

Preachers' Gatherings 2019

Preaching **Deuteronomy**

Booklet 1
Introduction

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‘The LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and all your soul, and live.’ *Deuteronomy 30.6*

‘I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers.’ *Deuteronomy 30 v. 19, 20*

Key Verse: 6.3

Hear O Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the Lord, the God of your fathers, promised you.

Checklist of prominent terms

(see ‘Theology of Deuteronomy’ p25)

There are a few oft-repeated terms that catch the heart of Moses’ preaching in Deuteronomy. They encapsulate the responsibility of the preacher of Deuteronomy.

<u>Terms</u>	<u>NT //s</u>
The land God has given you (156x) (= their rest: ch.12 v.9f)	Heb.3&4; Eph.1.18-20, 3.14-19; Phil.3.12
The heart (33x)	Heb.8.10-12 fulfilling Deut.30.6
Obey (31x)	Phil.2.12; 1 Thes. 4.1-8; 1 John 5.2f
Love: God’s for us; ours for him (29x)	John 3.16; Matt.22.36-40; Gal.2.20
Covenant (25x)	Matt.26.28; 2 Cor.3.6; Heb. (17 esp 7.22, ch. 8-10, 12.24, 13.20
The one place of worship (20x)	John 4.23; 1 Cor.2.2; Gal.6.14; Acts 4.12
Laws usually plus commands & decrees (22x)	Matt. 5.17-20; 1 Cor. 9.19-23
Remember (16x), do not forget (10x)	Luke 17.15f; Ephesians 2.11-13

The Vision

For preachers to be thrilled by, keen to unfold and unleash, all-Deuteronomy; and to feel able to do so.

The Remit

‘To equip preachers, over four hours, to be able to start teaching a book of the Bible within two weeks.’

The Resource

Booklet 1 Introduction to Deuteronomy

Booklet 2 Sermon Resources

Our love for God, his for us

‘A commitment demonstrated in actions that serve the interests and pleasure of your covenant partner’

Daniel Block *Deuteronomy* p. 698

Deuteronomy at a glance: Summary of chapters

N = *material that is evidently narrative or editorial material.*
S = *where the text presents itself as the start of the next speech/sermon.*

I. Prologue: historical review - “So this time, listen!” (1-4)

a). Review of recent events, ch. 1-3

N Ch. 1. These are Moses’ words E of Jordan explaining God’s laws and teachings.

S “Remember Sinai & the promise you’ll occupy the land (I appointed judges) At Kadesh Barnea I said Enter; you wouldn’t trust; Lord angry ...

Ch. 2 ... so we spent 38 yrs in desert but then killed Sihon & took his land ...

Ch. 3 ... ditto to Og. Gave their lands to 3 tribes, the fighting men to help conquer Canaan. Which I prayed to enter, but Lord said ‘No’, ’cos of you.

b). Recall to the covenant

Ch. 4 Obey the laws so as to occupy the land & show the nations. Remember, & tell children, the Covenant. Involves 10 Com’ts, all the laws, and no idolatry.”

N Cities of refuge. Moses gave the people God’s laws and teachings E of Jordan.

II. God’s covenant with us (5-31)

a). Its core: the ten commandments, ch. 5

S Ch. 5 “Listen re covenant (v.6-21: preamble and 10 com’ts). At Sinai you were scared. So the Lord gave them to me for you to obey.

b). Its spirit: the love of God ch. 6-11

Ch. 6 The Lord our God is One. Love him with all your heart, soul and strength. Remember & teach your children.

Ch. 7 God will give you the land. Don’t make alliances. He’s keeping his promise to your ancestors. He loves and, on your obedience, will bless you. Don’t be afraid. He will drive out your enemies little by little.

Ch. 8 Obey! Man lives by ... every Word. God will bring you in; remember him.

Ch. 9 He will drive the people out not because you’re good but because they’re wicked. Remember you’re stubborn! I prayed for 40 days for you ...

Ch. 10 ... and cut new stones for the repeat 10 commandments.”

N 10.6-9 narrative re the journey and the appointment of the Levites

S “Worship and love God. Love the foreigners among you.

Ch. 11 (not your children but) you saw what God did to the Egyptians. Obey and love him and see the blessings ... or not (v.26)! Your choice.

c). Its stipulations: The Law expounded, ch. 12-26

Specific laws for Israel the church-nation state in the promised land

Ch. 12 *These are the laws.* Destroy pagan places: *the Lord will choose one place* for your worship sacrifices: which enjoy! Never eat blood. Eschew pagan practices.

Ch. 13 Don't follow even a prophet if he leads you away from the Lord: Death.

Ch. 14 No pagan mourning or unclean food. Tithe produce and eat it (or what it buys on sale) at *the one worship place*. Every 3rd year give it to the Levites and poor.

Ch. 15 Every 7th year cancel debts. Generous to the poor. Release slave every 7th year unless they wish to stay. 1st born animals are the Lord's: eat them at *the one worship place*, but not the blood.

Ch. 16 Celebrate Passover, Harvest, Shelters at *the one worship place*. Judges must be just.

Ch. 17 (justice ctd) Idolatry: death penalty. Needs 2+ witnesses. Take difficult cases to *the one worship place*; priest + judge decide. Standards for a king.

Ch. 18 Offerings for Levites and priests. Beware pagan practices. God will send prophets like me; test them.

Ch. 19 Cities of refuge. Ancient boundaries. 2+ witnesses.

Ch. 20 Principles of war.

Ch. 21 Unsolved murders. Marrying a POW. Rights of first-born. Death to rebellious son. Don't leave body on tree overnight: that's cursed.

Ch. 22 Care for stray animals. No cross-dressing. Spare a mother bird. Railings round roofs. Virginity on marriage. Adultery, fornication, rape.

Ch. 23 Whom to exclude (eg Moabites) from worship. Clean military camps. Runaway slaves; keep your vows; plucking neighbour's crops.

Ch. 24 Divorce. No remarriage. Don't oppress or infect neighbour. Punish criminal but not their family. Leave produce for the poor to glean.

Ch. 25 Punishment in civil cases. Don't muzzle ox. Levirate marriage. Honest scales. Exterminate the Amalekites for what they did vs God and you.

Ch. 26 At Harvest, remember Egyptian bondage. Tithe. *Keep these laws.*”

d). Its sanctions: curses or blessings, ch. 27 & 28.

NS **Ch. 27** (Moses + elders) “As enter the land, write these laws on stones. Sacrifice on Mt Ebal.”

NS (v. 9) (Moses + priests) “You’re God’s people; obey him.”

NS (v. 11) (Moses) “6 tribes on Gerizim (blessings) and 6 on Ebal (curses); Levites to recite the curses (detail given), people to say Amen

Ch. 28 ... and the blessings on Mt Gerizim. But if disobey: defeat, sickness, exile”

e). Its acceptance: choose life, ch. 29 & 30.

N **Ch. 29.1** Editorial note: here are the terms of the Covenant

S (v.2-29) (Moses) “You saw the exodus miracle but you still don’t *see* it. You’re here to enter into covenant. Don’t go your own way, lest disasters. There *are* secret things, but the Law is revealed.

Ch. 30 Turn to the Lord and he’ll restore and return you here even from exile (ch. 28.end) and circumcise your hearts. It’s not too hard: choose life (the Lord is your life), be faithful to him, and you’ll live long in the land.

f). Its living preservation: re-read regularly, ch. 31

Ch. 31 Joshua will lead you. Be courageous.”

N Moses’ charge to Joshua; wrote Law, to be read every seventh year. Lord spoke to M of their unfaithfulness & to J to be courageous. Keep Law beside ark.

III. Epilogue: Moses’ handover and death (32-34)

a). Moses’ song, ch. 32

S **Ch. 32** Song of Moses. “Take these words to heart: they are your life.”

N 32.48-52: God speaks. Moses is to die on Mt Nebo, not enter the land.

b). Moses’ blessing, ch. 33

S **Ch. 33** Moses’ blessing. “Happy you: no God is like your God.”

c). Moses’ death, Joshua succeeds him, Moses’ epitaph, ch. 34

N **Ch. 34** Moses saw the land, died, buried. 120y.o; his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated. Joshua took over. M was peerless: Lord spoke to him face to face, w. incomparable miracles.

Why preach through Deuteronomy?

1. It concerns a key stage in the life of Israel. They have been given their constitution. Now they are about to live it out as a nation settled in their own land for the first time. The last time they were there they were 70 people.¹ Now they were – what, a million? – who had been plodding and grumbling for 38 years: a whole generation who had not personally seen Sinai or heard the book of the law. They were not ‘getting it,’ not *seeing* what it was all about (29.4). They regularly tuned God out and would be tempted to tune in to the local religions, as they had on the way there (Num.25.1). Is this not timely? Deut. shows how a man of God addressed such a situation and laid the foundation of the state of Israel.
2. Deut. is a key book in Scripture. ‘No OT book has exerted a greater influence on the formation and development of both Jewish and Christian thought and practice than Deut. Its doctrine is foundational within the OT. The prophets recall its teaching and challenge their contemporaries with Deuteronomy’s clear and unequivocal demands. Kings were reminded of its high ideals and leading officials rehearsed its truths in times of national crisis.’² ‘Since this book offers the most systematic presentation of theological truth in the entire OT, we may compare its place to that of Romans in the NT. A comparison with John may be even more appropriate. Just as John wrote his Gospel after several decades of reflection on the Death/Resurrection of Jesus, so Moses preached the sermons in Deut. after almost four decades of reflection on the significance of the Exodus and God’s covenant with Israel.’³
3. Deut. informs NT faith. The UBS Greek NT lists 195 Deut. quotations in the NT. Andrew Thomson lists 45 giving them in both Deut. and NT order. Raymond Brown says, ‘its quotations are found in 17 NT books & over 80 references from its pages are found within the NT literature.’ This is appropriate because there is a real equivalence between their situation in life and ours. God has rescued them with a mighty salvation, claimed them as his own; and they are poised to receive all that he now has for them in the land/territory/rest they are about to take possession of. The same is true of us. What he did for them in physical history he does for us in spiritual fulfilment; their journey is a metaphor for the life of faith.

¹ Gen.46.27

² Raymond Brown p. 13

³ Daniel Block p. 25

4. Deuteronomy is great preaching. Moses is so involved with his people. 'It is not because of your righteousness that the Lord your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stiff-necked people.' More happily, 'Impress these commandments on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road.' If you are sensitive some of his approach will make you think about yourself: 'It's your fault I am not to be allowed to enter the land' (1.37). Is that a balanced comment, or the inspired record of a hurt and imperfect servant getting back at the people? It's a great book for the preacher.
5. Whether obedience is legalism is a hot topic just now. Deut forces us to consider how to preach OT law (see 'how not to preach Deut,' below).
6. It cannot but make more tender our appreciation of God. The doctrine of his impassibility can lead us to portray him in a way that implies lack of feeling. Well, consider texts such as these: 'When the Lord heard what you said, he was angry and solemnly swore 'not a man of this evil generation shall see the good land.' 'Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep my commands so that it might go well with them and their children!' 'It was because the Lord loved you that he redeemed you from slavery.'⁴
7. Deut. provides a thought-provoking, open-ended programme for organising the whole life of a nation politically, socially and religiously. It has much to offer any society and certainly ours as the Christian values that formerly shaped it are being lost and increasingly opposed. See 'Theology' section below, page 28, no. 5.

⁴ 1.34, 5.29, 7.8

The Historical Setting

In around 1446BC⁵ the Hebrew people escaped from slavery in Egypt. They started back to Canaan, the land God had promised to their forefathers. They crossed the Reed Sea and ‘Pharaoh’s army got drowned.’ What a rescue. God led them south to Mt Sinai (= Horeb) and gave them their constitution (Ex. 20). They were to be a nation under his reign by a covenant typical of the period, the ten commandments being its core laws. Led north again to Kadesh Barnea they declined God’s forward call. They were condemned to wandering round the Sinai peninsula until that whole untrusting generation had died out. All, that is, except Joshua and Caleb and their families, and Moses. A journey of 11 days had taken 38 years through lack of trust in God and fear of the difficulties.

The re-entry into the promised land, in addition to being something God had promised, was to serve at least two larger purposes: one of salvation, one of judgment.

Around 2000 BC God had made a promise to an extraordinary man, Abram from Ur of the Chaldees, the low-lying area immediately north of the Persian Gulf. God swore to make his descendants into a great nation, protect them and through them bring blessing to all the peoples on earth (Gen.12.1-3). Our Lord Jesus is, of course, the heart and source of that blessing. In fulfilling that larger, redeeming purpose God would give them the land of Canaan (Gen.12.4-7).

His second purpose was ecological cleansing and ethnic judgement. What about the current inhabitants? Canaan had been occupied from Abram’s time till then by a group of peoples who had increasingly engaged in practices that defiled the land and disgusted God (Lev.18.24-28; Deut. 18.9-13). But he was not prepared to act until their sin had reached its full measure (Gen.15.16). ‘Until it was *right* to invade, God’s people must wait, if it cost them centuries of hardship. This is one of the pivotal sayings of the Old Testament.’⁶ The sin of the Amorites had now reached that foul nadir. It was time to cleanse the land and destroy its inhabitants. The judge of all the earth acts justly.

Thus, in fulfilment of purposes far more significant than they appreciated (and isn’t that true of all of us?), forty years after the exodus from Egypt we find the Hebrews just east of Canaan and being prepared to conquer and

⁵ Or possibly 1292-ish. The cross-checking of Egyptian and middle eastern dates is extremely complex and scholars differ in their final conclusion.

⁶ Kidner on Gen.15.16.

occupy it. Had they learnt from the 40-year delay? What would they now make of the factors that had frightened them, the size of the inhabitants and the defences round their cities? Faith is always spelt r-i-s-k; would they act in faith this time? A word was needed, and that word is the book now before us.

These issues are part of the service we owe our people when preaching through Deuteronomy. Like Israel we do not know the repercussions of the decisions we make: how much is at stake when we trust God or fail to, risk all or fail to, refuse temptation or fail to. Who knows what will happen if you stand up for Jesus when strongly tempted not to? Perhaps someone's salvation, or your congregation's or denomination's future, or the repercussions of your martyrdom or reputation as a Christian, or the faith of your grandchildren, or the honour of God, hang in the balance. Do I live *coram Deo*: before the face of God, under his gaze?

There was an interesting outcome of an IVF house-party at the Keswick Convention some years ago. An overseas student joined them but did not attend a single meeting. At the end of the week he asked to become a Christian. Why, they asked. He said he had watched their lives; he mentioned their cheerfully doing the washing up without being asked to. Whatever it was that made them like that, he wanted it. Our living is momentous, and it is that awareness that Deuteronomy is full of.

Introduction to Deuteronomy

Given the historical setting you could almost guess what message the people needed. Imagine the Scottish rugby team just before a match against the auld enemy. What is the head coach to say? 'I have chosen *you*, and I love every one of you. You have a frustrating tendency to take your eye off the ball and to incur unnecessary penalties, but on top form you are invincible. Remember the basics and the game plan. We want territorial possession. We want total mutual support. Townsend, Laidlaw, **Scotland**: think of the names at stake!'

Chosen; loved; penalties or invincibility, curses or blessing; gaining possession of the territory; the game plan; living by the basics; the names at stake: these are the key themes in Deuteronomy too, and expressed in similar spirit. It is a plea, a reminder of the basics, a pep talk, an appeal.

This should inform how we preach it. These sermons (that is what Deuteronomy is) are passionate, warm hearted, broken hearted, with a vision for the life of God's people. They are not dry moralising or theoretical explorations of legal niceties. They are engaging teaching and an appeal to be a certain kind of people through succeeding generations. If we are to be faithful to Deut., so must our sermons be. God has chosen us, in love. He has entered into a 'covenant of grace to deliver us out of our estate of sin and misery and to bring us into an estate of salvation by a redeemer' (Shorter Catechism qu.20). What kind of people are we going to be, for his sake who saved us?

That is how Jesus used it. It was Deuteronomy he quoted when faced with his life's three great temptations (Matt.4.1-11 and parallels). Deuteronomy when insisting on proper judicial procedure (Matt.18.16), marriage and divorce (Mark 10 and parallels). Deuteronomy gave him the greatest commandment, to love God (Matt.22.37).

It was the same for the early church. Deuteronomy gave them their realisation that Jesus was the promised Prophet (Acts 3.22f, 7.37). Paul found here that God's righteousness is not difficult by way of law-keeping, but close to us through faith (Rom.10.6-8). He quotes Deut. at least fourteen times, including his understanding of the cross 'cursed is everyone hung on a tree' (Gal.3.13), and the validity of ministerial support (1 Tim.5.18).

The title 'Deutero-nomy' means 'second law,' a title chosen through a mistake in translation. Deut. 17.18 says 'the (future) king is to write a *copy* of this law (and) read it all the days of his life.' (*italics mine*). The translators of the LXX wrote *second* instead of *copy*. The Hebrew title is taken, as always, from its opening words: 'these (are) the words,' i.e. of Moses, following on from the end of Numbers. But the LXX's translation error is not an unhappy one.

At its heart Deut. spells out what obedience to the ten commandments is to look like, in Israel the nation state, once they are in the promised land. The disadvantage of the title is that it obscures Deuteronomy's provenance as a 'before I die' appeal akin to John 14-17 or the deathbed blessings by Isaac and Jacob. Our sermon series must carry that feel of a biographical, personal matter of the heart.

Deuteronomy resources Christian doctrine and practice in equal measure. Wenham calls it 'arguably the most influential book of the OT. It brings the Pentateuch to a climactic conclusion. It is at the same time the first of the prophetic books, with the greatest of Israel's prophets, Moses, giving his last impassioned sermons to Israel before he dies'.⁷

Deut. combines features of two types of document characteristic of its era: suzerainty treaties⁸ and law codes.

- The suzerain was a king or state in control of another, but in which the vassal state still ran its own affairs. Examples are the Hittite treaties of about 1500-1200BC. The Hittites were based in the area of eastern Turkey and Syria. Their treaties boasted of the kindness of the Hittite king in allowing the vassal state such freedom, and then spelt out the relationship between them. Deut. has this feel because its great passion is the kingship of God over the people ('What a suzerain *we* have!!'), while making them responsible for how his reign worked out in practice.
- Law codes took up previous statutes, explained them and applied them to specific situations. An example is the code of Hammurabi, king of Babylon c. 1792-1750 BC. In similar vein Deut. spells out the way that the ten commandments – already given at Sinai (Ex.20) – are to be lived out in the forthcoming new situation when they will change from being desert wanderers to a nation state settled in their own land. They have already been expounded in the book of the Covenant (Ex.20-23) but that is shorter and less systematic. In Deut. Moses does a fuller job more specifically adapted to life in the promised land, now they are about to enter it. That combination is useful for the preacher. Thinking of salvation as *Jesus' suzerainty treaty* with us he is our Lord and master, but not so as to remove our autonomy. We are responsible for delivering our loyalty where the rubber hits the road: 'by constant use, training ourselves to distinguish good from evil.'⁹ The fact that our covenant with Jesus includes salvation *law codes*, OT and NT, reminds us that Jesus reigns over every aspect of our life and it is so

⁷ Gordon Wenham 'Exploring the OT, vol. I The Pentateuch,' IVP, 2003, p.123

⁸ Wenham 125f; and Wikipedia on 'suzerainty' is surprisingly good.

⁹ Heb.5.13 & 14

useful to have paradigm principles (as distinct from casuistic details) as we consider what to do in each successive situation. Like other behaviour codes – the Book of the Covenant (Ex.20-23), the sermon on the mount, Paul’s moral lists – Deut has a value found nowhere else.

Wenham compares the structure of Deuteronomy with these two types of contemporary document¹⁰ in a way I have modified slightly:

Table 1. Similarities to contemporary legal codes and treaties

Law code eg Hammurabi 1750BC	Deuteronomy Mostly Moses: 1430-20?	Treaty eg Hittite c.1500-1200 BC
Historical prologue	Prologue: 1-4	Historical prologue
	Reminder + appeal: 5-11	
Laws	Stipulations expounding the Law: 12-26	Treaty stipulations
‘Document clause’: store and read	(deferred till ch. 31)	‘Document clause’: store and read
	no equivalent: only YHWH	gods witnessing treaty
Blessings	Curses (long), blessings & curses: 27 & 28	Curses (long)
Curses (short)		Blessings
	Acceptance: 29, 30	
(equivalent of document clause above)	Preservation clause: store and read: 31	(equivalent of document clause above)
	Epilogue: succession and biographical note: 32-34	

Moses uses ideas and terms familiar to his generation to make substantial theological points, while modifying the structure of contemporary codes and treaties to serve his own purposes. The dominant message was that God had made a divine covenant with them, with applications of the Decalogue covering every part of life.

Shalom Paul identifies ten interesting ways in which Biblical law is distinctive;¹¹ it is worth considering how different is this approach to life and justice, from current worldviews; and how much it has to offer societies both secular and of other religions.

¹⁰ Wenham p. 125

¹¹ Shalom M Paul, *Studies in the book of the covenant in the light of cuneiform and biblical law*, Vet.Test. Supp. 18, Leiden, Brill, 1970 p. 37-42 and 100-101

1. Since law is an expression of God's will, all crime is sin.
2. Since the whole of life is under God's reign, man's civil, religious and moral obligations are interwoven in a single body of law (the Roman distinction between human and divine law is absent).
3. Since God is the legislator, Israel is responsible to him, not to any human ruler or legislative body. Uprightness, we might say, is unmediated.
4. Since God gives the law not to the king but to Israel (in Mesopotamia the gods gave the law to the king alone), every member of society is responsible to uphold justice and the rights of society: to observe the law and see that it is observed by the community.
5. The law is put in the public domain and re-read every seven years. It is prospective and prescriptive (in Hammurabi it was handed to professional jurists and you only learned of your rights in law after the crime was committed). Everyone knows where they are.
6. Law serves as an instrument of education. This was unique to Biblical legislation and meant that everyone understood their individual and communal obligations.
7. Since man is made in God's image, human life is sacred and whoever kills must give a reckoning for it.
8. Brutal and multiple punishments, common in other codes, are virtually absent. The limit is a life for a life, executed solely on the offender.
9. All men being created equal, class distinction is excluded in the meting out of justice. The *lex talionis* limits punishment to the offender and the measure of the injury (in other societies, the rich got away with paying off the injured party in a way denied to the poor).
10. Laws pertaining to slaves protected them and preserved their dignity. Eg his status is temporary, he must not be abused; he is not merely his owner's chattel.

S. Paul comments, law is an index of a civilisation and reflects the values of that civilisation.¹² In these days when Sharia law is increasingly advocated in UK, when the deliberations of family law courts are secret and their decisions not open to appeal, when you can receive a ten-year sentence for financial misdemeanour and only two for rape, when some 4000 prisoners are serving hugely longer sentences than their deeds deserve under the wicked and Kafkaesque IPP law (Imprisonment for Public Protection) despite Ken Clarke abolishing it, the values in Deut. ch. 5-26 deserve all the exposure we can give them.

¹² S. Paul op cit p. 1

Jesus in Deuteronomy

On the Emmaus road the risen Jesus ‘interpreted in all the Scriptures the things about himself.’ He started with ‘Moses and all the prophets’ (Luke 24.27): a traditional term for the Hebrew Bible. So the OT, in all its parts, points to Jesus. I’d pay to hear that podcast.

I’m guessing he showed the flow of God’s purpose and the pattern of his working (e.g. sin can only be dealt with by way of a death) more than individual texts. But we can be sure of one text he quoted because Luke’s next few pages, the first chapters of Acts, twice record apostles quoting it. Deut.18, said Peter in Solomon’s colonnade, promises a prophet like Moses, and Jesus is he. Stephen’s testimony spelt out the parallel further.¹³

Starting with those clues it seems to me that our Lord is present in Deut in at least four distinct ways.

1. The whole book breathes his spirit. It is an exposition of the love of God for his people and their love for him. When asked what was the greatest commandment, Jesus quotes Deut. 6.5. His spirit surfaces page after page:
 - Deut 8.3 = Matt.4.4 Man does not live by bread alone but by every word ...
 - Deut 6.16 = Matt.4.7 Do not put God to the test
 - Deut 5.29, 6.4 etc = John 14.15 if you love me you will keep my commandments

The UBS Greek NT lists 195 quotations or direct echoes. Deut. breathes Jesus.

2. I see two texts that are there directly to predict Jesus.
 - Deut.18.15-22 ‘I will raise up a prophet like you. I will put my words in his mouth.’ By NT times ‘The Prophet’ was expected and people wondered if Jesus were he. Seeing the feeding of the five thousand they said, ‘Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.’ His words at the Feast of Tabernacles convinced them: ‘When they heard these words, some of the people said, ‘This really is the Prophet.’ After the Emmaus road talk Peter confirmed it.¹⁴
 - Deut.21.23 ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree’ = Gal.3.13.

¹³ Acts 3.19-22; 7.37

¹⁴ John 1.21, 45; John 6.14; John 7.40; Acts 3.22

3. Patterns that Jesus ‘re-enacts and escalates to show their fulfilment or eschatological inauguration at a new level.’¹⁵

- As Stephen said in his martyrdom speech, Moses was sent by God to be his people’s ruler and redeemer, doing miraculous signs and receiving living words to pass on to them.¹⁶
- Hebrews 3.1-6 spells out the comparison and contrast. Moses was faithful as a son in God’s house, Jesus as Son over it. John likewise: ‘The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ’ (John 1.19).
- Moses provided the manna; Jesus is the true manna. The people were baptised into Moses¹⁷; Christians are baptised into Christ.
- Take Exodus-Deut. together and the pattern is irresistible. Both were goodly children, delivered from violent death as infants, called out of Egypt, left their palace to deliver God’s people from bondage, were rejected at first by their people, were meek and faithful, had people who wanted to stone them, finished the work God gave them to do, spoke with God face to face at unique depth, refused a kingdom, made the sea obey them, were the objects of a king’s wrath, went through years of silent training, mediated between God and people. ‘Moses wrote of me’ (John 5.46).
- 2 Cor.3.7-18 compares the ministries of Moses and the Spirit. Those who overcome will sing the (one) song of Moses and the Lamb (Rev. 15.3).
- Godly ministry is opposed: by the people against Moses, by the religious leaders against Jesus, and by those who love themselves in the last days. Hebrews calls us not to be like those who rebelled against Moses.¹⁸
- In Deut. we see Moses, like Jesus, outside the camp: denied the land that is promised to Israel. ‘There is something vicarious about his suffering’.¹⁹

Deuteronomy is full of Jesus.

¹⁵ Darrell Bock, *Luke*, Vol. 2, Grand Rapids, Baker, 1996, p. 1918 on Lk.24.27

¹⁶ Acts 7.35-37

¹⁷ John 6.32; 1 Cor. 10. 2

¹⁸ Deut.1.43; 2 Tim.3.8; Heb.3.16-4.1

¹⁹ McConville 478f

4. The new covenant mediated by Christ is clearly promised in the very book that expounds the first one. 30.6 still astonishes me. Moses prophesies that after the return from exile, 'The LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live.' When writing of the new covenant Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Hebrews take their language exactly from Deut. 30.1-8:

- The return from exile: 30.1-5 = Jer.31.23 = Ezek.36.24
- God will circumcise their hearts to love him 30.6 = Jer. 31.33 = Ezek. 36.26 = Heb.8.10
- There will be a new obedience: 30.8 = Jer.31.33 = Ezek.36.27 = Heb. 8.10,11
- Forgiveness and prosperity will follow: 30.9 = Jer.31.34-40 = Ezek. 36.29 = Heb.8.12

Particularly seminal is the death-resurrection pattern. Moses so loves the people, longs to enter the promised land; but his death must precede that new life. Tolkien puts the principle nicely. After destroying the ring of power Frodo heads for The Havens. Sam says 'I thought you were going to enjoy the Shire for years because of all you've done.' 'So I thought once,' says Frodo, 'but I've been too deeply hurt. I tried to save the Shire. It has been saved, but not for me. It must often be so, Sam, when things are in danger. Someone has to give them up, lose them, so that others may keep them ... But you are my heir. All that I had and might have had I leave to you.' He could have been writing about Moses or Jesus. Compare p. 27 note 40.

Authorship and Unity

Dates all the way from the 15th century BC to the fifth have been promoted for the penning of Deut. My chief response is: Deut presents itself as mostly spoken and then written by Moses, and forbids false witness.²⁰ Jesus put his imprimatur on this; Peter, Paul and ‘Auctor’ (the name used for the author of Hebrews) followed him.²¹ There is plenty of supporting evidence and argument.²² Moses is the author of the vast majority of Deut., just as it claims. The canonical Deut. includes editing, as my ‘N’ sections show. Some of this might have been Moses’ work. For other parts such as the account of his death and the assessment of his life we are not told the author. Brown suggests Joshua or Eleazar as possibilities, Andrew Thomson hazards Samuel.²³ As to unity, the design of the book has an unanswerable coherence (see ‘Structure’ below). This is a single, beautifully designed and executed opus.

Date

The date follows from the authorship. Moses spoke and wrote nearly all of Deut. towards the very end of his life. There is not enough evidence to be sure who did the final editing so the date of the canonical Deut. is unknown.

Moses the man

Imperfect, with anger and arrogance sometimes close to the surface²⁴, a man of action who found it difficult to delegate; consumed with passion for God, prayerful, holy²⁵; what an opportunity Moses presents for people to come to terms with who they are and what God can do through them.

²⁰ 1.1,5 and *passim*; 31.9 & 22; 5.20

²¹ Matt.19.7; Mark 7.10 etc (note that the words of Moses are simultaneously the commands of God); Acts 3.22 etc; Rom.10.5,19 etc; Heb.12.21. The doctrine of the perspicuity (clarity) of scripture, to which Deut. (6.6f) makes a contribution, supports this: eg Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* IVP 1994 p. 105-111

²² Most of the commentaries include discussion about the composition of the Pentateuch, documentary hypotheses included. Gordon Wenham’s p. 159-185 is a helpful overview. McConville p.38 comments ‘The assembly of Israel is the context that does best justice to Deuteronomy’s character as both written document and spoken word.’

²³ Brown p. 18 n.17; Thomson p. 9 n.1

²⁴ Ex.2.12; Num.16.5,20.6-12; Deut. 3.26, 32.51

²⁵ Ex.17.4, 32.11-14, 33.9-11,13,18; Num.14.10-20; Deut.34.10-12

The danger is of presenting two-dimensional portraits of the Biblical heroes. The author becomes entwined with the scripture in our thinking and we do not want to suggest, or our hearers to assume, that the Bible is flawed. Actually, the perfection of holy scripture is enhanced if we represent its personalities accurately. Nowhere is this more relevant than in respect of Moses. Take these two accounts of the same event:

<p>The Lord said to Moses, Send some men to explore the land of Canaan which I am giving to the Israelites. From each ancestral tribe send one of its leaders. So at the Lord's command Moses sent them out (Num.13.1f)</p>	<p>I said, the Lord has given you the land. Go up and take possession. Then all of you came to me and said, Let us send men to spy out the land and bring back a report. The idea seemed good to me so I selected twelve of you (Deut.1.20f)</p>
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It is interesting how memory puts a spin on an event. The spying out of Canaan was an unhappy, divisive occasion that led to Israel wandering in the wilderness for 38 years. Those years included grumblings that led to real heartbreak:

“The Lord said to Moses, “Take the staff, speak to that rock before their eyes and it will pour out its water.” Moses took the staff and said to them, Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock? Then Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff.

Water gushed out, but the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not trust me enough to honour me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them.”²⁶

His reaction – anger, arrogance, personal disobedience – disqualified him from entering into the promised land. I have painful memories of acting just like that, and I don't doubt that it has limited my usefulness although the Lord is forgiving. Look at the box again: a plain instruction from the Lord is remembered as a request from a stiff-necked and untrusting people, to which Moses acceded but rather wishes he hadn't. How holy is scripture! What a mixture we its servants are! How searching is its word! ‘Nearly all the wisdom that we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves.’²⁷ Observing Moses took me to Jesus.

²⁶ Num.20.2-12

²⁷ Calvin, *Institutes* 1.1.1

Structure of Deuteronomy

It is often said that Deuteronomy consists of three sermons. As indicated by the marginal Ns and Ss in 'Deuteronomy at a glance' above (p. 5-7) however, the book has nine sermon sections (S) divided up by ten narrative or editorial insertions (N).²⁸ I do not think 'three sermons'²⁹ is how Deut presents itself, so much as an autobiographical narrative of preaching in the territory of Moab. Moses is saying, 'This is how we got here. Here are lessons to learn from that, instructions, and appeal as we go on into the land.' It is important nonetheless to reflect its genre as preaching as well as biographical narrative.

The structure below is an analysis of the function that each successive section of Deut. is performing.

I. Prologue (1-4)

- a. Review of recent events (ch. 1-3)
- b. Recall to the covenant (ch. 4)

II. God's Covenant with them (5-31)

- a. Its core: the 10 commandments (ch. 5)
- b. Its spirit: the love of God (ch. 6-11)
- c. Its stipulations: The Law expounded (ch. 12-26)
- d. Its sanctions: penalties and blessings (ch. 27, 28)
- e. Its acceptance: vassal to sign (ch. 29, 30)
- f. Its preservation: to be read every seven years (ch.31)

III. Epilogue (32-34)

- a. Moses' song (ch. 32)
- b. Moses' blessing (ch. 33)
- c. Moses' death, Joshua succeeds him, Moses' epitaph (ch. 34)

Each section makes its own pastoral contribution and opens up its own preaching responsibility.

²⁸ Harman's statement (p. 11) that narrative occurs only in 1.1-5 and parts of ch. 29, 31-34 is not quite accurate, as shown by the marginal 'N's on my p.5-7.

²⁹ Eg Wenham p. 125

Flow of themes in Deuteronomy

Ch. 1-4: Historical review → so this time, listen

1.1-5 Heading: these are the words Moses spoke east of Jordan

Ch. 1.6-3.29 Review of journey Horeb (Sinai) to Moab:

- 1.6-2.1 their parents' generation
- 2.2-3.29 their generation

Ch. 4.1-40 Appeal: listen this time!

Ch. 4.41-43 Cities of refuge east of Jordan

Ch. 5-11: Loving God with all your heart

4.44-49 Heading: here are the law and stipulations Moses gave them

Ch. 5 God has made a covenant of salvation with us ...

Ch.6 ... so love him back and teach your children to also.

Ch. 7 He chose you simply because he loves you.

Ch. 8 Don't let your prosperity in the promised land make you proud –

Ch. 9 - remember you're a 'golden calf' people,

Ch. 10 , and circumcise your hearts.

Ch. 11 Obey & love him, and know the blessings ... or not. Your choice.

Ch. 12-26: Life in the church-state in the promised land

12.1 Heading: these are the decrees and laws (*notice how wide-ranging*)

Ch. 12 Loyal worship

Ch. 13 No idolatry

Ch. 14 Clean and unclean foods, and tithes

Ch. 15.1-18 Releasing slaves, cancelling debts

Ch. 15.19-16.17 Firstlings and festivals

Ch. 16.18-18.22 Leaders: judges, priests, kings, prophets

Ch. 19.1-22.9(or 12) Protect life, esp human

Ch. 22.13-23.18 Gender and exclusion issues

Ch. 23.19-24.7 Property law

Ch. 24.8-25.4 Protect the disadvantaged

Ch. 25.5-19 Various additional laws

Ch. 26 Concluding section

Ch. 27-34: Weighing it up, closing the deal, staying faithful, moving on

27.1-4 Heading: Prepare the altar on Mt Ebal

Ch. 27 & 28 Weighing it up: the cost of disobeying, the blessings of obeying

Ch. 29 & 30 Closing the deal: embrace this covenant, choose life

Ch. 31 Staying faithful: nation to re-read the law every 7 years.

Ch. 32-34 Moving on

- Moses' song: ch. 32
- Moses' blessing: ch. 33
- Moses' death, successor, epitaph: ch. 34

It is not difficult to make 21st century messages from such.

Several excellent recent commentaries structure 6-26 or 12-26 by which of the ten commandments each section is expounding, so I next discuss this possibility.

Additional note: do chapters 6-26 (or 12-26) follow the ten commandments in order?

Ever since Stephen Kaufman proposed in 1978-9³⁰ that ch. 12-26 expound the ten commandments in order, an almost irresistible thought, some commentators have used that correspondence as the basis for dividing out the central section of Deuteronomy. The trouble is, it is quite hard to match the passages to the commandments. Commentators match different ones. They allocate the first commandment for example to, respectively, ch. 6-11, ch. 7-11 and ch. 12. See tables 2 & 3 below.

They unanimously confess the difficulties caused by doing so. For example:

- Thomson says, "Some of the laws don't seem to fit naturally under the heading of each commandment, leading to some debate as to whether this outline is real or imagined."³¹
- Harman, having identified for example that ch. 14 is an exposition of the third commandment, says, "The contents of ch. 14 seem at first sight to be totally disconnected either with the third commandment or with the immediate context here in Deuteronomy."³²

Tables 2 & 3 indicate the level of correspondence between the order of laws in the ten commandments and in Deuteronomy ch.6-26.

³⁰ S. Kaufman *The Structure of the Deuteronomical Law* Maarav 1, 1978-79, p. 105-58 (*Maarav* means Western; it is 'a journal for the study of north-western Semitic languages and literatures')

³¹ Thomson p. 15 n. 3

³² Harman p. 160

Table 2. Attempts to match Deut. 6/7-26 or 12-26 to Decalogue order

Commandment	Kaufman	Harman	Thomson	Manchester 'some commentators'
1. No other god: loyalty	} } 12	6 – 11	7-11	12
2 No idol: worship		12.1 – 13.18	12.1-13.18	13
3 Name in vain: reverence	13, 14	14	14	14
4 Remember Sabbath*: rest	15.1 – 16.17	15.1 – 16.17	15.1-16.17	15, 16
5 Honour f + m: respect for authority	16.18 – 18.22	16.18-18.22	16.18-18.22	17, 18
6 no murder: respect for life	19.1 – 22.8	19.1 – 22.8	19.1-22.8	19-21
7 no adultery: respect for marriage	22.9 – 23.18	22.9 – 23.14	22.9-23.14	22,23
8 not steal: respect for property	23.19 – 24.7	23.15 – 24.7	23.15-24.7	} } 24-26 }
9 no false witness: truthfulness	24.8 – 25.4	24.8 – 25.4	24.8-25.4	
10 not covet: contentment	25. 5-16	25.5 – 26.15	25.5-26.19	

*Except in the ten commandments (ch. 5), Deuteronomy does not mention the Sabbath, but it does spell out the annual cycle of festivals, and 7th year issues.

Table 3 analyses the match by the content of each section:

Table 3. Does Deut. expound the ten commandments in order?

Commandment	Kaufman	Does the Deut. content correspond? (note repetitions)
1 No other god: loyalty 2 No idol: worship	} } 12 }	Destroy the current places of worship. Worship in the place God gives, not anywhere you please. Eat all the meat you want where you live, but not the blood & not the tithe. Don't ask after the locals' gods.
3 Name in vain: reverence	13, 14	Avoid false prophets, pagan mourning, unclean food. Eat tithe at the worship place. Give to Levites & poor every 3 rd year.
4 Remember Sabbath: rest	15.1 – 16.17	Cancel debts every 7yrs. Generous to the poor. Release slave every 7 th yr. Firstlings: eat at the worship place. Passover, Weeks, Tabernacles (but not Sabbath!).
5 Honour f+m: respect for authority	16.18 – 18.22	Judges. No Asherah poles. Sacrifices without flaw. Death to idolaters. Law courts. The king. The priests' share. No child sacrifice or sorcery. The prophet.
6 no murder: respect for life	19.1 – 22.8	Cities of refuge. 2 witnesses. Principles of war, incl. re trees. Unsolved murders. Marrying a POW. Rights of firstborn. Death for rebellious son. Body on tree. Straying ox. Transvestism. Birds' nests. Parapet roof.
7 no adultery: respect for marriage	22.9 – 23.18	Mixtures: seeds, ploughing, clothes. Tassels. Virginity, adultery, fornication, rape, father's wife. Exclude castrated, illegitimates, Moabites. Clean camp. Asylum seeker. Shrine prostitute.
8 not steal: respect property	23.19 – 24.7	Not charge interest. Pay vows. Hand reaping OK. Divorce certificate. Military duty. Millstones as security. Kidnap.
9 no false witness: truthfulness	24.8 – 25.4	Leprosy. Security for loans. Fair wages. Die for own sin. Gleanings for the poor. Punishment. Don't muzzle working ox.
10 not covet: contentment	25. 5-16	Levirate marriage. Brawling: if she grabs his testicles, cut her hand off. Honest weights.

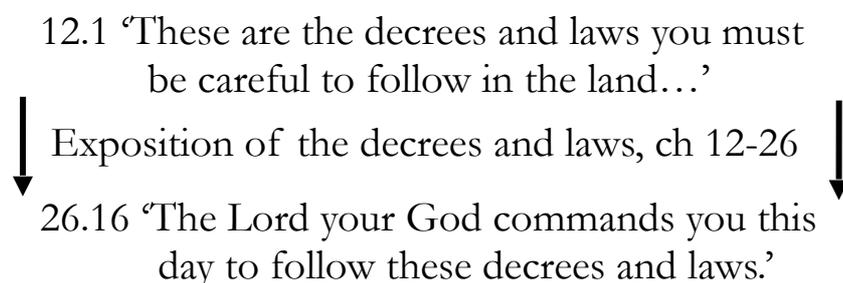
If Moses did intend Deut. to follow the order of the Decalogue rigorously, it is clearly difficult to identify which correspondence he had in mind. There is

some general match with the order of the ten commandments, and some apparent non-correspondence, but the basis of arrangement in detail seems obscure. The variety of classifications in the commentaries reflects the same problem.

I have an additional difficulty with including anything before ch. 12 in such an analysis as Harman and Thomson do. The text itself identifies Ch. 12-26 as one unit intended to expound the Law, while ch. 5-11 are exhortation / motivation / appeal to respond to God's love. 'There is clearly a significant break in the text at the end of ch. 11, where exhortation gives way to the collection of laws,'³³ says Millar.

Mayes adds, re the closing verses of ch. 11, 'These verses are intended as a conclusion to the whole of ch. 1-11, in that after all the history and exhortation they bring Israel to the point of decision. The verses are also a prelude to what follows, since the decision which is now set before Israel concerns obedience or disobedience to the law which is about to be proclaimed.'³⁴

It is not just the change of theme that separates 1-11 from 12-26. The text provides an *inclusio* starting at 12.1, finishing at 26.16-19 and marking the passage as a unit:



In addition, ch. 27 'echoes the passage immediately preceding ch. 12, namely 11.26-32.' In fact the three parts of that short passage are now repeated in reverse order:

11.26-28	Blessing and curse pronounced in Moab
11.29-31	Ceremony of blessing and curse on Gerizim & Ebal
11.32	Call to obey commands
ch. 12-26	
26.16-19	Call to obey commands
ch. 27	Ceremony of blessing and curse on Gerizim and Ebal
ch. 28	Blessing and curse pronounced in Moab

³³ Millar p. 44

³⁴ A.D.H. Mayes *Deuteronomy* (New Century Bible) 1981 p. 217 quoted Millar p. 45

‘This structure has the effect of enclosing the laws of ch. 12 – 26 between exhortations to obedience’³⁵

Although we can reckon that every law and ethical decision is related in some way to the Decalogue, therefore, I end up underwhelmed by the proposal to *structure* Deut 6-26, 7-26 or 12-26 on this basis. Block comments that the attempt is forced.³⁶ Millar writes of Kaufman’s attempt, ‘There are two major problems with this scheme. Nowhere in ch. 12-25 is the Decalogue actually quoted, nor are the connections with it always terribly clear; (although) he shows that many of the laws fall within this Decalogue order.’³⁷

Millar then expounds ch.12-26 for forty pages and concludes - ch. 12-26 are extremely complex! ‘While we detected order in places, even order which corresponded very closely to that of the Decalogue, there are other parts of the collection where we could detect no rationale whatsoever behind the arrangement.’³⁸

It seems to me that in Deut. we see the same kind of ‘faithful yet free’ hermeneutic of the Decalogue, that Paul shows re the OT. The preceding books of the Pentateuch are so much the way Moses thinks that he just preaches on them, omitting and adding as the Holy Spirit guides. Hence the omission of marriage, death, contract and direct damage to property from OT law, and the additions that we see in Table 3 which have no obvious source in the successive commandments which some say is being expounded. Surprisingly, Deut. does not even have legislation about the Sabbath.

Michael Fishbane comments, ‘Biblical law collections may best be considered as prototypical compendia of legal and ethical norms rather than comprehensive codes.’³⁹ That guides our interpretation too, and the pastoral role we set for our sermons. Deut. is teaching us how to think, not covering every circumstance and telling us how to behave there. I conclude that it is better to structure Deut. in a way that respects the change of theme at 12.1 and the *inclusio* marking ch. 12-26. Hence my offered structure.

³⁵ McConville p. 387

³⁶ Block p. 170

³⁷ Millar p. 106-108.

³⁸ Millar p. 145

³⁹ M. Fishbane *Biblical interpretation in ancient Israel* Oxford 1985 p. 95 quoted Millar p. 105.

Theology

Most of the divisions of theology lie within Deuteronomy's pages: God, Scripture, man, sin, redemption, the work of the Holy Spirit (in gifting Joshua with wisdom); almost nothing directly about the Redeemer apart from the Prophet whom God will raise up.⁴⁰ But some theological themes are especially prominent and at least one (no. 5 below) is Deuteronomy's particular contribution.

1. *The interpersonal immanence of God* (his close involvement with creation). Sinai frightened the people about God's *transcendence*. 'I stood between the Lord and you because you were afraid of the fire,'⁴¹ thunder and darkness. Deut. brings home God's *immanence*, his active involvement with us. He directed when they stayed, when and where they were to move on. When they said he hated them it made him angry. He personally watched over and provided for them during the desert wanderings. He spoke regularly in detail to guide their relationship with each successive nation, teaching them his reasons. He remembered his promises to their parents and saved them from slavery because he loved them.⁴² Deut. is a living demonstration in history of God having a will for our lives. He wants our conversation if we have anything to say to him (do we?).
2. *The need for a new heart*. Deut. is often called pessimistic about human nature but the truth is it combines great realism (and repetition on the matter) with the divine solution to that problem. Rather like Paul's letter to the Romans ... We are stiff-necked⁴³, reluctant and will never be any better unless God circumcises our hearts to love him with heart and soul.⁴⁴ See the Luther quote in the sermon notes on ch. 20 in Booklet 2.
3. *The momentousness of God being in covenant with us*. It is not a matter of two equal friends gentlemanly agreeing a joint venture. God declared his covenant with them, a covenant of love; it was he alone who made it. He is faithful and will stick to it. It is unilateral in establishment but mutual in

⁴⁰ 18.15ff; Matt.17.5?; Jn 6.14, 7.40; Acts 3.22. But there is plenty that reflects the coming Jesus. Moses is the servant *par excellence*. He is denied what is promised to Israel: there is something vicarious about his suffering. The lines to Isaiah's servant songs and Luke 4 are clear (McConville 478f).

⁴¹ Deut 5.5; Ex.19.16-25, 20.18-21

⁴² Respectively, 1.6; 1.27 & 34; 2.7; 2.19 & 24; 7.8; Psalm 139 esp v. 16.

⁴³ 9.6 & 13; 10.16; 31.27

⁴⁴ 1.28; 5.28f; 8.14; 10.16; 15.7; 17.17; 30.6; Jer.31.31f; Ezek.36.26f; John 3.1-16

accomplishment. Follow its terms carefully therefore, for it comes with curses attached as well as blessings. Violation of it is a terrible betrayal so remember it, remind yourself of it, bear it actively in mind, teach your children about it. Its terms *are*; they will affect the future for good or ill of your life and reputation and even God's.⁴⁵ Revere the power of this living reality.

4. *Ecclesiology*. Deut. emphasises two features.

- (a) The way the corporate and individual realities of being God's people coexist. Moses addresses all-Israel (that expression 10x): we are in this together. Yet each individual is responsible to play their part, teach their children, ensure justice, be kind to the needy, receive a new heart.
- (b) Our continuity with the past as God's one people. To those born after the events Moses says, 'It was not with your fathers that the Lord made this covenant but with us, with all of us who are here alive today. For the Christian, we were there when they crucified our Lord, hence Rom. 6.8-14, Gal.2.20 and the present memory and Real Presence as we meet at his table.

5. *Politics, civil order, war, international relations*. Here is Deut.'s most important individual contribution to Biblical theology and the most difficult to do justice to. It is why I included war and the YHWH war (ch. 20) and the ordering of society (ch. 24) in my recommended sermon series. 'In its style, structure and content (Deut.) constitutes a single harmonious concept designed to organise the whole life of Israel under the one God Yahweh ... Deut. should be seen, in the context of the ancient world, as a radical blueprint for the life of a people, at the same time spiritual and political, and running counter to every other social-religious-political programme.'⁴⁶

You can see the implications all through my 'Deuteronomy at a glance' on ch. 12-26 above (p6), but for example here are Raymond Brown's headings for ch. 24. A godly society will protect women (1-4), newly married couples (5), debtors (6,10-13,17), vulnerable people (7), the community (from infectious diseases, 8 & 9), the innocent (16) and the weak (17-22).⁴⁷ That is what a God-obeying counter-culture will look like.

⁴⁵ 4.13 & 23, 5.2, 7.9, 8.18, 17.2, 29.9, 29.21 & 25, 6.6-12, 4.5-7, 29.22-25.

⁴⁶ McConville p. 20, 21.

⁴⁷ R. Brown p. 227-241; his chapter includes 25.1-4.

McConville summarises, ‘Deut., or at least a form of it, is the document of a real political and religious constitution from a pre-monarchical period ... It aims to circumscribe the powers of the king ... the offices actually prescribed are those of judge, priest and prophet in their separate roles. But over all these is the people itself, addressed typically in the laws in the singular, ‘thou.’ (Mcconville mentions its difference from the prevalent ANE royal-cultic ideology in which the king is chief executive in cult and political admin). It establishes the role of Torah in Israel, for which the people as such is responsible ... it makes justice the essential principle of all administration (16.20); and it shows that the ultimate judge, and guarantor of justice even beyond the reach of the courts, is Yahweh himself ... It finds a real religious and political programme ... on the other hand it leads into an open future, not married to any one religious-political framework ... it is essentially about the nature of God, and what it means for life in human society.’

6. *Righteousness and justice, the foundation of God’s rule.* 16.18-20, the heading and foundational principle of 16.18 – 18.22, contains two unique usages: the double-word ‘justice-righteousness’ (*mishpat-sedeq*, 18) is how officials must judge (or rule: *shaphat*) the people; and the doubled ‘righteousness-righteousness’ (*sedeq sedeq*, 20) shall you pursue.’ The words merge, but righteousness is especially a character trait or principle of right action while justice is the embodiment of it, the resultant behaviour. Between these verses, v. 19 adds ‘do not twist justice or show partiality.’ It could not be more emphatic.

This section is Deuteronomy’s treatment of the political and religious organisation of Israel. The two unique doublings indicate how critical is the principle. The passage appoints four offices of leadership side by side: judge, king, priest and prophet. None is supreme over the others; if there is any priority it lies with the judge who administers God’s law, and the prophet who speaks God’s word.⁴⁸

The words are so central, and vital, and Messianic,⁴⁹ that I quote Tim Keller at length in the Appendix, page 40.

7. *The words for God’s law.* Three are often used together (‘commands, decrees and laws’ 6.1, 7.11, 8.11, 26.17); two, translated ‘stipulations’ and ‘requirements’ in NIV, are less common. The words overlap in meaning but each makes its own contribution to a believer’s relationship with God.

⁴⁸ Wright p. 203

⁴⁹ eg Isaiah 42.1-3 on the vocation of Messiah has ‘justice’ 3 times in 4 verses.

- Commands, *mitzvah* (singular collective noun) carries the thought of the senior's right to rule. It is used of father to son, a king to his servants. It is also the word for the terms of a contract or the conditions of a covenant. The ten commandments are such (Ex. 24.12). At 'Bar Mitzvah' ('son of the commandments') you become in your own right one of the community with whom the Lord has entered into covenant. Living by the mitzvah gives insight and full life (5.29, 6.2, 8.1). The wisdom it gives, evokes respect from others (4.5f). Obeying it opens the door to the fullness of God's *hesed*, his grace (5.10).
- Decrees or statutes, *huqqim*. The verb means to engrave, hence decree, hence govern. The sense is often indistinguishable from *mitzvah*. Used with *shamar* (to observe, keep) indicating believers' calling to take notice of them in order to be diligent in our obedience.
- Laws or judgements, *mishpatim*. Mishpat is the action of a judge or governor including legislative, executive and judicial functions. Whereas we probably think of obeying the law, the ancients thought of themselves as ruled by their seniors. Compare the role of the modern Sheikh among the Bedouin. So the *mishpatim* come from God (1.17); hence Shalom Paul's point (p.15f above) about crime being sin.
- Stipulations, *edutim* (6. 17 & 20). *Edut* is to bear witness, as in 'the ark of the testimony.' It is God's own affirmation of his person and purpose, and includes a note of warning. Its essence in the NT is the proclamation of the Gospel.
- Requirements, *mishmeret* (11.1), same root as *shamar* above: to pay careful attention to, to observe, to guard as in 'guard the Gospel.'

Together these five terms add up to *Torah* (1.5): instruction, guidance. God's laws set out the behaviour that expresses God's being in covenant with us: the love between us, the actions that serve his interests and pleasure. He is our father and king; they display his character and constitute the sceptre by which he reigns over us. Many are the benefits that accrue – our wisdom, others' respect, God's grace poured out. Of course we want to know them well, obey them carefully: given the rewards, who wouldn't?

How *not* to preach Deuteronomy

There are many dangers in preaching OT law. Three ways of not doing it are:

- **As mere history.** It would be a shame if we stopped at exegesis and simply left our hearers better informed about the norms for living in 1300 BC.
- **As moral oughtness.** Even worse would be to moralise, leaving us feeling ‘I’d better try harder.’ Especially considering it includes capital punishment for rebellious sons who remain steadfastly impenitent ...
- **By direct transfer to 2019.** We are not the church-nation Israel living in 13th century BC. Their judicial laws have expired. We do not have the sacrificial system as the process of atonement. We have left those ceremonies behind.

Nonetheless Deut. has a tremendous amount to offer the 21st century Christian. In order to gain that benefit we must instead go by way of Jesus Christ: hence my “→Jesus → 2019” sequence when exploring the value of the successive sections of Deut. in Booklet 2.

What then is the role of Deut. law in a Christian’s life? The question deserves larger treatment but here is a brief flow of thought.

1. Adam and Eve simply lived that way in the Garden of Eden, doing God’s perfect will and not needing absolution: they had no failures to atone for.
2. After the Fall, (a) God gave law codes: not covering every circumstance, but as collections of paradigmatic moral and legal norms. (b) The laws also provided for atonement for when people failed. (c) Since Israel lived as a body politic he gave them social and judicial laws for that time and place.
3. Jesus fulfilled all these laws on our account.⁵⁰
4. Thanks to Jesus we are not under them as a way to God’s favour. But they are all true and valuable.⁵¹
 - The atonement ones are true. Jesus left them torn down like the temple curtain; but they teach us wondrously about absolution through Another’s vicarious death.
 - The body politic ones are true. They expired with that body politic and Jesus lived the ones that applied in his time and age (‘Render unto Caesar...’), but they teach us wondrously about building a society under God’s reign.

⁵⁰ John 1.17; Rom.3.21

⁵¹ Matt.5.17-20; 1 Thes.4.3-8; 2 Tim.1.9, 3.16

- The moral ones are true. Jesus fulfilled the law for us and they have been done away with as the way to get on God's good side; but they teach us wondrously about the right way to live.

So God has made obsolete the first, Mosaic covenant we expound in Deuteronomy. As a way to God's favour, it has been done away with. But in the new covenant what has he written on our hearts? – those laws.⁵²

- We love the OT picture of atonement, so full of the Gospel.
- We love the OT programme for 13th century BC Israel living in Canaan among those neighbours. Even though much of its detail was only for that community, it is full of insight as we seek to be 21st century AD Christians living in Scotland among *our* neighbours.
- We love the moral guidance that finds an echo in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

Our love for him is *law*-shaped.⁵³ The laws he gave us are *love*-shaped.⁵⁴

Sinclair Ferguson puts it beautifully from 1 Cor.9.20, 21. We are not under the law (*hupo nomos*). Yet nor are we outside the law (*a-nomos*). We are 'in-law of Christ' (*en-nomos Christou*). We married our heavenly Bridegroom and love our new in-law, God's law.⁵⁵

We feel some of this delight as we read Deut. Ch. 24, for example: let a society protect women, the newly married, debtors, the vulnerable. Of course! 'How lovely is your law,' we say. 'Let's do what we can to have society live like this.' Deut. has a role in Christian thinking, as 2 Tim.3.16 says.

5. What of the death penalty they impose, e.g. on a persistently, impenitently rebellious and profligate son (21.18-21)? The NT revokes the Law's sanctions while affirming its values: see John Murray quotes below, p37.
6. How are we going to keep these laws, live this lovingly? The Holy Spirit is given to us for this purpose: 'And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that *the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us*, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.'⁵⁶

⁵² Hebrews 8.7-13, as promised in Jeremiah 31.31-34.

⁵³ John 14.15-21; 1 John 2.3-6, 5.2-4

⁵⁴ Matt.22.35-40. My double phrase is modified from Sinclair Ferguson *Devoted to God* Banner of Truth 2016 p. 162.

⁵⁵ Op cit p. 185

⁵⁶ Rom. 8.1-4 in the context 7.1 – 8.17

Moses' achievement via Deuteronomy

1. He taught God's people to know themselves. As Socrates replied to his prosecutors, 'The unexamined life is not worth living.' Calvin made the same point on the first page of *The Institutes*: the first part of wisdom is to know God and ourselves. Thanks to Moses, Israel knew that they were loved, stiff-necked, in covenant with the sovereign Creator, with a hope and a better-covenant future.
2. He set up a way of running a country with values that remain the basis of Western civilisation: applied to their then context as a church state, but flexible enough to benefit every state in any era.
3. He ensured the just military cleansing of a morally filthy land, but only when the iniquity of the locals had reached its nadir; and instituted a spiritual foundation for its future health.
4. He brought a whole nation to lay claim to God's promises for the next stage in their history, and so took forward God's purposes for his generation.
5. Most important of all, he established within the Hebrew and now the Jewish and Christian soul for all time that God is in momentous, whole of life, ineradicable *covenant* with us.

Bibliography

See also the selected preaching bibliography in Booklet 2

Daniel Block *Deuteronomy*, NIV Application Commentary, Grand Rapids, Zondervan 2012 is modern, thorough and he writes plainly if a little long-winded. Its great strength is the threefold structure 'original meaning; bridging contexts; contemporary significance' so it is doing the task we set ourselves as preachers. Block really works to achieve that contemporary significance although he doesn't always satisfy or convince me. The ethical treatment of animals, for example, is very important but I'm not certain it exhausts the contemporary significance of 12.15-28.

Raymond Brown *The Message of Deuteronomy: not by bread alone* IVP (BST series) 1993. An outstandingly useful expository commentary.

Peter Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, NICOT (Hodder) 1976 gives more space than most to 'typical' introduction issues (unity, date, authorship, the Hebrew text, theology, problems) and dialogues with alternative viewpoints. The commentary is detailed and thorough.

Allan Harman *Deuteronomy* Christian Focus 2001 is verse by verse detailed exegesis. Excellent resource for the exegetical stage of sermon preparation. Less good on structure and not enough for my liking on relevance for Christians; but what it does, it does excellently.

Simon Manchester's Bible readings at the Crieff Fellowship, January 2016, are a good resource. His comments are very concentrated but perceptive, detailed and with pastoral wisdom. His sermons on the book are helpful: online on the website of St Thomas's North Sydney, Australia.

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David F Payne *Deuteronomy* in the Daily Study Bible series, Edinburgh, St Andrews Press 1985 is OK but I wouldn't write home about it.

George Philip's daily Bible reading notes are canny as always and available on the Torrance Parish Church website: www.tpc.org.uk

James Philip's daily Bible reading notes are spiritually alive, admirable, with overview and theological insight. Available online at thetron.org/ Resources / James Philip Bible Readings

W.H. Griffith Thomas *Through the Pentateuch chapter by chapter* Eerdmans 1957 is an immensely suggestive bullet-point type of book with an analysis followed by 'the message for meditation' for every chapter in Gen-Deut. He catches the exact burden of each chapter as few do.

Andrew Thomson *Opening up Deuteronomy Day One* 2015. Absolutely brilliant. I nearly bought you copies rather than prepare this booklet. In only 136 pages he expounds the whole book with judgement, clarity and some contemporariness.

J.A. Thompson *Deuteronomy* IVP 1974. A steady, reliable exegetical guide.

Gordon J Wenham *Exploring the Old Testament vol.1 The Pentateuch* IVP Downers Grove 2003 is stimulating. A concise introduction and overview full of information, questions to consider and summaries He covers Deut on p. 123-43 but the whole book is valuable: eg on the theme, composition and rhetoric of the Pentateuch with brief discussions of alternative viewpoints.

C. Wright *Deuteronomy* NIBC Paternoster 1996. Profound, insightful; not easy to get hold of.

Additional reading on the Christian and OT Law

Sinclair B. Ferguson *Devoted to God* Banner of Truth 2016 p.161-188.

Love doesn't *replace* law; it *fulfils* it (cp Rom 8:3). Love gives motivation; the law, direction.

John Murray *Principles of Conduct* Tyndale Press 1957 p. 53-55 shows a distinction between OT and NT law. Murray takes two examples: one from Paul, one from Jesus. **(1)** In respect of sleeping with your father's wife (Lev. 20.11; 1 Cor.5.1f) the NT changes the punishment from the death penalty to excommunication. 'The gravity of the offence is established by the fact that the extreme of ecclesiastical censure is pronounced upon it. But the sanction ... in the OT economy is revoked. The sanction has been changed from the corporeal to the spiritual, a change which, by its very nature, underlines the gravity of the offence and therefore the abiding sanctity of the law violated by it.' **(2)** 'Our Lord instituted divorce as a permissible (but not preferred) recourse (Isaiah 50:1) for the innocent spouse who had been wronged by adultery on the part of the other (Matt.5.32, 19.9). By implication our Lord abrogated the death penalty for adultery. But ... the sin of adultery is not relieved of any of its heinousness as a violation of God's law. It is precisely because the spirituality of the law and the heinousness of its violation are more fully revealed that the abrogation of the penal sanction takes place.'

Westminster Confession ch. XIX, (XX)

I can't exactly recommend **Bruxy Cavey** (*Re*)*Union* Herald Press (Virginia) 2017 p. 139-162 but it is an attractive example of the 'Jesus has replaced law with love' position. I summarise above, p33, Sinclair's answer to that position.

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Appendix: Tim Keller on Justice and Righteousness

‘When I was professor at a theological seminary in the mid-eighties, one of my students was a young man named Mark Gornik. One day we were standing at the copier and he told me that he was about to move into Sandtown, one of the poorest and most dangerous neighborhoods in Baltimore. I remember being quite surprised. When I asked him why, he said simply, “To do justice.”’

‘It had been decades since any white people had moved into Sandtown. For the first couple of years there, it was touch and go. Mark told a reporter, “The police thought I was a drug dealer, and the drug dealers thought I was a police officer. So, for a while there, I didn’t know who was going to shoot me first.” Yet over the years Mark, along with leaders in the community, established a church and a comprehensive set of ministries that have slowly transformed the neighborhood.’

‘Although Mark was living a comfortable, safe life, he became concerned about the most vulnerable, poor and marginalized members of our society, and made long-term personal sacrifices in order to serve their interests, needs and cause.’

That is, according to the Bible, what it means to “do justice.”

Justice is Care for the Vulnerable

‘The Hebrew word for “justice,” *mishpat*, occurs in its various forms more than 200 times in the Hebrew Old Testament. Its most basic meaning is to treat people equitably. It means acquitting or punishing every person on the merits of the case, regardless of race or social status. Anyone who does the same wrong should be given the same penalty.’

‘But *mishpat* means more than just the punishment of wrongdoing. It also means giving people their rights. Deuteronomy 18 directs that the priests of the tabernacle should be supported by a certain percentage of the people’s income. This support is described as “the priests’ *mishpat*,” which means their due or their right. *Mishpat*, then, is giving people what they are due, whether punishment or protection or care.’

‘This is why, if you look at every place the word is used in the Old Testament, several classes of persons continually come up. Over and over again, *mishpat* describes taking up the care and cause of widows, orphans, immigrants and the poor—those who have been called “the quartet of the vulnerable.”’

‘In pre-modern, agrarian societies, these four groups had no social power. They lived at subsistence level and were only days from starvation if there was any famine, invasion or even minor social unrest. Today, this quartet would be expanded to include the refugee, the migrant worker, the homeless and many single parents and elderly people.’

‘The *mishpat*, or justness, of a society, according to the Bible, is evaluated by how it treats these groups. Any neglect shown to the needs of the members of this

quartet is not called merely a lack of mercy or charity but a violation of justice, of *mishpat*. God loves and defends those with the least economic and social power, and so should we. That is what it means to “do justice.”

Justice Reflects the Character of God

‘Why should we be concerned about the vulnerable ones? It is because God is concerned about them. It is striking to see how often God is introduced as the defender of these vulnerable groups.

‘Don’t miss the significance of this. When people ask me, “How do you want to be introduced?” I usually propose they say, “This is Tim Keller, minister at Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City.” Of course, I am many other things, but that is the main thing I spend my time doing in public life.

‘Realize, then, how significant it is that the biblical writers introduce God as “a father to the fatherless, a defender of widows” (Psalm 68:4-5). This is one of the main things He does in the world. He identifies with the powerless. He takes up their cause.

Justice is Right Relationships

We must have a strong concern for the poor, but there is more to the biblical idea of justice than that. We get more insight when we consider a second Hebrew word that can be translated as “being just,” though it usually translated as “being righteous.” The word is *tzadeqah*, and it refers to a life of right relationships.

‘When most modern people see the word “righteousness” in the Bible, they tend to think of it in terms of private morality, such as sexual chastity or diligence in prayer and Bible study. But in the Bible, *tzadeqah* refers to day-to-day living in which a person conducts all relationships in family and society with fairness, generosity and equity. It is not surprising, then, to discover that *tzadeqah* and *mishpat* are brought together scores of times in the Bible.

‘These two words roughly correspond to what some have called “primary” and “rectifying justice.” Rectifying justice is *mishpat*. It means punishing wrongdoers and caring for the victims of unjust treatment. Primary justice, or *tzadeqah*, is behavior that, if it was prevalent in the world, would render rectifying justice unnecessary, because everyone would be living in right relationship to everyone else. Therefore, though *tzadeqah* is primarily about being in a right relationship with God, the righteous life that results is profoundly social.

‘Rectifying justice, or *mishpat*, in our world could mean prosecuting the men who batter, exploit and rob poor women. It could also mean respectfully putting pressure on a local police department until they respond to calls and crimes as quickly in the poor part of town as in the prosperous part. Another example would be to form an organization that both prosecutes and seeks justice against loan companies that prey on the poor and the elderly with dishonest and exploitive practices.

‘Primary justice, or *tzadeqah*, may mean taking the time personally to meet the needs of the handicapped, the elderly or the hungry in our neighborhoods. Or it could mean the establishment of new nonprofits to serve the interests of these classes of persons. It could also mean a group of families from the more prosperous side of town adopting the public school in a poor community and making generous donations of money and pro bono work in order to improve the quality of education there.

‘When these two words, *tzadeqah* and *mishpat*, are tied together, as they are over 36 times, the English expression that best conveys the meaning is “social justice.”

Justice includes Generosity

Many readers may be asking at this point why we are calling private giving to the poor “justice.” Some Christians believe that justice is strictly *mishpat*—the punishment of wrongdoing, period. This does not mean they think believers should be indifferent to the plight of the poor, but they would insist that helping the needy through generous giving should be called mercy, compassion or charity—not justice.

‘In English, however, the word “charity” conveys a good but optional activity. Charity cannot be a requirement, for then it would not be charity. But this view does not fit in with the strength or balance of the biblical teaching.

‘In the Scripture, gifts to the poor are called “acts of righteousness,” as in Matthew 6:1-2. Not giving generously, then, is not stinginess but unrighteousness, a violation of God’s law. In the book of Job, we see Job call every failure to help the poor a sin, offensive to God’s splendor (Job 31:23) and deserving of judgment and punishment (v. 28). Remarkably, Job is asserting that it would be a sin against God to think of his goods as belonging to himself alone. To not “share his bread” and his assets with the poor would be unrighteous, a sin against God, and therefore by definition a violation of God’s justice.

‘Despite the effort to draw a line between “justice” as legal fairness and sharing as “charity,” numerous Scripture passages make radical generosity one of the marks of living justly. The just person lives a life of honesty, equity and generosity in every aspect of his or her life.

‘If you are trying to live a life in accordance with the Bible, the concept and call to justice are inescapable. We do justice when we give all human beings their due as creations of God. Doing justice includes not only the righting of wrongs but generosity and social concern, especially toward the poor and vulnerable.’⁵⁷

⁵⁷ from Tim Keller *Generous Justice* Hodder & Stoughton 2012. Online extract: page numbers not stated.

Overview of Deuteronomy - The Bible Project

Available on-line as a short movie, which builds up into an A4 printable page.

<https://thebibleproject.com> Click on Videos, then Bible Overviews: Old Testament

Or on a Videos about the Torah, then Deuteronomy.

Or on Posters, Old Testament, Deuteronomy.

For sermon resources and Bibliography, see
Preaching Deuteronomy **Booklet 2**.

For similar resources on other books of the Bible, see the Preachers'
Gathering website:

<http://preachersgathering.org.uk>

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