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Lesson 74--Final Look-Back and How to Read the Bible,
especially Deuteronomy

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I. MODELING HOW TO VIEW SCRIPTURE

Only two views of ultimate [reality]: 1-level or 2-levels

Only two ultimate sources of [ideas]: creatures or Creator

Only two bases for [ethical judgments]: creatures or Creator

Only two religious [classes]: pagan or biblical (genuine biblical or those that "ape" the Bible)

Sections of Scripture must be interpreted within the overall biblical network of beliefs

Problems that make it very difficult to correctly interpret Scripture:

(1) "hop-scotch" Bible exposure--a fragment here; a fragment there

(2) "category two" illiteracy--the inability to understand what one reads enough to be able to discuss and contrast ideas of the Bible with pagan conceptions

(3) "top down" approaches that begin with one's favorite theological concepts

(4) mental laziness due to distractions of the world, the flesh, and the devil

II. HOW TO VIEW DEUTERONOMY

Viewed from within the biblical worldview or from within the pagan worldview?

A. Pagan worldview (Enlightenment "Higher Criticism," most university courses on the Bible, media echoes)

- Starting with the agenda of trying to avoid the consequences of [rebellion] against the Creator and Judge
- Then a denial of genuine verbal revelation
- Then the basic idea that Deuteronomy must have originated out of the [minds] of the ancient Jewish community, i.e., ultimately it is merely Jewish autobiography

B. Biblical worldview

- Starting with the agenda of seeking reconciliation with the Creator and Judge--looking for Him as [Savior]
- Then a recognition that Deuteronomy is His self-revelation that resonates with the heart created for it
- Then the basic idea that Deuteronomy must have ultimately originated out of God's [mind] and been communicated to Israel by historical actions and by prophetic revelation

III. HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND EFFECTS OF DEUTERONOMY

Since history is "His Story" Deuteronomy must be "connected" with its contemporary setting as well as with subsequent history all the way to our day.

A. Historical context

- As more Ancient Near East artifacts become known, the old higher critical model that Deuteronomy was a late (1st millennium BC) compilation of an "evolved" social justice has been refuted.
- Strong parallel structured international treaties now are known although major conceptual differences exist between their view of the source of justice and historical teleology (purpose): ANE pagan judges consistently omitted references to law codes in their decisions whereas Deuteronomy informed Israel's elders and judges; ANE treaties failed to show any awareness of historical progress toward an ethical goal or any concept of divine grace.
- The conservative view of Deuteronomy has been vindicated: it pictures the unique historical situation when "God actually ruled a nation"

B. Historical effects

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|--|
| Coherent exposition of the Yahweh-Israel <i>personal relationship</i> |
| Revelation of Israel's <i>special place</i> in history |
| Revelation of God's <i>condescension</i> to enter into a personal relationship with His creatures |
| Unilateral, not a parity, relationship implying a " <i>lord</i> "/" <i>servant</i> " role |
| Kingdom culture <i>constructed by divine providence & revelation</i> , not from random social dynamics |
| Example of how the Word of God was <i>taught</i> to lay people |

- Massive effect on Western law: inclusion of civil rulers under law; social justice = equal treatment under law based upon divine imagehood
- Forthcoming work on the role of the Ten Commandments in Western law by Dr. John Eidsmoe

IV. STRUCTURE OF DEUTERONOMY

Moses' teaching to the people, not just to the elders. Later compilation by prophetic or priestly editors (?).

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|---|
| 1:1-5 Introduction to God's spokesman, the 1 st Prophet Moses |
| 1:6-4:40 1st Exposition of the Torah = <i>motivation</i> to obey from (1) <u>past gracious actions</u> of Yahweh and (2) sovereign <u>destiny</u> of the nation (<u>future gracious actions</u> of Yahweh) |
| 4:41-49 Editorial comment on context of 2 nd Exposition of the Torah |
| 5:1-26:19 2nd Exposition of the Torah = <i>proper response</i> to Yahweh in heart and soul |
| 27:1-29:1 3rd Exposition of the Torah = <i>inauguration of the covenant</i> in the land |
| 29:2-30:20 4th Exposition of the Torah = prophetic fore view of <i>covenant performance</i> |
| 31:1-34:12 Handover procedures from Moses to Joshua and the new generation |

A. 1st Exposition: how their contractually-defined, God-nation relationship worked in the 1st generation.

1:6-18 Evidences of Abrahamic Contract fulfillment

1:29-46 Wasted years

2:24-25 Transjordanian "surprises"--flexibility in this relationship

4:1-8 Uniqueness of this relationship among mankind

- Blessings conditioned upon how they respond to Savior-Yahweh's lordship and this lordship relationship grounded upon prior elective relationship through Abraham

- Position in Abrahamic Covenant; Experience in Mosaic Covenant

B. 2nd Exposition: massive, long, detailed exposition of loyalty to Yahweh in heart and mind.

1. "Loving" the Lord with the "heart"

"love" = loyalty

"heart" = brain is far more connected to the heart than previously realized; ancients recognized the reactions of the heart to thought, exp. inner thought not observed by others and not always "under control" of the mind. Some recent research has shown that the heart actually is a rhythmic "manager" of the body.

POINT: Deuteronomy makes clear the primary role of the heart vs. traditional emphasis upon external force of law.

5:1-33 Mt. Sinai

Moses details the response of the sinful people to expose the reality of a God-nation relationship that must rely upon saving grace.

6:4-9 teach them

Primary educational authority = parents, not the state.

7:1-5 utterly destroy

Good-evil boundary always causes "war". Holy War issue: ethics of justice that one day will be imposed upon mankind at the return of Christ. Applied here in history on a very limited scale in order to express God's nature vs. fallen human society. No religion today is qualified to conduct holy war because Christ alone can do so.

8:1-10:11

Adversity test, Prosperity test, Self-righteous temptation. All battles of the mind.

2. "Loving" the Lord with the "nephesh"

Appears to be somewhat structured according to the 10 commandments.

12:1-7 destroy all the places

Can't have a unified nation under God with a diversity of gods being worshipped: 1st & 2nd commandments. Coming Kingdom of God will not have religious diversity.

13:1-5 false prophet

Revealed truths must be accessible to everyone's mind without distortion and perversion. Also, the truth must endure beyond Moses' day. The core principles are "static" because they didn't come from Moses' mind (liberal view of revelation).

14:1-16:17

Extensive economic structure in Deuteronomy based upon maximum freedom from totalitarian economic policies although there was a "totalitarian" ethical policy.

(1) flat tax rate = "fair" and "just" tax system

(2) tax on income, not on property or on sales = protects capital and doesn't discriminate against the poorer part of society

(3) standards of measurement in money (gold and silver) were protected against debasement of the currency

(4) charitable loans were managed without loss of dignity of the recipient and without causing endless indebtedness

(5) economic policy worked only because the ethical policy worked

16:18-18:22

Standards of behavior for all leaders in society--judges, kings, priests, and prophets. VERY historically important influence on Western civilization,

19:1-21:23

Protocols dealing with maintaining "social justice" in judicial and military procedures, including capital punishment (e.g., 19:15-21).

22:1-23:18

Protocols to protect social boundaries so that society has a rational structure. For example: the 8th commandment isn't narrowly confined to seizure of one's property; it also includes care for one's property (22:1-4).

23:19-24:7

Rules to protect "human rights", including the right of God to expect promises to be fulfilled (23:21-23) and the right of a poor recipient of a charitable loan to life-sustaining assets.

24:8-25:4

Rules concerning truly representing official authority, personal dignity, value of animals, etc. (24:16).

25:5-19

Rules concerning selfishness (e.g., 25:5-10).

C. 3rd & 4th Expositions (27:1-30:20): providing for historical continuity--perpetuation of basic structures that don't "evolve" through time.

V. CONCLUSION

What do we do with this information as NT Christians living in 21st century USA?