

DEUTERONOMY

Author

Although many wish to attribute a later date and author to Deuteronomy,

- * The book clearly indicates that it was written by Moses.
 - All of it was spoken by Moses (except the appendix).
 - 31:9 indicates he wrote it also.
- * Our Lord frequently quotes from it, giving credit for its contents to Moses.
- * The historical appendix which describes Moses' death may have been added by someone else.

It seems best to accept the testimony which includes Deuteronomy, along with the other books of the Pentateuch, among those which Moses wrote.

Date

The events described in Deuteronomy occurred during the eleventh month of the fortieth year Israel wandered in the desert, 1406 B.C.

Background

Israel is on the banks of the Jordan, in Moab, ready to enter Canaan.

Moses' forty years of leadership are drawing to a close.

After a long delay in the wilderness, the generation that failed to believe God and rebelled against Him has died and their children are now ready to move on.

Purpose and theme

Basically Deuteronomy is *not* an historical book.

Only 32:48-34:12 continue the historical narrative.

It's really a book of sermons.

Moses, knowing he's about to die, delivers a final warning to God's people.

It is actually five sermons he preached to them.

He leaves it in written form so that it will serve as a permanent reminder in the future.

The book summarizes his previous years of teaching ministry while he has been with them.

Moses uses the experiences of the previous generation to teach the younger generation the dangers of unbelief and rebellion.

Moses demonstrates the importance of maintaining a proper relationship with God who has chosen them as His own people, and of obeying His commands.

If they obey Him, He will bless them.

If they rebel, He will judge them.

Theme: Yahweh alone is our God.

Love Him with all your heart and obey Him.

Moses is concerned that the covenant people remain faithful to God so as not to surrender to the contaminating influence of the Canaanites.

In that way God will be able to bless them and they will be a light in the midst of surrounding pagan darkness.

Organization

Two logical ways have been commonly proposed to organize the contents of the book. Both have considerable evidence to support their use.

The first proposal acknowledges that the author's understanding of the covenant relationship between God and His people has affected the organization of his presentation.

In Moses' day a common treaty form was the Suzerainty Treaty.

For the Hittites it was essentially a unilateral agreement, imposed by a powerful king on a lesser vassal, committing the vassal to recognize the great king's authority and to promise loyalty and submission.

The basic ingredients of a covenant agreement are all present in the book of Deuteronomy, in the forms commonly used at that time. For that reason some commentators outline the book on that basis.

Kline's outline is one of the earliest and simplest examples:

(If you compare the treaty form to this outline, you will see how the author develops his theme as the treaties were written.)

- I. *Preamble* 1:1-5
- II. *Historical prologue* 1:6-4:49
- III. *Stipulations* 5-26
- IV. *Curses and blessings* 27-30
- V. *Arrangements for succession and public reading* 31-34

The stipulations section of these treaties was usually composed of two parts:

- General requirement of allegiance to the sovereign 5-11
- Specific commandments 12-26

The parallel with the author's organization in the book seems to reveal a deliberate imitation of the covenant format.

But when you study Deuteronomy itself, without Kline, while these divisions are closely paralleled, they are not the organizing structure of the book.

In spite of the parallels with the covenant format, the historical situation and grammatical structure seem to place these elements within a different format which controls the content of the book.

The layout of the book revolves around five final messages Moses preaches to Israel, just before his death.

As Moses is about to die and the people will have to enter Canaan without him, he gathers them together on five occasions to speak to them. This book reveals his five messages to the people:

Historical prologue 1:1-5

First message: historical review of God's dealings with Israel 1:6-4:43

Second message: review of the commandments God has given to His people 4:44-26:19

Third message: two alternatives for God's people 27-28

If they obey Him, they will be blessed

If they rebel, God will judge them

Fourth message: logically subordinate to the preceding one, relates these two alternatives to their past history and to God's future plan for His people 29-30

Fifth message: final exhortation to Israel to follow the teaching He has given them 31:1-29

Historical appendices 31:30-34:12

Argument

I. Historical Prologue 1:1-5

Deuteronomy is introduced by an historical prologue which identifies the circumstances under which its message was delivered.

Israel was located in Moab, on the banks of the Jordan, ready to enter Canaan and to claim the land God had promised them.

They had waited a long time. What might have been an eleven day journey, had become a 40 year sojourn, wandering around the wilderness because of their unbelief and rebellion. That time was now concluding and Israel was finally ready to enter the land.

II. First message: Historical review of God's dealings with Israel 1:6-4:43

An historical review of God's dealings with Israel

Previous to his death, Moses called the people together for a history lesson.

A. From Horeb to the rebellion at Kadesh-Barnea 1:6-4:6

He reviewed the painful experiences of the previous generation in order that we might learn the importance of obedience.

He reminds us of how God had led the people to the land once before. However because of their unbelief and rebellion, they were judged and entrance to the land was postponed.

That generation never did enter the land.

B. Forty-year wilderness wanderings 2:1-16

The forty-year sojourn in the wilderness was described.

That entire generation died as the Lord's hand was against them.

C. Victorious approach to the land 2:17-3:29

Then God began to direct them once again toward the land.

God has given them victory over the surrounding nations that opposed them.

He has prepared new leadership to direct them as they move into the land.

D. Consequent warnings to Israel 4:1-40

Moses warns us to learn from experience of the preceding generation.

Obey God's commandments and be sure not to forget.

Teach your children to obey the Lord.

Guard against idolatry.

Above all else remember to be faithful to God and to His covenant.

1. To keep the commandments 4:1-8
2. To remember the things seen 4:9-14
3. To guard against idolatry 4:15-40

E. Appointment of cities of refuge 4:41-43

This message was concluded with the establishing of three cities of refuge on the east side of the Jordan. These cities permitted a person who had accidentally killed another to escape the vengeance of the deceased person's family.

III. Second message: Reconfirmation of Mosaic covenant 4:44-26:19

A review of the commandments God has given to His people

God's requirements for His covenant people are again described.

A. Historical background 4:44-49

B. Exhortations to obedience 5-11

God reveals His basic requirement that His covenant people choose to be faithful to Him and obey His commandments.

1. Review of the covenant 5-6

He reminds us of the time when He established His covenant with them.

He urges us not to forget, and to teach our children not to forget Him, nor His covenant.

2. Command to destroy heathen influence 7

When they enter the land, they are to destroy totally the pagan Canaanites who are dwelling there.

They are to be destroyed lest they contaminate God's people, whom He has called to holiness, by their pagan lifestyle.

If they are obedient to Him in this matter, He will give them victory.

3. Command based on God's grace 8-11

We are reminded that the reason we are to obey Him is because of His gracious dealings with us.

We ought to remember all that He has done for us and, out of gratitude, respond in obedience.

If they are obedient to Him, He will bless them in the land He is about to give them.

- a. Command to remember God's gracious dealings 8:1-10
- b. Warning against forgetting God's gracious dealings 8:11-20
- c. Warning against self-righteousness 9-10:11
- d. Requirements of God 10:12-22
- e. Reasons for obedience 11
 - (1) God's past dealings 11:1-7
 - (2) God's blessing in the land 11:8-32

C. Summary of statutes and ordinances 12-26

After presenting the basic command of love and submission to God's authority over our lives, specific commands are issued.

1. Commandments emphasizing religious significance 12-18

Some of these commands deal with religious issues. . . .

It was apparent that God's people were to be different from the other nations of the world in regard to religious matters.

Our allegiance and submission to Yahweh alone should be demonstrated in every area of our lives.

2. Commandments emphasizing civil significance 19-26:15

Moses also gave the covenant people an extended list of commands which emphasize proper conduct in our civic and political lives.

These commandments deal with matters such as murder, private property, trespassing, war, family problems, clothing, social assistance, treatment of animals, marriage, slavery, moral conduct and justice.

Every area of our lives should be affected by our walk with God.

3. Commandment requiring general obedience 26:16-19

In conclusion, we're warned to be obedient to God and His laws.

We should reveal our distinct relationship to this unique God by our lifestyle.

Holiness will glorify Him.

IV. Third message: Consequences of their response 27-28

Two alternatives for God's people

If they obey Him, they will be blessed

If they rebel, God will judge them

Importance of Deuteronomy 28-30:

Key to understanding Israel's history from God's perspective/
Prophets repeatedly go back to this summary sermon.

Sets graphically before Israel the two alternatives they may choose to follow.

The people would be divided between Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal. The two groups would demonstrate that there are two alternatives.

If Israel obeys God's voice, He will send abundant blessing.

If they choose disobedience, the results will be an equally abundant cursing.

They must choose which they prefer.

- A. Recording of the message 27:1-8
- B. Motive for obedience 27:9-10
- C. Results of response 27:11-28:68
 - 1. Division of the people 27:11-14
 - 2. Curses to remember 27:15-26
 - 3. Blessing for obedience 28:1-14
 - 4. Cursing for disobedience 28:15-68

V. Fourth message: Second covenant confirmed 29-30

Logically subordinate to the preceding one, relates these two alternatives to their past history and to God's future plan for His people

The past deliverance of Israel in spite of her rebellion is related to the promise of future blessing.

Once again Israel is invited to enter into a covenant relationship with Jehovah.

On the basis of this covenant, those who disobey will be judged.

However, even in the midst of judgment, when the people repent and return to Yahweh they are promised that He will restore them and bless them again.

This is the basis for their hope in the future.

God will draw them to Himself once again and they will receive His blessing.

The message closes with the exhortation to make the right choice and experience God's blessing.

- A. Addition of the covenant 29:1
- B. Obedience because of deliverance 29:2-9
- C. Establishment of the covenant 29:10-13
- D. Effects of the covenant 29:14-21
- E. Judgment by the covenant 29:22-29
- F. Restoration by the covenant 30:1-10
- G. Attainability of the covenant 30:11-14
- H. Alternatives in view of the covenant 30:15-20

VI. Fifth message: Final exhortation to Israel 31:1-29

His final exhortation to Israel to follow the teaching He has given them

- A. Promise of Yahweh's presence 31:1-8**
- B. Command to read the law 31:9-13**

This is especially important for their children, so that they might learn to obey Him also.

- C. Forecast of the future 31:14-22**

Moses describes prophetically the path which Israel will take in the future. Their rebellion doesn't take God by surprise!

- D. Charge to Joshua 31:23**

An encouraging word is directed to Joshua, their new leader.

He can be assured of God's presence with him.

- E. Witness of these words 31:24-29**

The book of the law is given a special function.

It will be a witness between God and Israel.

All the conditions of the covenant are clearly defined in it.

All they have to do is compare the record.

God will always be found faithful

Evil will come upon them, but not because of God's failure.

Their own disobedience will be the cause.

VII. Historical appendices 31:30-34:12

The book concludes with a description of several historically significant events.

A. Song of Moses 31:30-32:47

Moses gave them a song which would remind them of the basic issues involved in their covenant relationship with God.

In the song he shows the contrast between God's righteousness and grace, and Israel's unrighteousness and ingratitude.

Though God will punish His people, He will not destroy them.

In the end, He will restore them.

Moses taught the song to the people for their instruction.

B. Command to climb the mount 32:48-52

After Moses teaches the song to Israel, God calls him to go up to Mount Nebo to die.

Even Moses' death was a warning to the people of the importance of obedience to God.

Moses would not be permitted to enter the land because of his disobedience to God's instructions.

Nevertheless, God was merciful to allow him to see the land before his death.

C. Final blessing on Israel 33

Previous to his death Moses pronounced one last blessing on Israel.

He dealt with the nation by tribes, giving a specific promise to each.

The blessing is concluded with the promise of God's protection.

1. Introduction 33:1-5
2. Blessing by tribes 33:6-24
3. Promise of divine protection 33:25-29

D. Death of Moses 34:1-8

Finally, Moses, God's servant, climbed Mt. Nebo, received a guided overview of the land, and died.

The Lord buried him in Moab so the Israelites would not be tempted to go back for him, nor worship at his grave.

E. Beginning of Joshua's ministry 34:9-12

With the death of Moses, a great period of Israel's history came to a close.

Never again would God's people be led by such a mighty leader.

Never again would their head talk face-to-face with God Himself, as Moses had done, until the Messiah should come.

Now it was up to Joshua to take them into the land.

Moses had trained him.

The Holy Spirit had prepared him.

Now they were to move into the land and claim it for Jehovah.

WHAT LESSONS SHOULD WE LEARN FOR OUR LIVES TODAY ON THE BASIS OF THE MESSAGES OF DEUTERONOMY?