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COMMENTARY ON THE WHOLE BIBLE

Deuteronomy

by Matthew Henry

To the Students of the Words, Works and Ways of God:

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AN EXPOSITION, WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS, OF

THE FIFTH BOOK OF MOSES, CALLED

DEUTERONOMY

This book is a repetition of very much both of the history and of the laws contained in the three foregoing books, which repetition Moses delivered to Israel (both by word of mouth, that it might affect, and by writing, that it might abide) a little before his death. There is no new history in it but that of the death of Moses in the last chapter, nor any new revelation to Moses, for aught that appears, and therefore the style here is not, as before, *The Lord spoke unto Moses, saying*. But the former laws are repeated and commented upon, explained and enlarged, and some particular precepts added to them, with copious reasonings for the enforcing of them: in this Moses was divinely inspired and assisted, so that this is as truly the word of the Lord by Moses as that which was spoken to him with an audible voice *out of the tabernacle of the congregation*, ~~CRUI~~ Leviticus 1:1. The Greek interpreters call it *Deuteronomy*, which signifies the *second law*, or a *second edition of the law*, not with amendments, for there needed none, but with additions, for the further direction of the people in divers cases not mentioned before. Now,

I. It was much for the honour of the divine law that it should be thus repeated; how great were the things of that law which was thus inculcated, and how inexcusable would those be by whom they were *counted as a strange thing!* ~~CRUI~~ Hosea 8:12.

II. There might be a particular reason for the repeating of it now; the men of that generation to which the law was first given were all dead, and a new generation had sprung up, to whom God would have it repeated by Moses himself, that, if possible, it might make a lasting impression upon them. Now that they were just going to take possession of the land of Canaan, Moses must read the articles of agreement to them, that they might know upon what terms and conditions they were to hold and enjoy that land, and might understand that they were upon their good behaviour in it.

III. It would be of great use to the people to have those parts of the law thus gathered up and put together which did more immediately concern them and their practice; for the laws which concerned the priests and Levites, and the execution of their offices, are not repeated: it was enough for them that they were once delivered. But, in compassion to the infirmities of the people, the laws of more common concern are delivered a second time. *Precept must be upon precept, and line upon line*, ^{<380>}Isaiah 28:10. The great and needful truths of the gospel should be often pressed upon people by the ministers of Christ. *To write the same things* (says Paul, ^{<301>}Philippians 3:1) *to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe*. What God has spoken once we have need to hear twice, to hear many times, and it is well if, after all, it be duly perceived and regarded. In three ways this book of Deuteronomy was magnified and made honourable: —

1. The king was to write a copy of it with his own hand, and to read therein all the days of his life, Deuteronomy 17, 18, 19.

2. It was to be written upon great stones plastered, at their passing over Jordan, ^{<670>}Deuteronomy 27:2, 3.

3. It was to be read publicly every seventh year, at the feast of tabernacles, by the priests, in the audience of all Israel, ^{<590>}Deuteronomy 31:9, etc. The gospel is a kind of Deuteronomy, a second law, a remedial law, a spiritual law, a law of faith; by it we are under the law of Christ, and it is a law that *makes the comers thereunto perfect*.

This book of Deuteronomy begins with a brief rehearsal of the most remarkable events that had befallen the Israelites since they came from Mount Sinai. In the fourth chapter we have a most pathetic exhortation to obedience. In the twelfth chapter, and so on to the twenty-seventh, are repeated many particular laws, which are enforced (Deuteronomy 27 and 28) with promises and threatenings, blessings and curses, formed into a covenant, Deuteronomy 29 and 30. Care is taken to perpetuate the remembrance of these things among them (Deuteronomy 31), particularly by a song (Deuteronomy 32), and so Moses concludes with a blessing, Deuteronomy 33. All this was delivered by Moses to Israel in the last month of his life. The whole book contains the history but of two months; compare ^{<600>}Deuteronomy 1:3 with ^{<609>}Joshua 4:19, the latter of which was the thirty days of Israel's mourning for Moses; see how busy that great and good man was to do good when he knew that his time was short, how quick his motion when he drew near his rest. Thus we have more recorded

of what our blessed Saviour said and did in the last week of his life than in any other. The last words of eminent persons make or should make deep impressions. Observe, for the honour of this book, that when our Saviour would answer the devil's temptations with, *It is written*, he fetched all his quotations out of this book, ~~400~~ Matthew 4:4, 7, 10.