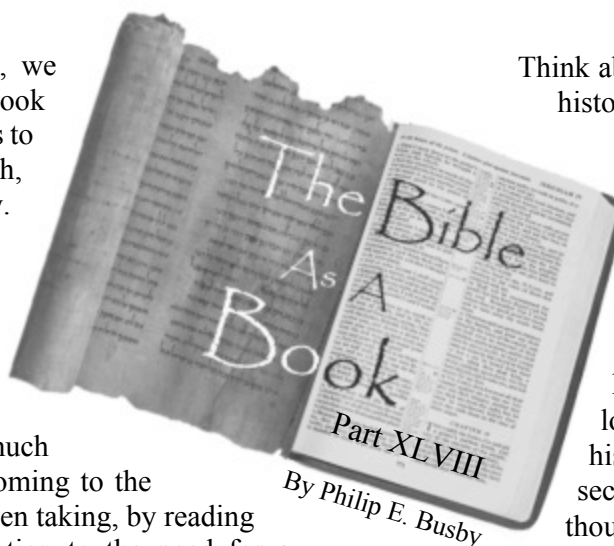


In our last segment, we ended our overview of the Book of Numbers, and that brings us to the last book in the Torah, which is Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy is very appropriately placed at the end of the Torah in that it really is the chronological end of the five books which are the core of God's Word. It is also a book very much about review, and it's as if coming to the end of the journey we have been taking, by reading through the Torah from creation to the need for a chosen nation and its establishment, has brought us to a moment where we need to stop and review where we now stand. It was with the Law in place that the chosen nation was a nation with a purpose and from there would go forward watching their lives unfolding with this system at work. This is no trivial matter in the truth that God would not change this fact even once Jesus came. It would be inside this system that the coming of The Messiah could receive recognition by both the Jew and the non-Jew. It would also be from the perspective of this system that we can see all God has taught us about righteous living no matter what culture we may actually live in, and it is only with this system that there is a way to see The Messiah for Who He really is when He returns to do the work He shall do in the end of this world!

Because this system was not just important to Israel's journey to the promised land, nor just for the generation or two after they entered the promised land, Moses stops right before it is his time to go home to be with The Lord and repeats all these ordinances in their basic form. While many may see most of this as redundant, it is not! Not only does this solidify these Laws for us before we go on into reading what remains of all we call Scripture, it gives us an example of a truth so many want to deny, and that is - we serve an unchanging God! As we have gone through these first books of the Bible, we have talked about how much time they each span, along with how much time, if any, they have in between each of them. While it's true that most of what we read in Numbers does not really cover a great amount of time (especially in comparison to a book such as Genesis), and Deuteronomy covers even less, when one considers the time period the Torah as a whole covers, we are talking about more than a third of the world's history!



Think about it. Over a third of human history passes before we get out of these first five books, and the rest of the Bible is talking about how the Jews, along with the rest of the world, responded to God putting this system in place. The easiest way to keep in mind a very rough look at time is to remember history breaks down into three sections of almost a couple thousand years. From the creation

to the flood of Noah's day there is close to two thousand years. From that time to when The Messiah first appeared, there is about two thousand years, and from the time Jesus left this world until now, there has been almost two thousand years. Now, I emphasize this is a very crude starting point for a way to remember it because it is not that simple when you really crunch the numbers. I suppose I should emphasize I'm also not teaching any mystical thought about how every two thousand years an important event is going to take place. It's just that once sin became a part of man's character humanity became somewhat predictable in his thoughts, and this led to us having this simplistic way of keeping the basics in our head about where we are in time. As of this writing the Jewish calendar years, which are based on a calculation from creation according to what the Bible tells us, puts us in the year 5,777. This is just 223 years short of the 6,000 year mark.

If we think about it in more detail, we find that just the first part of Genesis covers the first third of our universe's existence all by itself. What is important about this fact is it only took until that first third for man to take all the steps needed to cause God to settle on what system was needed in order to deal with man's choices. This, because it only took that amount of time for man to insist on a way to go about living this human existence. It is true Jesus is The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. (Rev. 13:8) However, what this really tells us is Jesus was always prepared to give His life for us, and it was with the understanding this might be necessary that God created a freewilled being. Man not only gave up the innocence and paradise that came with the way God created us to be, very early on, man continued to reject the ways of God so badly that it only took until about

1,656 years before God had to send a flood to destroy everything and everyone not on the ark He had told Noah to build. It only took about another 175 years before God had to confound man's language at the Tower of Babel, because even after the flood man headed down a path that would corrupt all men even faster than before.

After that, the Book of Genesis shows us how God began building and establishing a chosen nation. This, because God knew that nations, which are a smaller version of what man did at the tower, would be the way man would choose to divide up and even attempt to overcome the barriers God put in place to man again achieving the tower's original idea as a whole. Thus, as we have discussed, there needed to be one nation who's culture represented the struggle to maintain the ways of God on this earth, along with being the keepers of God's oracles for how to find righteousness. This would ensure individuals all throughout the world could still learn the ways of God in spite of the cultural influence they lived in, and that's what makes those written oracles so important, because we all need to study the Word of God for ourselves. As I just keep saying, the core of all those words are these first five books, and Deuteronomy is given at the end of the five because we are at that point where the reason to establish a chosen nation has been clearly defined; the work to build a specific family into that nation has been accomplished; the laws that would make those people a true nation had been given; and the nation had some time to live those laws in a real world setting, even for a long enough period to understand who they now were! It is in this light that we need to see the reason for this rundown of all that came before being placed at the end of the Torah.

It should also not be forgotten that the generation which now stood to hear Moses rehearse these words was not the generation that knew Egypt's bondage and had seen firsthand how God's might had brought the nation out of that bondage. Mostly what this generation had seen was a lot of wandering round in the wilderness until the generation before them had all died off. This was not God's intent. It was His intent to bring the same generation He freed from Egypt's bondage to the promised land where they would see God use them as the tool to destroy the wicked inhabitants of that land. This would have added a greater impact to the world's understanding that a nation, once slaves in Egypt, not only were freed from

the mighty Pharaoh, but destroyed an entire region's people in order to possess their land all because they served The One True God of the universe. That exact story did not happen, because that first generation did not believe God could bring them into the promised land. However, the story would still be much the same in that the nation did not simply disappear into the wilderness after leaving Egypt. It continued to survive and thrive in a place where only handfuls of nomadic people lived here and there, but in which there was no natural resources for any nation to exist.

Then one day that miracle of a nation turned east and then north to easily destroy Canaanite people on the east side of the Jordan River. What this gives us is a story where there is a whole lot more years and events between Egypt and the entering of the promised land than there was originally suppose to be, but it did not change the fact this nation, by the hand of God, would rise up to be a great nation in this world! At the time of Deuteronomy that rising up was about to happen, but before those events this new generation which had seen God give them the land on this east side of Jordan needed to be reminded of their real reason for existing. God was not giving them this land because as God's people they were entitled to greater blessings at the expense of other people in the world. God knew at the time of Abraham He would one day give them this land because the wickedness of the people living on it would need to be wiped out. However, Israel's real point for existing was to carry on generation after generation studying, preserving, and exemplifying these Laws God had given them! Thus, it would be at this point Moses would stop to go over those Laws in their most complete form.

This is a point so crucial to every believer, because it is more often than not a mistake in the mindset of those who claim to have received salvation that they now hold some special ticket that entitles them to blessings of God and an ultimate home in heaven. While it should be our great desire to make it to heaven, even that should not be based on the thought of just getting to live for eternity. It should be based on how much it will mean to get a second chance to return to what God created man to be, instead of just living this sin-filled existence man has chosen to build in the here and now. If that desire is what truly motivates us, then attempting to take the steps we can to have as much of that life as we can in the here and now is what our lives should be about right here and right now.



Living the ways of God, or, at the very least, a desire to strive for those ways no matter the cost to our comfort in this life is no more than our reasonable service to God. (Rom. 12:1) In so many ways, shapes, and forms, this is what the Book of Deuteronomy is emphasizing to the nation of Israel as well as to us. We can be distracted by many events and historical happenings, but living for God is about obeying His Words - pure and simple.

When we look at the word "Torah," we see a word that at its root means simply "The Law," and we know this is a specific reference to the Laws of God. In our covering of each of these books, we have talked about which ones are more history and which ones are more purely law, along with what that means. However, it could be said that Deuteronomy in and of itself is the Torah in a nutshell! If we look at what the name Deuteronomy means, or, in other words, why this book is named Deuteronomy, we find it's because it simply means "Second Law." This is not to say in any way God had revised the Law. Far too many people want to believe God has done such a thing and is continuing to, because it is their hope it opens the door to claiming so many things are true which are not if one is attempting to live righteously before God. Such people want to throw out those things that are not convenient under our "modern" or current circumstances. If God really does change things as we go, then we can interpret what we think He has changed to fit our desires. The very existence of the Book of Deuteronomy directly debunks the idea God is constantly morphing what it means to be righteous, and this is why it is also appropriate to interpret the meaning of the book's name as being, "Repetition of The Law." This point goes back to that emphasis I put on the fact the Torah is the true core of God's Word, and why when people ask me where they should start reading the Bible, I always respond - from the beginning! Like so many books, you cannot understand what you read later, especially in starting at the New Testament of all places, if you do not know what has come before.

In so many ways, the Book of Deuteronomy shouts this truth. As this new generation of Israel stood before Moses, he was telling them how much, for all the passage of time and events that had taken place since the days of their forefathers and the giving of the Law in the mountains of Sinai, had not changed what God wanted to do. One should consider, it had been a

very straightforward and fairly easy thing for the nation to bring their offerings and sacrifices to the center of the camp where the tabernacle stood. However, the events that would now make them into a nation, which means they would be spread across a great land, would not change their responsibilities in such things, as those things would remain the point of Israel's existence. This is why everything else we read in the Bible must be taken by looking at it in this framework. The rest of God's Word is given to us from the perspective of how much the nation succeeded or failed at various points and times to follow God's instructions for them as a people. As it relates to the non-Jew, who was not instructed to perform the ceremonies of the Law, it's all very much about how the nations of the world responded to the existence of a nation that had been given such instruction by God for their lives. It's all about how individuals, both Jew and non-Jew, all across the world, and forward from the time the Law was given, has observed or ignored what these words showed and still show us about living our lives in righteousness!

Now, in talking about time, we come to that conversation concerning how much time there is between the Book of Numbers and Deuteronomy, as well as how much time does the Book of Deuteronomy cover? Both these questions are actually pretty easy to answer for Deuteronomy, because as we've already talked about in covering Numbers, God had told Moses he would not lead the nation into the promised land. That job would pass to Joshua, and in doing this God not only gave Moses the blessing of being relieved of his earthly burdens, but it also was, at least in a symbolic way, speaking to the truth, God had said the generation that had failed to trust Him to bring them into the promised land would not get to enter. Of course, if one has been paying attention, we know Moses was not one of those people who doubted God. It is also a fact Joshua was specifically one of the spies who had went into Canaan that first time, who, along with Caleb, was one of only two out of the twelve spies to attempt to convince the nation they should immediately go up to take the land God was more than able to give them. Thus, the nation being given this new leader put an emphasis on the fact God said only the next generation would enter, and at that same time God had made His judgment clear that Caleb and Joshua would be exceptions to the rule!

Since the clarification that the time had come

for this transition from Moses to Joshua had already been given in the Book of Numbers, we should be able to understand how much Deuteronomy is just the capping point of Moses' life. This is why in it we see Moses is the one giving these words. He is also giving them in the same spot the nation had basically been camped for the entire last part of the book of Numbers. Of course, this spot was now a place, along with a lot of other territory on this east side of Jordan, that belonged to Israel. Thus, they were already not a nation just living in the wilderness, and they had experienced what it would be like to face temptations from surrounding cultures, but they had still not entered the promised land God wanted them to primarily hold. The fact Moses is giving these words means he was still alive obviously, but his time was short, and we are told near the end of Numbers that Moses took the time to sit down and rehearse all that had happened during Israel's journey to this point. In talking about those words in Numbers, I mentioned the fact this really gave Moses the time to write or, at the very least, put what he had already written into more of the cohesive form we know the books to be today. It is also reasonable to believe it was in this same mindset and time Moses goes out and verbally covers all this information with the nation, and that's what gives us the Book of Deuteronomy!

What this means to the point of how much time there is between Numbers and Deuteronomy is that there is no reason to believe there is any time. It is more than likely within the time period covered by Numbers that most all of what Deuteronomy covers takes place. This also means talking about how much time the Book of Deuteronomy covers in and of itself is, again, not complicated. It did not take Moses years and years to go over these words. Moses did not have years and years left, and his compiling of this information into a very structured form made the rehearsing of events and laws before the people as straightforward a task as it ever can be. That's why I say this book really is the Torah in a nutshell. It is interesting to think of the Book of Deuteronomy as mostly consisting of the first verbal rehearsal of the Law. In all the other books we see things as they come about, such as God speaking to Abraham about what He desired to bring through his family and Abraham responding. We see this in the life of Isaac and Jacob as well. Then we see this significantly as we move into Exodus where God speaks to Moses and he takes on the responsibilities God was giving him. After Israel

left Egypt we mostly see Moses speaks to God and then to the people. The people speak to Moses and he takes the matter before God. As God answers, Moses takes those words back to the people, and we see the reaction to (or in some cases the rejection of) the answer. Through this process we see the establishment of the Law, but now in Deuteronomy we see the first full example of the Law being laid out in its more solid finalized form.

No more questions and answers as to what the Law consists of, just how do we follow what we've been given and apply it to our daily lives as they currently exist. This is in no way to suggest a direct and continual relationship with God is not necessary, because it is faith that these Laws should lead all individuals both Jew and non-Jew to seek first and foremost. However, it brings us back to the point, once again, about how much we do not serve a changing God. What He wants from us has been clear from the beginning of our creation. How to walk as best we can in what God wants from us, with consideration of the environment men who do not want the ways of God have caused, is what we see becoming the bigger and bigger issue starting with Adam's and Eve's first missteps, and it only gets worse from there. I should say as we continue to talk about all this that we are not discussing the idea of all people becoming Jewish, and certainly not that they all follow the religion of Judaism, for that was never God's intent. What we are talking about is the truth of what it's like to be told how to create an environment on a national scale which is directed by laws God specifically gave. In looking at such a thing we see just how much difficulty there is in doing this, because it has everything to do with individuals being willing to cooperate and obey God in order to bring it about.

If man was so determined at the Tower of Babel to work together to build a world based on man's thoughts, the question was/is, can there be a group of people who can build at least one nation on the basis of God's Law? Sadly the answer is, not one with great cohesion for any length of time! Not in this world at least, and that is the answer we needed to know before we as a human race can fully see the justification of God having to destroy this world one day. If one nation could not accomplish, and even be fought so hard against establishing one small spot in this world where people lived exclusively by a set of laws given directly by God, what hope is there that man can build a world



of peace that is worth more than generation after generation living and dying in their sin which is useless? Is this meant to bring despair to this world? Yes. Is this meant to bring despair to the idea of living our lives according to a religion? Yes. Is this meant to bring despair to an individual's faith in God? No! Why? Because individuals living in a direct relationship with God is all each of us have any control over. Whether we get to do that among any others who also truly seek faith or whether we must do it all by ourselves is something God's chosen nation proves is just dependent on when and where we might live, because, again, it has to do with each individual making their own choices!

With that, we will turn to the question of who wrote the Book of Deuteronomy, and that question is just a little more complicated but not by much. You see, if Moses is speaking most of the words we read in this book, the question only turns to, did he really write them? In a way this is a bit of a trivial point, because since it's true most of this book is Moses speaking, this book consists of his words as much or more than any of the others. The fact he may not have physically been the one to write them down is no different than the way many people write books today, which is to simply dictate them to a person or computer that does the actual "writing." However, what is more interesting about discussing this point is the fact the book is really written in the third person, meaning we are given this picture of Moses standing before the people speaking most of these words. While this is true at a lot of points in the other books of the Torah, it really comes home in Deuteronomy when we see it ends by giving us an account of Moses' actual leaving this world. It would seem pretty clear Moses did not sit down after he left this world and give us the account of that event.

Thus, at least a portion of this book we can say with a great amount of certainty was not put in writing by Moses himself, and the answer as to who did is often passed off as simply being the next leader Joshua. However, I'm not so sure that's the best way to look at it. What we see later on, especially in the times of the kings, are scribes who keep the written records of events. This is literally where we get the books of I & II Chronicles. Later, in New Testament times, scribes refers to those who literally made the copies of the Word of God, but what I think we are seeing in Deuteronomy is another truth the nation was starting

to act like a true nation. Moses was as close a thing as they had to a king at this point, and Joshua would be so after; and what you get the feeling of in reading Deuteronomy is that some other person took up the work of a scribe as it was typical for the day. That would mean this person actually records this history for us!

This takes nothing away from this being a book of Moses, but does speak to yet another step in development of the nation recognizing they should not forget their history. The person or persons who more likely than not took up the work of writing this permanent record are also most likely the ones who ensured the other books of the Torah were initially preserved. This is one of those moments I hope we can all appreciate because this job was of the utmost importance! It was not enough for Moses to make sure the words were down in print before he left this world. He may have understood this better than anyone, and that had a lot to do with his passion in speaking the words verbally to the people here in Deuteronomy. While this, of course, was done at the direction of God, it set a precedent; and, in fact, the nation had been told on more than one occasion to be sure to tell their children of these events so they would not be forgotten. However, that all being true, there were these unnamed people working in the background that made sure these words got preserved in any case. Outside of just giving God the credit, which is where it truly belongs, these individuals are the reason we can read the words for ourselves today. It is my hope that this would encourage every believer in two specific ways. One, pick up your Bible and read it! It has taken the hard labor of many people through thousands of years, who followed God's direction in order for you to have this privilege! Two, in light of this you should never think that your work for God is in vain no matter how insignificant it may seem to you or others at the time!

Let's stay in God's Word!

