

Bible Survey – 5.1 Deuteronomy

1. Introduction:

- a. **Name** – The 5th book of the Pentateuch’s Hebrew name is “Words” and its English name “Copy of the Law” from the Vulgate (Latin translation) *Deuteronomium*.
- b. **Purpose** – It is generally regarded as a second copy or restatement of the Law to reaffirm the Sinai Covenant between Israel and God. It is in essence 3 lengthy speeches by Moses, reiterating and reconfirming the Sinai Covenant. This book is considered the “keystone” of the entire documentary hypothesis integrating the 5 book volume of the Pentateuch. Genesis begins with creation, Deuteronomy ends with the nation of Israel entering the Promised Land.
- c. **Author** – It is widely attributed to being authored by Moses, with the exception of the narrative account of Moses death. Most likely, Joshua was involved in writing the later and perhaps involved in the former as well.

2. Historical Considerations:

- a. **Form and Structure** – is similar to the Hittite and Assyrian “Suzerainty Treaties” – these are the covenants a powerful king would enter into with an inferior or conquered people. This is the form of the Sinai Covenant. These treaties had the following form:



b. 6 Stages of Suzerain Covenant Treaties:

- i. **Preamble** – this identified the author and parties of the covenant. It would usually recount how the suzerain took possession of the vassal, as well as explain the demand of loyalty and service from the vassal. Such covenants were very formal documents that were not entered into lightly for the covenant persisted for as long as the entities endured and were binding on all successive generations... negotiable but changeable only by the Suzerain.
- ii. **Historical Prologue** – this identified the Covenant history and author, and provided the motivations to fulfill stipulations on the agreement based on gratitude. Though the Suzerain would compel the weaker Vassal, the emphasis was on the benefits the Vassal would derive. The history would provide the basis so they would know how to react going forward.
- iii. **Basis Stipulations** – the Suzerain would require the Vassal to “love their supreme ruler from the heart” – the Suzerain knew that if he had the heart of the people, everything else would follow. In this context, gratitude is the motivating factor that results with the Vassal’s loyalty, fealty, service

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and obedience. This remains observable to this day in most monarchies especially in the Middle East. In some systems such as Egypt and Babylon the Suzerain was worshiped a deity.

- iv. **Specific Stipulations** – these were meant to promote and protect the Kingdom within and from without. These typically involved paying taxes, providing conscripted labor services and military recruitment, food allotments, etc.
- v. **Blessings and Curses** – the blessings of obedience promised that life would work out well for you. The curses of disobedience promised that life would go badly for you.
- vi. **Provisions for Dynastic Continuity** – emphasis was on the continuance of stability in the Dynastic rule through successive Kings and generations. This was open for public review, and was typically reinforced through annual delegations from the Vassals to the Suzerain’s stronghold where ambassadors would avow their continued adherence as well as pay their tribute.

3. Literary Theme – Covenant (see Bible Survey/Genesis 1.1 page 2 on covenant theme development)

- a. The basis of Scriptural content is the Self Disclosure of the Person of God [Yahweh] to a chosen people who would be God’s ambassadors to humanity. This Self Disclosure would be sufficient for humanity to know and be drawn into personal relational intimacy with God. This intimacy would become self-sustaining as people would be drawn further up and into relational wonder with God.
- b. Scriptural content is thus presented in terms that God’s chosen ambassadors would know and understand. It would make no sense to reveal content for which these people could not grasp. The simple form would be expounded and developed over time throughout redemptive history.
- c. God’s Covenant is not merely a judicial contract, but rather a promise of commitment based on trust and gratitude. It is essentially a personal as a marriage commitment where one makes an unconditional commitment to another person to be faithful out of trust and appreciation.
- d. By contrast a legal contract is based on mistrust and the need for protection, where one party is compelled or driven by threat rather than drawn by love. God’s Covenant with humanity is a marriage agreement of “I’ll be bound to you if you’ll be bound to Me.” It is a reciprocal bilateral agreement.
- e. The use of the marriage imagery is employed often in the prophetic writings where God’s plaintiff plea is often heard in terms of “I was as a husband to you, and you as an unfaithful wife.”

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- f. For the nation of Israel, Deuteronomy becomes the “Constitutional Law” based on God’s *Hessed* Love. LaSor, Hubbard & Bush in Old Testament Survey point out:
- i. In emphasizing the appeal to all humanity, they point out that as a general rule, the Bible does not enjoin the people of God to slaughter unbelievers. The only such instances are in conjunction with the Israelite conquest of Canaan where God decreed these wicked people for condemnation.
 - ii. Like a marriage covenant, the relationship between Yahweh and the people is a covenant of mutual love and trust. Like adultery, apostasy breaks the relationship by despising the love on which it is based, violating the trust and treating the person as unworthy of total commitment.
 - iii. The concept of progressive revelation applies here. One type of Law was necessary at the time the Israelite nation was becoming established in Canaan. Idolatry in later generations brought the nation to defeat and destruction... by which God’s grace established a remnant of faithful followers to preserve His covenant for future generations.
 - iv. The Biblical story moves back and forth between Israel’s future obligations in Canaan, and Israel’s past experiences of Yahweh’s words and deeds. This interplay of past and present in light of the future provides a prophetic view of history.
 - v. The Biblical view is neither that of *Kismet* [the fatalism of Islam], nor that of *Karma* [the deterministic cause-and-effect of Hinduism and Buddhism]. In the Biblical view humanity behaves in light of their free choices [knowing what they ought to do or are expected to do, and therefore are personally responsible for their actions]. In the Judaea/Christian view, judgment is therefore based on a known right and wrong – an objective standard of conduct, not a capricious or situationally changing standard.
4. Outline of the Text – Genesis to Deuteronomy = the Pentateuch and comprise the story written in poetry and historical narrative of the saga of humanity from creation to the preparation of entering the Promised Land.
- a. Content Outline:
 - i. Preamble – establishes the mediator of the Covenant – 1:1-5
 - ii. Historical Prologue – provides Covenant history and author.
 1. History from Horeb to the conquest of Trans-Jordan – 1:6-3:29
 2. Encouragement to enter the Covenant with Yahweh – 4:1-29
 - iii. Basic Stipulations – 5:1-11:32
 1. Restatement of the original Covenant – 5:1-33
 2. Foundational Expectation – to Love God – 6:1-25
 3. Three Dangers and their antidotes in the Land – 7:1-11:32

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- a. Foreign Pagan gods will ensnare you
 - b. Pride and self determination will lead you to neglect and forget God.
 - c. Failure to properly discipline and train the next generation will lead to neglect and forgetting God.
- iv. Specific Stipulations – 12:1-26:19
- 1. Commandments pertaining to the loyalty to God – 12:1-16:17
 - a. Allegiance to Yahweh’s Sanctuary – 12:1-32
 - b. Elimination of apostates – 13:1-18 (cf. Deut 24)
 - c. Maintain personal purity with foods – 14:1-21
 - d. Tithes & giving – 14:22-29
 - e. Year of debt cancelation – 15:1-18
 - f. Law of the firstborn – 15:19-23
 - g. Pilgrimages – 16:1-17
 - 2. Judicial/governmental righteousness – 16:18-21:23
 - a. Judges and God’s Altar – 16:18-21:23
 - b. Kings and God’s Covenant – 17:14-20
 - c. Priests – 8:1-13
 - d. Prophets – 18:14-22
 - e. Holy war – 20:1-20
 - f. Atonement for unsolved murder – 21:1-9
 - g. Laws pertaining to the home – 21:10-21
 - 3. Sanctity of the Devine Order – 21:22-25:19
 - 4. Confession of God as Redeemer/King – 26:1-19
- v. Blessings and Curses – 27:1-28:68
- vi. Summons to Commitment – 29:2-30:20
- vii. Appendix: Dynastic Disposition – 31:1-34:12
- b. Concentric [Chiastic] Outline:
- A. And now O Israel, obey Yahweh’s commandments – 4:1-40
 - B. Then Moses set apart three cities – 4:41-43
 - C. This is the Torah – the Ten Words – 4:44-6:3
 - D. Hear O Israel, Yahweh is our God, Yahweh alone – 6:4-7:11
 - E. When you obey, you will be blessed – 7:12-26
 - E’ When you disobey, you will perish – 8:1-20
 - D’ Hear O Israel, you are about to cross the Jordan – 9:1-29
 - C’ At that time Yahweh spoke the Ten Words – 10:1-7
 - B’ Yahweh set apart the Tribe of Levi – 10:8-11
 - A’ And now O Israel, what does God ask of you? – 10:12-11:25

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5. Preparation against the Three Dangers in the Land – Deut 6-11

a. The Shema: keep focused on the main thing – 6:1-9

i. Introduction – 6:1-3

These are the commands, decrees and laws the LORD your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the LORD your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life. Hear, O Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, promised you.

1. **Moses is reminding the people that this instruction comes from God and is under His authority, not that of Moses.**
2. **Obedience to God’s decrees would be rewarded or punished accordingly.**

ii. The Basic Command: Love God – 6:4-5

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

1. **This is the heart of the Shema and would be repeated by the people at worship and during the feasts.**
2. **This is also the centerpiece of the “Great Commandment” Jesus taught His disciples.**

iii. Diligently Instruct the Each Generation – 6:6-9

These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

1. **The adverb translated as “diligently” comes from the root word “*shanan*”, which means “tooth.” This use suggests that the teaching is expected to be “incisive and with bite.”**
2. **This command to remember and to instruct is important because of the tendency of humanity to neglect and forget... something consistently plaguing the nation in successive generations.**
3. **This concept is also the centerpiece of Jesus’ “the Great Commission” – the command to Go and Instruct all the nations.**

b. The Threefold Dangers Explained – 6:10-25

- i. **Pride – great blessings are often thought to be due to the worth of the individual, rather than the Grace of God. With blessings come responsibilities as well as the temptation of pride and self-worth – 6:10-12**
- ii. **Idolatry – the lure and deception of foreign forms of worship will attempt to ensnare you – 6:13-19**

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- iii. **Lack of Discipline – neglect and forgetfulness are invariably the result of parent’s failure to pass along the instructions of the Law in the context of a profound love for God. The expectation is that parents will train up their young as a service to God.**
- c. **The Cure for Pride – 8:1-10:11**
 - i. **Humility – remember the wilderness failure of your forefathers and God’s faithfulness in providing – 8:1-5**
 - ii. **Worship God – praise is the antidote to forgetting – 8:6-19**
 - iii. **Grace – the land is a gift of God, not a result or a reward for your righteousness – 9:1-6**
 - iv. **Fallen nature – remember your history of rebelliousness – 9:7-10:11**
- d. **The Cure for Idolatry – 7:1-26**
 - i. **Vigilance – be tenaciously consistent in rooting out all forms of idolatry... don’t allow them a foothold, and when you find evidence of it destroy it immediately and completely. Become ruthless against evil – 7:1-5**
 - ii. **Set Apart – God’s people are to be a Holy People, God’s gift to the world in answer to the promise give to Abraham that his offspring will be a blessing to the world – 7:6-11**
 - iii. **Remain focused on God and His reward – the ways of the world have always been in conflict with the ways of God – 7:12-16**
 - iv. **While it runs against our calling as peacemakers and ambassadors for the Kingdom of God, the initial decree by God to destroy the original inhabitants of the land was meant to demonstrate purity and an uncompromised standard of life. Not unlike the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, these inhabitants were marked for destruction, likely because of their blatant disregard for God’s Rule.**
 - v. **The nature of idolatry in these days was not unlike the temptations we face today:**
 - 1. **Sex and pleasure – Ashera and Baal worship focused on sex, alcohol, and decadence.**
 - 2. **Power – Molech worship required the burned offering of the firstborn... something God blessed as Holy. It was a form of sorcery. A quick note on sorcery and magic – these were Pagan practices where an initiate or master sought to control their deity and/or worldly situations through the manipulation of spiritual powers. The power behind these were invariably demonic. The results of these practices are inconsistent at best, and always demand more from the practitioner than they receive in the transaction.**

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Ultimately, the Pagan practitioner is consumed in their arrangement. By contrast, the True God is not capricious but is straightforward as to what He expects from His people. Further, redemptive history demonstrates that God always gives more than He asks for in return... with the ultimate sacrifice being Jesus on the cross. The result of Pagan ritual is temporal power, wealth, or some other material benefit... consistent with Satan's tempting of Jesus (Mat 4:1-11). The result of the Covenant with God is personal relationship... blessing amid difficulty now and bliss in eternal life in the Presence of God.

3. Mammon – Jesus taught against the worship of money above doing what is right and proper before God. Money can be a great blessing, but when valued above God it is an idolatrous snare that destroys.
- vi. Fear and discouragement – are things we will always have to contend with in a hostile world where God's Rule has been perverted. Idolatry places practices and means of controlling our situation outside of faith in God.
- e. The cure for future generations not knowing God – 6:4-25
 - i. Method of teaching children – 6:4-9
 1. Parents are to first internalize the word of God.
 2. Parents are then to model the word of God in living out their faith in all aspects of their life.
 3. One of the problems we have in the Church is that children see the hypocrisy of their parent's faith... instead of being challenged to emulate a vital and living witness.
 - ii. The motivation of teaching – 6:20-25
 1. Never forget the depth of your former slavery. When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the 10 Commandments, he found the people engaged in Baal worship... the depth of the people's past slavery included Idolatry.
 2. Never forget the magnitude of your deliverance/salvation. Against the backdrop of the misery of their past is the hopeful view of a beckoning future of bliss. Remembering the former makes it easier to live for the latter.

6. Theological Revelations:

- a. CREED – is a basic statement of faith and belief. For Israel the Creed is the *Shema* – from Wikipedia: "Hear, [O] Israel") are the first two words of a section of the Torah (Hebrew Bible) that is a centerpiece of the morning and evening Jewish prayer services.

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- i. The first verse encapsulates the monotheistic essence of Judaism: "Hear, O Israel: the Lord is our God, the Lord is one," found in Deuteronomy 6:4 . Observant Jews consider the Shema to be the most important part of the prayer service in Judaism, and its twice-daily recitation as a mitzvah (religious commandment).
 - ii. It is traditional for Jews to say the Shema as their last words, and for parents to teach their children to say it before they go to sleep at night. The term "Shema" is used by extension to refer to the whole part of the daily prayers that commence with Shema Yisrael and comprise Deuteronomy 6:4–9, 11:13–21, and Numbers 15:37–41. These sections of the Torah are read in the weekly Torah portions Va'etchanan, Eikev, and Shlach, respectively.
 - iii. The literal word meanings is as follows:
 1. *Šēma*: listen, or hear and do (according to the Targum, accept)
 2. *Yisrāel*: Israel, in the sense of the people or congregation of Israel
 3. *Ādōnāy*: often translated as "LORD", it is read in place of YHWH
 4. *Ēlōhēnū*: the plural 1st person possessive of *Ēlōhīm*, meaning "our God".
 5. *Eḥād*: the Hebrew word which has the dual meaning "one" and "a unison", its root is also "unique".
- b. ELECTION – Israel is shown to have been selected to carry out God’s redemptive purpose initiated in Abraham fulfilling the blessing he was told his offspring would be to the nations – CR Gen 12:1-3; 15:1-6.**
- i. **The basic doctrine of election [or selection, choosing] is found in the call of Abraham... with the promise of “seed” or numerous offspring.**
 - ii. **The idea continues with the call of Moses and the revelation of the Law at Sinai.**
 - iii. **The idea is further developed in Leviticus (18:1-5; 24-30); and then in Numbers with the choice of the faithful spies – Caleb and Joshua (Num 13:2).**
 - iv. **However in Deuteronomy election becomes a pervasive ideal. As the people are prepared to enter the new land, the profound nature of having been chosen forms the driving impetus and prelude to of the next book of Joshua, also known as the “Former Prophets” [Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, and 1 & 2 Kings], and ultimately for the Prophetic writings.**
- c. COVENANT – That people would enter into a “contract” known by its characteristic “quid-pro-quo” or “this for that” arrangement. The idea of covenants between people [as in marriage] or between kings & kingdoms [Suzerain covenants] is a further development but all of these have a basic understanding of service**

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rendered for service received underlying the arrangements. The matter of God entering into a covenant with humanity is on a completely different order – only because God is eternal and unchanging, thus His Covenant would be unending. In God alone does the ideal of Covenant find its zenith.

- i. **Covenantal relationship with God begins with – Adam [Adamic Covenant], then Noah [Noachian Covenant], then Abraham [Abrahamic Covenant], then Moses [Mosaic/Sinai Covenant], then David [Davidic Covenant], and finally Jesus [the Messianic Covenant].**
- ii. **Covenantal relationship with God develops along with God’s progressive redemptive revelation in Scripture, which occurred over the millennia.**
- iii. **Covenantal relationship for the Prophets in Scripture was the cornerstone of their Hope. They saw three basic elements of this Hope:**
 1. **Formation and continuation of the people God has chosen. God saw that a remnant always persisted to fulfill His redemptive plan for humanity.**
 2. **Inheritance of the Land that God had promised the Patriarchs and their descendents. The land was a symbol of the place where God and humanity would coexist, a place of great peace, prosperity and blessing.**
 3. **Establishment of the Throne of the Kingdom of Earth [Creation] God pledged to David and his posterity – the Messianic promise. This ultimately was fulfilled in Jesus – Christ, Son of Man, Messiah, Son of God... these titles all mean King of Earth [Creation]. The picture presented of the Trinity is not three gods or even three manifestations of god... the Father is King of Heaven – the realm of the Spirit; Jesus is King of Creation – the realm of humanity; the Spirit integrates the two until the “Parousia of Christ” – the second coming with the redemption of the material realm and the integration of Heaven and Creation. The “Three in One” is a functional relational unity we can only guess at, the promise is in eternity we will join into that unity as Children of God... this is the inheritance for which Christians through the ages all Hoped for.**
- iv. **Persistence of the Covenantal Relationship – God honors His promises because of His steadfast [*Hessed*] love... because He is God and it is His Nature to do so. God may chasten and punish his people out of His love, and even destroy the wicked because His Nature is Purity and wickedness cannot coexist with God’s Holiness. Through all ages, God honors His Covenant simply because it is God’s nature to do so.**

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- d. **SIN** – It is unfortunate that we have ceased much substantive discussion on the problem of Sin and its distinction from sin.
- i. Small case “sin” is the garden variety wrong doing we tend to focus on – it is the actions we take like cheating on a test, lying about an embarrassing situation we don’t want divulged, or not paying appropriate income tax. These are wrong actions that we know better but do anyway. Often with rationalizations like “everyone does it anyway.”
 - ii. Large case “Sin” is something quite different and is the underlying problem from which most small case sin actions arises. Large case “Sin” has to do with our demand to have things my way, it is refusal to submit to another’s authority... especially to God’s Sovereignty. Such was Satan and the demons who knew God yet chose their own way wanting to be sovereign over their own life instead of submitting in love to God.
 - iii. Sin Development in the Pentateuch:
 1. In Genesis the Fall of Adam and Eve is just the beginning and leads to such decadence that God had enough... Gen 6:9-13
Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God. Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth. Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight and was full of violence. God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. So God said to Noah, “I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them.”
 2. In the Book of Exodus, no sooner had God delivered and protected Israel, that the people fall back into idolatry at Mount Sinai, followed by their repeated complaints and rebelliousness.
 3. In the Book of Numbers the Sin of Israel is shown in their murmuring and rebelliousness against God and Moses.
 4. In Deuteronomy Sin is seen against the backdrop of the Covenant relationship. The Mt Gerizim ritual blessing and the Mt Ebal ritual cursing is the climatic thrust of the Book.
 - a. All 12 tribes were involved in the blessing and cursing rituals – indicating that all the people were directly involved.
 - b. The 12 curses (27:11-26) involved a wide range of spiritual, social, sexual crimes in much greater and broader detail that revealed in the 10 Commandments.
 - c. The 12 blessings (28:1-19) embraces a wide range of God’s gracious gifts to the people politically, agriculturally, and militarily.

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- d. The curses land in the New Testament in Romans 6:23 with the proviso “the wages of Sin is death.”
- e. Apostasy and idolatry are shown to be the most damning of the Sins in Deuteronomy (29:18-20), and this would be the snare that catches Israel in the Prophetic era leading to the destruction of the Temple and the scattering of the nation.
- e. **GOD ACTING IN HISTORY** – unlike other religious traditions of the time and later syncretism resulting, in the Judaeo-Christian Scripture, God entered history for the expressed purpose of blessing and redeeming humanity. This is the most unique aspect of Biblical doctrine... culminating in the divine Messiah redeeming all of humanity and opening the door of eternity to all who would accept the invitation God offered.
 - i. God often employs imagery to show Himself as the patient father-figure, and the faithful husband to the wayward wife. Both demonstrate humanities abstinence and foolishness, and God’s faithful benevolence, but even that has its limits.
 - ii. Specific aspects of God’s redemptive action are better understood through progressive revelation in history... “*Heilsgeschichte*” or the history of salvation which begins in the garden, the best place on earth; and ends in Heaven, the best place.
 - iii. Diachronic theology is the study of theology through time in terms of progressive revelation in Scripture throughout redemptive history.
- f. **EMERGENCE OF GRACE** – Grace is the unmerited love of God demonstrated in blessing and especially in the cleansing of Sin.
 - i. The Law established the standard of life and conduct, the Tabernacle/Temple ritual established the means of cleansing from Sin.
 - ii. We learn in the Pentateuch that all of humanity is prone to sin; no one is free of its effects. Thus all require grace, which God alone can supply.
 - iii. Psalm 51:8-9 – “hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.” Here David uses the term God employed to purge the effects of human wickedness and cruelty – God would blot out humanity in the flood. God would blot out the wicked from the Book of Life. God will blot out the life of the unrepentant wicked, but He will blot out the sin of the repentant faithful.
 - iv. Isaiah 25:8 – “The Lord God will wipe away [blot out] all tears.”
 - v. Psalm 51:10-11 – “create in me a clean heart O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.” To create invokes the imagery of the Genesis

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creation account. The God who can make something from nothing, and make clean in impure and restore the corrupted. Such is Grace.

- vi. Psalm 51:16-17 – “for You do not delight in sacrifice otherwise I would give it; You are not pleased with burnt offering. The sacrifices of God [those He accepts] are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart O God, You will not despise.” David understood God’s heart and anticipated prophetically the Grace that would ultimately be bestowed on humanity through Messiah.
- vii. Obedience and Grace are linked together in the story of Josiah in 2 Kings 22:1-23:30, and involves the discovery of the “Book of the Law” (understood to be Deuteronomy) when rebuilding the Temple of God that had fallen into disrepair. A series of previous kings had practiced idolatry and the prophets had warned them that God would ultimately destroy them, which they failed to believe and respond to. Because of Josiah’s obedience and humility before God, and the earnestness of his faith God decreed that He would postpone the destruction of Jerusalem until after Josiah died.