

LESSON 31: DEUTERONOMY 33-34
OCTOBER 3, 2012

OVERVIEW

- . Moses' blessings on the tribes – Deuteronomy 33
- . The death of Moses – Deuteronomy 34

MOSES' BLESSINGS ON THE TRIBES – DEUTERONOMY 33

- . The dying words of only one other man, Jacob (Genesis 49), are recorded in the Pentateuch
 - . Moses' last blessing is comparable in form and structure to Jacob's
 - . Both contain a blessing as well as somewhat of a prophecy
 - . Unlike the Song of Moses (Deuteronomy 32), detailing Israel's gloomy future, this blessing promises a bright future of divine favor
- . Moses' blessing begins and ends with Israel's God
 - . It reinforces that God is the origin and cause of all things
 - . This theme flows throughout the Pentateuch from Genesis 1 – Deuteronomy 34
- . Moses' blessing also begins with God at Sinai, rather than going back to when God first called Abraham
 - . This symbolizes the beginning of Israel, as a nation, at Sinai
 - . In Genesis 49, Jacob was giving his blessing to his actual sons
 - . During the 400 + years from the death of Jacob to the Exodus, Israel was not a Nation
 - . At Sinai, God's law was given to a nation, not an individual
 - . As a result, that moment marked the beginning of God's relationship with the nation of Israel
 - . What makes the nation of Israel different from all other peoples at that point in time, is that God specifically entrusted his Holy law with the nation of Israel
 - . God's desire was for the Israelites to be His beacon of light in the world
- . Not all the tribes are mentioned in Moses' blessing
 - . There is no mention of Simeon – Genesis 34:24-31
 - . The Simeonites were later scattered throughout Judah – Joshua 19:1-9
 - . In a sense the Simeonites were included in the blessing given to Judah
- . The blessing of Reuben – Deuteronomy 33:6
 - . The oldest of the sons of Jacob is always mentioned first

- . However the brief blessing is a reminder of how his birthright was forfeited because of his sin with Bilhah, his father's concubine – Genesis 35:22
- . Despite this, he and his people did not lose their place among the tribes of Israel

- . The blessing of Judah – Deuteronomy 33:7
 - . Judah is the royal tribe from which all Israelites kings will come
 - . It is therefore the tribe that will lead Israel in many of her battles
 - . Moses speaks of this when he talks of Judah defending “his cause” and asks God to be Judah’s “help against his foes”

- . The blessing of Levi – Deuteronomy 33:8-11
 - . The lengthy words of the blessing are awarded to Levi because of its role in being official keeper and protector of the law
 - . The blessing reminds the Levites and all the Israelites why the Levites are the keeper and protector of the law
 - . It was the Levites who remained faithful to God in the aftermath of the Golden Calf episode – Exodus 32:25-29
 - . The Levites demonstrated their willingness to place the honor of God before their own families and relatives
 - . Three things were granted to Levi
 - . The Thummin and Urim (see Exodus 28:30) were used in some way to determine the will of God
 - . These two things have been mentioned before in Exodus, but we knew little about them
 - . The Levites were given the privilege of teaching the people about God
 - . The Levites were given the duties pertaining to the offering up of the incense and sacrifices

- . The blessing of Benjamin – Deuteronomy 33:12
 - . Benjamin was the beloved son of Jacob, the second child of Rachel, whom Jacob especially loved
 - . This comes out in the blessing “the beloved”
 - . However, Moses notes it’s more important to be beloved by the Lord

- . The blessing of Joseph – Deuteronomy 33:13-17
 - . The longest and most extensive of all the blessings
 - . Blessings were of a fruitful land, blessed by “dew from Heaven above”
 - . Seems appropriate since Joseph was the one through whom Egypt was saved at the time of the famine
 - . This in turn led Jacob and his family to seek shelter in this land, which in turn saved the Israelites from the famine
 - . Now the land of Canaan would prosper under the hands of his Descendents

- . The blessing of Zebulun and Issachar – Deuteronomy 33:18-19
 - . These tribes are to be blessed in times of war (“young going out”) and in times of peace (“in your tents”)
 - . These tribes will encourage the people in their worship and prosper through Commerce
- . The blessing of Gad – Deuteronomy 33:20-21
 - . Gad was one of the tribes that chose to settle east of the Jordan, outside of Canaan
 - . The explains the statement “he chose the best land for himself”
 - . Gad’s territory, on Israel’s eastern flank had to be strong
 - . The people of Israel were appreciative of Gad’s iron-like qualities and its fierce defense of its territories
- . The blessing of Dan – Deuteronomy 33:22
 - . Jacob refers to Dan as stealthy, having the sting in warfare
 - . Moses refers to Dan the same way he calls Dan “a lion’s cub”, springing out of Bashan
- . The blessing of Naphtali – Deuteronomy 33:23
 - . Will settle in the northern areas
 - . The “lake’ mentioned here is probably the Sea of Galilee
- . The blessing of Asher – Deuteronomy 33:24-25
 - . Referred to as “the most blessed of sons”
 - . He is to be favored even by his brothers
- . A postscript about the “God of Jeshurun” – Deuteronomy 33:26-29
 - . Jeshurun means upright or righteous one
 - . The word is in reference to what Israel was to be
 - . These are the last words of Moses and reveal his high praise and admiration of God
 - . God is recognized here as Israel’s defense, safety and source of blessing

THE DEATH OF MOSES – DEUTERONOMY 34

- . Moses ascends Mt. Nebo, to be gathered to his people
 - . Here we see God and Moses having their last conversation
 - . In this exchange one feels a deep sense of respect and love
 - . Although God reminds Moses he’ll not be able to cross into the Promised Land, He wants Moses to be able to see it from one end to the other
 - . It’s as if God is saying to Moses – “look what you’ve accomplished, well done good and faithful servant”

- . These verses also acknowledge that although Moses was 120, “his eyes were not weak nor his strength gone”
 - . God had blessed Moses with exceptional health right up until the end
- . Moses dies and is buried somewhere on Mt. Nebo, where no-one has ever been able to find him
 - . His death was a simple one with no grand eulogy
 - . The people of Israel mourned for thirty days
 - . His death, with no fanfare, is a reminder that Moses was a simple servant
 - . He was a man who chose to spend *time* with God
 - . He was truly blessed to have as much time with God as he did
 - . He was a man whose heart desired to know and be with God – “Teach me your ways that I may know you”
 - . He was a man who chose to be *obedient*
 - . He not only taught the need for obedience, he illustrated it
 - . He was a man who chose to *trust* God
 - . Moses believed God and lived his life based on God’s instruction, encouragement, laws and promises
 - . Finally, Moses was a *witness* to others
 - . Others saw God’s light in Moses and were thus drawn closer to God

NEXT LESSON – WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2012: JOSHUA 1

WE WILL NOT MEET ON WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2012

The Old Testament study of the nation of Israel and the minor prophets from Joshua to Malachi

19	Hosea	Hosea
20	The exile of Israel and the reign of Hezekiah in Judah	2 Chronicles 26-32, 2 Kings 17-20, Isaiah 6-8, 36-37
21	Micah	Micah
22	Last years of kingdom of Judah (about 621-587BC)	2 Chronicles 33-36, 2 Kings 21-25, Jeremiah 22,25,39, Daniel 9
23	Nahum and Zephaniah	Nahum, Zephaniah
24	Habakkuk and Obadiah	Habakkuk, Obadiah
25	Esther	Esther
26	The Jewish return from Babylon to Jerusalem	Ezra, Haggai 1-2
27	Zechariah (Part 1) - The first five visions	Zechariah 1-4, Haggai 2
28	Zechariah (Part 2)	Zechariah 1-4
29	The reconstruction of the wall of Jerusalem	Nehemiah 1-6
30	The re-established national life	Nehemiah 7-13
31	Malachi	Malachi
32	The first burden	Zechariah 9-11
33	The second burden - final prophecies	Zechariah 12-14