

DEUTERONOMY AND III JOHN

THE PARALLEL MESSAGE SEEN IN BOTH BOOKS

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That revealed through Moses in the five books which he wrote in the Old Testament parallels that revealed through John in the five books which he wrote in the New Testament. This parallel is seen in Genesis and John, Exodus and Revelation, Leviticus and I John, Numbers and II John, and Deuteronomy and III John.

Both II and III John are short, one-chapter books (thirteen and fourteen verses respectively); and the parallel with Numbers and Deuteronomy seen in these two books has to do more with *the central messages of the books* rather than with the books as a whole, as seen in the first three parallels.

The latter part of the Book of Numbers — following the nation's falling away at Kadesh-Barnea — has to do with events occurring during the wilderness wanderings (during the thirty-eight years following that which had occurred at Kadesh-Barnea), taking the reader to near the end of this period of time, near the end of the overthrow of the entire accountable generation.

The Book of Deuteronomy then picks up at this point (1:3), with Moses beginning the book by referencing matters all the way back to events surrounding the nation at Mt. Sinai, ready to begin the journey to the borders of the land at Kadesh-Barnea (seen in the opening part of Numbers [1:6-18]).

Moses very briefly describes their journey from Mt. Sinai to Kadesh-Barnea (1:19). Then, quite a bit of time is spent on events at Kadesh-Barnea and that which, resultingly, occurred in the wilderness

during the next thirty-eight years (1:20-2:15).

Contextually, all of this is for the purpose seen in that part of the book which follows (2:16ff), forming, essentially, *the central message of the book*. The forty years of wandering in the wilderness was about to end, the overthrow of the entire accountable generation (save Caleb and Joshua) had occurred, the mantle of leadership was about to change hands, and God was about to begin fulfilling His promise in relation to *the nation of Israel and the land set before them*.

This central message seen throughout Deuteronomy has to do with "belief," rather than unbelief as exhibited by the nation at Kadesh-Barnea thirty-eight years earlier. *Belief* in this respect is centered in *God's promises to His people concerning the land covenanted to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*.

And this would involve all that appertains thereunto — God's firstborn son (Israel) entering the land, driving out the nations inhabiting the land, giving full adherence to the Law (the rules and regulations governing the people within the theocracy which God had brought into existence at Sinai), and realizing the rights of primogeniture in that land.

(There are almost two hundred references to *the land* in the Book of Deuteronomy, with the preceding end result in view — *i.e.*, with God's people, His firstborn son, dwelling in this land within a theocracy and all that is involved in their so doing.)

Belief, Unbelief

At Kadesh-Barnea thirty-eight years earlier, after the people had believed the "evil report" of the ten spies and sought to appoint another leader (in Moses' place) and return to Egypt, Caleb and Joshua (the two believing spies) rent their clothes and sought to reason with the people. The nation was not rejecting Moses' leadership alone but was rebelling "against the Lord," Who had appointed Moses to his position. In essence they were saying that the same God Who had miraculously led and provided for the nation thus far (since their departure from Egypt) would be unable to continue this

type leadership once they had entered the land. They looked at the size and strength of the nations instead of the promises and continued provision of an all-powerful God (Num. 13:31-14:10).

And the preceding was really only a beginning part of something *much larger*, something which involved not just the nation of Israel, the Gentile nations in the land, and the land itself, but something which could only take one back to *the opening verses of Genesis*. The people of God, through their actions, had turned their backs upon that which involved *the complete redemptive program of God in relation to both man and the earth (something which God would bring to pass through Israel), along with the ultimate destiny of not only man but Satan and his angels as well*.

This wasn't apostasy in some general sense but apostasy on *the most extreme level that could possibly exist*. And it was directed against, not just Moses and his leadership, but more specifically against *the God of the universe and His leadership*. It involved *the whole of the matter revealed in His Word, beginning with the creation of the heavens and the earth in Gen. 1:1*.

The Overthrow in the Wilderness

This is the reason why God, during the next thirty-eight years, overthrew an entire unbelieving generation in a particular and meticulous manner. And, as well, because of *the gravity* of that which had been done, this is the reason God would not change His mind once judgment had been pronounced upon this generation, even though the very next day the Israelites changed their minds and sought to enter the land (Num. 14:40-45).

The Israelites, turned away from the land of Canaan, were told to journey "into the wilderness by the way of the Red Sea" (Deut. 1:40). The "sea" refers particularly to two things in Scripture. It refers to *the place of the Gentile nations* and to *the place of death*. In this respect, typically, the place which God had reserved for the unbelieving Israelites was in the sphere of death among the nations. It was here that they were to be overthrown.

Relative to the overthrow of this unbelieving generation in a place associated with *death*, God decreed

that they were to be overthrown, *not just anyplace in this wilderness, but in the lands of Esau and Lot.*

1) *In the Land of Esau (Deut. 2:1-7)*

Esau, the elder son of Isaac, is the one who *despised* his birthright — considered it of *little value* — and sold it for *a single meal*, a meal consisting of “bread and pottage of lentiles.”

Esau was “a cunning hunter, a man of the field,” contrasted with Jacob who was “a plain man, dwelling in tents” (Gen. 25:27). The “field” in Scripture, as “Egypt,” typifies *the world*. And “dwelling in tents” points to *a stranger and pilgrim in the field, in the world* (Heb. 11:8-16).

From a spiritual standpoint, Esau could only have been *completely destitute, with his rights as firstborn being something which he knew practically nothing about and, accordingly, something of little interest to him*. Thus, looking upon the birthright from the vantage point of *the world* and seeing little value therein, Esau considered one meal to be of greater value and sold his birthright for that meal.

And the generation of unbelieving Israelites was driven into Esau’s land to be overthrown. This unbelieving generation was *to be overthrown in the land of the descendants of a person who had looked upon the rights of the firstborn after a similar fashion to the way that they had looked upon them*.

2) *In the Land of Lot (Deut. 2:8-12)*

And not only were the unbelieving Israelites to be overthrown *in the land of Esau*, but they were also to be overthrown *in the land of Lot*. They were, as well, to be overthrown in the land of a person who wanted *the best of what this world had to offer*.

Lot, when given the choice by Abraham to take any part of the land in which to dwell, had lifted up his eyes, looked upon the well-watered plain of the Jordan valley, and chose that part of the land.

Lot then moved *down into the cities of the plain, pitched his tent toward Sodom, and eventually ended up living in Sodom*. Then, years later, immediately before the destruction of the cities of the plain, Lot is seen *seated in the gate of Sodom, i.e., numbered among those conducting affairs on behalf of the people*

of Sodom (Gen. 13:10-13; 19:1).

And it was into this land, as well as Esau’s land, that the unbelieving Israelites were taken *to be overthrown*. They were not only to be overthrown in the land of a person who considered his birthright to be of little value, but they were also to be overthrown in the land of a person who chose the best of what the world had to offer — a person who had settled down in the world rather than dwelling in tabernacles in the high country. They were to be overthrown in the land of a person who had looked upon *the world* after a similar fashion to the way they had looked upon *Egypt* (Num. 14:2-4).

3) *The Exhortation*

With the preceding in view beginning Deuteronomy, one overriding message pervades the whole of the remainder of the book. And this message centers around two inseparable things:

- 1) *The land* covenanted to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
- 2) *Belief* relative to entering and taking this land rather than unbelief as had been exhibited thirty-eight years earlier.

The forty years were almost up, the unbelieving generation had been overthrown, God was about to lead His people into the land under one of the two men who had believed Him thirty-eight years earlier (Joshua), and the Israelites were being called upon *to exercise faith accordingly*.

III John

The whole matter of Christians in the antitype hardly needs to be stated for those who have eyes to see. There is nothing — *absolutely NOTHING* — more important in the Christian life than presently moving out toward and ultimately realizing the goal of one’s calling.

But what are Christians doing relative to the matter today? One need only look around, go into practically any Church of the land...

Is this the topic of concern that one will hear in the Churches today? Hardly!

Christians can go *the way of Esau and/or the way of Lot* — having any spiritual senses and perspective progressively dulled by the things of the world — resulting in their progressively being overthrown, as it were, in the lands of Esau and Lot.

Or Christians can keep their eyes fixed on the goal and dwell, as it were, in tabernacles with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the high country — “escape to the mountain [‘a mountain’ in Scripture signifies *a kingdom*]” (Gen. 19:17) — having their spiritual senses and perspective progressively strengthened, allowing them to one day realize the rights of the firstborn.

III John parallels Deuteronomy in the latter realm, in the realm of *faith, belief*. Note several opening verses, setting the tone for the epistle in this respect:

“Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

For I rejoice greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth.

I have no greater joy than to know that my children walk in truth” (vv. 2-4).

“Faith” is *believing that which God has stated about a matter, believing the truth, which is God’s Word — in written form, or manifested in flesh* (John 1:1, 2, 14; 14:6; 17:17). Thus, *testifying* “of the truth” in III John is simply *testifying concerning God’s Word*. And *walking* “in truth” in this epistle is *walking in the light of God’s Word as one exercises faith therein*.

Christians can go in one of two directions relative to the land set before them — the way of Caleb and Joshua, or the way of the remaining ten and the nation at large. And the end result will be exactly the same as seen in the type — being allowed to enter and realize one’s inheritance, or being overthrown in that typified by the Israelites’ overthrow in the lands of Esau and Lot (*cf.* Num. 14:21-38; Deut. 2:1-12; Josh. 14:7-14; 19:49, 50).

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