



DEUTERONOMY

STUDY NINE | CHAPTER 33:26+34:12

YOUR
TRUE
HOME




 ST. JOHN'S
VANCOUVER

INTRODUCTION

Deuteronomy is often thought of as a law book - which is true - but as we've discovered over the past eight studies, Deuteronomy is a book thoroughly shaped by God's grace.

It is this gracious God who has been with Moses leading the people for over forty years, bringing them to the land promised so many years ago to Abraham, and it is this gracious God who will continue with his people, upholding his covenant with them. Though Moses shepherded God's people faithfully, he will not go into the land with them because of his own sins, which makes the two songs of Deuteronomy 32 and 33 Moses' last words to his people. With these songs, and with his death, Moses points God's people to their faithful Rock, the one who was, is, and will be their true home.

STUDY FRAMEWORK

-  Bible Passage
-  Study Notes + Study Questions
-  Prayer

Bible Passage

DEUT 33:26 - 34:12

CHAPTER 33

- 26 There is none like God, O Jeshurun,
who rides through the heavens to your help,
through the skies in his majesty.
- 27 The eternal God is your dwelling place,
and underneath are the everlasting arms.
And he thrust out the enemy before you
and said, 'Destroy.'
- 28 So Israel lived in safety,
Jacob lived alone,
in a land of grain and wine,
whose heavens drop down dew.
- 29 Happy are you, O Israel! Who is like you,
a people saved by the LORD,
the shield of your help,
and the sword of your triumph!
Your enemies shall come fawning to you,
and you shall tread upon their backs."

CHAPTER 34

- 1 Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho. And the LORD showed him all the land, Gilead as far as Dan,
2 all Naphtali, the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the western sea,

- 3 the Negeb, and the Plain, that is, the Valley of Jericho the city of palm trees, as far as Zoar.
- 4 And the LORD said to him, "This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, 'I will give it to your offspring.' I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not go over there."
- 5 So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD,
6 and he buried him in the valley in the land of Moab opposite Beth-peor; but no one knows the place of his burial to this day.
- 7 Moses was 120 years old when he died. His eye was undimmed, and his vigor unabated.
- 8 And the people of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days. Then the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended.
- 9 And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him. So the people of Israel obeyed him and did as the LORD had commanded Moses.
- 10 And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face,
11 none like him for all the signs and the wonders that the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land,
12 and for all the mighty power and all the great deeds of terror that Moses did in the sight of all Israel.



Study Notes

BACKGROUND

GENRE

The first part of this passage is an ancient poem. Poetry is much easier to memorize than prose, and the Hebrew in this poem is strikingly old. Because of this, some scholars think that it is the earliest part of the book. There are a number of other songs in Israel's early history that are also archaic poetry, e.g., Moses' Song of the Sea in Exodus 15.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

Moses is speaking in the "prophetic past tense" with vv. 28-29, by talking about events which have not yet taken place as though they have already occurred. This is a particularly important emphasis in his blessing, because Israel is going to attempt their conquest of Canaan without his leadership.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

"Jeshurun" is a poetic name of honour for Israel meaning "(morally) upright one." It occurs only four times in the Old Testament (Deut 32.15; 33.5, 26; Isa 44.2).

IMMEDIATE CONTEXT

- We're dropping into the middle of Moses' final words to the people of God. He began with a song in chapter 32, and then blessed the people in chapter 33 before his death at the end of chapter 34. The blessing has strong military overtones, and gives a specific vision to each tribe of Israel.

- After this passage, the next words in the Bible (Joshua 1) will pick up right where the story left off, and Israel finally enters the promised land.

IN DEUTORONOMY

- 33.26 "O Jeshurun" is also used in Deut 32.15, but with a more ironic tone.
- 34.9 "for Moses had laid his hands on him." This ceremony happened back in Deut 31, where Joshua was officially commissioned in the sight of both Israel and the LORD.

IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

- 33.27 "The eternal God is your dwelling place" is the main theme of another song of Moses: Psalm 90.
- 33.29 "The shield of your help..." is a phrase also regularly used in the Psalms (e.g. Psa 33.20, 84.11, 144.2)
- 34.5 "Moses...died there...according to the word of the LORD," fulfills the LORD's promise to Moses in Num 20.10-13
- 34.7 "His eye was undimmed..." is another way of saying that Moses saw matters wisely. Compare this description with that of Eli, the priest in 1 Sam 3.2, whose physical disability reflects a moral defect as well.

Study Questions

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Look at the imagery of the poem. What do these images convey?

What is the mood of the poem?

What are the main emphases of Moses' song in 33:26-29?

How is Moses described in chapter 34?

STUDY TIPS

Ⓐ Pray

Ⓑ Look closely

- Commands
- Descriptions of God or His People
- Words and phrases
- Repetitions, Contrasts, Surprises
- Big Bible Words
- Characters
- Dialogue – who is talking to whom?
- Setting (timeline and place) – does it change?

Ⓒ Look at the context

- What kind of writing is this?
(eg. narrative, poetry, teaching)
- How does the dialogue progress?
- Divide the passage into its natural sections, looking for transitions in setting, speaker, or theme can help with this
- Create a heading for each section
- Summarize the section in your own words

Ⓓ Share

- In your small group share something you noticed



WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Read chapters 32-33. Why do you think Moses chose his last words to be a song of blessing?

How do you think Moses felt looking over the Promised Land before his death?

Why do you think the book ends the way it does, focussing on Moses' prophetic supremacy and Joshua's leadership?

STUDY TIPS

Ⓐ Look at the context

- ▶ Read the passage immediately before and after
- ▶ How does the context help us understand the meaning of the text?
- ▶ Look up cross references.
- ▶ How do they help us better understand the passage?
- ▶ In your small group share how the context has added to your understanding of this week's passage.

Ⓑ Summarize the big idea

- ▶ So, what's the main idea of the passage? How would you title this passage?
- ▶ In your small group share the main idea

Ⓒ Stop to pray

- ▶ Thank God for all he has already revealed to you, and ask him to help you see Jesus more clearly, and love him more deeply, through the next steps of your study.

WHAT DOES IT REVEAL?

Though Israel is being given the Promised Land, where is their true home?

Why did God show Moses the Promised Land before his death? What does this say about God?

What does this song, and the entire book of Deuteronomy, teach us about the unique privilege of belonging to the LORD?

HOW WILL I RESPOND?

“Happy are you oh Israel! Who is like you? A people saved by the Lord!”
How does this passage encourage you, knowing that you have been saved by Jesus Christ and adopted into the people of God?

What does it mean for you to say that “the eternal God is your dwelling place”?

Prayer

Take time to pray and give thanks to God for what he has been revealing to you in Deuteronomy about his character, his purposes, and the incredible grace which he extends to all of us in Jesus Christ.