

**MOSES, THE PREACHER**

Moses - Part 23

Selected Passages from Deuteronomy

**Intro:** I could just as well have entitled my message for today, *Moses, the Pastor*, as well as *Moses, the Preacher*, because it shows Moses' heart for the people of the Lord, the people of Israel, the people which he clearly looked upon as his people. Moses had been their Pastor, their Shepherd, for forty years. He had seen one who generation pass away, and another generation come along to take the place of the generation of adults who had left Egypt forty years before.

The whole book of Deuteronomy was preached and written under the inspiration of God, but one significant difference between Deuteronomy and the preceding books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, is that in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers we have Moses speaking (and writing) to the people of Israel on behalf of the Lord, but in Deuteronomy we have Moses appealing to the people on behalf of the Lord. As I have said the books of Moses, as they are often called, are all equally inspired of God, but in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers we have the Lord speaking to Moses, and telling Moses what he was to say, or to give in commandments to the people. But in Deuteronomy, Moses was not giving the people anything new, but from his heart repeating what he had already told them, but emphasizing with them the importance of walking day by day in obedience to the Lord as they prepared to enter the land. The name given to this book is taken from its translation into Greek. It is a combination of two Greek words, δεῦτερος, meaning *second*, and νόμος, which means *law*. It was not a different law from that which the Lord gave to Moses on Mt. Sinai, but it was a repetition of that Law. But we might say that the Law given in Exodus 20 was from the Lord through Moses, but the Law given here was the same Law, but in Deuteronomy it was a repetition of the same Law given by and from Moses – but remember, it was all under the direction of the Spirit of God Who is the Author of all Scripture.

Some say that we have three messages from Moses in this book of Deuteronomy, but I prefer to say that there were four. The last message is presented in a different way, including a Psalm from Moses, but it seems to me to have been a fourth message.

In Deuteronomy 1:3 we have a date given: “in the fortieth year, in the

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eleventh month, on the first day of the month.” Today we would probably say, *on the first day of the eleventh month of the fortieth year*. But I point this out to you to show why many expositors say that Moses delivered all of these messages in the last month of his life. Some expositors, like Charles Erdman, who was a professor at Princeton Seminary many years ago, believe that it did not take Moses a whole month, but more likely just a few days to preach these messages to the people. It really does not make any difference to the messages, but it is important to see that these messages were given in the last days of Moses’ life.

Let me give you the divisions of the book:

- 1) The first message is given in the first four chapters of the book (Deut. 1-4).
- 2) The second message is the longest – from chapters 5 through 26.
- 3) The third message is in chapters 27 through 30.
- 4) The fourth and last message is in chapters 31 through 33. Chapter 34 tells us about the death of Moses, about Joshua succeeding him, and the Lord’s comments about Moses.

The theme of the book of Deuteronomy is obedience, obedience to the Lord, obedience to the revealed will of God. But I would remind you as to how the people were to obey the Lord because this is most important for us to remember even today. The Lord quoted from this book when He was asked what was the greatest commandment in the Law. His answer is recorded in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. The Lord’s answer is found in Deuteronomy 6:5:

And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

And although the Lord was not asked about the second most important law, He gave it the Jewish lawyer who had asked about the greatest commandment. The second, as probably all of you remember, was, and still is: “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,” a quotation from Leviticus 19:18. And then the Lord said that all of the Law and the prophets “hang” on these two commandments, or are a summation of morality as it is taught in the OT.

I know that most of you have read Deuteronomy. Perhaps you have read it many times. It is a very important OT book. I always look forward to reading it again. Several years ago I taught it in the Tuesday Bible Class. It is a great book for pastors to read and to digest. Moses was a true shepherd of the Lord’s sheep, an example for us to follow. He did not

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have all of the truth that we have today because it had not yet been revealed. But what he had transformed his life. And the message that by God's grace he has left us in this book of Deuteronomy, is a message that the church of the Lord Jesus Christ desperately needs today. We are not under the Law as Israel was in those days, but Moses' emphasis on a life that is pleasing to God, is a message that we all need to hear again and again. The best that I can hope to do in just one message, is to point out what Moses said and wrote when he knew that he just had a few days to tell them what was on his heart for them.

Let me begin by pointing out his main emphasis in the first message which is recorded for us in Deuteronomy 1 through 4.

### **I. A REVIEW OF THEIR PAST HISTORY.**

Moses did not go back to Abraham except to remind them of the Lord's promise to give them a land. He did not even speak of their years in Egypt. But Moses went back in this first message to Horeb, or Mt. Sinai, where he had received the Law from the Lord. He spoke of how they had been given wise and understanding leaders. But in spite of all that the Lord had done for them, their fathers refused to go into the land in spite of the way Caleb and Joshua tried to persuade them to go. After the Lord pronounced judgment on them for their rebellion, their fathers tried to remedy the situation by going on their own, only to be defeated by the Amorites. Then time and time again the Lord had delivered them from their enemies. All of this was with the generation before the Israelites to whom he was speaking.

In chapter 4 Moses made the application from what he had been reviewing about the nation's past history. Note in particular 4:1 and 2, 5-9, 14-15, and 23. And from verse 25 on he warned them against idolatry after mentioning how concerned they should be about their children. Finally, notice verses 39 and 40.

Now what was the point in all of this? It was that they needed to remember their past, profit from their sins, and see the importance of living in obedience to the Word of the Lord.

Have you ever wondered why, when you repent of your sins that you still remember them, and the memory of them often comes back to you so vividly that it was almost like you had just committed them, and it seems

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to you like they had never been forgiven after all? If we have confessed our sins, and have forsaken them, they are forgiven, but the Lord keeps them in our memories so that we will not make the same mistakes again. A good memory is of great importance if we are to be a truly holy people, pleasing to the Lord.

But let us go on to the second message, the longest one – 22 chapters long in our Bibles. What seems to be the chief emphasis? Just as the first message, for the most part, looks back over their wilderness journey, citing the failures of the people, and why they failed, so the emphasis in the second message looks ahead, especially to the time when they will be in their land.

## **II. GOD'S PATTERN OF LIFE FOR ISRAEL IN THE LAND (Deut. 5-26).**

Moses was seeking to prepare the people for the days ahead. Note the prominence of the future tense of the verbs in these chapters. All but two of the ten commandments are stated in the future tense, but even the two have future significance. It is very evident that the Lord expected His people to be obedient to Him. The various statutes and judgments had to do with every detail of their lives – what they were to eat, what they were not to eat. It had to do with what was right, and what was wrong. They were told how to approach God as compared with how they were not to approach Him. And the Lord had the right to tell them all of these things, first, because He was God, and second, because He had redeemed the people of Israel. The days ahead were not going to be easy, but the one thing that they needed always to be most concerned about was their relation with the Lord. There were nations to be conquered.

Deuteronomy 8 is an especially important chapter dealing with the ways of the Lord as the Lord sought to meet the needs of His people, not only their need for physical safety and sustenance, but especially for their spiritual needs.

Scattered all through this message we have revelations that the Lord made of Himself. Deuteronomy 10:12-22 is typical of the way that Moses spoke about the Lord, what He had done, what He would do, and what He expected of the people. Much of this was repetition, but repetition is what the people needed. See 14:1-2. The need to believe the Lord and to trust the Lord were themes Moses repeated over and over for the people.

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The Lord did not leave them in the dark about anything. The details indicated that there was always the tendency in all of their hearts to do the wrong thing.

But now let's skip over to the end of this message to see how Moses concluded this second message. You will find it in Deut. 26:16-19.

But now let us move on to the third message. Here we find Moses making a final appeal to the people, setting before them the trials that would come their way if they disobeyed the Lord as compared with the great blessings that would be theirs if they obeyed the Lord. No person in his right mind would choose the curses over the blessings, but unfortunately the history of Israel shows that there was more disobedience than there was obedience. We can call this message:

### **III. THE CHOICES WHICH THE PEOPLE FACED (Deut. 27-30).**

There were only two: they would either obey the Lord and have His blessing, or they would disobey and experience His judgment, called curses.

The conclusion to this message makes the situation clear as they faced going into the land. Cf. Deut. 30:15-20.

The choices for us remain the same. If we want blessing, we must obey the Lord. If we are not obeying the Lord, we are disobeying Him. We are always either trusting the Lord, or not trusting the Lord – trusting in ourselves, or trusting in others, trusting in what we have, acting like we are self-sufficient, or recognizing every day that the only safe way to go is by taking the path of obedience to God.

But none of us will do this, or can do this, in our own strength. The Psalms make it very clear that the Lord's people in OT times had to trust the Lord to be obedient to Him just as we do. And so prayer and faith are absolutely essential if we are to be a holy people, pleasing to the Lord. Proverbs 3:5 and 6 were originally written for people living under the Law, but it applies to us just as much although we live after the Lord Jesus came, opening up even greater possibilities for us to be the people that the Lord wants us to be.

Now we come to the fourth and last message. I don't know of a better

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title to give it than to call it:

### **IV. MOSES' SWAN SONG (Deut. 31-34).**

Perhaps you know that the expression, swan song, refers to the legendary utterance of a dying swan. And from that it has come to refer to a person's final appearance, and action, or words. Not everyone knows when the words he speaks will be his last words. But Moses did know. It seems that the Apostle Paul knew. And the Apostle Peter knew. And of course our Lord knew. Last words can be a person's most important words if he, or she, knows that they are the last. It is very interesting to see what Moses did in these chapters.

His first words to the people are in 31:1-6. (Read.)

His second words were to Joshua in 31:7-8. (Read.)

The third thing that Moses did was to finish writing this book, and to give it to the priests with specific instructions as to what they were to do with it. See verses 9-13.

Then it was that the Lord spoke to Moses, giving him a sad message about what the people will do after he dies. And the Lord gave Moses a song to teach the children of Israel which would be a witness against them in the times when they turn against the Lord. All of this takes us to the end of chapter 32.

In chapter 33 Moses blessed the tribes of Israel. This was the last of his swan song.

In chapter 34 we have the death, the burial, and the divine eulogy concerning Moses.

**Concl:** And thus the ministry on earth came to an end. His voice was silenced, and no one even knows where he was buried. But the testimony of his life lives on in the Word, Moses, the man of God and the servant of the Lord. May the Lord enable us to hear Moses' words, to understand his heart, and to show the same compassion and concern for the people of God that was so evident in the life of Moses – and to follow the example of his life as he walked with and served the Lord so faithfully.