

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

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

**DHW BIBLE CLASS
LESSON 18**

DEUTERONOMY

CHAPTERS 33 & 34

INTRODUCTION

These final two chapters touch on the last days of Moses on earth. Forty years had passed since he was called by God in the land of Midian where he tended the flock of his father-in-law. He was then eighty years old. Being the man of God who led the children of Israel out of Egypt and through the wanderings in the wilderness of Sinai to the plains of Moab, the threshold of the Promised Land, Moses had displayed unbelievable strength, courage, patience, love and care. It is a fitting tribute to Moses as Scriptures record: "And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face " (34:10).

Just before his death, he gave his swan-song address to the children of Israel. As usual, he always recognised the greatness and the goodness of God. He commenced his address by praising God. He gave his blessings to the tribes of Israel. He ended his speech by praising God again and with a joyful note of encouragement to the children of Israel. According to the promise of the LORD, the LORD showed him

all the Promised Land from Mount Nebo. Then he was taken away to be with the LORD, and to join his brother Aaron and the Patriarchs, which is far better. To use the words of Paul, Moses had fought a good fight in fulfilling the will of God.

Moses died at the age of one hundred and twenty years. It is not insignificant that it is pointed out that *his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated* (34:7). Joshua succeeded him as the new leader and commander of the people of Israel. His epitaph is permanently inscribed in ending the book.

OUTLINE

A. The Introduction to Moses' Blessing of the Children of Israel (33:1-5)

1. Moses, the man of God, blessed the children of Israel (v.1).
2. Moses praised the LORD (vv.2-5).
 - a) The LORD gave the Law to the children of Israel at Sinai.
 - b) The LORD loved the children of Israel.
 - c) The LORD was King of Jeshurun.

B. Moses Blessed the Tribes (33:6-25)

1. Reuben (v.6).
2. Judah (v.7).
3. Levi (v.8-11).
4. Benjamin (v.12).
5. Joseph (vv.13-17).
6. Zebulun & Issachar (vv.18-19).
7. Gad (vv.20-21).
8. Dan (v.22).
9. Naphtali (v.23).

10. Asher (vv.24-25).

C. Moses Gave Glory and Honour to the LORD (33:26-29)

1. The LORD is incomparable (v.26).
2. The LORD is a refuge unto Israel (v.27).
3. The LORD blesses Israel (v.28).
4. The LORD protects Israel (v.29).

D. Moses Passed Away (34:1-9)

1. The LORD showed Moses the Promised Land (vv.1-4).
 - a) Moses went up to Mount Nebo over against Jericho.
 - b) The LORD reaffirmed His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
 - c) The LORD caused Moses to see the land.
2. The death of Moses (vv.5-8).
 - a) Moses died in the land of Moab.
 - b) No man knew the location of his grave.
 - c) Moses was 120 years old a strong and healthy man.
 - d) The children of Israel mourned Moses for thirty days.
3. Moses had laid his hand on Joshua, his successor (v.9).

E. Moses is Honoured (34:10-12)

1. Moses stands out among all the prophets of Israel (v.10).
2. Moses was the greatest in all the signs and wonders he performed in Egypt were stupendous (v.11).

3. Moses was great in his leadership (v.12).

COMMENTARY

The Lord Our God Be Praised

This chapter opens with words of praise to the LORD. Moses reminisced about the awesome power of God, His giving of the Law to His people, and His love for the children of Israel. The LORD is the King of Jeshurun. God called Israel by that affectionate name "Jeshurun" which means "upright." A king protects, provides and preserves his people. The LORD as Israel's King had done what no other king possibly could have done for his people. The LORD indeed was most gracious, merciful, and longsuffering. We too as Christians who have been made the children of God through the Lord Jesus Christ can rejoice in the knowledge that God the Father loves, protects, provides and preserves us.

Blessing The Tribes

The blessing of Moses reminded us of Jacob's blessing to his twelve sons (Genesis 48 & 49). The pronouncement of these blessings is not just mere sweet words to flatter the hearers. They were charged with power, and as with God's Word, these blessings spoken by Moses would not return empty and void.

Simeon is missing. No reason is given. Jacob rebuked him and Levi for being "instruments of cruelty." Jacob pronounced a curse on him and that his descendants would be scattered in Israel (Genesis 49:5-7).

As with Jacob's blessing, Reuben was mentioned first.

Moses blessed Reuben but his people might not be many (33:6). The translators of the King James Version have added the word “not” in order to continue to the flow of the meaning of the previous phrase. Some say that this is unnecessary because grammatically the word “not” is absent. On the other hand others like the KJV translators felt that the flow of the argument is more consistent if the “ellipsis” not is added. If one opts for the former, the meaning perhaps would be that although Moses blessed Reuben, it was his wish too that male Reubenites should not be many. Jacob described Reuben as “unstable as water, thou shalt not excel” (Genesis 49:3).

The latter is also grammatically acceptable as “the negative sometimes extends its influence from the first to a second negative sentence parallel with it (eg. 1 Sam. 2:3; etc.) [from *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, number 152, w, 3]. Therefore the KJV translated it as “let *not* his men be few.”

Levi had joined with Simeon to commit acts of cruelty. While Simeon is missing in the blessing, Levi is not. The reason is that Levi stood on the side of the LORD at a time when the other tribes committed idolatry at the foot of Mount Sinai. They had observed and kept the words of the covenant. The LORD Himself redeemed Levi and appointed them to the privileged position of serving Him in the Tabernacle. The Levites were given the task of teaching the children of Israel the laws of God, and to offer whole burnt offerings on the altar. Moses called upon the LORD to bless the work of the Levites (33:8-11).

Benjamin had a special blessing for being close to the LORD. Indeed the tribe of Benjamin settled very near to where the Temple was later built by King Solomon when the Israelites took possession of the land (33:12).

The blessing upon Joseph was a blessing to his two sons, namely, Ephraim and Manasseh. They were specially blessed with abundant fertile inheritance in the hills (33:13-17).

The final blessing fell on Asher with the wish their number would grow large and that they would be blessed with oil. Asher settled in the north-western part of the land. The land is renowned for the production of olive oil.

The Praise Of God

So Moses ended this farewell address and blessing of the tribes of Israel by extolling the God of Jeshurun, and with a happy and joyful note of comfort and encouragement to the children of Israel (33:26-29). Moses praised and testified that there is none who is like the LORD God of Israel. The LORD had been Israel’s help. The eternal God had been Israel’s refuge, and Israel had found solace under the everlasting arms of God. God had driven away and destroyed the enemies of Israel. Having removed her enemies, Israel would dwell in the land in peace. The LORD would bless the land which would be abundantly productive. Indeed Israel would be the envy of the other nations. No other nation would be like her!

These verses are a fitting and climactic end to the Pentateuch, beginning from the call of Abraham (Genesis 12) to the death of Moses. It all began when God

called and chose Abraham and made a covenant with him. Israel entered Egypt with seventy souls and after four hundred years, it had grown into a great multitude. God delivered the Israelites from bondage in Egypt. God led them through their journeys and sojourn in the wilderness of Sinai. God gave them laws which no other nation had. In spite of the fact they disobeyed God at Kadesh-barnea, God was with them in their wilderness wanderings. A new generation had emerged. God repeated the laws to this new generation. God gave them the choice of life and death, blessings and curses. And it is the will of God that His people would hearken unto His voice, and choose life rather than death, blessings rather than curses.

The Death Of Moses

After the concluding praise of the LORD, Moses ascended Mount Nebo in the plains of Moab, on the eastern side of Jordan. On the top of the mountain overlooking Jericho, the *LORD* "showed him all the land... and all the land of Judah, unto the utmost sea" (34:1, 2). From the top of the mountain, the naked eye could not see beyond the Judean wilderness to the valley of the Jericho with its palm trees, let alone the Mediterranean Sea. But the *LORD* *showed* Moses all the land. This writer believes that this phrase intimates that the *LORD* enabled Moses to see, just like today we would use a field glass or binoculars to see a distance, or those huge telescopes to probe the outer space. This is further confirmed by the words, "I have caused thee to see with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over hither"

(34:4b). Moses had pleaded with God to let him go into the land with the people. But the *LORD* forbade him. This God given ability to see all the land was a consolation to Moses. The *LORD* having shown to Moses reiterated to him that this is the land that He had sworn to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Moses died in the land of Moab. He was buried in the valley of the land of Moab, over against Bethpeor, but his grave is not known to anyone. He died at the age of one hundred and twenty years. His eyes and his health were still good. What an assurance and encouragement to all those who are called and served God faithfully that we can serve Him till our time is up, as determined by God. The children of Israel mourned for him thirty days.

But before his death, Moses in accordance to the commandment of the *LORD* ordained Joshua by laying his hands on him before the children of Israel. This act was important to signify the transfer of the leadership to Joshua who was chosen by God to be the next leader to lead the people into the Promised Land. This public ordination of Joshua ensured that the children of Israel would hearken to Joshua to do just as the *LORD* had commanded Moses. There is a valuable lesson to be learned here by pastors and leaders of the church. Succession of church leadership is important and essential if there is to be continuity in the oversight of the church. Many pastors and church leaders neglect this responsibility to prayerfully look and train a successor. This is the will of God, and God would endow him with the discernment and wisdom to determine the successor.

The closing verses (10-12) give an impressive description of Moses. Moses was known for his humility and meekness, there was not another prophet who is like him. He performed mighty signs and wonders in Egypt and in the midst of his brethren. He was mighty in power. We know that the source of his greatness lies in the fact that he had an intimate relationship with God. This is beautifully described to us that the LORD knew him face to face (v.10).

This final chapter looks ahead. Joshua, the next leader. Position itself does not ensure obedience from the people but the filling of the Spirit of wisdom will lead people to follow. AMEN

**DAILY READING & DISCUSSION
QUESTIONS**

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Deuteronomy 33:1-5; 2
Timothy 3:15-16

TUESDAY: Deuteronomy 33:6-25;
Psalm 32:1-2; Ephesians 1:3-4

WEDNESDAY: Deuteronomy
33:26-29; Psalm 40:4; Hebrews
4:14-16

THURSDAY: Deuteronomy 34:1-9;
Psalms 90:1-12

FRIDAY: Deuteronomy 34:10-12;
Psalm 116:15; 2 Corinthians 4:6

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is a blessing given by one
to another?

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2. What characteristics and
personality traits of God did
Moses reveal here?

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3. From Moses' blessings to the
children of Israel, what does
God want life to be like for His
people on earth?

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4. What is specially mentioned
about the descendants of Levi,
and their responsibilities and
duties?

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5. In what ways would you say
that verses 26-29 are a fitting
climax to the Pentateuch?

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6. Are not our blessings in Christ much greater?

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7. What are the salient points surrounding the death of Moses?

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8. What lesson/s may the death of Moses teach us?

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9. Why did the children of Israel hearken unto Joshua?

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10. How can you receive the spirit of wisdom as Joshua did?

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11. Moses knew God "face to face;" can we know God in the same way?

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12. What is the most important truth or lesson that you have learned in each book of the Pentateuch?

Genesis:

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