

Deuteronomy And History

John W. Ritenbaugh

Given 03-Oct-15; Sermon #FT15-09

This morning I opened up my email to see if there was anything there that I needed to read, then I closed it up and came down for services and Martin starts talking about time ["Is Any Time Right for You?"]. He starts talking about John F. Kennedy's assassination, he mentioned that it has been over 50 years since he was assassinated on November 23, 1963. I was doing my usual Friday thing at that time. I was under the automobile making sure we could get to services the next day.

When he mentioned 50 years ago it rang a bell to someone else besides John F. Kennedy, and another occasion besides an assassination. It reminded me of something that was a rather happy time. It was a spokesman club meeting, it happened just about the same number of years ago, the Pittsburgh spokesman club was having a combined meeting with the Akron Ohio spokesman's club. I gave a speech that day and so did a young man about eight to ten years younger than me. I was really attracted to that young man because to me he seemed as though he had some things on the ball, he had a bright future ahead of him.

He went off to Ambassador College, and from there he graduated. He was sent out in the field as a ministry trainee, and he was ordained. I should add, after that initial meeting at the spokesman's club I never spoke to him again in my entire life! That has been about 50 years. I kind of kept track of him to see what he was doing.

He was ordained, he got married, and would you not know he married a gal named Evelyn, same as my wife. He kept increasing in value to the work of God and the first thing you know that guy was an evangelist, he was over the work in South Africa. The story begins to come to an end when he returned to the United States and the Worldwide Church of God began breaking up. He eventually settled into United Church of God and became the pastor of a church that I used to pastor in Chicago, the Hinsdale congregation.

The story came to an end because he died. What I read this morning when I opened up my email was the death notice. He was around 72-74 years old. I could not help but think that this fellow that I never spoke to again for the rest of my life had made such a impact on me that I followed his progress within the ministry for somewhat close to 50 years, and now he is gone. His course is done. I feel sure from my judgment that he has made it, but it is over and we are all going to reach that place at some time.

I have become a little bit known for saying something, a quote you might say, that I become tagged with just because I said it so often. I said it often because as I was reading through, studying through, giving Bible studies on the book of Ecclesiastes, I could see that everything in life matters. We really have to be alert and on the ball to what it going on in the world around us, in our own life, the lives of our children, the lives of our community. We cannot possibly keep track of everything that is going on but what does come into our view, we need to think about it—how does this effect me, how does it effects others, what is going to happen down the road as a result of what has happened?

This is the lead in, because I am going to continue right where I left off in my previous sermon ["Deuteronomy Opening"]. I want to advance to another aspect of the importance of the book of

Deuteronomy to us. I am going to give you those four conclusions that I gave to you and we will begin with that.

First, Deuteronomy is specific instruction given to Israel just before entering the Promised Land. It was written in the last month of Moses' life as Israel completed forty years of testing and trials.

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

Third, there are two Israels. One is spiritual. That Israel is the church. The second is the children of the flesh. God is not at this time dealing directly with the children of the flesh. They are still around, they exist, but God is not dealing with them directly.

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

Deuteronomy 17:14-20 "When you come to the land which the Lord your God is giving you, and possess it and dwell in it, and say, "I will set a king over me like all the nations that are around me," you shall surely set a king over you whom the Lord your God chooses; one from among your brethren you shall set as king over you; you may not set a foreigner over you, who is not you brother. But he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, for the Lord has said to you, "You shall not return that way again." Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away; nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself. Also it shall be when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this laws in a book, from the one before the priests, the Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statues, that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, and that he may, prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel."

I begin with these scriptures today because I want us to be reminded that even as Deuteronomy was being written before they went into the Promised Land, God was already thinking of the future times long before the Israelites ever thought of having a king. That begins to tell you something. Even before they went into the Promised Land, He was already showing that this was the direction that Israel was going to go.

Recall the every-seven-year rule by which Deuteronomy is to be reconfirmed in their minds. This paragraph helps confirm that Deuteronomy was written for all generations of Israelites long into the future, not merely those living then, and the problems that immediately faced them. In other words, Deuteronomy is to be applied way into the future. We are going to see how far, and see why it still applies to us.

As it turned out Israel did not have a king until Samuel's day, which was a little over three hundred years later, but the Israelitish people should still be following the instructions laid out in this document, referencing it for guidance.

Deuteronomy 12:32 “Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.”

He is making sure that He closes us in to every area of possible change to something that He has given to us. God will brook no changes to Deuteronomy, that is very clear. This is why Jesus stated in Matthew 5,

Matthew 5:17 “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets, I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.”

It will not pass away until all is fulfilled, not one jot or tittle. God means what He says. Why? Because God still has use for it, for our preparation, for His Kingdom and beyond. His Kingdom will be established at the time of Jesus Christ’s return. Deuteronomy is still going to apply all the way up to the Lake of Fire.

There is an interesting proof of this in a prophecy in a later time period. Please turn to the book of Jeremiah. God still insisting that Israel do things His way,

Jeremiah 30:4-7 Now these are the words that the Lord spoke concerning Israel and Judah. “For thus says the Lord: We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask now, and see, whether a man is ever in labor with child? So why do I see every man with his hands on his loins like a woman in labor, and all faces turned pale? Alas for that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.”

There is the time element that we are dealing with at this time. It is the time of Jacob's trouble which we believe is the great tribulation. This has not occurred yet, so verses 4-7 still lies ahead of us, in the future, in order to be fulfilled.

Jeremiah 30:19-20 Then out of them shall proceed thanksgiving and the voice of those who make merry; I will multiply them, and they shall not diminish; I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small. Their children also shall be as before, and their congregation shall be established before Me; and I will punish all who oppress them.

He is talking about the restored Israel after the tribulation. The theme of the chapter continues but now the tribulation is over, Israel is being restored, and there is happiness, wonderful things happening.

Jeremiah 30:21 Their nobles shall be from among them, and their governor shall come from their midst [There it is: Deuteronomy 17. God is insisting that they be ruled over by a fellow Israelite.]; then I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach Me; for who is this who pledged his heart to approach Me? Says the Lord.

I gave you that so that you have a strong understanding that these things in Deuteronomy are not just pushed aside by God and He plans on using it all the way to the Lake of Fire. As long as it is needed, it is going to be in the book.

Deuteronomy 17:19-20 “And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, and be careful to observe all the words of

this law and these statues, that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, and that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel.”

Fearing God in the way that God wants us to fear Him does not come naturally. We can see just from verses 19 and 20, that this book helps anyone who reads it with understanding to come to fear God. That is, the respect for God will grow as a result of the things that are here and the contact with God.

Our big problem in relation to the book of Deuteronomy is that we have been told all of our life that it is done away. That builds within us a resistance to believe it, because that nagging thought is there. It has come, without a doubt, from Satan through the ministry that he is using out there calling themselves Christians, when they just have a shell of the beliefs that they really need, that Deuteronomy, the whole Old Testament, is done away. It isn't. That concept has to come out of us.

That does not mean that I am telling you I understand the application of every law in Deuteronomy. I don't. But God wants it there. He did not take it away, and I can assure you that in those laws, there is wisdom if we can sometimes figure out how it is that they apply. I do know that many of the things that we feel that we can no longer do because we do not live in the nation of Israel in the way that these people did, nonetheless, they still teach us how to judge between right and wrong and give us understanding.

These things are the basis of the judgments that God wants us to be able to do. As we go along, I am sure He is going to reveal to us how these things apply, whether in the letter or within the spirit.

Notice the beginning of verse 20, “his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandments to the right hand or to the left.”

He does not want the king to get a big head regarding the position that he holds, He wants him to rule over the people of Israel in humility. Again the book of Deuteronomy, the wisdom we get from it will tend to keep man in his place, because above all things he should understand from the reading of this book, that the person who wrote it—I do not mean Moses—had an awful lot of wisdom. He out to quail before that and understand that God's wisdom is right, and not his own.

What is needed for this to occur is the fear of God. Please turn to Psalm 34. We need to understand this, because the fear of God is not something that is in us by nature, it is something that has to be learned.

Psalm 34:11 Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord.

There are two solid reasons why it takes a considerable period of time to truly come to fear God as He desires to be feared. He is not talking about terror here. He is talking about a deep and abiding respect for Him so that we are very careful not to deviate from what He says, and that we would not dare to change anything away from what He says, because we have so much respect for what He is in His character, what He is in His intelligence, that we will be humble enough to take His advice regardless.

The reason it takes a fair period of time for this to occur is because it must take place within a relationship, and the respect builds while He is doing this. So God has called us, and He has opened up a relationship to Him. We can actually go right into the throne room because of His calling. And

that helps aid in the building of the respect, because to know Him is to love Him, and to love Him is to respect Him for what He is, what He says, and what He does.

The second reason that it takes so long, is because human nature is not merely a dead weight, but a constant, active force resisting God. So says Romans 8:7. It is the enemy of God and it is active and we never lose it, it is always there to turn us away from God's wisdom.

There is a desire in human nature to change things so that one can be more comfortable with the self and with society around him. So, we are given a warning, a caution, in the book of Proverbs. The context is in a governmental sense.

Proverbs 24:21 My son, fear the Lord and the king; do not associate with those given to change.

Americans are great at changing things. I do not know if we are so great—we just have a proclivity for doing it. To most Americans, it seems as though change is the most positive thing that we can do.

We are warned not to be changeable, in a governmental sense, especially, right in in that context. But the unchanging mind and character of God—remember how we started this. God said basically, "Don't change a thing" in Deuteronomy. That reflects the mind, the character of God. "I am God, I change not." He does not put down statements that we are to live up to carelessly. They are all thought out.

The unchanging mind and character of God is often reflected in Deuteronomy. This episode regarding the king, in chapter 17, is another example of this, in God's demand that the king also be unchanging. He wants the king to be humble and not get a big head. I am sure if the king carried out in a sincere way what God says to do—by writing Deuteronomy out, by reading through it—God will give him the gifts that will enable that king to keep his mind in the right place in relation to himself and the people that he is governing.

I am reminded of the series of commentaries that I have been giving for the last three months or so ["*Mightier Than the Sword*"]. Every personality that has been the centerpiece of one of the commentaries I have given was presumably a great human. They have all been philosophers who first turned away from God. These particular philosophers all grew up in the womb of a 'Christian' church. Many of them were Roman Catholics, but there were some Christian-influence there.

Karl Marx grew up in a German Lutheran congregation/family. He stuck with that church until he was in his twenties. Even in his teens, he was writing articles and things in praise of Jesus Christ, and then something happened. *Boom!* He just lost all of his marbles. But he grew up in the influence of a supposedly Christian church.

This was the same with every one of those that I have given you, that is why they were chosen. They started out in what we would normally call a Christian household but somewhere along the line they began to look for ways out of what they were involved in. They changed their own outlook regarding the authority that they looked for guidance, that is God, and the philosopher then proceed to work with great vigor to change other people. They just flipped sides.

An interesting contrast regarding both time and a public civic issue from American history is taking place in our time. It impacts (not real heavily) on our heritage as Americans and also as Christians.

Beginning with the Jamestown, Virginia colony in 1607, which began as a commercial business gamble by some English investors, American history occupies roughly 400 years. Brethren, that is so tiny by comparison to other nations. But to us it seems like a long time.

By way of contrast, Israel's history beginning with Abraham, covers a period over 3400 years. But even in America's tiny history, disputes are taking place regarding whether the American Constitution should be revised so as to change it, "update" it (is the softer term) to make it more amenable to the times.

We are following, brethren, the same principle regarding the Old Testament in religion: It is done away; you do not have to be concerned about it. In this case, though, they blame it on God. He changed it and made it easier for us. He did make it easier for us to achieve, to have salvation, but the laws are not done away, because He also gave us the tools to be able to do it.

God's Word never changes, and with good reason: God is never wrong in the first place. He knows exactly what He is doing! But you see, that is not the way we tend to approach it. We are looking for outs. That is human nature. We look for outs, so we have to be careful about the way we approach them.

Bible scholars make interesting comments regarding Deuteronomy's worthiness. Christopher Wright in his commentary on Deuteronomy says, "Deuteronomy has been aptly described as the heartbeat of the Old Testament." He adds, "If you feel the pulse of Deuteronomy, you are in touch with the life and rhythm of the entire Hebrew Bible." In other words, he is saying Deuteronomy fits perfectly within the framework of God's purpose as shown throughout the Old Testament.

Protestant commentator Adam Clark says in his introduction to Deuteronomy, "It may be safely asserted that very few parts of the Old Testament scriptures can be read with greater profit by the genuine Christian than the book of Deuteronomy."

The teaching regarding Israel and the Israel of God is far more significant at this time than you probably think. In fact, when looked at as an important slice on the broad expanse of 6000 years of human history, it might be considered at this time to be rather urgent. My thinking about that is: how much time do we have left before Christ returns? It cannot be many years.

That is how urgent it is, and the book of Deuteronomy, especially, is directed at the Israel of God, basically for the same reasons that it was given to the Israelites of old. To them it was given so that they could live and perform—function—in the land. To us it is given so that we can live, function, and perform in ruling and teaching over the land.

Do you know Deuteronomy's laws? I do not know them anywhere near well enough.

God is not done with Deuteronomy yet, because He is preparing His own family. It is needed for that teaching.

Another reason why this thing about the Israel of God is important is because all kinds of things are changing. That seems to be the heartbeat of the entire world. Change is happening every day on a much larger basis than ever before. Sometimes things that you would think have no account are changing.

Let me give you one. Are you aware from news reports that significant physical characteristics of the Israelitish people are gradually disappearing? I read about a year ago an article that was not titled regarding the Israelitish people. Rather, it was titled regarding people of the Western world, meaning Europe, the United States, and Canada. The author had no idea that is in the Western world that most Israelitish people live.

The author stated that people who research into such things tell us that, blond and red hair, light brown hair, blue, green, gray, and hazel eye coloring, which are still dominate in the Western world, are gradually diminishing in numbers. Everything is going downhill in Israelitish countries. The shades tending to disappear are very common amongst Israelitish families. Apparently the main cause is immigration and intermarriage with people who carry more dominate genes pools in their DNA, thus fewer children with those gradually disappearing colors are being born.

This certainly is not a major concern in the world that has far, far greater problems, but is it possible that this is part of the penalty the Israelitish nations are paying for their sins? The way the trend is going, they would simply disappear into the sands of history, if this were allowed to go on at the rate that it is going on.

I believe that this is an indicator of what is happening, and I also believe that except for God's promise, the Israelitish people as a whole would indeed disappear. They already at this time have no idea who they are, and they do not seem to care either.

Turn to Amos and we will read two verses in chapter 9. Here is God's promise and it is going to be carried out—thank God!

Amos 9:9-10 “For surely I will command, and will sift the house of Israel among all nations [Has that not occurred? Absolutely.], as grain is sifted in a sieve; yet not the smallest grain shall fall to the ground [What a promise! God is not going to lose a single person. You talk about wonderful things!]. All the sinners of My people shall die by the sword, who say, ‘The calamity shall not overtake us, nor confront us.’”

God is going to rescue the Israelitish people from their self-imposed oblivion. Did you catch that? I said, "self-imposed." We did it ourselves. We know that because we believe the Bible that the citizens of the Western world have no idea their heritage is so awesome.

It is right here that we begin to get into the heart of this sermon. How is it that the Israelites lost their identity? There is one valid, simple but true explanation. It is, when God drove the Israelites into captivity by means of the Assyrians, and 120 years or so later the Jews by the Babylonians, both the Israelites, and the Jews to a lesser extent, forgot to remember who they were. They simply forgot who they were.

I just happened to think of a verse here, and I am going to take a second or two to look, because it is stunning:

Isaiah 1:2-3 Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! For the Lord has spoken: “I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me; the ox knows its owner and the donkey its master's crib; but Israel does not know, My people do not consider.”

God accuses us of simply forgetting who we are. We did not do it; our ancestors did. But we have that proclivity within us that if we were put in similar situation, we would probably do the same thing.

Psalm 78:1-12 Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old, which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, telling to the generations to come the praises of the Lord, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done. [Wonderful words there. Wonderful attitude at that time, coming from Asaph.] For He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers that they should make them known to their children [Do you know where it says that? Right in Deuteronomy 6.]; that the generation to come might know them, the children who would be born, that they may arise and declare to their children, that they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments; and may not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that did not set its heart aright, and whose spirit was not faithful to God. The children of Ephraim, being armed and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle. They did not keep the covenant of God; they refused to walk in His law, and forgot His works and His wonders that He had shown them. Marvelous things He did in the sight of their fathers, in the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan.

This psalm is not directly teaching that Israel forgot God and who they are *in their captivity*. They did this forgetting, recorded in this psalm, right in their own homeland, living in familiar settings. In captivity, the forgetting rapidly worsened. In captivity, and in their migration from Assyria, and then into the Caucasus, and from there into Ukraine, and then Russia, and from there into central and northwestern Europe, and wherever they are on earth today, be it the United States, Europe, Canada, Australia, South Africa, New Zealand—they continued their pattern of forgetfulness, year after year.

You can be absolutely certain that the Israelites migrating in that way had no formal program established to remember their heritage. That kind of program must be prepared and systematically taught or the heritage we see from the ancestors will be lost in the sands of history. That is exactly what happened.

While progressing through their proclivity their minds were on survival, not history. I am sure that were few among the migrants who left enough records through the centuries of the trek so that researchers like Steven Collins or Yair Davidiy could piece together harmonious accounts of the trek of the Israelitish migration. But most of the information regarding the immigration of the children of Israel came from the nations they passed through.

God made sure that researchers found those clues so that there would be some measure of historical confirmation. However, as far as I know, nobody has ever found a systematically arranged account authored by Israelitish immigrants themselves. We just lost it. If it had been done, it would have been led by someone or some family, generation after generation, and none has ever yet been found. If it was done at all, it was done by a few individuals who took it upon themselves personally to do that.

You can be certain that the Israelites did not make any systematic studies into Deuteronomy in Assyria, and neither did the Jews after God blew them apart by means of the Romans in 70 AD, and then again in 135 AD, when the Romans, in their spiteful anger, even salted the lands of Judea so no food could be grown. That got rid of the people in a hurry when they could not eat!

It is right at this point that the book of Deuteronomy becomes invaluable, because God caused this book to be written in a way that is adequate to His purpose. In order to make right use of Deuteronomy when God's time in His purpose came, one must still be called, and having God's Spirit, knows and believes in what God is doing. And then, that scripture that we began with—Deuteronomy 29—becomes truly relevant, and so does Ephesians 1:3-14.

We went through this before but I want to read it again. I can understand why Herbert Armstrong said his favorite chapter in the Bible was Ephesians 1, because God encapsulates, in a sense, who we are and where we stand at this time.

Ephesians 1:3-12 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us [he's talking about the church] with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world [That's incredible! God began thinking about everything imaginable even before He began it. He is not piecing everything together every once and while—"Oh, I've got a new idea; let's try that." That's the way *men* invent things.], that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.

Even as Jesus is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the earth, so has God's overall purpose been underway from the exact same point. That includes us. Though it is smoothly proceeding right on course, some major steps within that purpose may humanly be millennia apart.

For example, it is roughly 4,000 years between Adam and Eve and their sins to Jesus Christ. Look at all the things already recorded in the Bible that happened in that period of time. A lot of history took place in that expanse of time.

It will, as far as we know, be 2,000 years between Christ's death and resurrection, to His return as King of kings and Lord of lords. Again, a tremendous amount human activity and thus history takes place during these large periods of time. The lengths of our lives, though it may seem long as we are living them, are really puny by comparison.

There is the ever-living God, confidently working everything out through Jesus Christ and we fit in to that purpose. Did He think about us individually, at the very beginning when the Lamb was slain before the foundation of the earth? I cannot say that I know positively but it certainly seems possible according to the way this is worded here. What a mind!

Who can make a cogent assembly of events that makes sense so that they are remembered? I do not want a single one of us to forget, not to be guilty of what the Israelites did. Here is the answer: Each and every son of God is *required* by God to make private, solid efforts to remember the history of the people of His heritage.

You cannot run and say you cannot do it. It is in the book. It is already written for you. But it has to be in *your* mind. We need to revel in that history, because those people who went before us and were chosen by God to carry out acts in His purpose that He has been working out since before the foundation of the world, are listed in this book—their names and what they did. That is leading up to the way we should feel about this nation, the Kingdom of God.

This is everybody's responsibility, so that you do not lose track of your heritage. One of our men in the United States was going around asking people if they knew who Betsy Ross was. I think he got one right answer out of about twenty people that he asked. They do not even know who Betsy Ross was.

How many times have you seen one of those late night comedians go out on the street and ask people questions on the street of New York City? I wondered for a while if this stuff was just acting, but I do not think so. The Millennials especially in this nation know almost nothing about what is going on.

I think it was Dr. Maas in his sermon said that most Millennials now do not believe that there is an absolute truth. Everything is relative, so they just dismiss it. This book is truth and these people mentioned in this book, who are a part of your inheritance in God's way of life, were real people and they did what God recorded that they did and they did it by faith just as is required of us.

Each son of God is required by God to make private solid efforts to remember the history of the people of his heritage, His people. Our people are the people God, by means of His calling, has not merely brought us in contact with Him but established a relationship with them.

At what point beyond Adam and Eve does the history of God's work begin? Where should a son of God focus? There is no doubt that people such as Abel and Seth and Noah and Shem are surely important players of what occurred very early. God's spiritual labor of love does not make a truly clear and significant first step until the calling of Abraham. At the very least, that is where you need to begin because that is where the Israel of God begins.

After Abraham comes Isaac. How much do we know about Isaac? He was quite a man, too. He was going to let his father kill him without a whimper! He was probably a man when that occurred, not a little kid like you see in these Bible stories. I would not doubt one bit that he was the same age as Jesus was when He was crucified, thirty three. Do you not think that he could have overthrown his father and run away? He laid down his life.

How about Jacob? He was a character, but he repented. That is the important thing. He and his wives gave birth to twelve sons, each of those sons became a founder of a nation. It is not until after each family was in servitude in Egypt for a couple of centuries that they were freed only because of God's merciful use of His purpose and sovereign power.

What I am doing here is giving you an outline and you can develop it from there, and you should. Some of these people might be your ancestors. I always believed I had a German heritage, but it was

Geoff Neilson in South Africa, who sent me a listing of Jewish names of people who had been in captivity from Galatia, and in that list was Reichenbach. Not only that, but also on that list was my mother's maiden name, Hann. Both of them were on that list. Now I do not know if I am Jewish or German, the persecutor or the persecuted.

What God did at this time was raise up a nation descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and that nation was named Israel. Then in the sequence of events following Israel's formation, the Bible begins to fill its pages with much more detail of the actions of many characters as the centuries roll by.

What God has been working on since the foundation of the earth is not truly made significantly clear until His Son was given the responsibility of clearly announcing its purpose. We are dealing with this in a broad sense but this occurred as God was still working with the nation of Israel.

Mark 1:14-15 Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel."

It is right here, roughly 4,000 years after Adam and Eve, where it becomes clear that the creation of the nation of Israel descended from Jacob was only a type. Israel is in one sense a teaching tool for the Israel of God, even though its population may have consisted of millions of people even in ancient times. I want you to appreciate the bigness of God's thinking.

How many people have been Israelites through the ages? I do not know, but even now it is estimated that the population of the Israelites in Europe, the Americas, Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, is still over 400 million people.

God is not dealing in something little, it is awesome! Out of that 400 million plus people, how many are actually in the Israel of God? Hardly any, and yet it is the most important institution on the face of the earth. You think you should not know about your heritage? That is part of your heritage, it is part of your nation, it is part of your people. We have a different spirit, but we have largely come out of the Israelitish people.

God is creating a family Kingdom, not descended from another human being, but one that is descended from *Himself*. Therefore that family will bear His characteristics, not Jacob's or any other humans. Now it is right here that the Israel of God and Deuteronomy are linked.

Romans 9:6-8 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 [physical Israel], these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed.

Here we can see a clear delineation that though the Israelitish people might be 400 million or so, out of that very large figure has come largely the church. There are of course Gentiles within it as well, and I have something to say about that later that is really a blessing to the Gentiles.

But the Israel of God is a very tiny group. What you can understand from those verses in chapter 9 of Romans is that the physical nation of Israel, even though it began all the way back with Abraham,

Isaac, and Jacob, and therefore has been in existence for thousands of years, the nation of Israel has never been God's ultimate objective.

That significance lies with the Israel of God which did not begin until Jesus came. Four thousand years of history passed by before God began working on the Israel of God. Now we are focused in on God's ultimate objective at this time. Brethren this is part of your heritage. These are things that you ought to know. The significance lies with the Israel of God and the expansion of His family. Israel of the flesh has never been any more than a type and a reservoir that the children of promise are largely drawn from and learn from.

Who do we learn from? We learn to not do things like the Israelites did. That is why God put it in the Book, so that the children that is His family would say, "Don't do it that way. Do it the way God says." Where is our heritage based? It is not really in Israel; it is in the Israel of God. That is our heritage.

It is most interesting that the book of Deuteronomy was made available immediately preceding the Israel of the flesh's formation into a nation. It was intended to be helpful to its maintenance as a nation of people God chose to be witnesses before the world. Its availability is also helpful to the Israel of God's survival, and perhaps even more so to its understanding, especially at critical times in the history of God's formation of it.

This is because in God's purpose it is required that His children cooperate with Him in His spiritual work. The linkage between the Israel of God and the Israel of the flesh is part of our heritage. Though we are converted and part of the Israel of God, God wants us to understand that in His mind the linkage between us and Israel is not yet completely broken.

Let's go to the book of Ephesians, and I am going to give you something that I don't entirely understand, but it is there in the Book, and I see the skeleton of it. It is there for some reason—for our betterment.

Ephesians 2:11-13 [This was written to Gentile people] Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh [are they no longer Gentiles in the flesh? Let's ask that question. This was written to Gentile, but Paul says, "you were *once* Gentiles in the flesh."]—who are called uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision [Israelitish people] made in the flesh by hands—that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been made near by the blood of Christ.

Near to what? Two things at the same time. Near to the physical nation of Israel and the spiritual nation of Israel. Both of them. He goes on to show that the ultimate purpose regarding what He is doing here is to make the two one. Like I said, I do not know the fullness of this. I know for sure He is not yet done with the physical nation of Israel but it still plays a strategic role in the conversion of all of us. That includes the Gentiles among us, and God has made the Gentiles part of the nation of Israel as well as the Israel of God, because it is Israel that got all of the goodies from God. That is the truth. That is what Paul is saying. Even Christ came as a Jew, an Israelite. Right at the very top, that honor was given to one of the tribes of Israel. In another place, Paul states that a converted person *is* a Jew. Figure that one out. I think the answer is very plain, because Jesus was a Jew. If we become part of Christ, it does not matter what your nationality is, you become a Jew spiritually. It does not

change the physical at all, but God is still using the nation of Israel as a part of what is being worked out, but it is no where near as important as the Israel of God.

Paul is explaining that the nation of Israel has been favored by God to be the possessors of all of His gifts, the greatest of which is Christ. He was born into it and began His work within it. It does not make the Israelites any better at all as human beings. It does make them more responsible. They have more to account for than any nation on the face of the earth. "To whom much is given, the much more is required." Israel is going to take a beating from God like no other nation on earth.

It is important at this point that we understand more of the role that Deuteronomy plays in our salvation and also part of why God requires it be gone through once every seven years. More specifically is God's intention that Deuteronomy be used by us for. In other words, what is it? You may remember in my first message I reported to you that the scholars report that Deuteronomy touches on every element needful for salvation. I then ticked off about ten or so elements of salvation that Deuteronomy mentions. Then comes something that I did not mention, that is, that nowhere does Deuteronomy teach on any one of them in enough detail to be thoroughly understood.

Thorough understanding of most of the doctrinal details is not God's overall intention for Deuteronomy. This is because thorough detailed understanding of each aspect of salvation lies elsewhere in the Bible. Deuteronomy's purpose is not in that department.

Researchers have called Deuteronomy a *Reader's Digest* version of the Bible. That is basically a true statement. We must understand that in an important way Deuteronomy only points the way to specific teaching, but all by itself, it is not sufficient for salvation.

Deuteronomy's value lies in being a tool. It in many ways is more like a compass to help keep one from getting lost along the way, and if one does become lost, as long as he has Deuteronomy, the chances are great that if it is put to proper use, you will be able to find your way back to the right path once again, because it will lead you to more explicit teaching.

In modern terminology I believe what Deuteronomy contains is what God desires major aspects of our worldview to consist of. God's word is truth, and Deuteronomy is a compact, unique, and specific section of His truth directed toward all of His children at all times.

One's worldview is one's perspective. It is an overall perception of which one grasps and interprets the world, its events, and himself in, causing or motivating him to act or react in a manner that fits his beliefs and the goals that God has set before him.

Everybody's worldview is uniquely different depending on the life lived. Each person's worldview contains his perspective of what he individually holds as his views on life. One of the things that God has done in Deuteronomy is draw an overview of the basic requirements He wants all in His children's minds to focus on on a daily basis in one compact place. None of it is detailed; it is simply noted. But because it is in Deuteronomy, it must be paid attention to.

What was the immediate purpose for which Deuteronomy was written? It was that when Israel was firmly in the Promised Land, they were going to use it to renew the Old Covenant with God. Thus, if you want to know what Deuteronomy is in its largest sense, it is the Old Covenant. There's no avoiding that. It is the Old Covenant.

Thus, in a technical overall sense, Deuteronomy is an expanded rendering of the Old Covenant, and in this case it is a much fuller covering than the brief rendering in the book of Exodus. You might say, "We are the Israel of God; aren't we under the New Covenant?" Absolutely. Have you ever wondered why Satan has so vigorously spread the lies that the Old Testament laws are done away, and we do not have to pay attention to them? I think you know the answer to that. He is trying to hide something. What he is attempting to hide is that the laws are not done away, it is that simple.

I will not go into a long explanation, but did you notice that when David Maas read from Hebrews 8 toward the end of his sermon on Wednesday ["Loving God's Law: The Thread of Reality"] that God is going to write His laws on our mind and on our heart? How, brethren, are they going to get there? By magic? Not on your life! No, they still have to be kept for them to be deeply inscribed in our hearts. Remember that the heart is the seat and the reservoir of our conduct and attitude. What, then, is the major difference between the Old Covenant and the new? It tells us in Hebrews 8. We are not going to go into detail in this, but it is so plain.

Hebrews 8:6 But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.

That is the difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant—it is the promises that are different. The laws are still the same. The laws did not change one iota, but God gave better promises. Things like, "I will forgive your sins through the blood of Jesus Christ;" we now have personal access to God and a relationship with Him through prayer; we have the promise of the Holy Spirit. None of these were promised under the Old Covenant. God gave them on occasion to an individual, but they were not ever promised. There is a big difference there.

The laws that provide us with specific guidance for the conduct of life on a daily basis are still in the Old Testament and they must be employed. Obedience is not an option to the called. Sons of God under the New Covenant cannot pick and choose their laws.

There came a time when Deuteronomy was put to use as God intended by an obedient king. I want you to note how Deuteronomy was identified and named in a much later account in Judean history. I think you will find this really helpful to your understanding.

II Kings 22:1-2 Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jedidah the daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath. And he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.

Josiah was probably the greatest king Judah and Israel had since David. He was really earnest in what he did. There were repairs being done on the Temple. Drop down to verse 8.

II Kings 22:8-12 Then Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the scribe, "I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the Lord." [While they were doing some repairs, suddenly they find this Book of the Law.] And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it. So Shaphan the scribe went to the king, bringing the king word, saying, "Your servants have gathered the money that was found in the house and have delivered it into the hand of those who do the work, who oversee the house of the Lord." Then Shaphan the scribe showed the king, saying, "Hilkiah the priest has given me a book." And Shaphan read it before the king. Now it happened when the king heard the words of the

Book of the Law, that he tore his clothes. [It affected him so emotionally. "What are we doing?!"] Then the king commanded Hilkiyah the priest

In chapter 22, it seems to indicate that Shaphan was only reading one book.

II Kings 23:1 Then the king sent them to gather all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem to him, and the king went up to the house of the Lord with all the men of Judah, and with him all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the priests and the prophets and all the people, both small and great. And he read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant .

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Guess what they found? They found the book of Deuteronomy. What did they do? I will just tell you what they did. They followed its instructions. The king was so taken by what he read that they not only repaired the building, they cleaned Judah out as good or as better than any other king before them to get rid of the idolatry. They were not completely successful, but nonetheless, he did what he could under the circumstances, and he followed the book of Deuteronomy's directions.

Is it beginning to become clear to you what one of the major reasons is for the book of Deuteronomy? This is why I said earlier that it is more like a compass. When an individual forgets, or when a nation forgets, when they lose their way away from God, if they find the book of Deuteronomy and God is leading them, it will put the whole thing back on the track and in the right direction, because it is written in such a way that it is not detailed about things, but it shows the direction that God wants His people to go in. So they got things pretty well straightened out.