

**RCF Academy**  
**The Bible and a Just Society:**  
**Ancient Truths and Modern Applications**

**Topic 1:**  
**Introduction**

- I. **Introduction**
  - a. Who I am
  - b. How the class will run
    - i. You will read
    - ii. You will answer questions
    - iii. This is a conversation
- II. **What exactly will we be doing?**
  - a. Over the next 15 weeks we are going to unpack what the Scriptures have to say about the what a Godly political-economic system looks like
  - b. Worldview – the idea of bringing all things under Biblical authority but in area often overlooked
  - c. We are going to discuss a number of topics:
    - i. The nature of Man – James has done much of the work for us here in his class this summer
    - ii. Property and its importance
    - iii. Legal and Justice System
    - iv. Civil Government
    - v. The Role of Culture
    - vi. Economic Activity
    - vii. How Then Should We Live? How should we think?
  - d. Why are we doing this?
    - i. The Bible spends a lot of time on these issues – quite honestly many Christians do not
    - ii. For many Christians there ideas on government and economics are either
      - 1. Hank Williams Jr. View - Shaped by family tradition
      - 2. Star Wars View - Based on what feels right
      - 3. The View View – Read half an article and a headline and believe they know all there is to know
    - iii. There is much confusion about what the Bible says about these issues
      - 1. Scriptures are regularly used to support completely different views on

- a. Welfare and Charity
  - b. The nature and role of government
  - c. What is justice and how do we implement it
  - d. Business and work
  - e. Much more
- 2. Much conflation of civil government and Christian mandates
- 3. Young Christians seemed particularly confused
- e. How are we doing this?
  - i. The focus will be on the book of Deuteronomy
  - ii. Many other passages will be used as well but Deuteronomy is our anchor – why?
  - iii. It is Moses’ final statement to the nation of Israel on how to be a nation and how to be God’s people
  - iv. God was taking a nation of loosely related tribes whose most recent common experiences were slavery and desert camping/wanderings and turning them into not just a nation but as God’s example to everyone else of what a nation of priests set aside to God’s purpose looked like.
  - v. This was a huge task. So big it took a cleansing by death and 40 years a number of miracles and leadership by the greatest prophet of Judaism.
  - vi. Deuteronomy is a both a spiritual and political document. It is Suzerain Treaty, a treaty between a strong king and a lesser people, a vassal state. We have about 50 examples of these from archeology and history work from the ANE and they have a certain form.

Preamble - who

Prologue – history of relationship

Terms of the relationship

Public Reading

Divine witnesses

Blessings and curses

It is the only Constitution or nearest document that Israel has ever to this day

### III. **Why is Deuteronomy Important?**

- a. Every book on the bible is important and has its purpose(s) but it is possible that we can argue that Deuteronomy is a preeminent book.
  - i. Application to the church
  - ii. Application to individual Christians

- iii. Application to nations
  - b. It is the second most quoted book by Jesus, He quoted it 10 times, only exceeded by Psalms which He quoted 11 times, several as prophetic utterances on the Cross – so up until the Passion it was the most quoted book by Jesus
  - c. Third most quoted in the NT:
    - i. Psalms – 68 times
    - ii. Isaiah – 55 times
    - iii. Deuteronomy – 44 times
      - i. Given the prophetic nature of Psalms and Isaiah, Deuteronomy is a different purpose in many ways, for example...
      - ii. When confronting Satan in the Wilderness (Mt 4) Jesus relied on Deuteronomy
        - 1. 8:3
        - 2. 6:16
        - 3. 6:13
  - b. When asked the Greatest Commandment (Mt 22:37), Jesus quoted Deuteronomy (6:5)
  - c. Changing gears, Deuteronomy was the most quoted source during American revolutionary period, according to Daniel Dreisbach, a Constitutional Scholar with American University
  - d. “Dreisbach noted that scholar Donald Lutz has identified one third of the citations in the literature of the founders as being from the Bible. Deuteronomy was the most frequently cited book, cited more often than the most quoted secular source, Montesquieu’s *The Spirit of the Laws*. Dreisbach said Deuteronomy was frequently cited because it is “a digest of the books of Moses.” He said that the Pentateuch exerted an enormous influence on the colonists. It was used to develop political and legal institutions. Americans believed that Deuteronomy was a guide for them as it had been for Moses.
- 2. Many American Christians seem to have lost their focus in this area, Deuteronomy seems like a book that is designed to get us on track, as it did with Josiah when it was re-discovered, and focused and good place to spend some study time.

#### **IV. Deuteronomy’s Purpose:**

- a. It is an exposition and explanation and instructions on applicability of the Ten Commandments
- b. It has 613 laws that serve several purposes, some laws serve more than one purposes:
  - i. Laws unique to that time and place and people
  - ii. Purity/Holiness of the nation – lessons for the church
  - iii. Purity/Holiness of the individual – our need for a savior and how to live

- iv. Proper working of a nation state - largely applicable to this day
- v. It is the first systematic book – a complete statement on theology and righteous living, it can be thought of in many ways as a parallel to Romans.

## V. A few other details and points about Deuteronomy

- a. **Read Deut 1:1-2** - Location
- b. East side of the Jordan river probably not far from Jericho which would put the closer to the Dead Sea, south of the Sea of Galilee but the traditional place for Mt. Nebo is that area where Moses views the Promised Land at the end of Deuteronomy before he dies.
  - i. This is all in Moab, (modern Jordan) and was populated by pagans that worshipped Chemosh a false god who makes an appearance in 1 Kings 11 (Solomon's wives) and in 2 Kings 23 as being abolished by Josiah, once he rediscovered the book of Deuteronomy which had been missing for many years at that point.
  - ii. Paran – where Hagar and Ishmael settled after Abraham expelled them – Genesis 21- David spent time here in 1 Samuel 25
- c. Several other mentions – it was a known region for centuries and sometimes referred to a city on the area
  - i. Tophel – a town in Edom which was south of Paran so this sort of frames our area
  - ii. Laban – not sure
  - iii. Hazeroth – mentioned several times in Numbers location not definite
  - iv. Dizahab – the name implies there was gold in the area, which would make sense the gold of Egypt and others came from somewhere as did Solomon's later but its location is uncertain.
  - v. **Horeb** – some say (including Calvin) that Horeb and Sinai were the same which traditionally would put the mount in the southern area some agree but suggest that maybe it was a twin peak with different names, it is where Moses met God in the burning bush and where the Ten Commandments were delivered and where God made His covenant with the nation., it would be where Elijah fled too to hide from Jezebel.
  - vi. **Kadesh Barnea** – a town in southern Israel – Josephus identifies it as Petra in Jordan which would place it to the east of the traditional location which is closer to the sea and Egypt. Mentioned many times throughout the OT. If Sinai/Horeb is 11 days walk from here then the traditional placement of Sinai, in the deep south of the Sinai peninsula (Mt. Catherine) makes sense and it all fits together pretty well.

- d. The point of this verse is not to orient the reader, this is not really near where they were but to demonstrate the cost of disobedience. If they had (and their parents) had been obedient and loyal to God they could have entered the Promised Land within a few weeks of the Mt. Sinai experience. Kadesh Barnea is considered the southern point of the Promised Land at least in the minds of the people.
- e. 40 years v. 11 days. Disobedience has all sorts of costs, spiritual separation from God is primary and most significant but it can cost human relations, time, money and much more. God had a mission for these people and their actions (which of course He knew) ended up in them living, maybe not a wasted life, having and raising God fearing children is a high calling and they did do that, but certainly a lessor life then was available to them.

## **VI. When did it take place?**

- a. **Read V.3**
- b. First day of the 11<sup>th</sup> month – Not November 1<sup>st</sup> as we all know. Although November 1<sup>st</sup> is an extremely important day
- c. Don't want to get too far down this side issue but compared to some books where authorship is not known with clear certainty and time written we are given some real tangible details here and it seems worth the time to explore it a bit. There are no throw away verses.
- d. The Hebrew calendar is a lunar one which is about 11 days shorter than the solar one we in the West use. So, they have a leap month every 3 years, yes they add a whole extra month. So, their year is 354 days and then a leap year is 384 days.
- e. In Moses' time they had not named their months, the Jews adopted names for months during the Babylonian captivity and the names they use today and we see in other parts of the Bible are Babylonian in origin. Before then they used the very practical approach of numbering the months hence we get this verse stating in the 11<sup>th</sup> month although there was some adopting of month names from the Canaanite tribes in a few places and cases. But since time was marked by the rising and falling of the Nile or planting and harvest time, none of which happened in the wilderness the month is not exactly clear to us, possibly the month of Tammuz which corresponds to our June/July 1406 B.C. Probably the most important part of the dating is that we know from Joshua 4 that the Israelites entered the Promised Land on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the first month, 70 days after the date here. Provide 30 days of mourning for Moses and we can surmise that Moses delivered these sermons in a 40-day period, essentially the last 40 days of the wandering and of his life.
- f. We know the Jordan was at flood stage (Joshua 3:15 at the time and that it flooded during harvest time), which today starts in October. If we back out

70 days we are in August so it seems like we have a pretty reliable range between June and August 1406 BC.

- VII. So this is where, when and why and having established that we can use its lessons to understand how a truly just society operates