

Deuteronomy

The last book of the Pentateuch, Deuteronomy, is a reminder of Israel's past and a pressing forward to her future. It is Moses' last flurry of prophetic wisdom to his people. For the past thirty-eight years he had carried the nation upon his shoulders. Now the time had come to infuse into the people a remembrance of Israel's past failures. The time had come to undergird their spirits with commandments for the present and wise advice for the future. And, the time had come for the prophet of God to die.

In preparing the people to possess Canaan, it was necessary for Moses to remind this new generation of the past. He wanted to be absolutely sure that they knew what was at stake. Either they would have faith in God and inherit the Promised Land or they would not trust the promise of God and come under judgment once again. Here they stood, in the land of Moab, with yet another chance to enter the land flowing with milk and honey. He wanted them to know that milk and honey was a lot better than sand and manna. The primary message in these remembrances of the past was, Obey God and prosper, or, Don't obey God and be destroyed!

Next, Moses moseys on to the needs of Israel at their present juncture. Nearly twenty-two chapters are devoted to refreshing the children of Israel on God's laws and their applications. These included the Ten Commandments, laws of worship, and guidelines for the punishment of infractions. Through this legalistic exhortation, Moses was insuring that God's holy decrees would not pass from his people. Thus we have Moses declaring: "And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates" (Deut. 6: 6-9). Moses was laying the foundation for Israel to become a people of one Word, the Word of God. We, today, would do well to have the same devotion to his eternal Word.

As Moses continues, focus is applied to the future of Israel in the Promised Land. Various commands are given by Moses to the people. Publishing the Law of God was one such command. In chapter 28 Moses gives his people the famous list of blessings and cursings associated with obedience and disobedience. One needs only to observe America's schools and streets to conclude we as a nation are falling under God's judgment.

Lastly, the book of Deuteronomy records the death of Moses and his compassion toward the people prior to the event. Moses, at 120 years of age, knows that he is going to die. He also knows he will never set foot into Canaan. God told him both these would be so. Was Moses embittered by this knowledge? No...he was not. Rather, he began a collage of manifested care and love. He publicly exalted Joshua as his successor, exhorted the priests, gave Israel a prophetic song, and blessed each tribe uniquely. After this, Moses performed his last work for God with perfect obedience. He went up to Mount Nebo, up to the top of Pisgah, and saw the Holy Land. Then he died...No rebellion...No fuss. He gladly accepted the providence of the Lord.

Deuteronomy is a book of old truths to a new people. God's ways are eternal ways. People do not break the Almighty's commandments; the commandments break them. This is why it was important for Moses to refresh Israel with the holiness of God. For him to pour down upon the people God's goodness and sternness, in the form of his holy decrees. For them to look back into the failures of past Israel, that they be not repeated. So it would be good for us also to look back: a look back into our early years, a look back into our country's

years, a look back into all the blunders of mankind. In doing so, we may escape living a life of bad re-runs.