

(S) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this teaching series, you will have an opportunity to learn to know the Bible. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. Today we will learn how the book of DEUTERONOMY came into being, its character as a divine revelation, its division into five main parts. We will also learn about the Messiah, Jesus Christ, in the book of Deuteronomy.

POINT 1. THE ORIGIN OF DEUTERONOMY

First. The name of the book.

In the Hebrew Bible, the first five books are called by their beginning words. This book is called “words”. In the oldest translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek, it is called “The second law”. Another translation called it very suitably “the record of the repeated commands”.

Second. The writer, the date and the place of writing.

One. Deuteronomy was written by Moses.

The book itself states very clearly that Moses is the writer of this book. The book consists mainly of the speeches of Moses. The first three verses say, “These are the words Moses spoke to all Israel in the desert east of the Jordan ... in the fortieth year, on the first day of the eleventh month, Moses proclaimed to the Israelites all that the Lord had commanded him concerning them.” According to Deuteronomy 34:5,8 and Joshua 4:19, Moses died about one month before Israel crossed the Jordan and Israel mourned his death for one more month. Thus, the book of Deuteronomy was written during the eleventh month of the fortieth year after Israel’s departure from Egypt. This was about February 1407 B.C. Moses wrote the book over a period of about one month at the border of the Promised Land.

The book mentions Moses 36 times and in Deuteronomy 1:16 etc., Moses speaks in the first person. In Deuteronomy 31:9 we read that he himself wrote down the law. In the Old Testament, the author of the book of Chronicles (2 Chron 25:4; compare Dt 24:16) and in the New Testament, Jesus (Mt 19:7-9; Jn 5:45-47) himself and the apostle Paul (Rom 10:19) spoke of Moses as the author of the book of Deuteronomy. Words from the book of Deuteronomy are quoted 90 times in 14 books of the New Testament.

Two. Deuteronomy has a few later additions by an editor.

It seems that certain historical and archaeological remarks have been added by a later person. For example, in Deuteronomy 2:10-12 we read, “The descendants of Esau drove the Horites out, just as Israel did in the land the Lord gave them as their possession.” Likewise the remarks in Deuteronomy 2:20-23, 3:9,11 and 14. It is also possible that the introduction to the speech of Moses in Deuteronomy 1:1-5 was written by a person already living on the West side of the Jordan, but it is also possible that the East side of the Jordan was called Transjordan. Deuteronomy 31:22 says that Moses recorded his own song in Deuteronomy 32 and taught it to Israel. Although the blessing of Moses in Deuteronomy 33 was spoken by Moses, it was probably recorded by somebody else. The writer, who described the death of Moses in Deuteronomy 34, is not mentioned, but he could have been Joshua. However, no matter whom the Holy Spirit used to record the words written in Deuteronomy, according to 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:20-21, we Christians believe that the whole Bible was inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Third. The character of the book.

One. The book of Deuteronomy reminds, warns and exhorts.

Deuteronomy is a book written on the border between two worlds: *the past* of Israel in the desert of Sinai and *the future* of Israel in the Promised Land of Canaan. The purpose of the book is to remind Israel of their experiences in the desert and these experiences of the past are the basis for his warnings and exhortations with respect to the future.

Two. The laws in the book of Deuteronomy are directed to the general public.

The laws and commandments in the book of Deuteronomy are a repetition and sometimes even a supplement of the laws given before. But while most of the laws in the books of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers are more technical in character and regulate how the ceremonial (ritual) law must be applied by especially the priests and Levites, judges and leaders, the laws in Deuteronomy are clearly more popular in character and are directed to the general public of Israel. That is why the book of Deuteronomy had to be read in public to all the Israelites once every seven years (31:10-11).

Three. The ceremonial (ritual) laws in the book of Deuteronomy emphasise the importance of joy in their celebrations.

Deuteronomy 12:7 commands, “There in the presence of the Lord your God, you and your families shall eat and shall rejoice in everything you have put your hand to, because the Lord your God has blessed you.” The Israelites must include their whole family, servants and the Levites in their joyous celebrations (12:17-19).

Four. The ceremonial (ritual) laws in the book of Deuteronomy deliberately limit the extent of sacrifices.

While the other nations made sacrifices on every hill, Israel may only bring offerings at the one place God would choose in the Promised Land. This must have caused an enormous limitation of the number of sacrifices made by the Israelites, especially by those living very far from the tabernacle. This limitation concerning the sacrifices prepared Israel for the time when all sacrifices to God would be abolished! Because the religious-ethical demands were emphasised, we must conclude that the sacrifices were not the highest God expected from Israel.

Five. The laws in the book of Deuteronomy deal especially with the time Israel would be living in the Promised Land, Canaan.

In Deuteronomy 12:1 we read, "These are the decrees and laws you must be careful to follow in the land that the Lord, the God of your fathers, has given you to possess." Chapter 12 includes the centralisation of the ceremonial (ritual) worship. In contrast to the heathen nations, who had put up their idols all over the country and who sacrificed on every hill, Israel must have only *one place of worship* of the Lord. Israel must bring all their sacrifices and offerings, tithes and other special gifts to the place where the tabernacle would stand. Chapter 16 includes a law about the appointment of judges and officials in every town in which they would live in Canaan (16:18). Chapter 17 includes even a law for the king for the time when Israel would choose a king! (17:14). The purpose of these laws were to keep Israel from worshipping God in the way of the idolatrous nations around them.

Six. The book of Deuteronomy emphasises not the ceremonial (ritual) laws, but the religious-ethical laws.

While the laws in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers are more *legal-ritual* in character, the laws in Deuteronomy are far more *religious-ethical and practical* in character. These religious-ethical demands are for example the demands to love God, to fear God and to obey God. In Deuteronomy 6:5 God commands, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." In Deuteronomy 10:12-13 is written, "And now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to observe the Lord's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?"

Seven. The civil laws in the book of Deuteronomy are ethical rather than legal in character.

Chapter 16 commands that judges and officials must judge people *fairly*. They may *not pervert justice or show partiality*. They may *not accept bribes*, because bribes blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous. They must follow justice alone, so that they may be able to possess the Promised Land and keep on living in it (16:18-20). Chapter 17 commands that the king must read the laws of God in the Bible every day of his life, so that he may learn to fear and respect God, follow all God's laws carefully and will *not become conceited and arrogant* (17:18-20). Chapter 23 commands that the Israelites must *protect refugees* (23:15). It also commands that they may not charge their fellow-Israelites *interest on money* or on anything else that may earn interest (23:19). Chapter 24 commands that a recently married soldier must not be sent to war, but must be given one year leave in order to enjoy his marriage (24:5). The Israelites may not make their labourers *work overtime* or *withhold their wages*, but they must pay the wages of a poor man every day before sunset (24:14-15). The Israelites must *not oppress the poor*, but allow them to pick up a certain amount of their harvest (24:19). Chapter 25 commands that the courts must acquit the innocent and *condemn the guilty*. They must punish the guilty, but the punishment must be in the presence of the judge and the *punishment must not be cruel* (25:1-3). The Israelites may not even be cruel to their animals. They may not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain (25:4). Finally, chapter 27 warns, "Cursed is the man who withholds *justice from the alien, the fatherless or the widow*." And the curse means that they would not prosper in the Promised Land, but everything, they put their hand to, would fail. The Lord would punish them with diseases, droughts and agricultural pests. The Lord would punish them with war, oppression by enemies and captivity to foreign countries (28). Later history shows that all Gods promises and threats became a reality!

POINT 2. THE DIVISION AND MAIN CONTENTS OF DEUTERONOMY

The book of Deuteronomy may be divided into five main parts as follows:

The first part of Deuteronomy consists of chapters 1 to 4.

It consists of the first speech of Moses to Israel. Moses gives an overview of Israel's history from the time Israel left Mount Sinai until they reached the border of Canaan. For example, Chapter 1 records God's requirements for leaders of God' people. God's people may only choose men to be their leaders when they are wise, understanding and respected. These leaders must be chosen from every tribe, thus from every section of God's people (1:13). Chapter 4 warns that people may not add anything to God's commandments and also not subtract anything from God's commandments. God reveals his will and all people must obey God's commandments (4:2).

The second part of Deuteronomy consists of chapters 5 to 11.

It consists of the first half of the second speech of Moses to Israel. It includes reminders of the history of Israel and laws and exhortations of a general nature. The Ten Commandments and the command to love the Lord with all your heart and soul are in this section.

Chapter 5 teaches to walk in the way of the Ten Commandments (5:6-21,33). The first commandment is that people must only know and worship the God of the Bible. All the other gods of other religions are not the same as the God of the Bible. The second commandment is that people must not make any idols. That includes that people must not make an idol of their career or money or power or position. The third commandment is that people must not use the name of the God of the Bible to make vows, pronounce curses or to swear. The fourth commandment is that God's people must set aside one out of every seven days apart to rest from their daily work, to meet together with other people of God and to do good works. The fifth commandment is that people must honour their parents. The sixth commandment is that people must not kill other people. The seventh commandment is that people must not get involved in sexual immorality. The eighth commandment is that people must not steal anything. The ninth commandment is that people must not tell lies or give false testimonies. The tenth commandment is that people must not covet (desire) anything that belongs to another person.

Chapter 6 warns people not to test the God of the Bible (6:16). Chapter 8 teaches that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God (8:3). In chapter 10 God asks people to fear him, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve him with all their heart and soul and to observe all his commands (10:12-13). And he teaches them what God is like: The God of the Bible is mighty and awesome. He shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. He defends the cause of the fatherless, the widows and the foreigners (10:17-18). In chapter 11 he warns the people of Israel that they must fix the words of God in their minds and talk about them to their children or else soon perish from the land (11:16-20).

The third part of Deuteronomy consists of chapter 12 to 26.

It consists of the second part of the second speech of Moses to Israel. It includes a series of specific laws. For example, it regulates the civil laws concerning finding possessions that belong to somebody else, the wearing of proper clothing, the responsibility of building safe buildings and the punishment of a series of sexual violations. It regulates the civil laws concerning refugee slaves, prostitutes, kidnappers and lepers. It regulates civil laws concerning the newly weds, divorce and re-marriage. It regulates the civil laws concerning charging interest on loans, taking pledges on loans, taking securities on debts, paying wages to the poor, allowing the poor to harvest the leftovers on harvest fields and using only accurate weights and measures in commerce. And it regulates the civil laws concerning punishing only the guilty member of a family, acquitting the innocent and not depriving the aliens or orphans of justice. For example, in chapter 15 he teaches that there should not be any poor people among God's people. God's people must cancel debts, freely lend the poor what they need and set their slaves free. Chapter 18 warns that God's people should not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations that worship a god which they have devised themselves or that practice occultism (18:9-13). Chapter 23 teaches that God turns the curses of enemies into blessings for his people (23:5). Chapter 25 commands that all merchants should have accurate and honest weights and measures (25:15).

The fourth part of Deuteronomy consists of chapter 27 to 30.

It consists of the third speech of Moses to Israel. It consists of a command to Israel to write all the commands of the Lord on white plastered stones on Mount Ebal and of curses that must be read aloud to all Israel. It moreover includes the blessings for obedience and the curses for disobedience. Finally, it describes the renewal of the covenant on the plains of Moab, just before Israel crossed into the Promised Land and God's offer of life and death to Israel. God demands that Israel must choose. For example, God blesses every one who carefully obeys his commandments (28:1-2). God makes it very clear that he has not revealed everything about himself to people, but that he has revealed everything that is necessary for people to know God, have a personal relationship with God and follow God and his ways (29:29). God also makes it very clear that what he commands is not too difficult for any person to do (30:11).

The fifth part of Deuteronomy consists of chapter 31 to 34.

It consists of the last words of Moses to Israel. It regulates the successor of Moses, the reading of the law every seven years, and the prediction that Israel would rebel in the future. It moreover includes the song of Moses he recited to the whole assembly of Israel and the blessing of Moses he pronounced on all the Israelites before his death. In this song Moses said that the God of the Bible is the unmoveable Rock for those who trust in him. The works of the God of the Bible are perfect and all his ways are just. The God of the Bible is a faithful God who does no wrong. The God of the Bible is upright and completely just (32:4). Finally, it describes the death of Moses and his succession by Joshua.

POINT 3. THE MESSIAH, JESUS CHRIST, IN THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY

First. Jesus Christ is the prophet to whom everybody must listen.

In Deuteronomy 18:14-22, the Lord speaks about the coming Messiah, who would be a Prophet. He says, "I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. I will put my words in his mouth and he will tell them everything I command him (18) ... You must listen to him (15) ... If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account (19)". Deuteronomy not only prophesies the coming of Jesus Christ, but also warns that he must be obeyed.

Second. Jesus Christ memorised and used Bible verses from the book of Deuteronomy.

In Ephesians 6:17, the apostle Paul teaches the Christians about spiritual warfare. He says, "Take ... the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." The words in the Bible are powerful and whenever Christians use them, then the Holy Spirit works. In Isaiah 55:10-11, the prophet Isaiah says something similar, "As the rain and snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it." Jesus Christ memorised and used several verses from Deuteronomy: He used it in Matthew 4 *to repel* the devil and his temptations. He used it in Matthew 5 *to correct* the misinterpretation of the Ten Commandments. He used it in Matthew 15 *to expose* the false pretensions of human traditions. He used it in Matthew 18 *to teach* his disciples to confront a brother who sins with two witnesses. He used it in Matthew 22 *to teach* that loving God is the most important commandment in the Bible.

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

First. During the next week, read through the book of Deuteronomy chapters 18-25.

Second. See the workbooks "Go and build Christ's Church" and Internet on www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to "Discipleship training on the air".