

Read Through the Bible One-Year

Week 9, March 1-6, 2010

Readings: Numbers 21 - Deuteronomy 2 and Mark 7:14 - Mark 11:19

Introduction to Deuteronomy

Eugene Peterson, *The Message*

Deuteronomy is a sermon—actually a series of sermons. It is the longest sermon in the Bible and maybe the longest sermon ever. Deuteronomy presents Moses, standing on the Plains of Moab with all Israel assembled before him, preaching. It is his last sermon. When he completes it, he will leave his pulpit on the plains, climb a mountain, and die.

The setting is stirring and emotion-packed. Moses had entered the biblical story of salvation as a little baby born in Egypt under a death threat. Now, 120 years later, eyesight sharp as ever and walking with "a spring in his step," he preaches this immense sermon and dies, still brimming with words and life.

This sermon does what all sermons are intended to do: Take God's words, written and spoken in the past, take the human experience, ancestral and personal, of the listening congregation, then reproduce the words and experience as a single event right now, in this present moment. No word that God has spoken is a mere literary artifact to be studied; no human experience is dead history merely to be regretted or admired. The continuous and insistent Mosaic repetitions of "today" and "this day" throughout these sermons keep attentions taut and responsive. The complete range of human experience is brought to life and salvation by the full revelation of God: Live this! Now!

The Plains of Moab are the last stop on the forty-year journey from Egyptian slavery to Promised Land freedom. The People of Israel have experienced a lot as a congregation: deliverance, wanderings, rebellions, wars, providence, worship, guidance. The People of Israel have heard a lot from God: commandments, covenant conditions, sacrificial procedures. And now, poised at the River Jordan, ready to cross over and possess the new land, Moses, preaching his great Plains of Moab sermon, makes sure that they don't leave any of it behind, not so much as one detail of their experience or God's revelation: He puts their entire experience of salvation and providence into the present tense (chapters 1–11); he puts the entire revelation of commandment and covenant into the present tense (chapters 12–28); and then he wraps it all up in a charge and a song and a blessing to launch them into today's obedience and believing (chapters 29–34).

Reflections and Questions for Thought

By Rich Alley

After reading the above listed chapters in the Old Testament and New Testament which spans over 1400 years one amazing observation comes to mind. **God has not changed and man has not changed.**

The books of Numbers and Deuteronomy detail the journey of Moses and the Israelites from Egypt to the Promised Land. The chapters in the book of Mark cover Jesus' travels and ministry throughout several regions in and around Israel and his eventual arrival in Jerusalem.

When I finished reading the book of Numbers I was reminded of the many road trips my wife and I made with our three children. The kids, instead of being excited and grateful to be on family

vacation, sightseeing, visiting theme parks and national monuments and seeing grandma and grandpa, would sit and complain about being hungry and thirsty, fight and argue about any little thing and grumble about how much longer they had to be in the car. Those road trips took about 3 or 4 days and there were only five of us.

Now try and imagine what God and Moses had to put up with. They had to deal with 2 million people for over 40 years walking around in the desert. But not only did they have to put up with the complaining, fighting and grumbling, they had to deal with much bigger issues like the people of Israel not trusting and obeying God's commandments, not making the right choices and not being faithful to the one and only God. So here in lies the amazing observation. **Nothing has changed.**

The good news is God has not changed. His promises, His commandments, His word has never changed. All he asks in return is for us to believe in him, obey his commandments and have faith. And no matter what, he will always be with us just like the people of Israel as described in the book of Numbers.

The bad news is man has not changed either. Just like the people in the book of Numbers man continues to complain, fight, and grumble. Man blames God for everything. Man still does not trust and obey God's commandments. Wrong choices are made more often than not. And our faith is weak at best. And what is really pathetic is unlike the Israelites in the book of Numbers we have the Bible. The Bible was written for us. The Bible did not exist back then. The Bible very specifically tells us what God wants from us and what we can expect from him. Yet we continue to sin.

Now fast forward 1400 years. Has anything changed? The short answer is no. God has not changed and man has not changed. The only tangible difference is Jesus. God sent his only son, Jesus, to earth to save us. He tells us just like God and Moses did 1400 years ago if we just believe in him, obey his commandments and have faith all of our sins are forgiven and we get to spend eternity with him in heaven. So what does man do? They want to kill him. (Mark 11:18) Amazing!!

Just think what the people of Israel could have had if they just simply believed in God. Jesus said in Mark 9:23, "***Anything is possible if a person believes.***"

And Jesus proved this time and time again throughout the book of Mark 7-11. He healed sick children, he healed the deaf, mute and blind, and he fed thousands of people with only a few loaves of bread and a few small fish.

Now fast forward another 2000 years. It is March 1, 2010. Has anything changed?

Study questions:

- 1) The answer, of course, to the above question is no. God has not changed and man has not changed. So what can you and I do about it? We know God and his word will never change but what about man? We know what happens if we don't.
- 2) Since the Bible is very clear on what God expects from us why can't we just do it? What specific action steps can we take in order change and become followers of Jesus?
- 3) Above I say, "Just think what the people of Israel could have had if they just simply believed. Well, that same question applies to us. Think about our world if we just believed and had faith in our Lord and Savior. Wow!!