

**“The Covenant and The Cross”**  
**Deuteronomy 30:15-20 Luke 14:25-27**  
**September 9, 2007**

The Hebrew names of the first five books of the Bible are taken from the first words in the Hebrew text.

*In the beginning* – Genesis

The book of Deuteronomy is named for the Hebrew word – **Devarim** - meaning word.

*“These are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel beyond the Jordan...”*

The entire book is presented as Moses’ instructions to the Israelites as they are about to enter Canaan – the Promised Land.

We all know the story of what has happened to Moses and the people of Israel to bring them to this point – the exodus from Egypt, the wanderings in the Wilderness, the encounter with God at Mt. Sinai.

Now they stand on the edge of the ‘Promised Land.’

We also stand looking into the ‘Promised Land,’ a promise sealed in the life and death of Jesus, and carried into every generation by words spoken from thousands upon thousands of pulpits like this one I am standing in this day.

As Deuteronomy is a retelling of the stories of Israel’s past, so we preachers retell the story of Jesus. These words are our way of knowing who we are, and whose we are.

As Moses reminded his audience of the shameful failure to take the land of Canaan, which led to the period of wandering in the wilderness, so we are reminded of how Jesus came looking for us, found us and saved us.

Much of Deuteronomy is about specific law and the legal process of the Hebrew people. The foundation piece of this book is the contract between these people and God that was adapted from the political language of that day.

The relationship between the political and religious process is older than our current situation of religious positioning.

All the books of the Torah use the metaphor of “**Covenant**” to describe the relationship between God and Israel. Deuteronomy emphasizes this metaphor so frequently that it is often referred to as “**the Book of the Covenant.**”

This covenant consists of three things; the stipulations required by God, Israel’s promise to obey them and God’s promise to reward obedience and/or punish disobedience.

Understanding this covenant helps in understanding the intensity in the Holy Land.

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This obligatory compact between God and Israel resembles vassal treaties in the political world where the king of a superpower takes the king of a smaller state as his vassal and stipulates the terms of the relationship, demanding future loyalty that goes beyond purely emotional or spiritual association. There are several covenants found in the OT.

- Adamaic Covenant (Genesis 3:21)
- Nohic Covenant (Genesis 9:8-17)
- Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12:1-3)
- Canaan Covenant (Gen 17:1-14)
- Mosaic Covenant (Leviticus 19:2)
- Davidic Covenant (Jeremiah 23:3-6)
- Aaronic Covenant (Exodus 22:29-31)

Today, we stand also in a Covenant, but one that is sealed not in our faithfulness, but in the faithfulness of Jesus on the Cross.

This is called the Crucifixion Covenant, or Covenant of the Cross. In the Covenant of the OT, animals were sacrificed annually to atone for the sins of the people of God, the descendants of Abraham. The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus created the most dramatic shift in the theological landscape ever known.

In the Covenant of the Cross, God makes the sacrifice, God sends His lonely begotten Son to be the permanent and final sacrifice.

Some may not understand the need or meaning of sacrifice, and like to avoid the ‘messiness’ of the cross, but this is a naive way of understanding the world and God.

*“Life lives on lives, the earth must be broken to bring forth life, if the seed does not die there is no plant, bread results from the death of wheat.”* (Joseph Campbell)

Now six years after 9/11, we know that our life lives on the sacrificial acts of others; we have the seal of the Covenant because of the Cross. We are saved, not by our works or our words, by the work and word of our Lord.

*Edgell Franklin Pyles, Ph.D.*