

Deuteronomy Opening

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This is going to be my opening sermon on Deuteronomy for the year 2015.

Deuteronomy 29:29 “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.”

In some ways there may be no better verse in all the book of Deuteronomy, because it provides an overall purpose for delving into it. It is for our good, and it is to be used by us because it is revealing things that are needful for our life, for our relationship with Him, and needful for our relationships with each other.

I think that it is even possible that God intended that this verse be given as a general purpose for the entirety of the Bible, because His revelation is within it. But not everything is there, there are things that He has to do in order for us to grasp that revelation.

History shows us that God's purpose is not easily found. It is a matter of historical fact contained right within this book. It shows that we absolutely cannot find it even though almost every person who has ever lived has searched for that purpose. The reality is that it must be *revealed* and then we can use the Bible rightly.

This conundrum exists because that is the way that God willed it. His purpose must be revealed by a miraculous act to each person He Himself individually chooses to work within. Notice I did not say that people did not *hear* God's revelation. People can indeed hear of His revelation, but without understanding what they heard.

Please turn to John 15. It is interesting to think in this regard to what Jesus said in John 6:44, that no one can come to me except he be drawn.

John 15:15-16 “No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My

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name He may give you.”

This declaration given by Jesus does not merely apply to the apostles, it applies to each and every one of us. I do not fully grasp every aspect of God's reasoning but I do know that the way He has done this work results in a miraculously good affect on one's attitude. The affect of His calling, of His invitation, of Him giving us the opportunity, is not something that appears immediately. It is not like we were suddenly struck by lightning and we knew. Rather, the good affect of a truly humble appreciation for God's gracious opening of one's mind builds rather slowly and it continues until it virtually consumes almost everything of a person's efforts when we become that focused on Him and what He is working out.

We heard a bit of that in the sermonette. Elijah's focus drifted away and things began to fall apart. So you should understand, now that God has called us, He is calling us to focus on Him and what He is working out in our life. This is not something that is effective immediately. It is something that builds within us as we come to understand what it is that He is doing and what an awesome future lies before us.

Today we begin making a brief study into the book of Deuteronomy. In the time that we have available to us we will barely scratch the significance of its purpose. Once we have some keys its purpose begins to become much clearer but merely possessing these keys will not give us a much clearer understanding of why this writing has such a strange name and placed in a strange location within the Bible is so important, why it is so vital to our spiritual well being.

On the surface to a modern researcher the book of Deuteronomy is a book about a community of people being prepared for a new life. It certainly is that if one looks no further, or it is not revealed to him. That there is much more.

The book seems focused on an ancient body of people forming into a nation following a forty year period of seemingly aimless wandering in a wilderness, that in turn followed an even longer period of enslavement in a nation that was not their home land. Here we sit in modern America close to 3,600 years after this book was written, and about 4,500-5,000 air miles from where the events took place, but we are searching into it for spiritual instruction because we believe its words are helpful to our well being in life.

Almost every student of God's Word has certain books that reverberate in them as being more helpful than others because of the pointed practicality to their life. It just moves them for some reason and makes them want to follow what it says to do. For me those

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books begin with Deuteronomy, then there is Job, the book of Psalms, Proverbs, and then Ecclesiastes. These are all Old Testament books.

Deuteronomy 1:1-5 These are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel on this side of the Jordan in the wilderness, in the plain opposite Suph, between Paran, Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Dizahab. It is eleven days journey from Horeb by way of Mount Seir to Kadesh Barnea. Now it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, that Moses spoke to the children of Israel according to all that the Lord had given him as commandments to them, after he had killed Sihon king of the Amorites, who dwelt in Heshbon, and Og king of Bashan, who dwelt at Ashtaroth in Edrei. On this side of the Jordan in the land of Moab, Moses began to explain this law, saying . . .

There is a general rule in journalism that a reporter writing a news article should begin every article by informing his readers of the who, what, where, when, and why of an event in order to give a brief overview and to capture someone's attention. This series of verses sets the stage for all that follows in Deuteronomy. It tells us the author is Moses, that Moses wrote what God had given him, that the subject material is drawn from their experiences on the journey, it gives Israel's location after forty years of highly adventurous walking: they are just east of Jericho poised to cross the Jordan River and into the Promised Land.

It also lets us know that Moses gave its instruction, but it does not say anywhere near the opening why Deuteronomy is given, that takes a lot more thought. It does not because that subject is too grand, it is too multifaceted, too profound, especially when one understands that what he gave is intended for all of God's people for the entire expanse of time from now on until God's purpose for mankind is completed.

I made my first effort speaking on Deuteronomy at a Feast of Tabernacles in 1994, when we held the feast in Kansas City, MO. I was somewhat familiar with the instruction to do so in Deuteronomy 31.

Deuteronomy 31:10-11 And Moses commanded them, saying; "At the end of every seven years, at the appointed time in the year of release, at the Feast of Tabernacles, when all Israel comes to appear before the Lord your God in the place which He chooses, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing."

I first want you notice the statement 'this law.' The reference to this law appears at least 15-20 times in this writing. For a while I was uncertain as to whether it meant the Pentateuch or the book itself. I finally settled on Deuteronomy because of Deuteronomy's content, and I am even more certain today. I do not believe that the term law, that is Torah, is being used here in the sense of an ordinance, or statute issued by a government, but rather it is being used in its most basic application, thus meaning instruction.

Deuteronomy's overall intention is specifically broad. That 1994 attempt resulted in two sermons from Deuteronomy, seven years later in 2001, I gave four sermons from it. In 2008, I gave four more, and here we are again seven years later, 2015, and I plan to speak three times on it this year.

An interesting peculiarity that you may not be aware of is that the reason I spoke on it in 1994 is out of curiosity. Before the 1994 Feast Evelyn and I became curious about a cycle—if any existed of each of our years in the church since baptism. We made a chart featuring seven years, and we had each of our third tithe years very clearly marked. We arranged the entire chart into groups of seven years, beginning with our baptism in September of 1959. The arrangement revealed a number of items interesting to us. It turned out that when I began speaking on Deuteronomy that Feast of 1994, it was immediately following a multiple of a seventh year. It was year 35 since our baptism.

Seven times five when I began to learn specifically about the shemita year. That is the year of release from the Messianic Jewish Rabbi Johnathan Con, we discover that Evelyn and my seventh year was also in perfect alignment with the shemita year as he calculated it. This led to further intriguing discoveries, including that we first heard the World Tomorrow broadcast, and thus Herbert Armstrong, had our first contact with the Worldwide Church of God minister, attended our first Sabbath service, and were baptized all in one shemita year—1959.

Out of curiosity we looked a little bit further. In Herbert Armstrong's autobiography we discovered that he was ordained as an elder near Pentecost in 1931, and that too was a shemita year, as was the year 1966, when Richard, our only son, was born, and I was ordained an elder in Pittsburgh in a shemita year.

This most recent year of release ended at sunset September 13, on the Roman calendar at the same time that Elul 29, the last day of the Hebrew calendar ended. Thus Elul 29 is the Hebrew calendar equivalent of New Year's Eve.

Leviticus 23:33-35 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the

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children of Israel saying; “The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days to the Lord. On the first day there shall be a holy convocation. You shall do not customary work on it.”

What I want to pick up again: sunset on Elul 29, which is Rosh Hashanah (the Feast of Trumpets), began and so did a new Hebrew civil calendar year. So the first month of the civil year on the Hebrew civil calendar is Tishri. That is the month we are now in, in fact we are on day fifteen of Tishri in the new year.

Deuteronomy 31:10 [I want you to notice.] “At the end of every seven years, at the appointed time in the year of release, at the Feast of Tabernacles.”

The clearest defining term in regard to when this responsibility is to be carried out—at the Feast of Tabernacles. At this very moment, as best we know, this command has once again begun being fulfilled in your ears.

By way of contrast, Moses wrote and spoke in Deuteronomy on the last month of his life, which was also the last month of Israel's forty-year journey through the wilderness. The actual day, according to Deuteronomy 1:3, he began delivering Deuteronomy to the Israelites in Adar 1. I am giving you a lot of days and months. I do not want you to get confused as to what we are observing here, but I do want to put things in line so that you recognize that we are following exactly what the scripture says.

Israel left Egypt the day after Passover in the spring of the year. We are now in the fall of the year and we are observing this at the end of a shemita year in the Feast of Tabernacles. Tabernacles is a fall festival and thus Moses literally wrote and spoke Deuteronomy as winter was ending and spring was just about to begin. Thus the dating of the beginning of the writing and the speaking of Deuteronomy was five weeks shy of exactly forty years after the first and only Passover Israel ever kept in captivity in Egypt.

I am going through this because I want you to see how precisely God is giving these directions so you understand we are not just tossing things out at you. They are in the Book, and God recorded them for some reason, for our guidance.

Moses would die in about one month after beginning to deliver Deuteronomy. He would be buried on Mount Nebo without ever entering the Promised Land, and before Israel observed their first Passover in it. Thus from everything we know at this time we are on the right track regarding the scheduling of our search into Deuteronomy as God

ordained. Everything is in order.

Israel was encamped on the east side of the Jordan River, within a few miles of crossing into the Promised Land and then on to Jericho. Deuteronomy is mistitled in English. Deuteronomy is a Greek term meaning second law, or once again. The word deuteronomy indicates a repetition, the term deuteronomy gives one the impression that it is either merely repeating a body of laws that preceded it, or a group of new laws meant to replace what was previous given.

It is not specifically either of those. It is a specific collective arrangement of instructions given for a specific purpose. Deuteronomy receives an honor no other book in the Bible has: it is a specific collective arrangement of instructions given for a specific purpose. It is instruction. It is especially needful for Israel's use in the Promised Land, and more than that, it is so needful it is commanded to be given afresh every seven years. No other book in the Bible gets that prominence.

Every seven years. This requirement begins to suggest that this writing was intended by God for times far into the future. Its instruction must not be limited to merely getting them started on the next step of God's purpose, which is entering the Promised Land. It is this understanding that adds an exclamation point as to why Deuteronomy is important to us—we who have made a New Covenant with God. It is important to us, *especially right now*.

This book is so important to a certain purpose that this command is not given for any other book in the Bible. The title in Hebrew, according to Hebrew customs regarding biblical titles, is *These Are the Words*. They are drawn from the first words of the first verse as Moses wrote. Moses knew that he was composing and delivering this message to the Israelites, that he would not be entering the Promised Land. It was for him without doubt a huge disappointment. However, God had His reasons.

Thus the book has been described as the longest farewell address in the history of the world, but it is far, far more important to God's purpose for us than a mere farewell address. In light of all of the parallelism between the nation of Israel and its experiences with God in a covenant, as a forerunner of the church, Deuteronomy is also, for the church, one of the most meaningful writings of all the books in the Bible.

We are going to see without a shadow of a doubt that Deuteronomy is fully intended as an instruction for the church at this time right now. It is not instruction intended only for the physical nation of Israel. The physical nation of Israel is only barely seen in any application for it at this time, though at the time it was written physical Israel was its only

target of helpful, timely instruction in their situation. It is fully intended as instruction for the church. This is a truth that cannot be ignored if we are truly seeking understanding regarding the church's, and thus our, present responsibilities.

Galatians 6:14-18 But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God. From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

Paul's use of the preposition 'of' before the noun 'God,' in verse 16, suggests that there might be an Israel that does not belong to God, and indeed this is a biblical reality. In the Bible there are two Israels. I looked into this brief paragraph in six translations (besides the King James Version and the New King James Version), and each of them translated it in such a way as to distinguish one Israel from another undesignated Israel. Two Israels are clearly involved in Paul's thought but one is being distinguished from the other by the 'of God' designation.

The Living Bible was especially clear. It renders verse 16 in this way. "May God's mercy and peace be upon all of you who live by this principle and upon those everywhere who are really God's own." That rendering clearly suggests there is an Israel that is not really God's own. It is suggesting that this other Israel is lying about their identity. Either that or they have been disqualified by God. It suggests that there is an Israel that claims to be God's but in reality is not.

Several other translations inserted the term 'even' prior to the phrase 'Israel of God.' My dictionary stated that the insertion of the word 'even' is an archaic use of the term even, but it is still acceptable grammatically. It goes on to say 'even' helps to distinguish the Israel Paul is thinking of from another Israel. In other words it means not that one but this one. The insertion of even, adds emphasis to what Paul wrote.

The Phillip's translation renders the Israel of God phrase as "the true Israel of God." That too indicates two Israels and one is not truly God's.

Barns Notes commentary directly states that "the Israel of God is the true church of God. It could not be clearer. All that His true worshippers." That rendering says one Israel contains true worshippers, thus implying the other Israel has none. Mark that

down in your mind, it is a true statement. It is hard to grasp, but it is a true statement.

Romans 9:1-9 I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen. But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but "In Isaac your seed shall be called." That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. For this is the word of promise, "At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son."

Paul could not more surgically divide the two Israels apart. The one Israel is converted, the other Israel are unconverted physical human beings. That is why I can say dogmatically the other Israel does not have a converted person in it, because once they are converted they are no longer in that category. They are then in the Israel that belongs to God.

The reality is there. There is indeed an unconverted physical Israel called the children of the flesh, which still exists to this day. There is also converted spiritual Israel of God, which also exists to this day. The members of the converted Israel of God to this day mostly live within the unconverted Israelite nations, but both of these Israels should be using the book of Deuteronomy at this time during this Feast of Tabernacles, but one Israel is not.

The Israel of God consists of those called to be spiritually separate, primarily from the other Israel and also from the Gentile nations too. These called-out ones are those who occupy the places in the Israel of God. I will give you a series of verses in which Paul states in each one of these verses about the called, they are called to be separated.

I Corinthians 1:26-27 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty.

I Corinthians 7:15, 17 But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace. . . . But as God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk. And so I ordain in all the churches.

Called means the person is separated away from physical Israel.

Galatians 1:15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace.

I Thessalonians 2:12 that you would have a walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

There are a series of historical events that occurred within the conventional relationship of God and the physical nation of Israel. They are recorded in the Bible and those events clearly describe how two Israels came to exist. Please turn to Ezekiel 16. It is a long chapter and it is very detailed regarding what happened to Israel and God's relationship.

Ezekiel 16:1-11, 15-16, 30, 38 Again the word of the Lord came to me saying, "Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations [Jerusalem is named as the capital city of the nation and the nation is included within that.], and say, "Thus says the Lord God to Jerusalem: Your birth and your nativity, are from the land of Canaan; your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite. As for your nativity, on the day you were born your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed in water to cleanse you; you were not rubbed with salt nor swathed in swaddling cloths. No eye pitied you, to do any of these things for you, to have compassion on you; but you were thrown out into the open field, when you yourself were loathed on the day you were born. And when I passed by you I saw you struggling in your own blood [this is God talking about His view of how he came to be in this relationship with the nation of Israel], I said to you in your blood, "Live!" Yes, I said to you in your blood, "Live!" [He is saying that I began to reclaim you from this kind of a beginning. There was nothing about you when I came along that would be appealing that I would want you.] I made you thrive like a plant in the field; and you grew, matured, and became very beautiful. Your breasts were formed, your hair grew, but you were naked and bare. When I passed by you again and looked upon you, indeed your time was the time of

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love, so I spread My wing over you and covered your nakedness. Yes, I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you and you became Mine, says the Lord God. [A marriage took place. That was the Old Covenant.] Then I washed you in water, yes, I thoroughly washed off your blood, and I anointed you with oil. I clothed you in embroidered cloth and gave you sandals of badger skin; I clothed you with fine linen and covered you with silk. [How He supplied her needs with everything both physically and spiritually.] I adorned you with ornaments, put bracelets on your wrists, and a chain on your neck." [God provided for Israel.] . . . "But you trusted in your own beauty, played the harlot because of your fame, and poured out your harlotry on everyone passing by who would have it. You took some of your garments and adorned multicolored high places for yourself, and played the harlot on them. Such things should not happen, nor be." . . . "How degenerate is your heart!" says the Lord God, "seeing you do all these things, the deeds of a brazen harlot." . . . "And I will judge you as women who break wedlock or shed blood are judged; I will bring blood upon you in fury and jealousy." [The rest of the chapter continues on until there is no relationship between God and Israel.]

Hosea 4:6-8 "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children. The more they increased, the more they sinned against Me; I will change their glory into shame. They eat up the sin of My people; they set their heart on their iniquity.

That ended the relationship between God and physical Israel. I think that you can understand that as the descendants of this Israel that He is speaking of literally, who at the present time have gotten to the place where they do not even know who they are, because God is not reminding them with any strength any longer.

What did God do? Please turn to Matthew 19. God went through with this. He followed His own law that He commanded of the human beings in Israel.

Matthew 19:3-9 The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?" And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' and said, "For this reason a

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man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh? So then they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together let not man separate.” They said to Him, “Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce and to put her away?” He said to them, “Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery, and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.”

I read this only because God, from His position in heaven, followed His own law in divorcing Israel. He divorced her for the only legal reason given in the Bible, that was harlotry—adultery—but the spiritual sin involved in that marriage was idolatry. Harlotry is used in the Bible as a type of idolatry. That is what happened to the relationship, she abandoned God, she abandoned the relationship that they had and so He divorced her.

In Romans 7:1-3, Jesus fulfilled that responsibility, that requirement that will permit Him to be able to marry her again in the future. He entered into no unions with any other nation, so she will repent, she will become converted, and then she can join with God in entering the New Covenant with Him.

There is a three-chapter section that ends at the end of Romans 11, and in it Paul makes a statement regarding Israel that is very encouraging.

Romans 11:25-29 For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all of Israel will be saved, as it was written: “The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins.” Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

I do not want you to misunderstand regarding God's relationship with physical Israel. He is not done with them yet, but for right now Israel is scattered all over the world in its idolatrous sins oblivious as to whom they are. There is a wonderful future that God is planning for those people but you know what that means for you and me. The book of

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Deuteronomy at this time in God's purpose is addressed to the Israel of God.

The book is addressed to Israel. They are not listening, they are blinded, they do not know who they are, they should be having sermons on Deuteronomy preached to them at this time. The only ones who are listening to Deuteronomy is the Israel of God, and they are converted.

Deuteronomy 1:1 These are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel on this side of the Jordan in the wilderness, in the plain opposite Suph, between Paran, Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Dizahab.

The book of Deuteronomy is addressed to the Israel of God at this time in God's purpose. What you have just heard and seen in the pages of this book is a rather extended overview of the fact that Deuteronomy is in reality at this time addressed to the Israel of God, and that is the church. Sadly the children of the flesh do not even know who they are. In addition to that they are still in this nation and it has a pretty good measure of biblical teaching still going on. This generally protestant world we live in provides precious little teaching to its followers urging them to pay strict attention to and obey God's Word in the Old Testament.

The truths given in Deuteronomy are most assuredly not done away. If it is for the Israel of God, it is not done away. We are the only ones who will listen, not one jot or tittle is done away, that is what Jesus said. Here are a few examples so that you can rest assured that we are on the right track.

Matthew 5:17-19 "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks on of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

This statement by Jesus covers the entire Old Testament. Surely Deuteronomy is part of the entire Old Testament, and here they are telling people you really do not have to pay attention, it is not for us. In various places in the New Testament, we are commanded to follow Jesus, imitate Jesus, walk in His steps. How can those scriptures be done away when He used them as His path for the course of His life?

Matthew 4:1-2 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry.

I want you to see who tempted Jesus, it was the Satan. He was confronted by the same enemy we too must battle along the way toward our promised land.

In Matthew 4:4, Jesus quoted the Old Testament. It is drawn from Deuteronomy 8:3. Matthew 4:7 is quoted from Deuteronomy 6:16. Matthew 6:10 is a paraphrase of Deuteronomy 6:13. In addition, when He was tested by the Pharisees in Matthew 22:34-40, Jesus paraphrased Deuteronomy 6:4-6 as His answer. This is just a few references so that you will clearly understand Deuteronomy's impact on Jesus' sinless life. He lived by it.

According to Protestant commentators Jesus quoted more frequently from Deuteronomy than any other book in the Bible, and the New Testament as a whole quotes more from Deuteronomy than any other book except for Isaiah. It is quoted 83 times. Deuteronomy 8:3, Matthew 4:4, and Luke 4:4, all tell us that we are to live by every Word of God. That is quoted from Deuteronomy 8:3 which is definitely in the Old Testament and I think you all agree that the Old Testament is the Word of God.

Jesus clearly stated that Moses was the author of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Combining what Jesus did by referencing Deuteronomy so frequently to what the apostles did following His example as the church was founded and built, we can be assured that they found Deuteronomy an abundant source of information regarding godly living under the New Covenant.

Ask yourself this question, Why would God inspire them to reference a written word that was supposedly going to be done away? They try to make God look as though He is stupid. Every doctrine significant to salvation is broached in Deuteronomy's context. There is a brief history of the Israelitish people, there is mention of a need for faith, faithfulness, that we are elected of God, the keeping of the law, sanctification, forgiveness, justification, grace, God's sovereignty, God's providence, judgment, holiness, making choices, and a need for a savior.

They are all in Deuteronomy! They are not expounded in Deuteronomy, but they are mentioned there and the need is shown for them.

Deuteronomy is uncompromising, almost ruthlessly monotheistic. It almost throws it into

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our face that YHWH is God and there is no other. More importantly is that there is perhaps no other book that defines the character of God more sharply and completely. Deuteronomy is particularly filled with what it means to be the people of God, to be entrusted with the knowledge of God, and to be challenged not merely to believe that knowledge, but to *live* out the knowledge in the sight of those who are around you.

Deuteronomy makes sure that we understand that we are God's witnesses before the world. All of this in this Old Testament book.

Deuteronomy is given a unique privilege and distinctive honor given no other book in the Bible.

Deuteronomy 10:1-5 “At that time the Lord said to me, Hew for yourself two tablets of stone like the first, and come up to Me on the mountain and make yourself an ark of the wood. And I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke; and you shall put them in the ark. So I made an ark of acacia wood hewed two tablets of stone like the first, and went up the mountain, having the two tablets in my hand. And He wrote on the tablets according to the first writing, the Ten Commandments, which the Lord had spoken to you in the mountain from the midst of the fire in the day of assembly, and the Lord gave them to me. Then I turned and came down from the mountain, and put the tablets in the ark which I had made, and there they are just as the Lord commanded me.”

The ark was a wooden chest, forty-five inches long, twenty-seven inches wide, and twenty-seven inches high. The lid is referred to in the Bible as the mercy seat.

II Chronicles 5:7-10 Then the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the Lord to its place, into the inner sanctuary of the temple to the Most Holy Place, under the wings of the cherubim. For the cherubim spread their wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubim overshadowed the ark and its poles. And the poles extended so that the ends of the poles of the ark could be seen from the holy place, in front of the inner sanctuary; but they could not be seen from outside. And they are there to this day. There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets which Moses put there at Horeb, when the Lord made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they had come out of Egypt.

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This event that we just read took place about four hundred years later than the first verse we read in Deuteronomy 10. It is brought to our attention here as Solomon's temple was being completed.

Revelation 11:19 [This is at the time of Christ's return, just before His return.] Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail.

I am sure it was frighteningly awesome for John to look at that, but for our sermon here right now, Christ is poised to return for the end time battle, and at the very end of man's allotted time under the dominion of Satan, a vision is given of the ark in heaven, it is focused on and though its earthly counter part is not mentioned I have to assume that it exists and the tables of stone are probably still inside.

What this is picturing to you and me at this time in the book of Revelation, is that God's judgments on planet earth and its inhabitants are under way. The mercy seat aspect of the ark is symbolically the seat of God's throne.

Hebrews 4:14-16 Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

The mercy seat has an aspect of ark, it is symbolically the seat of God's throne. Here in Hebrews 4:14-16, Paul associates the throne as a seat of grace and mercy. The inference is obvious, the mercy and the throne of grace, are one and the same. The mercy seat is symbolically the place from which God governs and God judges. The mercy seat was placed right inside the Holy of Holies. God symbolically sits atop the Ten Commandments, that are inside the ark. The inference there is that they are the basis of God's legal judgments.

Deuteronomy 31:22 Therefore Moses wrote this song the same day, and taught it to the children of Israel. Then He inaugurated Joshua the Son of Nun, and said, "Be strong and of good courage, for you shall bring the children of Israel into the land of which I swore to them, and I will be with

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you.” So it was when Moses had completed writing the words of this law in a book, when they were finished that Moses commanded the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying, “Take this Book of the Law, and put it beside the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there as a witness against you;”

What was inside the ark were the Ten Commandments. What was right beside the ark was one single book, it is the only book there, and it is the book of Deuteronomy. The song that was referenced there in those verses is today Deuteronomy 32. The reference to this law in verse 24 is what we know today as the book of Deuteronomy. Then in verse 24, the Levites were commanded to place it beside the ark, which was inside the Holy of Holies containing the Ten Commandments.

This is a privilege no other book of the Scriptures is given and it points to Deuteronomy's significance in Israelitish history, everyday life in a relationship with God our Creator and Savior. Why was this done? Why the book of Deuteronomy of all the books in the Bible? Here is a guess. It comes from the *Keil and Delitzsch Commentary*, volume 1, page 462. They wrote, “The tables of stone were deposited in the ark and the book of law to be kept at its side, its form by nature and elaborate commentary upon the Decalogue. It was also to have it placed outwardly as an a complement to the tables of the law for a witness against the people in the same manner as the song in the mouth of the people.”

So symbolically God sits on the legal basis of His judgments, but right by His side is an elaborate commentary of that legal basis symbolically giving its council toward the making of His judgments of those individuals and nations who stand before Him to be judged.

It is if God looks up in the commentary and says, “I said that, therefore.” If God does that with the book of Deuteronomy, we should be looking at it in the same way. It is the commentary on the entirety of the law, that is its first purpose, real purpose.

Deuteronomy has a special niche

Here is a summary: First: Deuteronomy is specific instruction given to Israel just before entering the Promised Land. Is that not where we are going? Are we going to our Promised Land? It was written in the last month of Moses' life as Israel completed its forty years of wandering.

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Second: the instruction is intended to enable them to successfully live in the Promised Land. It is of such critical importance it is commanded to be reviewed every seven years.

Third: there are clearly two Israels, one is spiritual, the second is the children of the flesh. God is not at this time dealing with the children of the flesh.

Fourth: at this time in God's purpose the instruction of Deuteronomy is for spiritual Israel. Deuteronomy's instruction is in no way done away, not even one jot or tittle.