

Deuteronomy Rules

Session 4



"If you do not diligently observe all the words of this law that are written in this book, fearing this glorious and awesome name, the Lord your God, then the Lord will overwhelm both you and your offspring with severe and lasting afflictions and grievous and lasting maladies.

(Deuteronomy 28:58-59)

Chapter One

1. The Deuteronomist is convinced that "If you obey the Lord your God, all good things. If you disobey the Lord your God, all bad things." "We're getting bad things. Therefore, we must have disobeyed the Lord our God." How does this kind of belief affect the collective attitude towards the sick, the poor, or those who suffer?

2. Crossan says that the Assyrian style of government profoundly infected the Biblical tradition – almost a permanent disease. How is this expressed in the matrix of the Deuteronomist?

Chapter Two

1. A theology that understands your troubles as punishment from God spawns insoluble questions like "Why do bad things happen to good people?" Discuss.

2. It often seems that much of what we emphasize in the Bible is a rationalization for or distraction from having abdicated the hard work of Kingdom building. Discuss.

3. "Deuteronomy rules" to such an extent that it drove the re-write of history to be in agreement with its "you-get-what-you-deserve-and-you-deserve-what-you-get" theology. Crossan describes how Josiah and Manessah's stories were "spun." How does this information affect your approach to reading scripture?

Chapter Three

1. How is the story of Job a challenge to the bad theology of the Deuteronomist?

2. One would think that the positive message of Genesis 1 (no punishments, sanctions, or curses) would dominate over the terrible theology of Deuteronomy, but there's something about aligning punishments and rewards with our behavior that seems to be irresistible to us. How might your spiritual journey be changed by boycotting the fear and curses of Deuteronomistic theology?

Chapter Four

1. Magnificent theological ideas like “inalienable rights” and “liberty and justice for all” are at the heart of America’s identity. Do Americans really believe in these ideas (or have they simply become “innocuous and irrelevant” concepts?).