at the three discourses of Moses. These discourses appear to have been given just prior to Moses' death, whilst the people are viewing the promised land. We must remember Israel had had some forty years in the wilderness after their remarkable exodus from Egypt, and now they were fashioned into a nation. Deuteronomy is a kind of review of this process, but the acts and experiences through which it had passed were significant in the light of God's covenant with them, and the loyalty He demanded from them.

Discourse One: 1:1 – 4:43

In this discourse—which is primarily historical—Moses reviews the dealings of God with His people as they left Egypt and travelled through the wilderness, speaking of the opposition they encountered, and God's overcoming of their enemies resulting in their possession of some of the land east of Jordan. The discourse includes an appeal by Moses for the people to utterly reject idolatry and to be faithful to God. Also included is the mention of the making of three cities of refuge.

Discourse Two: 4:44 – 28:68

This is a long discourse,² and contains the following: exhortations; the statements of laws—including the Ten Commandments—codes for worship; purity; tithes and offerings; the three annual feasts; the carrying out of justice; details concerning prophets, priests and kings; the personal and corporate living of the community. At chapter 27 begins the matters of the blessings and the cursings. The first follows obedience, the second follow disobedience. The law being set up on Ebal the curses are antiphonally ratified from Mt Gerizim and Mt Ebal. The warnings and exhortations are quite strong.

Discourse Three: 29:1 – 30:20

Moses again summons the people to hear him, and then gives them final exhortation, describing again what God had done for them in their release from Egypt; their wanderings in the wilderness; their defeat of the kings of Heshbon and Moab; and the taking of their land for settlement by the tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh. There is a further warning against the danger of idolatry, and God's consequent judgments on the land and the people. Exile will be Israel's lot, but even then—when His people come to repentance—He will bring them back from the punishment of exile. Moses leaves them with the choice between trusting in the gods of other nations, and loving the Lord God Who has taken the initiative in loving them.

² D. M. Edwards and R. K. Harrison (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 1, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, p. 935) see two discourses in this section, the second commencing at chapter 27. J. Thompson (*Deuteronomy*, p. 78) sees the section as one discourse.

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We have seen the contents of 31:1 – 34:12, that is, the beautiful song Moses sang in witness to the people (31:30 – 32:47); God’s words to Moses on Nebo (32:48–52); Moses’ blessing to the children of Israel; and the death and burial of Moses (34:1–12).

The structure in its sections and subsections will become more clear as we read and study the entire text of the Book.³

SOME CONCEPTS, DOCTRINES, AND ELEMENTS OF THE BOOK

(i) The Book Is a Treaty

J. A. Thompson (pp. 18f.) gives a chart and explanation of Moses discourses constituting a treaty such as was a contemporary custom (c. 1400–1200 BC), especially within the kingdom of the Hittites. P. C. Craigie discusses this same view.⁴

According to this idea of treaty, there was a preamble or prologue in which the people with whom the treaty was made would know who was setting it out, namely the king or the god.⁵ The people had received past benefits from the ruler or god, and should anticipate more benefits in the future. Since it was a treaty, the people would have to follow certain stipulations (laws, conditions), and so a set of curses and blessings were stipulated, and the people would have to agree with these. Witnesses were needed on both sides to assure the deposition was legal, and then the treaty or covenant was sealed by an oath, ceremonies and sanctions. This assured a workable polity, a security for both rulers and peoples, and an understanding of the nature of obedience and the judgment of disobedience.

P. C. Craigie suggests that Deuteronomy could fit into the following order of a treaty:

1. *Preamble* (1:1–5); ‘These are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel’.
2. *Historical Prologue* (1:6 – 4:49).
3. *General Stipulations* (chs 5–11).
4. *Specific Stipulations* (chs 12–26).
5. *Blessings and Curses* (chs 27–28).
6. *Witnesses* (see 30:19; 31:19; 32:1–43).

It is simple enough to see the covenant God made with Israel: the agreement, the initiative and grace from God’s side; the agreement—as in Exodus 24—the ceremony, the stipulations and the curses and blessings that would follow. So many elements entered into this covenant—remembrance of past mercies and trust in God for them, remembrance of the awfulness of idolatry and its consequences, the delivering and sustaining power of the Covenant-God, and the whole matter of rich law, wonderful worship, prescribed and dynamic sociality, proper polity and purpose, and the true identity of the nation and its members. All of this helps the reader to understand that the book is a coherent whole.

Note: It is worth asking ourselves at this point, ‘What is the equivalent treaty or covenant under which we live?’ Do we as a nation—out of our Christian background—

³ A detailed Outline of Contents is given in *The New Bible Commentary Revised* (IVP, London, 1970, p. 205), whilst a more detailed analysis is given in the Tyndale Commentary by J. A. Thompson (pp.78–80).

⁴ P. C. Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1976, pp. 22–24.

⁵ Kings were representatives of the gods, or were themselves to be regarded as gods. This is clearly set out in the Book of Daniel.

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somehow live under the New Covenant? Doubtless the matter is highly complicated, but certainly for Christians in the church, there is a living under the New Covenant, whilst at the same time we are citizens of our own nation. This, too, is a complicated matter, but it helps us to focus on reality. God is King. He has made a treaty or covenant with His people, and in the midst of what some may term ‘secularity’,⁶ we have to keep in mind this multi-focal way of life that we have. The study of Deuteronomy should be most valuable in showing us how a community lived in covenant under God, and must have many helpful ideas and principles for us today. We will see that the essence of Deuteronomy is God’s love for His people, His gifts to His people, the expectation by Him that they will love Him, keep His laws—which, anyway, are for their good—which are themselves the expression of love. This is exactly what we find in the NT.

(ii) Things Secret and Things Given

Deuteronomy 29:29 is a fascinating verse. In its context it appears to mean that the matters of idolatry, cursing and blessing are God’s choice; that is, God’s decision from the depths of His own being, and even though they may not be always intelligible to His people, they ‘belong to Him’; that is, He knows *why* He does what He does—and He does it! Well, then, whatever our thoughts on the matter we must leave these things with Him. As for us there is enough to occupy us to the fullest. Firstly, we know God—or can know God—as much as is necessary for a human being. Secondly, we have been given the law. We know what it is: we know what we should do regarding it. This gift of law has been given, not only for now but for our children forever. Let us, then do it! As Koheleth has said, ‘To fear God and keep his commandments—this is the whole of man’. To accept this principle means we will not be busybodies, always insisting we must know the *why* and *wherefore* of everything. Again, Koheleth is helpful here when he says, ‘That which is, is far off, and deep, very deep; who can find it out’.

Undoubtedly the Book of Deuteronomy is busy telling us the things we can know, need to know, and which we must *do*.

(iii) The Covenant God and the Covenant

When we recognise that Abraham—as Abram—belonged to a family that was idolatrous (Josh. 24:2ff.), and that God—‘the God of glory’—appeared to him (Acts 7:1–2), so that Abraham believed Him, then we realise Abraham’s family was in a unique relationship with God. As a people, this family had little or nothing in regard to its future, its identity, its security and its heritage in this world, but God’s promises were vast. A covenant—universal in nature and intent—had been forged with Abraham by God. Henceforth that family lived under that regime. For them there was the certainty of hope, born out of faith in the promises of God. Hebrews chapter 11 deals at great length with this theme.

Biblically, God’s covenant is a unilateral arrangement made with those He has chosen to be His people, and so it is ‘all of grace’.⁷ He takes a nation which lived virtually

⁶ Since God created all things, and all things belong to Him and he gives us ‘all things’ (Rom. 8:32; I Cor. 3:21–23), then nothing is ‘secular’. When persons ignore God and take the creation to themselves—for themselves—then they ‘secularise’ it. Some recent theology has sought to de-secularize what has been put into a sacred category—usually a religious one—and this has been an attempt to show that nothing is secular, except, of course, evil. The NT speaks of ‘the natural man’ and this is the person who pursues secularity as a rejection of the essential spirituality of all things.

⁷ One description of covenant is, ‘A bond in blood sovereignly administered’ and its *mode* is (i) a statement of ideas made known (agreed upon), (ii) the agreement sealed with and by an oath, (iii) the invocation of a curse to guard the solemn statute, and (iv) the agreement ratified by some external act, i.e. a ritual. See *God’s Covenant: Man’s Crisis* (NCPI, Blackwood, 1985, p. 2). It can be seen that this is somewhat similar to the Treaty spoken about above, although the Treaty is more a form of government imposed upon the people from above.

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without any basic hope and has guaranteed its future—even its eternal future. Other nations develop by growth, by increasing warlike capacity, by conquest and domination. History has shown us the rise and fall of nations—the constantly changing scene—so that no nation ultimately dominates the world. Only Israel is promised that it will inherit the whole of the world (Rom. 4:13; cf. Ps. 25:13; 37:9–29).

As we have seen, Moses reminds the people of what has already happened in regard to the covenantal promises, hence for them—along with the rituals of remembrance (the festivals)—the covenant is at one a revelation of the gracious nature of God and an assurance of continuing security.

(iv) The Love of God and the Love of the People

We may argue that since God is love, then He has created all things in love, and love is the order of the creation. Therefore as God loves Man, so Man ought to love God and his fellow creatures. Whatever the truth of this may be, the Book of Deuteronomy shows that God loves Israel. Israel, then, ought to love God. It ought also to love the strangers in the land, since they—Israel—were once strangers. The verb *ahab*—‘to love’—is used at least twenty times in the book in regard to these different relationships of love. The term ‘loving-kindness’ (*chesed*) is also used a number of times. Love, then, is shown in the following ways—ways which Moses communicates in his writing:

- (a) Yahweh is the Lord; is the God of the Covenant; is the One who has liberated Israel from Egypt; has defeated Israel’s enemies; and who continues to do saving acts for Israel. Hence He is their King, Judge and Warrior.
- (b) God has (inexplicably) loved Israel with His *elective* love, and, as a result, Israel will naturally love God, and so be obedient to Him. This leads on to the principle of love and the law: God has given the law for Israel’s good (10:13), it is unique amongst the laws of all nations (4:10), and the keeping of these laws will bring wisdom (*chokma*; 4:6), peace (*shalom*) and life (*hayyim*). Notice the emphasis on the giving of the law (33:1–5).
- (c) In Romans 9:4, Paul speaks of God’s gifts to Israel, such as the law (Deuteronomy 33:1–5), the sonship (cf. 1:31; 8:5; 14:1; 32:6) the worship (10:12)—and so on. All these were the gifts of God’s love to Israel. They were also all of the one piece. Law and worship cannot be separated. Worship was a gift of the highest order, especially when we compare it with the worship of the Canaanite tribes.
- (d) Deuteronomy 6:4 (the *shema*) pronounced Yahweh as ‘one Lord’—‘The Lord our God is one Lord’ (cf. Exod. 3:14). Monotheism has been found elsewhere in history, but not this kind of personal, loving, relational, elective monotheism. Because Yahweh was One, all idolatry, and all political looking to other lords was forbidden.⁸

⁸ Nations always saw their deities as their lords, as their deliverers and defenders, and even as their giver of good seasons and crops. Their laws and their rituals were along such lines. Often their worship was sensual and immoral. Israel was always tempted towards such worship, especially if they misread God’s chastisement of them in times of rebellion, and so they sought the other gods which were—after all—*local* deities, having their rule in the locality. The prophets were alert to this idolatry and condemned it. Moses was the prophet *par excellence* in this respect.

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(e) The Ten Commandments comprise (i) love to God, and (ii) love to others. The commandments issued out of grace—God had delivered Israel from Egypt and hence commanded them on the basis of grace—hence their keeping of them kept them in love to God and to their fellow creatures.

(v) The Blessings and the Cursings

These took up many chapters, and were extremely important. Since the covenant was given out of love, and was to be obeyed out of love, and since Israel was to love God out of love (6:4; 30:6), it meant that when other loves intervened, then the covenant was infringed. Covenant-breaking could be forgiven by true change of heart and use of the sacrifices, as Leviticus shows us. The curses in Deuteronomy chapter 27 are strong ones. God naturally blesses His people (28:1–15), but rebellion and disobedience will be visited by terrible judgments—failure in crops, in season, and the bringing of horrible diseases upon flocks and people and the land. In some cases—where there is not repentance—it will be punishment by exile. Chapter 18 is of great importance since it forbids all links with the occult, and sets out the nature of true prophecy.⁹

Even so, Israel is God's people, and when His judgments have run His course, He will restore the people and the land. In this there is hope: God will not utterly reject His people—they are His in perpetuity. It has been pointed out that Moses' way of speaking is not harshly legalistic, but fatherly, loving and warm. Even so, whilst a gracious lawgiver, he was a powerful prophet. Even his injunctions are forms of prophecy, in the sense that promises of blessing and predictions of cursings would be irrelevant if Israel was not needing warnings and incentives.

CONCLUSION TO THE INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY

As we read and study the text we will find that our Introduction has not included many elements of the book. Even so, it gives us some orientation to the book, and should provide an incentive to read and understand it.

⁹ We need to understand that divination and such practices show that human beings wish to know what will happen in the future. In this sense what evil or [so-called] neutral powers tell human beings what will happen is a practice which is against God's prophecy and His prophets. This opposition is culpable and will bring terrible judgments, even to the point of being lethal.

‘Deuteronomy’

Materials For the Course

The following two Studies may be helpful for the Course. The first should be read simply to have a useful study on ‘**The Life and Ministry of Moses**’, and the second—‘**An Essay on Deuteronomy**’—should cause us to stop and evaluate the Book to the point of where we are reading.

1. THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF MOSES

Introduction: Assessment of Moses in Hebrews 11:23–18

(i) A man of faith, (ii) a chosen one—‘Moses’, ‘water-son’ (Exod. 2:10), (iii) holy, with his people, (iv) holy, anticipated the inheritance in Christ, (v), holy, did the will of God for His people, (vi) ‘looked on the thing that are not seen’, (vii) a man of faith in the will of God, keeping the saving Passover.

Moses the Man of God: Summary of Deuteronomy 34:10–12

(i) *The prophet unique in all Israel and its history* (verse 10). See also Numbers 12:7-8: note ‘my servant Moses’. See also Deuteronomy 18:15–22; Acts 3:22–25; 7:37. The meaning of ‘face to face’.

(ii) The man of signs and wonders. Note they are ‘which the Lord sent him to do’. See (a) In Egypt for the deliverance (Ps. 105:26ff.) , (b) in the wilderness for the protection of his people, e.g. the supply of food and water (Psa. 105:39–42), the judgements (Numb. 16:1ff.).

(iii) The man of mighty power and terrible deeds. Moses equipped by seeing the glory of God (Exod. chs. 33–34) and did what God enabled him to do. His being on Sinai was terrible in the sight of the people (cf. Heb. 12:18–21).

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Moses the Man of God: His Various Elements of Vocation

- (i) He was a man trained in all the lore of Egypt for his first 40 years.
- (iii) He was a man trained in the desert for his 2nd. forty years.
- (iii) He was a man who served God in Egypt and the desert for his 3rd. forty years.
- (iv) He was a prophet (see above)—the greatest of all prophets. Note his prophetic blessings in Deuteronomy 33:1–29.
- (v) He was a ruler—the ruler of Israel under God. Being ruler he was the judge of Israel under God. See Exodus 18:13ff. In his wisdom he appointed elders and prepared Joshua to be his successor (cf. Num. 27:15–23)..
- (vi) He was the great—even the greatest—law-giver Deuteronomy 33:4:2ff. (cf. Psa. 119:111).
- (vii) He was a priest. He met the Lord in the tent of meeting. He lived in the glory of God. He interceded for his people, time and again (e.g. Exod. 32:11–14, 30–35.
- (viii) He was a man of great heart and spirit, so that from him issued great songs. See Exodus 15:1–18; cf. Revelation 15:1–4; Deuteronomy 33.

Note: Moses was a fallible, sinful man, prone to accusation for his failures (cf. Jude 9), and was prohibited from going into the Promised Land (cf. Deut. 32:48–52; Numbers 20:1–14; 27:14. Even so Moses appeared in glory with Elijah at the time of Jesus' Transfiguration.

2. AN ESSAY ON DEUTERONOMY

Having done some eight chapters of Deuteronomy we have become reasonably familiar with the Book. The great man Moses has come alive to us. He is one the greatest men in history because having been selected by God and put through eighty years of training, he has—by the power of God—been the agent of a miracle the world must even now take notice of. He has freed his people from Egypt in remarkable ways and the strangest of days. Everything he has done has been rooted in history. That is, he has not been a person who like the great religionists such as Mahomet and his ilk, a great philosopher such as Buddha and Confucius, or a great ideologist such as Marx and Lenin—all of whom—have left their mark indelibly on the human race—but he has been 'the meekest man on all the earth', the only man who has stood 'face to face' with God, and—apart from Jesus Christ—the greatest prophet history has known. This leader who spent more time in the presence of God—and most powerfully so—has proved himself to be the highest lover of his people, and the one who has wrestled with God that his nation perish not, and that his own dynasty not supersede that of his ancestor Moses. He was the great messiah of Israel who saw nothing in his own accomplishments but looked to the day of Messiah—the one for whom the day of the Sceptre would mean the transformation of the world.

The Great Salvation History Historian

In what we have together studied of the Book we have seen the great leader was not a politician, and not even a great statesman. He was a man who burned with a knowledge

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of the mystery of godliness, the plan, wisdom counsel and will of God, not only for his own people, but the for the nations to come. He knew enough of the covenant with Abraham, and the seed of Abraham, to know that Israel was central to the purposes of God, but that the purposes of God were not restricted to Israel but to the human race created in Father Adam.

Deuteronomy cannot be called 'a concise salvation history'. It is the salvation story of Israel, a story not yet completed, and which would not be completed with the invasion of Canaan, and the judgement upon its heathen nations. Not even the fullness of its coming kingdom—shared by the early armies of Israel, made successful by David and secured by Solomon—is what moves Moses. What moves Moses is God and the people of God. What is primary to Moses is how God initiates this unique people, shaping them out of a slave situation and a slave environment, into a holy nation. Yet it is from his own knowledge of God—his friendship with Yahweh, his induction into the law of Yahweh, and his grasping of the wisdom of God—that he proves to be the greatest of all leaders in the historic processes of salvation history. Deuteronomy is not merely a document that has mercifully been preserved for us, that has value for those who study history, and can be utilised by the people of God in every age, studied by historians, theologians and their ilk, but it is the Book which helps us to come to the business of life and be assisted in it. All the great issues are clarified by it.

THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY AND US

Those who subject Sacred Writ to their own scrutiny, who ponder it textually, historically, theologically, must find it fascination, but it is those who come under the word of Moses for whom it is most powerful and most immediate in its impact. If a list were made of its main theme, its subsidiary themes, its understanding of history, its laws, its ethical principles, its reading of history with accompanying promises and warnings, then we would see there is nothing of life on which it does not touch, no basic theme with which it does not deal, so that virtually there is guidance now for almost everything which confronts us in our age, as it has in the centuries that have passed and the centuries which will come—if that sort of time is what God ordains.

We must be careful, then, not to subject this man and this Book, to limits of our lazy thinking. All human beings have parameters which they have set for themselves. Each of us determines to what lengths we shall go, what breadths, heights and depths we shall experience life. When we study a Book such as Deuteronomy we tend to interpret it according to what we understand of life, what plans we have for living, the extent to which we are prepared to go in living—in morality, understanding of and obedience to law, goals, accomplishments, relationship, and so on.

If we are somewhat mindless we will be glad of the leadership of a person such as Moses, and will fasten upon him as the fleshly Corinthians did—variously—upon Paul, Apollos and Cephas. Even without deifying Moses we will be slaves of his word, his leadership, his perception and his exhortations. That will be a destructive idolatry. Moses prime passion was God, his prime goal that his people might know God and live in Him. Obedience was not to be a legalistic thing. The law was not simple the best law available, but it was the law *of God!* Worship was not merely that which transcended all other laws—laws, which, anyway were inferior—but this was worship of Yahweh, a great—if not the greatest—gift to the people under Moses.

If then we refuse idolatry of Moses, or craven servility to his exhortations, and have our eyes opened to see the mystery of God which he understood (29:29), and the life which he set before his people and the principle that 'Man shall not live by bread alone,

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but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God', then we shall see that as men and women has then to live, so now they likewise have to life. Yet such a word of God was the word spelt out in many details, many precepts, commands. ordinances and the like. If we stand in the position of the spectator, the speculator, the literary and historical textual critic, the estimator and evaluator of this book then we will miss the heart of the matter.

The issues we face today—though their forms may differ somewhat to the forms of ancient Israel—are essentially the same. We must recognise them, be assisted by the Mosaic revelations, interpretations and exhortations. In this way we shall be able to face every modern issue of law, of life, of the complexities of humanity in its sinfulness, and so participate actively in the salvation history of God, as we share in the day-to-day matters and happenings of the human race. We will be fortified to deal with these things, and to be the servants of God in this portion of history and His sovereign rule and Divine purposes and workings.. They will not be a puzzle to us, especially if we do not use human wisdom, but that which is divine. If we think this Book may have been good in its day for the people of its day and do not see—like other Books—that 'these things happened to them as a warning, but were written down for our instruction, upon whom the end of the ages has come' (I Cor. 10:11) and—along with all other Scripture—that 'All scripture is inspired by God and [is] profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equip[ped] for every good work,' (II Tim. 3:16–17) then we ought not to proceed with the great Book of Deuteronomy—the word which has proceeded from the mouth of God, and the same word by which we live.

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