

Place: Lurgan Baptist 12:11:2013

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE BIBLE

Reading: Deuteronomy 6:1-15

6. DEUTERONOMY

According to Karen Bolla, a Johns Hopkins researcher, in the U.S.A. these are the things people most often forget,

Names: 83%

Where something is: 60%

Telephone numbers: 57%

Words: 53%

What was said: 49%

Faces: 42%

And if you can't remember what you just did, you join 38 percent of the population. John Newton was plagued with a terribly treacherous memory. His autobiography is filled with the sad, sad story of his forgettings. “*I forgot,*” “*I soon forgot,*” “*This too I totally forgot.*” These words occur repeatedly. So it came to pass that after his wild and sinful years, he entered the Christian ministry. It was then that he printed a certain text in bold letters and fastened it right across the wall over his study mantelpiece. The words of the text were taken from the book of Deuteronomy “*Thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt and the Lord thy God redeemed thee.*” (15:15) This was John Newton's text

and in the sight of it he prepared every sermon. “*I forgot, I soon forgot, this too I totally forgot.*” “*Thou shalt remember, remember, remember.*” You see, Deuteronomy is a book of remembrance. It consists of a series of addresses given by Moses warning the Israelites whom he was soon to leave of the danger of forgetfulness. “*Beware lest ye forget,*” he said again and again. “*thou shalt remember.*” These two warnings run like a refrain from page to page in this book.

“*Take heed to thyself and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen.*” (4:9) “*And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness.*” (8:2) “*But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God for it is he is that giveth thee power to get wealth.*” (8:18) This word “*remember,*” occurring 14 times in the book, invites the children of Israel to look over their shoulder. They are told that they must not forget the great things that God has done for them. Christians are also to remember. With spiritual insight we can remember that once we were slaves of sin and the Lord our God brought us out “*through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm.*” (5:15) Why, the Lord's Supper is a memorial feast. It ever keeps before us the central tenet of our faith, namely the cross of Calvary. “*This do in remembrance of me,*” said the Saviour.

So Deuteronomy is a book of remembrance. Actually the original Hebrew title of the book is translated “*these are the words.*” Do you see how the book opens ? “*These be the words*” (1:1) What happened was this. When a

scroll was opened from the cupboard of a Jewish synagogue, the first part would be unrolled to read the opening words. The book then became known by these words. So the book of Deuteronomy is simply called in Hebrew “*the words*.” However, when the Hebrew Old Testament was translated into Greek they had to think of a more appropriate title. Deuteronomy comes from two words in the Greek language which means “*second law*.” Now this book does not contain a new law replacing the one already given rather it is a second stating of the law. Deuteronomy was written by Moses when he had less than one month to live. (31:9-10 24-26 1:3 34:8 Josh 5:6-12) I mean you can almost see him. Like a dying father “*on this Jordan in the land of Moab*,” (1:5) he is appealing to them in a series of addresses. Now there are several reasons why Moses restated the Law on the border of Canaan. For one thing there was,

1. A New Generation:

The old generation had perished in the wilderness except for Caleb and Joshua and the new generation needed to hear the law again. My we have short memories and these people were 20 years of age and under when the nation failed at Kadesh Barnea. It was vital that they know God’s Word afresh.

2. A New Challenge:

Up to now their life had been unsettled, they had been pilgrims but now they were to enter their Promised Land and become a settled nation. There would be battles to

fight and they needed to be prepared. The best way to prepare for the future is to understand the past. “*Those who cannot remember the past, are condemned to repeat it*,” said a famous philosopher. Moses wanted the nation to remember what the Lord had done.

3. A New Leader:

Moses was on the way out and Joshua was on the way in. Moses knew that the success of the nation depended on the people obeying God, no matter who their human leader might be. If they were grounded in the Word and loved the Lord, they would follow Joshua and win the victory.

4. A New Trial:

You see, a settled people in the land would face different problems from a pilgrim people in the wilderness. Moses wanted them to possess the land and keep that possession so he warned them of the dangers and gives them the way of success.

Now in a spiritual sense many of us believers stand with Israel in the opening verses of this book. Sure, we are redeemed from Egypt but we have not yet entered into our spiritual inheritance. We stand “*on this side Jordan*,” (1:5) instead of in the Promised Land of blessing. And we need to hear God’s Word again and step out by faith and claim our inheritance on Christ. For Canaan represents God’s full purpose for His people. Do you recall how the hymn writer puts it ?

**More and more
More and more
Still there's more to follow
Have you on the Lord believed
Still there's more to follow**

Now there are four looks in this book. The backward look, the inward look, the forward look and the upward look.

(1) THE BACKWARD LOOK

You see, as Moses begins this series of addresses to the new generation in Israel he reviews the past history of the nation. Now it's a sin to live in the past but we can never understand the present or prepare for the future if we are ignorant of the past. We cannot live in the past but we can learn from the past. As Deuteronomy opens, the children of Israel are on the border of the land of Canaan. Now this first section of the book surveys God's dealings with His people from their stay at Horeb, Mount Sinai (1:6) to Beth Peor, located east of the Jordan River, probably opposite Jericho. You see, Moses is reminding them that although it only takes 11 days to walk from Sinai to the Promised Land their parents took 13,780 days. (1:2-3) Kadesh Barnea proved a turning point in the entire enterprise so far as that previous generation were concerned.

Only two Caleb and Joshua urged the people to trust God and go on. You see, as Moses looks backward,

(a) TRAGIC FAILURES ARE RECOUNTED:

For in his first message, Moses gives the people *a history lesson of their failures*. He recounts what has brought them to this place they have occupied for 40 long, wandering years. Do you see what he says in (1:32-35) Look again at (1:44-46) You see, this new generation would not know why the nation was organized as it was, and why the nation had not entered its inheritance sooner. So Moses points out that their sin at Kadesh Barnea was rebellion based on unbelief. (1:26) I mean the people are reminded that their plight was not due to a divine blunder, but rather because of their own human behavior. They had brought this upon themselves, and had no one to blame but themselves. They chose not to turn to God, and trust in God. They chose not to look to God or lean on God.

They had enough faith for God to get them out of Egypt, but not enough faith for God to get them into Canaan, so for the past 40 years they wandered. Is this where you are in your Christian experience ? Are you like a stagnant pool or a watered garden ? Are you going backward or forward ? Are you in the old life of failure or you in the new life of fruitfulness ? Tragic failures are recounted for look at (Ch 3:23-26) Why was this simple request denied ? Do you recall that it was God's judgment on Moses for striking the rock ? (Num 20:7-12) The constant bickering of the Hebrews had worn him down and he allowed his anger to rise to the surface. *Think of it, one moment of anger, one moment of disobedience, one moment of mistrust, one moment of frustration and the price to and the blessing he missed was great.* Do you know something ? We need the Lord in our 40th year of

ministry just as much as in our first. We need the Lord at the end of our ministry just as much as at the beginning. My we need the Lord more on the final lap of the journey than we ever did on the first lap of the journey.

(a) And then,

(b) TRIUMPHANT VICTORIES ARE RECALLED:

In spite of all their tragic failures, God had been faithful, and triumphant victories had been achieved throughout their nation's history. There were,

1. The Nations they Avoided:

Edom, the descendants of Esau, Jacob's brother (2:4) and Moab and Amon the descendants of Lot, Abraham's nephew. Since these nations had blood relations to Israel God did not permit the Jews to fight them. 1.

2. The Nations they Defeated:

For en route to Canaan the Lord give them victory over the attacking forces of King Sihon (2:24) and King Og (3:1) and the Lord foiled the plans of Balak, king of the Amorites (3:8) You see, what was happening was this. *The land east of the Jordan was being secured so that the Israelites could cross the river and take Canaan.* Moses reminds them of God's faithfulness, and urges them to be grateful and obedient. Look at (4:7-9, & 31) In spite of their failures, God had been faithful. They had His presence, His promise, His provision, His protection, and His providence all in the midst of their camp. No matter

what had been the obstacle, when they whined, God heard them, when they worshipped, God honored them, and, when they wandered, God helped them. My is this not one of the central themes of the book of Deuteronomy ? God is faithful. Think of all the times we have forsaken Him, failed Him, forgotten Him, and fled Him, yet, there has never been a time where He has forsaken us, failed us, forgotten us, or fled us. He has heard us when we pray, He has helped us when we're down; and, He has healed us when we're sick. God is faithful. What a source of comfort that is to us in days like our own, when things sometimes seem to have run out of control.

**God is still on the throne
And He will take care of His own
His promise is true
He will see us right through
God is still on the throne**

(2) A LOOK INWARD

You see, the source of all national greatness lies in a right relationship with God. This is so, with all peoples but especially with the nation of Israel, since God's purpose in granting them nationhood was that they might be a witness for Him to all mankind. Moses therefore warned Israel against forgetting the law of the Lord. Now in this section from (Ch's 5-26) there are set before us,

(a) THE SINAI LAWS:

For Moses begins by expounding the Decalogue the Ten

Commandments given by the Lord on Mount Sinai. He then reminds the congregation of their obligation to worship and serve the true God and instructs the Israelites to communicate these laws to future generations. Now as we have noted the word Deuteronomy means “*second law*,” for here there is a second stating of the law to a new generation. Now in this section there are three passages that deserve our attention.

1. The First One has to do with God’s Word:

Look at (6:4-9) That word “*hear*,” means in Hebrew Shema, to hearken or publish. In 1972 when I was in the Baptist College there was a brother in Christ that began his day by reciting the Shema. I remember it well. I can still him as he cried, “*Hear O Israel the Lord our God is one Lord.*” (6:4) You see, the Jews considered this to be the most important passage in Deuteronomy, Orthodox Jews still repeat the Shema twice a day. Now this part of the law was the SHEMA, was to be taught by the parents to their children. It was to be discussed, described, declared, and detailed at home. Every Jewish parent was to teach their children to.

Love God *Sincerely*: “*with all thine heart*,”
Love God *Sacrificially*: “*with all thy soul*,”
Love God *Supremely*: “*with all thy might*,”

You see, God’s Word was to be central in the home. I mean look at (6:8-9) The Jews took this so literally that they made little boxes called phylacteries or frontlets. They put the Shema or law in these boxes and tied around

their heads with a piece of leather to go “*between thine eyes*.” Do you recall when you were in Israel staying in a Jewish hotel there was a rectangular metal box on the doorpost of your room ? It’s called a *mezuzah*. You see, the Word of God was to be central in their homes. My is the Word of God central in our homes ? Are we teaching it to our kids ? We might not be Old Testament Jews, but I believe you would agree with me that it would be a glad day in our nation, a glad day in our churches, and a glad day in our homes were we to give God’s Word preeminence. Now did you know that this section of the Old Testament may have been “*a special favourite of the Lord Jesus* ?” You see, the Saviour only quoted from this book when He faced temptation, by the devil, in the wilderness. The Lord Jesus was,

Tempted Physically:

“*If thou be the Son of God command that these stones be made bread*,” (Matt 4:3) “*But he answered and said it is written man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*” (8:3)

Tempted Spiritually:

“*If thou be the Son of God cast thyself down*,” “*Jesus saith unto him it is written again thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.*” (Matt 4:7 6:16)

Tempted Materially:

“*All these things will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and*

worship me.” (Matt 4:9) “ *Then saith Jesus unto him get thee hence Satan for it is written thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and him only shalt thou serve,*” (6:13) The Hebrew letter says Christ “ *was in all points tempted like as we are,*” physically spiritually materially “ *yet without sin.*” My if this book of Deuteronomy was good enough for Christ is it good enough for you ? Steve Wagers says “ *they may take the Word of God out of the schoolhouse, courthouse, and White House; but, they can’t take it out of your house and my house.*”

“ *Upon thine hand,*” the Word must control all we **do**.
“ *Between thine eyes,*” the Word must control all we **see**.
“ *Posts of thy house,*” the Word must control all we **are**.

My many measure the success of their home by their brains, beauty, brawn, and bigness. God wants us to measure the success of our home by the Bible..

2. The Second One has to do with God’s Will:

Look at (6:23) I love that phrase, “*He brought us out that He might bring us in.*” My we have thought thankfully, on that negative “ *out.*” Have we given as much attention to the positive “ *in,*” ? You see, God God brought them out of Egypt that He might bring them into Canaan. He brought them out of bondage, that He might bring them into blessing. Now as we have already noted Christian songs portray Canaan as Heaven, but this can only be in a limited sense that Canaan came at the end of the journey. **Canaan represents God’s full purpose for His people.** Therefore, when God brought Israel out

of Egypt, it was for the purpose of bringing them into Canaan, the land of security, sufficiency, and stability. It was that which God had promised to His people, and prepared for His people. In the same way, when God saved us, He “ *brought us out*” of this old, sinful world. But He “ *brought us out,*” that He might “ *bring us in,*” to a land where we would not have to be blinded with sin, burdened by sin, or bound to sin. He “ *brought us out*” that He might “ *bring us in,*” to a land where we don’t have to be overcome, but we can be overcomers. 1, 2,

3. The Third One has to do with God’s Way:

Look at (10:12) Do you see those two little words ? “ *And now,*” they are gathering up the significance of the book. As Dr. S. Baxter says “ *this is distinguishingly the ‘and now,’ book.*” You see, the people have reviewed the faithfulness of God, they have seen His power, (4:20) His patience (1:25-26) His presence (2:7) His provision (2:7) and His preservation (3:2-3) “ *And now,*” what about it ? What is it that is required of them as they enter the Promised Land ? Simply this “ *to fear the Lord thy God,*” (10:12) If we could summarize it in one word, do you know what that word is ? Obedience. It has been pointed out that the word “ *do,*” occurs 50 times. My if this was expected of Israel, is anything less expected from us with all our exalted privileges in Christ ? Do you recall what the Saviour says, “ *He that hath my commandments and keepeth them he it is that loveth me.*” “ *If a man love me he will keep my words.*” (Jn 14:21-23) I wonder, does the Saviour have to put a question mark over your love for Him ? (a)

(b) *THE SACRED LAWS:*

And these were laws that have direct relevance to living in a settled community in Canaan. For example,

1. There is to be one place of worship. (12:29-32)
2. Idolaters are to be stoned on the word of two or three witnesses . (13:1-5) And so on. These were laws for living in Canaan.

(c) *THE SECULAR LAWS:*

Orderly government had to be established and so there had to be laws for kings, judges, law courts, the administration of punishment and so on.

(d) *THE SOCIAL LAWS:*

There were laws concerning marriage, adultery, (22:22) divorce, homosexuality (23:17) health, welfare and warfare. What are to make of all this ? Just this. God is interested in the whole of our lives. We are great people in dividing life into sacred and secular but all of life is for God. Living right is not just what you do in church on Sunday its concerns the whole of life. My Do you realise that God wants you to be right in every area of your life ? (1) (2)

(3) A LOOK FORWARD

For this section looks forward to,

(a) *ISRAEL ENTERING THE LAND:*

For when they moved into the land of promise, they were to pronounce the blessings from Mt. Gerizim, and the curses from Mt. Ebal. (11:29) In other words, God was saying to this covenant nation “ *If you obey me I will bless you, if you disobey me I will curse you.* ” My throughout Deuteronomy, we see divine sympathy constantly interwoven with divine severity. John Phillips writes, “ *Law and love, goodness and grace, wooings and warnings go hand in hand in the economy of God.* ” (a) And then,

(b) *ISRAEL ENJOYING THE LAND:*

“ *Obedience brings blessing,* ” that is the message of the first section of (Ch 28) Look at (28:1-2) God promises Israel material blessings in all areas, city, farm, fruit, cattle, coming in and going out. He promises to defeat their enemies and establish them in the land as a holy people. Do you see that in (28:10) the nation was to be a world wide witness of God’s grace ? Do you see from (28:46) they have become a world wide witness of God’s judgment ? Now keep in mind that Israel owned the land because of God’s covenant with Abraham, but she possessed and enjoyed the land only if she obeyed God’s covenant as a holy nation. In just the same way we have all the blessings we need in Christ. Paul says we are “ *blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ,* ” (Eph 1:3) but we only enjoy those blessings as we trust the Lord and obey His voice. Someone has said that when we read this chapter its like reading the whole history of Israel for the last 4,000 years for we see also,

(c) ISRAEL EXITING THE LAND:

Deuteronomy 28 is one of the most amazing pieces of prophecy ever recorded. It predicts the entire history of the Jewish people, from Egypt to the Millennial Reign of Christ. Warren Wiersbe says,

To spiritualize these covenant blessings and curses and apply them to the church is to twist the Scriptures and to fail to ‘rightly divide the Word of truth.’ These are literal curses and they fell upon Israel because she broke her covenant with God by worshipping idols and disobeying His law.

Look for example at (28:45) Now the word “*destroyed*,” here does not mean completely wiped out for God could not violate His covenant and destroy the nation of Israel. It means “*to be crushed*,” referring to the terrible trials that would fall on Israel because of her disobedience. The nation would be “a sing and a wonder,” to the world even as it today. Israel would be scattered among the nations. Look at (28:63-66) What a picture of Jewish history, full of persecution. Some believe this could refer to Hitler’s Holocaust, where over 6 million Jews were savagely slaughtered. (a) (b) (c) but don’t stop there for here we see

(d) ISRAEL ENTERING THE LAND AGAIN:

For (Ch 30) promises that God will “*turn the captivity of Israel*,” and restore her to her land. (30:3) Of course they return to the land today in unbelief. But God is

blessing that land. Today Israel has a population of six million and they are still coming and when the Lord returns in power and great glory and the nation sees their pierced Messiah they will be saved. Its interesting that in these closing chapters of the book a future state is moving in and a faithful servant is moving out. So we have in closing,

(4) A LOOK UPWARD

Moses, the leader of Israel for the past 40 years, is now 120 years of age. He is about to pass off the scene, and the moving out of this faithful servant is described in 4 stages. Notice,

(a) MOSES THE SPEAKER:

What a portraiture of God Moses gives in these closing chapters.

1. A God who goes Before us:

“*And the Lord he it is that doth go before thee*,” (31:8)

2. A God who walks Beside us:

“*He will be with thee*,” (31:8) My are you living in the shadow of some great disappointment ? Some physical handicap, some personal dilemma. The Lord is with you.

3. A God who is Beneath us:

For Moses in this farewell says, “*the eternal God is thy refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms*.” (33:27) Do you see that God surrounds us on all sides ?

Where is God ? He is Above us, “ *for there is none like unto the God of Jeshurun who rideth upon the heaven in thy help,* ” (33:26) Where is He God ? He is Around us, for “ *the eternal God is thy refuge,* ” (33:27) Where is God ? He is Before us, for “ *he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee,* ” (33:27) Where is God ? He is Beneath us, “ *And underneath are the everlasting arms,* ” (33:27) And my “ *this God is our God for ever and ever He will be our guide even unto death.* ” (Ps 48:14)

(b) MOSES THE SINGER:

For look at (31:30) He wrote 3 historic songs. He wrote a song that became the 1st song service in the Bible in Exodus (Ch 15) after deliverance from Egypt. He wrote this song in (Ch 32) and, his final song is heard in Psalm 90. (a) (b)

(c) MOSES THE SEER:

As here he asks God’s blessing on the various tribes. Did you ever notice the spiritual position of God’s people here ? We are in God’s hand (33:3) we are at God’s feet (33:3) we are between God’s shoulders (33:12) we are upheld by God’s arms (33:27) My we can say “ *Who is like unto thee O people saved by the Lord,* ” (33:29) What a privilege it is to be a child of God. (a) (b) (c) and

(d) MOSES THE SOLITARY:

Look at (34:1,4) Because of his own disobedience, (Num 20:7-13 3:21-29) he wasn’t able to occupy the

land; but, God allowed him a sneak preview of coming attractions. God held His own private funeral procession and ceremony with Moses. With eyes that were not dim, and strength that had not been diminished, Moses stretched out on the ground and died, and God laid him to rest. *God buried Moses in a place that, to this day, is undiscovered, undisclosed, and undetected.* The exact site is only known to God Himself. I have often wondered what kind of eulogy or obituary God offered for Moses in this private ceremony. We don’t know all of it, but we are given part of it. (34:10-12)

In the movie “**Gladiator**,” Caesar was about to turn his kingdom over to a man named Maximus. In that powerful moment the emperor looked into the eyes of Maximus and said, “ *I am dying Maximus. When a man sees his end he wants to know there was a purpose to his life.* ” Then, he asked a most penetrating question, “ ***How will the world speak of my name in years to come ?*** ” We know what God had to say about Moses, but, I wonder, what would God have to say about you, or about me ?

Robert Baker, in an article called “ *Country Road 13,* ” in Christianity Today made an outstanding statement,

“ As I grow older, I care less about what people think about me and more about what God thinks about me; because, I expect to be with God much longer in my existence.” What kind of eulogy will the Lord give about you ?

