

Introduction to Genesis-Deuteronomy

I. Names for Genesis-Deuteronomy

- The first five books of the Scriptures, which includes Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, is commonly referred to by two names: the Torah and the Pentateuch.
- I wanted to address these real quick because I will likely be using these two names interchangeably throughout this class and so I don't want there to be any confusion as to what I am referring to when I use these terms. So let's just quickly look at these two names.

A. Torah

- Torah is the Jewish term used to describe these first five books of the OT.
- While the Hebrew word "torah" is often translated into English as "law" in the Bible, the term carries more of the idea of instruction or teaching. It is something that instructs or points to something. Understanding Torah in this way will be especially crucial when we get into what we call the Mosaic Law later in this class.

B. Pentateuch

- The term Pentateuch is a Greek term that is translated "five implements" or some translate it "five scrolls," which points to the five books found in this section.
- This term became popular among Hellenized Jews as well as some of the early church fathers.

C. Other Names

1. Law of Moses (Luke 24:44; Acts 28:23)
2. Book of Moses (Mark 12:26)
3. Moses (Luke 16:29; 24:27)

II. Why Study the Torah?

- As I begin teaching through a particular subject or book, I like to always take a step back and consider why what I am about to teach or even study is important. Why does it matter? Why are we spending time in a class focused on studying the books of Genesis through Deuteronomy?
- I believe that a study of these books is absolutely crucial and very important for us to undertake and after looking at a couple reasons, I hope you will also see the importance of studying these five books.
- I recognize that there can be a variety of different reasons as to why we should study the Torah, but I am just going to focus on three major ones.

A. It Is Part of God's Inspired Word

- One of the foundational reasons as to why we should be eager to study the Torah is because it is part of God's inspired Word.

- Consider the familiar passage of 2 Timothy 3:16-17, “16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” When Paul wrote this, what Scripture had been primarily written at this point? The Old Testament. And so we see that the Old Testament, including the Torah, is also profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and for training in righteousness.
- God has seen fit to give us each book of the Bible and He does so for a particular reason. And since this is the case we should seek to study the whole counsel of God’s Word and not just certain sections of it.

B. It Is Foundational to the Rest of Scripture

- The next reason as to why we should spend time studying Genesis-Deuteronomy is that these books are really foundational to the rest of Scripture.
- If you were at the Behold Conference earlier this year, I talked about how the Bible builds upon itself and how you need to make the connections the Bible wants you to make in order to fully understand the point the author is trying to get across. And the reality is that a lot of the starting points begin in the Torah. In these five books God sets the stage for what his plan will be and many themes that we find throughout Scripture have their origins in the Torah.
- Consider this example. It’s like you are reading a book. Do you start by skipping the first few chapters? No, why? Because you would be lost and not know who certain characters are or anything. Or better yet, have you ever started watching a tv show or a movie and then someone comes and joins you part way through? What oftentimes happens? They start asking, “Who’s that? Why are they doing that? Why is that thing significant?” And so by missing the beginning they are missing out on a lot of the significance of events and actions. Can they still kind of follow along and get the basic idea of the plot? Yes, but will they understand the full significance of all that is happening? No. And that’s the same thing that can happen with the Bible. If we don’t understand what is happening in Genesis-Deuteronomy will we be able to read and understand later parts of Scripture? Sure. But will we understand the full significance of all that is happening? No.
- Let’s just consider one quick example. Do you know why Jesus spends time in the wilderness at the start of his ministry? Who else wandered in the wilderness? Israel. What section of Scripture do we find the account of Israel wandering in the wilderness? The Torah. Exodus and Numbers especially. Israel was refined and tested in the wilderness and did they pass or fail? They failed. But then zoom ahead in Israel’s history a little bit. Who else wandered in the wilderness? David. Remember when he is running from Saul and all that in 1 Samuel. Why does David spend time in the wilderness? To make the connection back with the nation of Israel and their wandering. This introduces the idea of what we call corporate solidarity. Corporate Solidarity is just a fancy term to refer to how the actions of one affect the many and how one will act as a representative for the many. So like a king is the representative of a nation and his actions are considered the actions

of the nation. So David is refined and tested in the same way Israel was in order to show that he is this representative of the nation. But the question is can he be this true representative and king that bears the nation on his shoulders? Can he succeed where Israel failed? And what's the answer? Did he succeed? No. He also failed. Remember stories like when he lied at the tabernacle to get bread, which resulted in the slaughter of many of the priests there? Did he trust the Lord in that situation? No. He fails. What does bread in the wilderness make you think of? The manna Israel received when they were wandering. See the connection? David also fails in some other ways, like not fully trusting the Word of the Lord as well as acting presumptuously as the king before he is officially the king. But what's the point? David was supposed to be this true representative and king of Israel, to bear them on his shoulders and succeed where they failed. But did he do it? No. So then zoom further ahead in the future. Do you start to see why Jesus is in the wilderness? Is it just to provide us with an example of how to respond to temptation? No. There is so much more going on here. What is the first test involve? Bread. Why? The connection back to Israel and David. Second test involves trusting and not violating God's Word. Third test involves not taking the kingdom presumptuously by taking it before the cross. And in all three of these tests does he succeed or fail? He succeeds. And in doing so shows what? That he is the true king.

- So do you start to see how understanding Genesis-Deuteronomy is truly foundational to understanding the rest of Scripture. And it opens our eyes to see the majesty and glory that the writers of Scripture want you to see.

C. To Know the Lord Better

- The last reason I wanted to bring up about why studying the Torah is so important is that in doing so we will know the Lord better.
 - The main character of every book of the Bible is God. And so in each book you are learning something about God; who he is, what he has done, etc. And Genesis-Deuteronomy is no different. In these books we will learn more about the Lord and if we neglect these books, I believe we will be missing out on learning some unique and amazing things about our Lord.
- So hopefully now you can start to see why we are doing this class and why studying the Torah can be so important and so beneficial. So now let's turn to start getting into some of the background of the Torah itself.

III. Background of the Torah

A. Authorship

- The first item we need to address in the background of the Torah is authorship. Who wrote the Torah? You may be thinking Moses. Isn't that obvious? And I would say yes I agree that Moses is the author but there are other proposals that you need to be aware of
- The reason I want to talk about this is because if you ever pick up a commentary on Genesis you will likely run into this topic or you may even hear this on like the

history channel or something like that and I want you to be prepared so that you are not caught off guard but rather that you can be confident in holding to Moses as the author of the Torah

1. Documentary Hypothesis

- The main opposition against Mosaic authorship is what we call the Documentary Hypothesis. Now you are probably thinking, what in the world is that? I'll give a simplified version of what this theory teaches.
- This theory had its beginnings in the 1800s and has kind of evolved and shifted a little bit along the way. But the basic premise of this theory is that the Torah is actually composed of four different sources. These four are labeled J, E, P, D. J stands for the Jehovist (Yahweh) source; E stands for the Elohist (Elohim) source; P is the Priestly source; and D is the Deuteronomic source.
- Then along the way you had these guys, called editors or redactors, who took the sources available to them and integrated them with one another until we had the final form before the 4th century B.C., which would then be what we have today.
- Now it should be pointed out that there have been many developments and tweaks to this hypothesis over the years, but even though this is the case a lot of it is still built upon the documentary hypothesis and uses a lot of the conclusions made in that theory to then build into their own theory.
- Why would this theory be proposed and accepted by so many people?
 - *Supposed Contradictions*
 - They will argue that there are supposed contradictions in parts of the Pentateuch, such as differences in some of the laws that are given. Or they may even point to two somewhat similar stories that sound very similar but certain details are different. And the way they explain these supposed contradictions is that you have information from two different sources
 - *Changes in Grammar or Language*
 - Next they also point to supposed changes in the grammar throughout the Torah which would indicate that multiple people were working on it
 - *Point to the Story of Josiah*
 - And lastly, they point to the time of Josiah when the Bible mentions that during his reign they "found" the book of the Law and they claim that them finding it was actually them writing it and they wrote it to support the reforms that he was doing during that time (2 Chronicles 34:14)
- Before getting into a response to these things, let me address what the danger of all this is. First of all, as we'll see in a second, denying Mosaic authorship contradicts some of the Bible's own claims that Moses wrote the Torah. In fact Jesus himself testifies to this (Mark 12:26; Luke 24:44)

and so you are making Jesus a liar. Second, by saying that the Torah, or at least a big portion of the Torah, was written during the time of Josiah, you are turning a theological document into a political document. The point of the Torah is no longer to reveal to us who God is and what he has done but rather the point is to provide support for political moves in Josiah's time and why they should worship in Jerusalem.

2. Moses

- Ok now let's take a look at why we believe that Moses wrote the Torah, and in doing so we will answer the objections raised by proponents of the documentary hypothesis.
- *Bible Claims Mosaic Authorship*
 - First of all, the Bible itself claims that Moses wrote the Torah.
 - In the OT there are many references back to the "Book of the Law of Moses" (e.g. 2 Kings 14:6), "The Law of Moses" (e.g. Ezra 3:2), which clearly indicate that the Law, or Torah" was considered to have been written by Moses. Also consider 2 Chronicles 34:14, the actual passage where the "Book of the Law of the Lord" is found during Josiah's reign. In that verse it states that that this Book was given through Moses or more literally in Hebrew it describes this book as being "by the hand of Moses." So even in that passage there is a clear pointing to Moses as the author.
 - And then in the NT you have Jesus claiming Mosaic authorship on various occasions Exodus (Mark 7:10; Mark 12:26); Leviticus (Matthew 8:4); Deuteronomy (Mark 10:3-5). Jesus even makes the claim in Luke 24:44 "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Notice how he uses the phrase Law of Moses to refer to the Torah.
 - Also you have Paul affirming Mosaic authorship as well (Romans 10:5; 1 Corinthians 9:9)
 - So essentially to reject Mosaic authorship is to reject the teaching of Scripture. That should sufficiently solve the issue but let's quickly address the other points brought up before.
- *Supposed contradictions*
 - Consider a couple of these realities in response to the claim that there are contradictions. First of all, if there were in fact contradictions wouldn't you expect an editor who is compiling multiple sources to be aware of these contradictions and then to try to smooth them over? Wouldn't these tensions point to one author because why wouldn't he feel like he needs to smooth them over? Because they make sense in his mind as not being contradictions.
 - Also, especially in reference to contradictions in the laws, wouldn't you expect Israel's laws to adapt and change depending on their circumstances. For instance, wouldn't you expect there to

be different laws for when Israel is wandering in the wilderness compared to when they are settled in the land? (such as 10 commandments)

- *Changes in Grammar or Language*
 - In regard to grammatical or linguistic arguments, an examination of the Torah actually reveals that these changes are rather overblown. The use of different words or phrases, instead of being a result of different sources, is often a strategic choice to communicate something specific or to follow the ordinary rules of the Hebrew language.
 - We often say things a little differently even if we are communicating the same story on different occasions.
- *The Story of Josiah*
 - We touched on this briefly already but just to further emphasis we see the clear teaching of Scripture is that the Torah was written by Moses and therefore not in the time of Josiah and even in that verse in 2 Chronicles, we saw the Book of the Law described as coming “by the hand of Moses.”
- So we end where we began with the simple truth that Moses is the author of the Torah. Again the reason it is helpful to spend some time on this is so that when you are confronted with these other views that you will not be swayed but rather will be familiar with the idea and be able to have some sort of defense or response in return
- On a somewhat side note it is interesting to note that there is a growing trend among liberal critical scholars that sees the final compiling of the Torah as being done by one group of compilers and that there is potential that this “group” may have actually been the authors. So you have this thought that there seems to be evidence pointing to one group that did this final compiling or writing of the Torah. It’s funny cause go with me here, what if that one group was actually just one person? And what if that one person wrote earlier than they assume? Who matches up? Moses. And we are right back where we began.

B. Time of Writing

- Let’s now turn to the time when the Torah was written. Obviously you’re viewpoint on the author is going to dictate your timing of the writing.
 1. **Conservative**
 - The conservative viewpoint, taking Moses as the author, would then place the writing of the Torah between the Exodus out of Egypt and the Conquest of the Promise Land, which dates would be 1446-1406 B.C.
 - The timing of when this is written is significant and links directly with the purpose of the Torah as a whole. Consider the fact that you have the nation of Israel about to enter the Promised Land to conquer it. How do you encourage them to go through with it? That’s where the Torah comes

in. The torah shows you this is who your God is, this is His plan, this is your role in that plan, and you have to make it happen in that moment.

2. Liberal

- This view places the writing of the Torah much later. In fact the composition, like mentioned above, is considered to have likely been a process with the final form being completed either during or after the exile. So you have portions written during the time of the kings, during the divided kingdom, in the time of Josiah, in the exile, and then it is finally completed.
- Do you wonder why the liberal scholars want to place the writing of the Torah so late? A lot of it actually has to do with the influence of evolution, where you move from the simple to the complex. This can be seen in a couple ways. In general the Torah is a complex section of literature and so the thought is it must have been written later. An example within this is the idea of polytheism compared to monotheism. The thought is that the simpler, natural thought of human beings would be to draw the conclusion that there are multiple gods (polytheism) rather than just one God (monotheism). So when do you have in Israel's history the worship of multiple gods? Later on, like in the time of the kings and the prophets. But then where is there mainly a focus on worship of one God? In the Torah. So they conclude that the Torah must have been written later than the Kings and Prophets. This is part of what influences their decisions to date these books so late and to reject the clear teaching of Scripture that Moses was the author and wrote during the time after the Exodus and before the Conquest.

C. Historical Setting

- The Torah covers a very large portion of time, starting with creation itself and going all the way until the nation of Israel is on the verge of conquering the Promised Land around 1406 B.C. This means that in these 5 books we are covering thousands of years of history.
- Most of the events, especially Abraham-Moses, will be taking place in the Intermediate Bronze Age through the early parts of the Late Bronze Age
- Also throughout the Torah we will interact with various nations and see the beginnings of nations that will become significant later on in Israel's history. So we will have to keep in mind certain people and nations because some of the events we see in the Torah will be the foundation for future events later on in the Old Testament.

D. Geographical Setting

1. The Significance of the Geography of Israel

- Now let's talk about the geographical setting of the Torah. Geography actually plays a significant role in the study of the Old Testament.

- First of all, geography is important because it shows that Scripture is dealing with real events that happened at real places. These are historical realities and as such the theological implications that these events teach and proclaim are realities as well. You can't divorce history from the Bible.
- Second, you have to understand that theology is often tied in with certain locations. Places in Scripture have certain memories and reputations. This is still the same today actually. For example, you have places like Beverly Hills, where as soon as you hear it, you immediately make associations with it in your mind. Like rich people or celebrities. And this is exactly what you have in Scripture as well. Certain places and areas would trigger past memories or reputations. And so often what you will find in the Old and New Testament is that when events happen at the same location it is significant because it is tying into that place's reputation. And we need to see and make that connection.
- So geography helps us to make connections, it is not accidental, and it helps us understand Scripture even better. So let's take a quick look at some of the basics of the geography of Israel.

2. The Location of Israel

- Let's start out by looking at the location of Israel as a nation. It is a tiny nation, about the size of New Jersey, but finds itself to be at the center of everything.
- Israel is located in what we call the fertile crescent, which is a crescent shaped area that stretches from the Persian Gulf all the way to the Mediterranean Sea. If you are looking at a map of this, what do you notice about this area? It is green, which means there is water and you can actually live there.
- But then also notice where exactly Israel sits in the midst of the fertile crescent. It sits at a very strategic spot where it serves as the land-bridge between three continents (Asia, Europe, and Africa). You have the sea to the west and the desert to the east and so if you wanted to say go from Mesopotamia to Egypt you would be forced to pass through Israel. This then makes Israel significant in two ways.

a) Secular Significance

- As a result you can understand the significance of Israel in a secular sense right? Controlling Israel would be crucial for both trade and military purposes.

b) Theological Significance

- But Israel's location is theologically significant as well for two reasons.
- First, Israel's location forces them to be dependent upon the Lord. Why? If you have this little tiny nation in a strategic spot and a

major superpower nation wants that spot, then what's going to happen? They are going to take it. And so the only way Israel will survive is because of the Lord and his intervention. It is a testing ground of faith. And you can also see how when they rebel against the Lord, that can easily lead to exile.

- Second, this also puts them in a position to be a light to other nations and to put the Lord on display. People have to pass through the nation and so when they did they should see that this nation is different and it should point to the Lord.

3. The Geography of Israel

- Now let's briefly take a look at the geography within Israel itself.

a) Four Main Longitudinal Regions

(1) Coastal Plain

- The Coastal Plain refers to the area of Israel that runs along the coast. It is a low, flat, and open land, which made it very good for travel. This is why you have one of the major routes of Israel (the International Coastal Highway) run through it.
- In the Old Testament this is the region often occupied by the Philistines.

(2) Hill Country

- The Hill Country runs through the central part of Israel and contains the three major areas of Galilee in the North, Samaria in the middle, and the Judean Hill Country in the South. The Judean Hill Country is where Jerusalem is located.
- As you can guess, this region is defined primarily by having what? Hills. And as a result, in order to travel through this region, most people would travel on routes that went along the ridges. Why? Because most people don't like going up and down mountains/hills but rather choose to take the easier path when traveling.

(3) Jordan Rift Valley

- As you continue to move east, we next have the Jordan Rift Valley. This region is where the Jordan River runs through connecting the Sea of Galilee in the north with the Dead sea in the south.

(4) Transjordanian Plateau

- On the eastern side of the Jordan Rift Valley you have what we call the Transjordanian Plateau. This region is where a few of the tribes of Israel ended up settling (Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh). However, this is also where nations such as Edom, Ammon, and Moab were located.

b) Other Important Regions

- In addition to the four main longitudinal regions, there are some other important regions that we should quickly note.

(1) Shephelah

- The Shephelah refers to the “low lands” and these area is located between the Coastal Plain and the Judean Hill Country.
- This area contains valleys that connect the Coastal Plain and the Judean Hill Country and is also a very fertile area where a lot of farming took place.
- This area essentially functioned as a buffer zone. Because remember who normally occupied the Coastal Plain? The Philistines. And then who would be on the eastern side? Israel. So this becomes the area where a lot of battles between Israel and the Philistines take place. So like most of Samson’s life takes place here and this is where the battle of David and Goliath took place.
- On a side note, when you realize that this place was fertile and where a lot of crops and farming took place, you can see why it was such a big deal when Samson used the foxes to burn down the crops in this area.

(2) Negev

- This region is located in the very southern part of Israel and is essentially a desert. So a very dry place due to inconsistent rains.

(3) Judean Wilderness

- The Judean Wilderness is located in between the Judean Hill Country and the Dead Sea. Normally when I think of wilderness I picture like a barren desert primarily. But this wilderness is not like that. It is very rocky and actually has hills and canyons that run all throughout it and as a result there are many caves scattered throughout all of these hills.
- This explains why it was such an effective place for David to hide when Saul was pursuing him.

(4) Jezreel Valley

- Lastly, we should mention the Jezreel Valley. This area is located in the northern part of Israel and is a flat, arrow-shaped valley.
 - It is a very fertile area as well and was kind of the country's breadbasket. Since it was a flat area in the midst of mountains, a lot of routes funneled through here as well.
- The main takeaway here as we wrap up this discussion on geography is that it is important and not accidental. Understanding it is helpful in understanding the Scriptures better as well as making the connections that Scripture wants you to make. Let's just consider a couple of examples of how this works before we move on.
 - First, let's consider Ezekiel 20:45-49. Notice in this passage that the Lord is declaring he will destroy the forest of the Negev and set aflame all the green trees in the Negev. Why is that weird based on what we just talked about? The Negev is a desert and so it would be like someone saying I am going to burn all the green trees of the forest of Lancaster. So then what's the point here? Where is the Negev located in Israel? In the south. And so this prophecy of judgment is really against the South, which would be the Southern Kingdom, which was the nation of Judah during the divided kingdom.
 - Second, real quick. Remember that guy Jonah? The Lord told him to go to Nineveh but he didn't want to go to those Gentiles so he fled. Do you know what port city he went to in order to flee to Tarshish? Joppa. Ok, keep that in mind and zoom ahead hundreds of years to the book of Acts. In Acts 10, you have another guy named Peter. Do you know Peter's full name? Simon Bar-Jonah (Matthew 16:17). Peter is commissioned by the Lord to go bring the Gospel to Cornelius. Who was Cornelius? A Gentile Centurion. Do you know where Peter was when he received this commission? Joppa. And so what do we have here? In one case you had a guy go to Joppa to run away from the Gentiles and in the other case you have a guy at Joppa to go to the Gentiles. Why? Because Christ came and changed everything.
 - Geography makes connections. It is not accidental. It makes a difference.