

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-
Presbyterian Church, 10 Downing St.
Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

**DHW BIBLE CLASS
LESSON 17
DEUTERONOMY
CHAPTERS 31 & 32**

INTRODUCTION

Moses could not enter the Promised Land because he trespassed against God and “sanctified Me not in the midst of the children of Israel” (32:50, 51). When a great, charismatic leader like Moses is going to pass away, the children of Israel would find it quite unsettling. The departure of Moses would leave a leadership vacuum. Who was going to step into his shoes? Someone must succeed him to lead the people. Another effect of Moses’ departure would be the continued guidance and instruction from the LORD. Moses had been the mediator between them and the LORD. Through whom would the LORD speak to all Israel, and who would speak to the LORD on their behalf? It would be both interesting and instructive for us to know what Moses’ last words would be to the children of Israel who were about to enter the Promised Land—the land their parents could not enter. These matters are dealt with in Chapters 31 and 32.

OUTLINE

A. Moses’ Successor, Joshua (31:1-8)

1. Moses spoke to all Israel that the time had come for him to depart (1-2).
 - a) He could not serve the people.
 - b) The LORD forbade him to enter the Promised Land.
2. The LORD would go before them and Joshua would be their leader (3-6).
 - a) The LORD would destroy their enemies in the land.
 - b) Joshua would go with them as the LORD had said.
 - c) Moses encouraged the people.
3. Moses spoke to Joshua before the people (7-8).
 - a) Moses encouraged Joshua to be strong and courageous and lead the people.
 - b) The LORD would go before him and never forsook him.

B. Moses Instructed The Priests Concerning The Law (31:9-13)

1. Moses wrote the Law and gave it to the priests (9).
2. Every seven years the Law would be read before the congregation at the place where God chose. (10-11).
3. The purpose was for all Israel to hear, learn, fear and obey God (12-13).

C. The Lord Spoke To Moses And Joshua (31:14-22)

1. The LORD called Moses and Joshua to present themselves before Him (14-15).
 - a) The LORD purposed to give a charge to Joshua before Moses,
 - b) The LORD appeared in the tabernacle.
2. The LORD told Moses concerning himself and Israel (16-18).
 - a) Moses would die.
 - b) Israel would turn away from the LORD.
 - c) The curses would befall Israel.
3. The LORD told Moses to write a song (19-22).
 - a) The song to be taught to Israel as a witness against Israel.
 - b) In spite of the LORD keeping His promises, Israel would worship and serve other gods.
 - c) Israel had the propensity to turn away from serving God.
 - d) Moses wrote and taught the song.

D. The Charge Of The Lord And His Word (31:23-30)

1. The LORD gave Joshua the charge (23).
2. The book of the Law given to the Levites to be kept in the Ark (24-26).
3. Moses echoed what the LORD said about Israel's stubbornness and rebellion (27-29).
4. Moses taught the song to all the people (30).

E. The Song Of Moses (32:1-44)

1. Praising the LORD their God (1-3).
2. The faithfulness of the LORD in contrast to the faithlessness of Israel (4-9).
3. The goodness of the LORD (10-14).
4. Israel prospered and apostasised (15-18).
5. The LORD chastened Israel (19-26).
6. Israel lacked discernment (27-33).
7. The vengeance of the LORD (34-43).
8. Moses ended his song (44).

F. The Last Days Of Moses (32:45-52)

1. Moses' last words of encouragement to Israel (45-47).
2. The LORD'S instruction to Moses (48-52).

COMMENTARY

Passing On The Baton

Moses comforted and encouraged the Israelites on their prospect of entering the Promised Land. He could not go with them. He told them that he was now 120 years old. He was 80 years old when the LORD called him. Now he described himself that he could "no more go out and come in" (31:2). This phrase which is used in other portions of Scriptures (Numbers 27:15,17; Joshua 14:11) describes a leader who served the people. Moses did not mean that he was physically weak and could hardly move around. Moses had to depart and could not go with them

because the LORD did not allow him to enter the land.

The Israelites must have been worried about who would be their leader. to guide, intercede and be their mediator between God and them. So Moses first assured them that the LORD their God would go before them. Just as the LORD did to the kings of the Amorites, Sihon and Og, the LORD would destroy the nations in the land which they would possess as the LORD had promised (31:3). So, they should “be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid” of the pagan nations in the land. The LORD would be ever present with them and would not forsake them.

Next Moses allayed their fears and worries by calling Joshua and presenting him before all Israel that Joshua would be his successor. Joshua would have to take his place and lead the people into the land which the LORD had promised them. Moses also assured Joshua that the LORD had chosen him to succeed him and lead the people into the Promised Land (31:14, 15). Moses was to call Joshua and present themselves before the LORD in the tabernacle. The LORD would give Joshua a charge (31:14). No details of the charge are mentioned but it would be the same as what Moses gave to Joshua. Moses encouraged him to “be strong and of a good courage,” as he led the people into the land. God would have sworn that He would be with him (31:23). Nothing can be more assuring than the presence of God with a person.

We read with heartfelt admiration for the man Moses who for forty years led rebellious and disobedient children through dry and difficult terrain of the

wilderness of Sinai. Moses loved his people, for many a time he had interceded on their behalf so that the LORD would spare the children of Israel for their murmurings and grumblings. It was his deep desire to go with them into the Promised Land. But alas he could not because of his trespass against the LORD, part of which the children of Israel were to be blamed. Now the time had come for him to die. He had groomed a successor - Joshua. We see here the mark of a true leader who trains another so that when the time comes he leaves his successor to carry on.

In the work of the LORD there is no substitute for godly leadership. Moses found Joshua to be a man of integrity and courage. Joshua was one of the twelve spies who trusted the LORD enough to tell the people to enter the Promised Land and claim it in spite of great odds. Joshua was a godly man. He was with Moses at Mount Sinai. He had proved himself as an able warrior when he led the children of Israel against the Amalekites. He was a true follower and disciple of Moses. Paul must be familiar with the exodus account for he charged young Timothy to “be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and the things thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:1-2). Moses graciously and gladly passed the baton to Joshua! This is a lesson many pastors today can learn. Before passing away from the scene, a pastor ought to leave behind someone who has the same biblical conviction to carry on the work of the Lord.

Promoting The Word

Moses wrote the Law and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi, to keep the Law in the ark of covenant (31:9-11, 25, 26). It was the responsibility and duty of the priests to periodically take the Word of God out to read before the people so that in hearing they might learn, fear the LORD their God and observe to do all the words of the law. God had given His people the truth of His Word. They must keep and guard it. Reading and hearing it is not enough. They must learn and obey it. This is the second most important thing for the Israelites on the eve of their entering into the Promised Land. The leader of the people of God does not lead the people according to his personal principles and ways. The leader of the people of God must lead God's people in the truth of God's Word. One more plus point for Moses who foresaw the necessity of these two important things: godly and able leadership, and God's Word. Every church today must have these two characteristics if the church is to be blessed by God. It is vain and meaningless to have a church that has a large number of 'loving and caring' members whose leaders are not godly and the truth of the Word of God is not read, learnt, obeyed and the reverential fear of God is absent.

Remembering In A Song

The LORD called Moses to write a song and then to teach it to the people of Israel. The function of the song was to serve as a testimony against the children of Israel for their disobedience. It was also a song to bear witness to the

faithful and caring ways of the LORD with the people of Israel (31:19).

The LORD had already envisaged that the children of Israel would "go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land," and they would forsake the Lord and break His covenant (31:16). This is predictive of Israel's apostasy. When Israel entered the land, the LORD would bless them; they would "have eaten and filled themselves, and waxen fat," but they would turn away from the LORD their God and worship and serve other gods to provoke the LORD to jealousy (31:16b, 20).

The wrath of the LORD would be upon them. God would turn His face from them, an expression describing God's displeasure and disapproval. God would judge them and "many evils and troubles" would befall upon them. And each time when they sang the song they would be reminded of their apostasy and their wicked ways (31:21). Moses also knew that the Israelites would rebel against God because they were a stiff-necked people, for he had seen their propensity to be rebellious and disobedient (31:27, 29).

Moses opened his song with a strong note by declaring the greatness of God and the steadfastness of God (32:3, 4) in stark contrast with man, who is perverse, foolish and unwise (32:5, 6). The image of "Rock" for God is perfect and appropriate. It is used repeatedly in the song "the Rock of salvation" (v.15), "of the Rock that begat thee" (v.18), "one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their Rock" (v.30), "for their rock is not as our Rock" (v.31)! It pictures

God as immoveable and steady in a shaky world.

The next stanza bursts out in a historical sketch of the goodness and kindness of God. God separated the nations of the world and set apart the children of Israel, He bore them through the wilderness like an eagle to her young. The LORD blessed His people with abundant crops, butter and milk from the cattle and lambs (vv.7-14).

But when “Jeshurun” (a nickname for Israel, Isaiah 44:2) became “fat” as a result of the blessings of God, she foolishly forsook God, and took the “Rock of salvation” for granted. They provoked God to jealousy by worshipping other gods, indeed, sacrificing to devils, and forgetting God who formed them (vv.15-18).

The LORD’S anger was stirred up. The LORD hid His face from them, an expression of His displeasure and abhorrence of His wayward people. The LORD would heap terrible things on apostate Israel, and they would be scattered abroad (vv.19-28).

The LORD stopped short of destroying His people altogether instead He called on the people of Israel to be wise and understanding. They could have a resounding victory over their enemies had they acknowledged their Rock (v.29, 30). Vengeance belongs to God who would repay all their enemies and there is no one who can stop Him (35- 42).

The nations are called to rejoice with Israel, the people of God. God would avenge His servants, and be merciful to them and their land (v.43). Moses spoke to the people the words of his song, even to Joshua. Moses called on Israel to set their hearts into the words of

the song, and commanded them to serve and obey God. They should not treat the keeping of God’s law lightly for it is their life, and by obeying the words of the law, they would prolong their days in the land which they would soon possess (vv.46,47).

Preparing To Die

The LORD now spoke to Moses after he had completed composing the song and taught the people. God told him to go up to the mountain Abarim to Mount Nebo. From that vantage point, he could see the land over Jericho—the land which He promised (v.49). Moses was to die on Mount Nebo. His death was God’s judgement against him for not sanctifying God before the people when they murmured against him. God in His goodness allowed Moses see the land which he could not enter (52).

SUMMARY

We have learned some great and valuable lessons. While it is true that no one is indispensable in the work of God, we must realise that God’s work must be led by godly and able people who are totally faithful to God. Godly and able leadership should prepare and train the succeeding leadership of the same quality so that the work of the Lord is not disrupted. Pray that God will raise godly and able men to serve Him and continue His work. We also learn the important qualities of a leader and that it is also important to be morally strong and courageous, and to know that God is with us.

We also learn that the Word of God is indispensable. To serve God we must know His will and the only way to know His will and

purpose is to read the Word, learn it, observe to do it, and fear the Lord. Our Lord Jesus Christ said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). Moreover the truth of God's Word will be a reliable, infallible and authoritative source of guidance and instruction in the way of prosperity and success. We must constantly and regularly dig, discover and do the Word of God!

Last but not the least, frequently remind ourselves of the greatness and goodness of God toward us. We should repent of our sins against God and return to Him, worship and serve Him only and no one else. And we will surely see the mighty work of God in us and through us others might come to know the Lord, hear His Word, believe in Him, and be saved. The Lord be praised. AMEN

DAILY READING & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Deuteronomy 31:1-13;
2 Timothy 2:1-5

TUESDAY: Deuteronomy 31:14-30;
Matthew 28:18-20; 2 Timothy 2:15

WEDNESDAY: Deuteronomy 32:1-14;
Acts 4:21-44; Ephesians 4:15

THURSDAY: Deuteronomy 32:15-38;
Ephesians 4:1-3; Isaiah 1:3

FRIDAY: Deuteronomy 32:39-52;
Revelation 14:17-20; 16:12-16

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How old was Moses when God called him to lead Israel out of Egypt? How many years did he serve God and lead Israel?

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2. What assurances did Moses give to the people of Israel to allay their fear of an uncertain future in the land they were about to possess?

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3. What are the twin qualities essential in a leader? Why? What comforting assurance did Moses give to Joshua to exercise these qualities?

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4. In what way could Israel be safeguarded against backsliding?

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5. What specific details did God tell Moses about Israel's future?

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6. What specific details did God tell Moses about Israel's future?

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7. Why does God allow “bad” things to happen to Israel?

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8. How God’s blessing did to Israel became a snare? Is it better for us not to receive God’s blessings?

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9. What was the function of the song of Moses?

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10. What theological truths are conveyed in poetic images?

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11. How did the Bible describe God’s goodness toward Israel?

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12. How did Israel respond to the goodness of God?

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13. What final counsel did Moses give to the children of Israel?

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