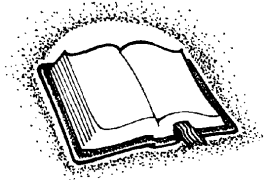


Unlocking the Bible (9)



TAKE ANOTHER LOOK! A look at the Book of Deuteronomy

The book of Deuteronomy, the next one in our survey of Old Testament Books, takes a second look at the experience of coming out of Egypt and going through the wilderness on the way to the promised land. It is a revision exercise.

Three main features emerge from that process.

Review

In the **first** place (chapters 1-8) the focus is on how they got to where they are. The evidence clearly points to the providence of God. It is He who has led them, provided them with clothing and sustenance, and shepherded them through their wilderness journeys. Therefore, there are obligations, things they need to remember. God is supreme; it is He who should be worshipped. No other god is to be given any consideration.

And His word is the only true guide. They are to follow His word: His commandments, and His statutes.

It reminds us of Peter's response to Jesus' challenge about leaving Him: *'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life'*. Reviewing past experience should bring us to that place of recognising Him as Lord and submitting to His word.

Revision

Secondly, a large part of the rest of Deuteronomy (9-28) is given over to the detailed recital of what those statutes are. This is not the place to look at them in detail other than to say that they are designed to ensure welfare and benefit for individuals and society. They reflect Jesus' 'second great commandment', namely to *'love thy neighbour as thyself'*. God is concerned for people's good as a corollary to His being given rightful place.

Action

Thirdly, (29-34) review leads to action. Something has to be done in response to the conclusions reached. A right response leads to blessing; a wrong one calls down a curse.

Thus Deuteronomy simplifies the issues. Problems encountered are not really about bread and water or who does what or the pros and cons of various practices. No, they revolve around our understanding of God and the extent to which we trust Him and obey His word. In chapter 30, the alternatives set before them are: life or death, blessing or a curse.

For many of us, reviewing the path, with its many – and often inevitable - failures we discover that apparently important - but secondary - matters have indeed become central (and often divisive, lacking in grace) usurping His pre-

eminence. The secret is to trace His goodness and to trust him fully. The safe rule is to pay attention to His word.

Revision is essential. Taking stock is important if the future is to be safe and sound. There were many in the Old Testament who lost the way. And the New Testament has many references to those in this period who missed out. Even the great Moses failed and was denied entry.

So let us take a 'second look', especially in this centenary year, and re-establish our priorities. Let us follow the Lord Jesus, Who *'learned obedience by the things which He suffered'* and may we be those who *'trust and obey'*.