



Deuteronomy 6:4-5 *“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.”*

So often Old Testament books get a bad rap as boring. Deuteronomy is no different. The lack of memorable stories probably hurt its fame. Yet, Jesus made several references to it. Some of the most famous verses in scripture come from it. This book is Moses' swan song. It is not; however, his defining moment. Instead, it is his farewell speech to the nation of Israel. It is tough to get a good read on this book. Much of the dialogue is a reminder of what God has done and where they are going. The first two chapters do not start well. It is a reminder of all their failings. I suspect it's a sore spot for Moses. Then comes the Jewish (Shema) declaration of faith. Deuteronomy 6:4-9. From there Moses continues to pound home their responsibilities under God. Finally, we have the passing of the torch to Joshua and Caleb. Literally, God cleaned house before they crossed into the promised land.

Narrative

The Bible is a big book. Most people won't read it directly because it's big. One of the characteristics of the Bible is that it's even bigger on the inside. The first eleven chapters contain over 2000 years of history. Moses just spent the better part of 40 years watching a new generation rise in the desert. They don't know Egypt or God. Knowing his time is coming to an end, Moses retells the history within 7 chapters. He reminds them of where they came from.

Chapter 8-13 give warnings to follow the Lord your God. All throughout this book are those words. The God Moses talks about is now their God too. Don't follow anyone but the one God.

Moses then goes on to explain the reasons for traditions. Chapters 14-17 harp on the reasons to follow God. What will go wrong if you decide to follow other Gods. This includes the desire to have a king like other nations. It's an ominous warning. More than likely these nomads have not interacted with many other cultures. The promise land will be full of different customs, idols, and Gods. Chapters 18-27 give more commands about treating themselves better than other nations. To be distinct. Finally, we have God predicting that the people will stray from Him. Moses sings a song of praise to the Lord. Deuteronomy ends with a blessing on this people that will be needing a new leader. This book is truly Moses' swan song.

Intent

In many ways this is a plea from Moses. For forty years he had watched his fellow Israelites die. We are talking about millions of people. A trail of unbelief and bones in the desert. Moses final words are given to a young nation. A nation that might not remember what God did for them in Egypt. In some ways these people did not have that personal touch of God as Moses had. Egypt had to be taken out of them. Moses was trying to put the fear and love of the Lord in them. This book is a reminder of time in the wilderness. What happens when people wander away from God. It's also a humbling book because even the great Moses did not get to enter the promised land here on this earth.

Characters

Moses, Joshua, Caleb, and God

Who wrote this book?

Moses by tradition but clearly, he could not write his own death. Joshua was with him a ton when Moses was with God.

Famous verses

Deuteronomy 4:24,29, 31, Deuteronomy 6:4-5, Deuteronomy 10:12, Deuteronomy 11:22-25, Deuteronomy 17:15-17, Deuteronomy 19:21, Deuteronomy 21:22-23

Controversies, issues, and Questions

The Palestinian covenant is a deal that God made with His people to possess the land. There are a series of “if you” and “I will.” Yet, today many Muslim groups claim this covenant as their own. Islam believes that God has promised this land to them. Hence the feud between Palestine and Israel today is a land and God issue. Who owns the rights to God’s covenant?

Clearly, Jesus had a favorite book. He fought back against Satan in the wilderness with scripture from Deuteronomy. To be fair, Deuteronomy is a re-hashing of other commands and deeds of God. They say that Jesus is the word. What does that mean? Some say that Jesus embodies all that scripture is. Yet, I would contend that it goes much further. Jesus “is” the word. Nowhere does it say that Jesus studied the scriptures or was trained as a theologian of the day. Yet, this carpenter’s son knew the word inside and out. I believe Jesus knew the word because He was somehow the word in body, soul, and mind.

There is a thought that Jesus is the new Moses. Matthew goes out of his way to parallel Jesus’ deeds to Moses. The killing of the firstborn, time in the desert, and comments like “I am the bread of life.” From Manna to miracles, Jesus was attached to Moses. In fact, the area that Jesus travelled is part of the promised land. Jesus is considered the new and improved Moses to

the gospel writers. How often did Jesus say “you heard it said?” Jesus himself took the words of Moses and made them go deeper like in the sermon on the mount.

Connections

Deuteronomy 8:3, Matthew 4:4 (the bread); Deuteronomy 6:13, Matthew 4:7 (don’t tempt God);

Deuteronomy 10:20, Matthew 4:10 (serve God), Deuteronomy 6:6, Matthew 22:37 (Love the Lord)