

VISION FOR THE WORD OF GOD

DEUTERONOMY

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Name: The name “DEUTERONOMY” like Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers does not appear in the Hebrew Bible. The Hebrew Bible refers to this book as “Words.” The name “DEUTERONOMY” appears in the Septuagint or first Greek translations of the scriptures that sometimes used themes to give names to biblical books. The name of “DEUTERONOMY” means “second law” or “repetition of the law”.

Date of Composition: Exact date unknown. Estimates range from 1440-1400 BCE if Moses was the writer. Scholars now believe that the book of “DEUTERONOMY” in its present form emerged sometime between the eighth and seventh century BC and was primarily addressed to the northern kingdom, rather than Judah. Scholars believe that the absence of any reference to the Davidic dynasty or Jerusalem and the demand for a radical reform of the kingship point to the northern kingdom, as does Deuteronomy’s focus on Shechem (11:29-30; 27: 1-26).¹ Even though scholarship cannot confirm it, it is traditionally believed by some that the book of law found in the temple under King Josiah (II Kings 22: 8) was the book of Deuteronomy.

Author: Traditionally ascribed to Moses. However the commonly accepted view is that the same major traditions, particularly the priestly that are all present in the formation of the other books of the other four books ascribed to Moses are in the final form of Deuteronomy as it appears in our bibles.

Contents of the Book of Deuteronomy:

Chapters 1: 1-4: 43, Part One: Moses reviews history, 1:1-3: 29, the road from Horeb; 4:1-43, Transition to the law.

Chapters 4:44-11:32, Part Two: Moses preaches about the law, 4:44-6: 9, First principles; 6:10-11:32, a motivational introduction.

Chapters 12: 1-26:19, Part Three” Moses proclaims the law, 12: 1-14: 21, purity in worship; 14: 22-16: 17, life in the new land; 16:18-20:20, the structures of society; 21: 1-26: 19, interpreting traditional laws.

Chapters 27:1-34: 12, Part Four: The story continues, 27: 1-30, Covenant making; 31: 1-34: 12, Transition to Canaan.

Significant Themes:

Religious Crisis, due to syncretism and worship of Canaanite gods

Social crisis from shift of agrarian barter economy to money economy in which wealth could be accumulated and lent at interest caused critical social problems. Farmers who had worked their ancestral lands for generations were losing them to classes who were in a position to lend them money. Inability to repay debt meant enslavement of

¹ Harpers Bible Commentary, p. 209

farmers and their families. The gap between rich and poor was widening and the traditional institutions to protect the poor needed to be revitalized.

Political crisis to due corruption and bribery that often denied justice to the poor.

The time to tithe is now

Lessons for today

The social, economic and political milieu of Deuteronomy sound like déjà vu all over again.

Whenever a society either neglects or attacks its fundamental and foundational institutions that society is in deep trouble, from both external attacks and internal crumbling.

Deuteronomy called for a return to the law of God and cast a vision for a new future based upon obedience to the word God gave for the future of God's people.

Significant faith statement of Deuteronomy:

The Schema, Deuteronomy 6: 4