

The Half Hour That Changes the World

Deuteronomy

Book 5

Basic Question behind the book:

What do I learn about how God worked with people in the past that helps me follow Him in the present?

Summary of book:

Deuteronomy is the fifth book of the Old Testament, in that section of the Bible that we call the Pentateuch, which contains the five books of the law, traditionally held to come from the ministry of Moses. Deuteronomy is a bit like the fourth Gospel, John, in the sense that it is a later reflection on earlier accounts of what God had done among His people. Following the very detailed laws, instructions and information in the latter part of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers, Deuteronomy goes back over much of the story but from a later perspective. No-one knows exactly when it was written or by whom, however there are a lot of similarities between the language and theology of Deuteronomy, and that found in Joshua, Judges, the books of Samuel and Kings. This has led some to propose that there was a *Deuteronomistic* compiler, probably during the time of the Kings and up to the exile. I use the word compiler deliberately, since we must always be mindful that the stories in the Old Testament books, and the Gospels for that matter, were passed on orally, before they were committed to writing. The compilers or editors would have had to choose which oral materials to use, how to frame them, and connect them together in a unified way before they were ever written down on scrolls for a new generation. So, we are reading in Deuteronomy a collection of accurate and sacred memories from a date many years after they happened. In a sense Deuteronomy is like a sermon in that it is the application of God's Word into a new situation, and thus becoming the Word of God in the present. Deuteronomy was very important to Jesus – you can see that in the temptations when the three verses that he quotes come from here. When asked regarding the greatest commandment, it is to this book that Jesus turns for the answer. In other ways it can be shown that the book of Deuteronomy had a great influence on the New Testament.

Vital Statistics:

Purpose: To remind people of what God had done & encourage them to rededicate their lives to him.

Author: The book was traditionally believed to come from Moses, but it is likely to be a much later writer who commits the oral traditions about and from the time of Moses to writing.

Recipients: To the people of Israel, possibly during the time of the Kings. There is much scholarly interest in the 'Book of the Law' that was discovered in the temple during the reign of Josiah (2 Kings 22). Was this all or part of Deuteronomy?

Dating: On the surface it appears to be written just before the death of Moses (1250BC) but it is likely that it was written down during the time of the divided kingdoms between Solomon and the Babylonian Exile (930-610BC).

Setting: In the East side of the Jordan River near to the border of Canaan before conquest under Joshua's leadership.

Other Reflections:

The Major themes of Deuteronomy include grace, covenant, loyalty to God, obedience, blessings and curses. On this occasion I offer you two key verses:

"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..." (6:5-5)

"Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments." (7:9)