

Introduction:

- We begin a new series today through the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy
 - Deuteronomy is the fifth book of the Bible, also known as the “fifth book of Moses”
 - As Moses, carried along by the Holy Spirit, was the one who wrote down the first five books of the Bible
- This series I expect will take some time
 - We spent 27 Sundays together going through all six chapters of Paul’s letter to the Ephesians
 - Well Deuteronomy has 34 chapters!
 - But I don’t think we’ll go through the book with the minute detail with which we studied Ephesians
- This is an exciting series to embark on
 - We find the people of God, the people of Israel, not yet in the promised land — but they’re about to cross the river Jordan and enter into the land that the Lord had promised to them
 - The land that they would enter was a land of different tribes of people
 - And wild animals (Deut. 7:22)
 - And danger
 - And Deuteronomy is in many ways a sermon, or a series of sermons preached over one day
 - And here in this book, we’ll discover together afresh, God’s particular commitment to his people
 - And the joyous response of the people of God who have come to know such a great love
- The name of the book, Deuteronomy, is from the standard Greek translation of the Old Testament called the Septuagint.
 - The Septuagint authors did not use the traditional Hebrew naming system for books — the Old Testament was written originally in Hebrew and some Aramaic
 - But used some of the language found in the 17th chapter of Deuteronomy which speaks of a copy of the Law, or a second Law
- But the original title, as I believe all Hebrew titles for OT books work
 - Is the first words of the book, “These are the Words”
 - Or “The Words”
- What we’re introduced to here is the beginning of a Covenant document

- Those who have studied ANE Covenants will tell you that Deuteronomy takes the traditional form of a Covenant document
 - Peter Cragie, in his commentary on Deuteronomy, lists¹ the Treaty-Covenant sections present here in this book including:
 - Preamble
 - Historical Prologue
 - General Stipulations
 - Specific Stipulations
 - Blessings and Curses
- So this is a book of sermon addresses from Moses while yet a Covenant document between God and his people, while yet the divinely inspired Word of God for God’s people then and today
- Bill Arnold: “Safely avoiding any overstatement, we can say Deuteronomy crystallizes the themes and messages of the first four books of the Bible, while at the same time it establishes the theological foundation for the books of history and prophecy to follow.”²
- I remember being in a French language Bible study in the Beauce region of Quebec
 - And the French was such that I couldn’t understand much of what they were speaking of
 - But again and again, I heard the words “Benediction” and “Maladiction”
 - Blessings and curses
 - And I realized that they were studying Deuteronomy 27 & 28
 - Those words have stuck in my head because I want to know about the blessings for the people of God
 - And, living in the presence of God, what would bring his displeasure that I might avoid it
 - Benediction, maladiction
- Daniel Block writes concerning Deuteronomy, and I have no reason to doubt him,
 - That concerning the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus, “Deuteronomy was his favorite book.”³
- According to the Reformation Study Bible, Deuteronomy is quoted in the New Testament over 50 times, surpassed only by the Psalms and Isaiah.⁴
 - Deuteronomy is foundational for a grounded knowledge of Christ and how God’s people are to live in the presence of God
- There’s some sense in which there’s no book more relevant for the people of God here at Covenant Church than Deuteronomy

- Remember, the people of God here are on the banks of the Jordan river. On the other side of the river, there is the promised land, and there they are about to enter. The land they were to enter is the land of the Canaanite
 - Daniel Bock writes
 - “While the Canaanites posed a formidable military threat, the spiritual threat they represented was much more serious.”⁵
- Here, we gather as the people of God in worship,
 - But come Monday we’ll be scattered throughout the city
 - And there too, just like the threat facing Israel, we’ll find that there’s a spiritual danger that faces us in our lives
 - Will we continue to walk in the joyous presence of God
 - Or turn back, pressured by the society around us?
 - ““Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” (Deuteronomy 6:4–9, ESV)

Read Deuteronomy 1:1–5

Exposition I: God’s People can Draw Near to to the God who Speaks

- In verse 1, we see what could be considered a description of the entire book of Deuteronomy
 - “These are the words that Moses spoke”
 - And then the place that he spoke them
- If I were to ask you, what’s the best place setting in which to hear a sermon or a speech, where does your mind go?
 - But here we find Moses speaking to the people “in the wilderness”
 - But this is appropriate considering the life of Moses and the people of Israel
- Do you remember the life history of Moses? Where he was born and how he grew up?

- Moses was born in Egypt
 - At a time when Pharaoh was killing the Hebrew male babies
 - His mother placed him in a basket and into the Nile to hide and protect him
 - And Pharaoh's daughter found him and raised him as her own
- It's this Moses who then is commissioned by God to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt and into the promised land
 - "Let my people Go," God was saying to Pharaoh through Moses and his brother Aaron
 - And after all of the plagues and signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, the people do go out of Egypt, and they're near now to the promised land, just on the other side of the river
 - Yet still in the wilderness
- I find it so incredible that God is, through Moses, providing such words to the people
 - The peoples surrounding Israel were people who worshiped
 - But they did not worship the living God, instead they worshiped stones and wood, dead things
 - Silent things
 - Contrast this with the living God of Israel, who speaks that his people might listen and obey and therefore live
 - "Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him? And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today?" (Deuteronomy 4:6–8, ESV)
- Notice in verse 2 that it's "eleven days journey from Horeb by the way of Mount Seir to Kadesh-barnea"
 - Scholars will tell you:
 - Horeb is synonymous with "Sinai"
 - And Kadesh-barnea is the place where Moses was speaking these words
 - And scholars will tell you that it has been mapped, and 11 days is very doable from Sinai to Kadesh-barnea
 - But then look at verse 3
 - "In the fortieth year"
 - The people have been wandering in the wilderness for forty years,

for a journey that should have taken only 11 days

- And this forty years is because the people failed to trust in the Lord their God
 - Had they simply trusted, that wilderness wandering could have been avoided
 - But the people had refused to trust
 - So they were in the wilderness 40 years
 - And yet God did not abandon them
- When you consider the wilderness, in Biblical terms, what other place in Scripture comes to mind?
 - Of God in the wilderness?
 - Our minds go immediately, I imagine, to the Lord Jesus, who was in the wilderness for forty days and forty nights
 - And then was tempted by Satan
 - Do you remember the answers that the Lord gave in response to Satan's tempting?
 - The Lord Jesus quoted Deuteronomy twice and once a Psalm
 - If Jesus quoted Deuteronomy in his maintaining the honor of God against the temptation of Satan
 - Then we can be sure that knowing Deuteronomy will help us to do the same

Illustration:

School bell

- Young people don't know how good they have it!
 - The chime of the school bell calls the students into immediate, subconscious action
 - Here, the words of God call his people to draw near to him in faith and love

Application:

- God speaks that we might listen and obey and have life
- This is a God that we can draw near to, in Christ, confidently, with joy, by faith

Exposition I: God's People can Draw Near to to the God who Speaks

Exposition II: God's People Can Draw Near to the God who Speaks Particularly

- In verse 3, notice that Moses is speaking to the people of Israel
 - According to all that the Lord had given him in commandment to them
- What Moses is commanding Israel is from the Lord
 - And this sets apart the people of Israel
 - That they have such laws and such an intentional God
 - That the people might have a relationship with him
 - These laws God does not give to every people
 - But particularly to his people
- One aspect of the law that will stand out as we study Deuteronomy in the coming weeks
 - Is that the keeping of the law is, in the words of Daniel Block, a response of the people to the salvation that they have received.⁶
 - The law is not a means to salvation
 - But how the people respond to the salvation they have with God by choosing to walk with him in holiness, set apart in a particular way from the nations around them
 - The other nations are all the same in that they have not been set apart in holiness
 - But this nation, the people of Israel has been set apart and the law and their keeping of it shows the nations that they have been set apart
 - It is God who has set them apart and who loves them
- Does this not remind us of the Lord Jesus?
 - “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.” (John 10:27–28, ESV)

Illustration: Sheep following the voice of their shepherd, because they are his sheep!

Application:

- God speaks to us particularly by his Spirit, drawing us out, loving us, redeeming

us

- Let's listen to and follow his voice
 - This is a God whom we can draw near to

Exposition I: God's People can Draw Near to to the God who Speaks

Exposition II: God's People Can Draw Near to the God who Speaks Particularly

Exposition III: God's People Can Draw Near to the God who Speaks Passionately

- Notice in verse 4 that there are the names of two kings whom the people of Israel have defeated in their time in the wilderness
- I am continually amazed at God's dealing with people in their rebellion against him
 - After God rescued his people from Egypt, they did not trust him
 - And rebelled against him
 - And we might think God would say, well, that's enough of these people — let me find another
- But God is a God of steadfast commitment to his people, whom he has chosen to put his love on
 - Thanks be to God that salvation is not based on merit
 - But on the free grace of God who redeems the captive and restores the broken to life
- God is passionate for his people and their salvation
- Now the WCF specifically says that God is without "passions"
 - But this refers to his unchangeableness

Illustration: The secret to writing, sitting down and doing it

Application:

- This is a God whom we can draw near to
- Because he has drawn near to us

Preach gospel!

The particular, passionate love of the Lord Jesus for us in his life, death, resurrection

5) In the name of Christ, and by His mercy and love, the minister shall call to partake in the sacrament all who humbly place their trust in Christ, are truly sorry for their sins, and by His help endeavor to lead a holy life.

(a) Those who have been baptized and have made profession of faith and have entered into communion with Christ in the visible Church shall be invited to participate. They should be encouraged to come in full dependence upon the grace of God in Christ, and upon the power of the Holy Spirit, and be reminded that in Christ they are made worthy to come.²¹⁹ They should be encouraged to examine themselves concerning their spiritual need, their faith in Jesus Christ, and their intention to be obedient to Him. They should be encouraged to pray for renewal and growth in their whole spiritual life.²²⁰

(b) Those who belong to Christ in the visible Church, and yet have doubts about partaking of the sacrament, shall be encouraged to come despite their doubts. For if they sincerely desire to be in Christ, and to be delivered from sin, that they might lead a holy life, the Lord's Supper has been appointed for their spiritual comfort and strengthening, that they might grow up into a full assurance of salvation.²²¹

(c) Those who are impenitent should be warned against partaking of the sacrament while still holding fast to their sins; lest they partake in an unworthy manner, and eat and drink judgment on themselves.²²²

(d) Those who are not members of the visible Church and others who should not partake of the sacrament may be invited to remain during the administration of the sacrament. They should be encouraged to meditate prayerfully upon the gracious offer of salvation in the Gospel and their own spiritual need.

1 Corinthians 11:23–32 (ESV)

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2. Arnold, Bill T. *The Book of Deuteronomy, Chapters 1–11.* Edited by E. J. Young, R. K. Harrison, Robert L. Hubbard Jr., and Bill T. Arnold. *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament.* Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2022.
3. Block, Daniel I. *The Gospel according to Moses: Theological and Ethical Reflections on the Book of Deuteronomy.* Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012. (2)
4. Sproul, R. C., ed. *The Reformation Study Bible: English Standard Version (2015 Edition).* Orlando, FL: Reformation Trust, 2015. (252)
5. Block, Daniel I. *The Gospel according to Moses: Theological and Ethical Reflections on the Book of Deuteronomy.* (11)
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