

Deuteronomy 1:1-8: Paths (Many Paths, only one way)

Lead-in

I am excited to begin a brand-new series in the Word of God we call Paths. There are many paths you can take in your life, but only one way that leads to true life. Let's start with trivia time, **if Jesus could only read one book in the entire world, what would it be?** [pause] Here's a hint, the fifth book in the Bible is mentioned almost 200 times in the NT and the most quoted segment of the Scriptures. This book is the part of the Holy Word that Jesus himself quotes or references more than any other OT book. Did you figure it out? Yes, the book of Deuteronomy. For the next several weeks we will walk through Jesus' favorite book of the Bible. To help you grow in your faith we will provide a daily devotional through email so make sure you have signed up for our email list either online or in the comments section of today's worship gathering.

The Land of Frustration Deuteronomy 1:1-8

You could almost feel the hush over the crowd as Moses began to speak. The timing is not coincidental, forty years past Israel worshipping the Father on Mt. Sinai and receiving the 10 commands. Yet, these words **(1:1)** are not Sinai words. The language flowing from Moses' mouth has great weight due to its geography. Across the Jordan, in the wilderness, near the Promised Land, but not yet in the land. Deuteronomy, these words, are the final speech given to a people that Moses has led for over 40 years.

Ever felt like the people of Israel? Have you ever experienced a situation where you feel you can finally see the light at the end of a tunnel but you can never reach the end? Ever wanted something so bad you could taste it? That's Deuteronomy 1:1.

The land of frustration (1:2). If you were to google map the people of God in this moment Siri would direct your path to a small patch of earth between Paran and Tophel called Horeb. That might not mean much to you, so the Bible includes this small detail, it's an 11-day journey to the gateway of the Promised Land, Kadesh Barnea. Horeb represents the land of frustration. What should have taken 11 days stretched into 40 years for the congregation of Yahweh. Why would this happen? Was Moses horrible with directions? No, the people had rebellious hearts.

Horeb teaches us a lot about frustration. The journey of unbelief is endless, rambling, and monotonous. In a word, **the life of unbelief is a life of frustration.**

Do you find yourself in a place of frustration today? Does it seem as if nothing is working, right? What if your annoyance is a sign that you are not walking with the Lord? I have a friend who is a mechanic, a shade-tree mechanic. One day as he was working on a car, replacing a routine alternator, he could not figure it out. For the next several weeks his skills unraveled and he could do nothing right! During this time, a neighbor invited him to church and for some strange reason he went. The next day a person from the church visited and shared the gospel and right there on his living room floor, as his tears filled the room, he gave his life to Jesus. My friend found that **the journey of unbelief is a wasteland, but the journey of faith is direct.** Unbelief, not fully trusting Jesus, turns a 11-day journey into a lifetime. **Faith turns a lifetime into a straight path.** Let Jesus direct your paths.

We all get irritated. Don't forget the moments of frustration in your life. Why would Moses begin reminding the people of 40 years of waste? Because God never wants His people to go back to a life of rebellion and destruction. Never forget where you came from. Those who remember the depth of their spiritual need are those who love Jesus the most. **Let the Father turn your frustration into faith.** Let Jesus direct your path.

Then from the very place of frustration Yahweh speaks **(1:6)**. And listen to this, "You have stayed at this mountain long enough!" Divine mic drop! Moses begins with a verbatim quotation of Yahweh's speech over 38 years prior. It was as if the Father said to His people, the new congregation, you get a second chance. What would you do if Yahweh gave you a second chance today? He has in Jesus Christ!

Then the Father shares his heart. **(1:6)Enough!** God's first words in Deuteronomy express impatience and show that the Lord was eager for Israel to enter the Promised Land immediately. The 40-year delay, the land of frustration, was not the Father's intention. Frustrated with your life? You are never alone; the Lord is always more frustrated with your sin, wanderings, and wasteland than you will ever be. When you pray, God I'm sick of this! You know what His response is? Me too! The Father is eager for you to walk a direct path of faith and abundant life. Jesus is eagerly waiting to give you His promises! **Is today your enough moment?** Trust in the Lord with all your heart.

Listen to the power of faith and obedience. God speaks, "Resume and go." The word resume literally means to turn. The moment that Israel made the decision to leave behind their old way of life, the life of frustration, the Father asked them to **face their new destination.** Jesus does not save you to stay at Horeb. Let me say it this way, when you turn to the Messiah, everything changes. Jesus Christ

did not die on the cross to offer you mediocrity or even a middle-class comfort. The Messiah said, **I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance (John 10:10)**. Resume, go, abide in the abundant life that Jesus gives everyone who follows him.

Standing east of the Jordan, the Israelites are about to witness the fulfillment of God's promise, that which he swore to the Patriarchs. God calls to you to Himself so that you will delight in the fulfillment of his promise. And **the Father fulfills his promises through you** so what the world may see what He can do for them.

Response

Have you ever felt stuck in the land of what could be? Ever feel frustrated? I don't know about you but social quarantine measures only seem to magnify my frustrations in my life and with others. You are not the first or the last person to feel this way.

For those who have put their faith in Jesus the Messiah, we live in the land of now and is to come. The kingdom of Christ is realized immediately for those who place their trust in Messiah and yet the community of faith waits with baited breath for the future return of our Redeemer! If you feel like an alien in a distant land, fear not! This is God's design that you will long for eternal glory with a holy sense of disassociation in a world that is not your home. Dear brother, don't worry, the Promised Land is just over the river. Trust His path.

Do you know Jesus Christ personally? I believe that God allows us frustration as a reminder that you can't do it on your own. That's why Jesus Messiah lived a sinless life, died on the cross, and was raised to new life. Jesus knows that a life without him is a wasteland and only leads to destruction. Jesus is better. **Will you turn to him today?** You can pray a prayer of faith like this right now:

*Father, today I **recognize** I can't do it on my own. I know I fall short. I **believe** Christ came to live, die and was raised from the death—to rescue me from my sin. **Forgive** me. I turn from me and put my trust in You. Today I need Jesus to be my Lord and King, and I will **follow** you all the days of my life.*

If this message has stirred your heart, if you would like to talk to a pastor or have someone pray for you. Please text pray to the # on the screen.

Rejoice! Because of Christ you no longer have to live in the land of frustration.

Notes

This is most likely the book found by Hilkiah in the temple during Josiah's reign in Judah.

Deuteronomy is the most quoted book of the Bible. Other OT books cite it 356 times

NT writers cite it over 190 times. Perhaps it was **Jesus' favorite book** since he quoted/alluded to it more than any other OT book (see Mark 12:28-31).

Possession of Land. Although the people do not possess the land in Deuteronomy, Moses prepares the people to enter the land

Deut. 1:1 These are the words Moses spoke to all Israel across the Jordan in the wilderness, in the Arabah opposite Suph, between Paran and Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Di-zahab.

“These are the words;” you could here a hush over the crowd as Moses began to speak. The time is specific, forty years past Israel initially worshiping the Father on Mt. Sinai. And yet, these are not Sinai words; these words are derivative words. This sermon has great weight due to its geography, proximity to the Jordan river, near the Promised Land, but not yet in the land. The entire book of Deuteronomy is a terminal sermon delivered by Moses to a people whom he has led for over forty years. Note that the first utterance in the book is a promise of what will be. In essence, Deuteronomy is the book of in between: a bridge between Exodus the fulfilled Promised Land of Joshua.

Arabah

The Hebrew word means wasteland. Here it refers to the deep valley between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea (Cornerstone, 471).

2 It is an eleven-day journey from Horeb to Kadesh-barnea by way of Mount Seir. **3** In the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first of the month, Moses told the Israelites everything the LORD had commanded him to say to them. **4** This was after he had defeated King Sihon of the Amorites, who lived in Heshbon, and King Og of Bashan, who lived in Ashtaroth, at Edrei.

11 day's journey

By referring to the ordinarily short time of 11 days, Moses was already drawing attention to the rebellious spirit of his people which causes 11 days to stretch

into 40 years. The journey of faith may be difficult, but it is direct. The journey of unbelief is interminable (Cornerstone, 472).

This 11 day journey serves as a man theme of Deuteronomy, the consequences of disobedience.

Horeb

Deuteronomy favors the name Horeb for the place of covenant, the same location as Mt. Sinai. Sinai occurs only in 33:2, a poetic piece (Cornerstone, 471).

Kadesh-Barnea

The gateway to the promised land (JPS, 4).

5 Across the Jordan in the land of Moab, Moses began to explain this law, saying:

Law

Instruction would better convey the wide range of meanings expressed by Torah, since it expresses both the intellectual and legal connotations of the term (JPS, 5).

John 1:16 Indeed, we have all received grace upon grace from his fullness, **17** for the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. **18** Here the contrast is not between law and grace, but between mediated grace (via Moses) and embodied grace (in Jesus Christ). Moses served Israel as a mediator of divine grace (Block, 57).

Deut. 1:6 “The LORD our God spoke to us at Horeb: ‘You have stayed at this mountain long enough.’”

Moses begins with a verbatim quotation of Yahweh’s speech to the Israelites 38 years ago, instruction to leave Horeb and head for Canaan. See Num. 10:11-13.

Long enough

In all, they dwelled at Sinai for a little over a year.

God's first words in Deuteronomy express impatience, indicating that He was eager for Israel to enter the land immediately. The 40 year delay was not God's intention but the result of Israel's failure to trust and obey Him (JPS, 8).

7 Resume your journey and go to the hill country of the Amorites and their neighbors in the Arabah, the hill country, the Judean foothills, the Negev and the sea coast—to the land of the Canaanites and to Lebanon as far as the great river, the Euphrates River.

Resume and go in

In two staccato-like commands, Yahweh said to in and occupy (Cornerstone, 474).

Resume/Set out

Literally turn, which carries the connotation of decision, a leaving behind and setting the face to the new destination (AOT, 63).

8 See, I have set the land before you. Enter and take possession of the land the LORD swore to give to your fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and their future descendants.'

Note well: the first utterance in this book of commands is a promise for what is not yet given to Israel. All the commands to follow are in the service of that promise that is Yahweh's primal intent for the present generation of Israel (Brueggemann).

Swore

God's reference to His oath to the patriarchs shows the people that He fulfills His promises (JPS, 10).

The first promise was fulfilled in Egypt and the second at Horeb. Standing east of the Jordan, the Israelites are about to witness the fulfillment of the third (Block, 66).

The Lord calls us that we might delight in the fulfillment of his promise, and that in that fulfillment the world may see what he can do for them (Block, 67).

Application

Have you ever felt stuck in the land of what will be? This is what scholars call realized eschatology. The kingdom of Jesus is now and soon. The kingdom of Christ is realized immediately for those who place their trust in Messiah and yet the community of faith waits with baited breath for the future return of our Redeemer! If you feel like an alien in a distant land, fear not! This is God's design that you will long for eternal glory with a holy sense of disassociation in a world that is not your home. Dear brother, don't worry, the Promised Land is just over the river.

My Response

Psa. 130:5 I wait for the LORD; I wait and put my hope in his word. **6** I wait for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning— more than watchmen for the morning. Father help me wait patiently for your eternal promises in my life through Jesus Christ my Lord.
