

Moses' Last Words (Deut 31-33)

"And the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, you are about to lie down with your fathers; and this people will arise and play the harlot with the strange gods of the land, into the midst of which they are going, and will forsake Me and break My covenant which I have made with them." (Deut 31:16). That was the message the LORD gave to Moses after he finished his farewell address to the people he had served so faithfully for 40 years. How could he encourage his beloved people to stay true to the LORD? These last few chapters contain lessons we need to learn from in order to stay the apostasy in our own days!

Encouraging God's People (Deut 31:1-6)

Moses focused his people on the LORD and His promises and His faithfulness. The LORD will cross ahead of them, the LORD will destroy, the LORD will do to them as He did to them as He did to Sihon and Og, the LORD will deliver them up before you. The LORD your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you. They only needed to do their part, i.e., fix their eyes and heart on the LORD and His promises and draw strength and valour from Him.

Encouraging God's Leader (Deut 31:7-8)

Moses gave the same words and promises to Joshua. Joshua was to duplicate the victories the LORD had given Israel on the east side of the Jordan. Human beings may be replaced but God is the same forever!

In the Lord's work, there is no substitute for godly leadership. We must follow the Biblical example and equip the younger generation to lead in a godly way. As Moses did with Joshua, Christ with His apostles and Paul with Timothy and Titus, so must we in our generation (2Tim 2:2). We must mentor and train gifted and godly people to lead the next generation.

Leaders must not only be qualified, but they must also be prepared and proven (1Tim 3:10). The absence of gifted and qualified leaders is sometimes evidence of God's judgment on His people (Isa 3:4,12).

Hearing God's Word (Deut 31:9-13)

During his long ministry, Moses kept a record of what God had done and said (Ex 17:14; 24:4-8; 34:27; Num 33:2; Deut 28:58; 29:20, 27), and he deposited that record with the priests who carried the ark of the covenant. God rules His world through His Word and God's people must respect His Word and obey it. In future years, Israel's king was required to write a copy of the law, study it and keep it with him (Deut 17:18-20). Each Sabbath year, at the Feast of Tabernacles, the law was to be read and expounded publicly to every man, woman and child, whether Israelites or strangers, so that they would hear, fear and obey (Neh 8). It was especially important that the children hear the word (Deut 31:13) so they could learn it early and enjoy a long life in the promised land.

Application: God has given His people the truth of His Word and we must guard it (2Tim 1:14), obey it and pass it along to the next generation (2Tim 2:2). The church of Jesus Christ is always one generation short of extinction, so it's important that each believer studies the Scriptures, receives the truth, practices it and passes it on to others.

We need faithful "full-time" servants like Ezra the scribe who "had set his heart to study the law of the LORD, and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel" (Ezra 7:10). We also need dedicated and willing lay people like Priscilla and Aquila who can expound the way of the Lord more perfectly to believers who are confused (Acts 18:24-26).

The doctrines of the Christian faith, recorded in the Scriptures were given by God to His chosen servants and we need to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3). In the local church we are to teach no other doctrine (1Tim 1:3), nor are we to preach anything other than the inspired Word of God (2Tim 4:1-5).

If we want spiritually healthy churches, the saints must feed on sound (healthy) doctrine (Tit 1:9; 2:1) and sound words (2 Tim 1:13). Anything else is "worldly and empty chatter" and will spread like gangrene (2Tim 2:16-17). While it is a good thing for believers to encourage one another, we must be careful that our "sharing" promote the truth of the Word and not just what individuals think about the Word.

Joshua's Commissioning (Deut 31:14-15)

Joshua had been publicly designated to the office of commander by Moses [Num 27:22, 23]; and God was pleased to confirm his appointment by the visible symbols of His presence and approval. As none but the priests were privileged to enter the sanctuary, it is probable that this significant manifestation of the cloudy pillar was made while the leaders stood at the door of the tabernacle.

But before appointing Joshua, God announced to Moses that after his death the nation would go a whoring after other gods, and would break the covenant, for which it would be visited with severe afflictions, and directed him to write a song and teach it to the children of Israel, that when the apostasy should take place, the consequent punishment from God came, it might speak as a witness against the people. The Lord communicated this commission to Moses in the presence of Joshua, that he also might hear of the future apostasy of the people, for he would bring them into the promised land. In this there was also an implied admonition to Joshua, not only to take care that the Israelites learned the song and kept it in their memories, but also to strive with all his might to prevent the apostasy, so long as he was leader of Israel; which Joshua did most faithfully to the very end of his life (Josh 23 and 24).

The Apostasy Foretold (Deut 31:16-22)

The punishment announced in v17 corresponds most closely to the sin of the nation. For going a whoring after strange gods, the anger of the Lord would burn against them; for forsaking Him, He would forsake them; and for breaking His covenant, He would hide His face from them, i.e., withdraw His favour from them, so that they would be destroyed. "They shall be consumed", it (the nation) will be for devouring, i.e., will be devoured or destroyed. And many evils and troubles will befall it; and it will say in that day, Do not these evils befall me, because my God is not in the midst of me?" When the evils and troubles broke in upon the nation, the people would inquire the cause, and would find it in the fact that they were forsaken by their God; but the Lord would still hide His face, namely, because simply missing God is not true repentance.

The announcement of the falling away of the Israelites from the Lord into idolatry, and the burning of the wrath of God in consequence (Deut 31:16-18), serves as a basis for the song in v19. Things which were of great importance and of common concern were, among the ancients, put into verse, as this was found the best method of keeping them in remembrance, especially in those times when writing was little practiced. Even prose was sometimes sung.

A witness for me against them - i. e., an attestation from their own mouths at once of God's benefits, their own duties, and their deserts when they should fall away. Being in verse it would be the more easily learned and kept in memory. The use of songs for such didactic purposes was not unknown to the legislators of antiquity. Compare also the advice of Paul, "teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (Col 3:16).

If this song did not prevent their apostasy, yet it might help to bring them to repentance, and to recover them from their apostasy. When their troubles come upon them, this song shall not be forgotten, but may serve as a glass to show them their own faces, that they may humble themselves, and return to him from whom they have revolted. Note: Those for whom God has mercy in store He may leave to fall, yet He will provide means for their recovery. Medicines are prepared before-hand for their cure.

Joshua Commissioned Deut 31:v23)

After this command with reference to the song, the Lord appointed Joshua to the office which he had been commanded to take, urging him at the same time to be courageous, and promising him His help in the conquest of Canaan. The Lord repeated Moses' words to Joshua (v7) for he was to be the general, and lead them on to battle; and though Joshua was a man of courage and valour, as well as had military skill (see Ex 17:9); yet such an exhortation was not needless, seeing he had so much work to do, and so many enemies to contend with and Moses will no longer be with him.

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Moses' Command to the Levites (Deut 31:23-29)

Moses bluntly told the Levites first so that they too could know what would befall the people of God and do their part in preventing the apostasy that would happen. Then he told the people what the Lord had told him: they were rebellious and stiff-necked and, after his death, would turn away from the Lord to worship idols (v27). When the people are stiff-necked, they refuse to bow in reverent submission to the Lord, but harden themselves against the Lord and persist in doing what they want to do (Ex 32:9; 33:3,5; 34:9; Deut 9:6,13; 10:16).

Hearing God's Word, meditating on it, and obeying it was the best remedy against apostasy. Unfortunately after the death of Moses and Joshua, the people of Israel listened to the false prophets and turned aside from God's truth and practiced idolatry (Judges 2:6-7). Centuries later, Stephen accused his own nation of being "stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears" and always resisting the Holy Spirit as He spoke through the Word (Acts 7:51).

The Song of Moses (Deut 31:30-32:47)

The song had 4 major divisions: the character of God (32:1-4), the kindness of God to His people (32:5-14), the faithfulness of God to chasten His people (32:15-25) and the vengeance of God against His adversaries (32:26-43).

The song traces God's dealings with Israel and is a concise review of the nation's history, from their wilderness sojourn to the judgments in the end times. It has both historic and prophetic aspects.

The Character of God (Deut 32:1-4)

Moses began the song with 2 interesting images: a courtroom (v1) and a rain shower (v2). He called heaven and earth to bear witness to his words (30:19; began the song with 2 interesting images: a courtroom (v1) and a rain shower (v2). He called heaven and earth to bear witness to his words (30:19; 31:28), for the song would indict Israel for turning away from their God and breaking the covenant. This was the most serious offense the people could commit. Everything in creation obeys the Lord except His own people! (see Ps 119:89-91; 148:5-9; Isa 1:1-3). But Moses did not call for a storm; he gave his message as a quiet shower, trusting that the Word would soften the hard soil and produce fruit in the hearts of the people (Isa 55:10-11). "Speaking the truth in love" (Eph 4:15) is the best way to proclaim the Word of God.

Learning the character of God should be our major concern in the school of life and Moses was a star pupil (Ex 33:12-34:9; Ps 90). The other "Song of Moses" (Ex 15) also magnifies the attributes of God.

In 2 brief verses, Moses attributes to the Lord perfection, greatness, justice, truth, faithfulness and righteousness, and he describes Him as "the Rock" (v4,15,28,30-31). This is a familiar biblical usage that speaks of God as stable, strong, unchanging, faithful and enduring. Jacob called Him "the stone" (Gen 49:24) and Jesus is frequently spoken of as "the Stone" or "the Rock" (Matt 21:42-44; Acts 4:11; Rom 9:32-33; 1 Peter 2:4,7-8).

At the very beginning of the song, Moses focused their attention on the greatness of God, for if they understood His greatness, they wouldn't want to worship man-made idols. A W Tozer says, "No religion has ever been greater than its idea of God" and "The first step down for any church is taken when it surrenders its high opinion of God."

The Goodness of God to His People (Deut 32:5-14)

When Israel turned to idols and corrupted themselves and acted in this way, are they really His children? They are a deceitful and twisted generation. What a way to repay their Father for all He had done for them! We expect unconverted people to be "crooked and perverse" (Phil 2:15), but not the people of God (Matt 17:17; Luke 9:41). One more time Moses invited the people to remember what God had done for them in "the days of old". The younger ones could ask the older people what they remembered, because it's the responsibility of the older believers to teach the younger (Ps 78:5-8; Tit 2:1-8)

The Lord is the God of history and geography; He divided the nations (Gen 10) and put them on the earth where He wanted them (Acts 17:26). But He had a special plan for Israel, for they were His own people and He made sure that they had a land adequate for them. The drama of salvation would be enacted in the land of Israel, so that land was very special to the Lord. The Lord delivered Israel from Egypt and then came to them in the wilderness of Sinai. They were a helpless people and He claimed them for Himself. They were "the apple of His eyes" referring to the pupil of the eye (Ps 17:8; Prov 7:2; Zech 2:8).

Moses used the image of the eagle to illustrate God's care for His people (Deut 32:11-13a). At a certain stage of the lives of the young, the parents destroy the nest and force the young to fly. To make sure the young don't fall, the adult birds stay close to the young as they "try their wings," flying beneath them and even carrying them in their strong claws. It's a beautiful picture of the difficult process of maturity that God put all of us through just as He did the nations of Israel. Israel was made to "fly on the high places" (v13) and not grovel in the mire like the pagans. Every experience they had during their wilderness journey was another opportunity for them to grow up, but too often they regressed and acted like babies.

Israel enjoying the land of Canaan is the theme of verses 13b-14. God gave them a rich land, one that produced honey out of the rocks and in which olive trees could thrive in stony soil and produce much oil. Flocks and herds multiplied in the pastures and the fruit and grain prospered in the fields, orchards and vineyards. Indeed, the Lord gave them a good land and nothing was lacking.

The Faithfulness of God in Chastening His People (Deut 32:15-25)

Moses warned the people that their undeserved prosperity in the land would tempt them to become proud and forget the Lord (Deut 8), and then He would have to chasten them, and that's exactly what happened.

"Jeshurun" is a nickname for Israel (33:5,26; Isa 44:2) and means "the upright one". As far as their standing before God was concerned, "He has not observed iniquity in Jacob, nor has He seen wickedness in Israel" (Num 23:21, NKJ), but when it came to their conduct, God stood ready to chasten His beloved people for not living up to their standing. He has a similar problem with the church today, for we don't always walk worthy of our high calling (Eph 4:1ff).

God's jealousy is that of a loving faithful husband whose wife has betrayed him (see the book of Hosea). To worship idols is to worship demons (1 Cor 10:20), so Israel was not only grieving the Lord but also playing right into the hands of the evil one. Their attitudes and actions prevented Him from loving them as He longed to do, so He had to show His love for them by chastening them (see Heb 12:5-11). Since they moved Him to jealousy by following other gods, He decided to move them to jealousy by blessing and using other nations (v21; Hosea 1). Historically, this refers to God using various Gentile nations to chasten Israel in their land (the book of Judges), Babylon to take them into captivity and Rome to scatter them into all the nations. Prophetically, it refers to God calling the Gentiles to salvation after Israel had rejected Jesus and His Gospel (Rom 10: 11:11ff).

The Vengeance of God Against His Adversaries (Deut 32:26-43)

The reason for Israel's plight was not the strength of their enemies but their own lack of wisdom (v28-29; Isa 1:3). They possessed the Scriptures that recorded the covenants, and all they had to do was obey God's laws and He would have blessed them. Those same Scriptures predicted the coming of their Messiah, yet when He arrived, Israel did not know Him (John 1:11,26). Today there is a veil over their hearts when they read the Old Testament and they cannot see Christ in their Scriptures (2Cor 3:12-18; Rom 11:25-36; John 5:39). If Israel had been faithful to the Lord, He would have given them victory over their enemies, but their rebellion against the Lord caused Him to sell them into the hands of their enemies.

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The giving up of Israel into the power of the heathen arose, not from the superior power of the heathen and their gods, but solely from the apostasy of Israel from its own God. "Having experience so often the formidable might of God, they knew for a certainty that the God of Israel was very different from their own idols" (Calvin). "Moses returns to the Jews, showing why, although the rock of the Jews was very different from the gods of the Gentiles, even according to the testimony of the heathen themselves, who were their foes, they were nevertheless to be put to flight by their enemies and sold; and why Jehovah sold them, namely, because their vine was of the vine of Sodom, i.e., of the very worst kind, resembling the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, as if they were descended from them, and not from their holy patriarchs."

Here we have God presented as the righteous warrior who will defeat Israel's enemies and at the same time vindicate His own people and have compassion on them. This was a message of hope for Israel, for His chastening is the first step toward restoring His people and returning to them the blessings they had forfeited when they turned to idols. The false gods they had trusted won't be able to help Israel, but the Lord will show His great power on behalf of His helpless people and deliver them from the enemy.

From verses 39-43 is perhaps a description of Armageddon because there is no record in Scripture or in history of any special time of vengeance when God vindicated Israel by defeating the Gentile nations, and the remaining Gentile nations rejoice with Israel over the destruction, so this prophecy has yet to be fulfilled.

Moses' Last Words to the People (Deut 32:44-47)

Moses closed the song, Joshua standing with him, by appealing to the people to take the message to heart and teach the song to their children, so that future generations would obey the Law and avoid idolatry. The arguments he uses to persuade them are,

1) The vast importance of the things themselves which he had charged upon them (v47): "It is not a vain thing, because it is your life. It is not an indifferent thing, but of absolute necessity; it is not a trifle, but a matter of consequence, a matter of life and death; mind it, and you are made for ever; neglect it, and you are for ever undone."

2) The vast advantage it would be of to them: Through this thing you shall prolong your days in Canaan, which is a typical promise of that eternal life which Christ has assured us those shall enter into that keep the commandments of God, (Matt 19:17).

The Word of God is the life of God's people, just as God is our life (Deut 30:20), for the Word communicates to us the truth about God and His gracious blessings. To receive and obey the Word is to share in the life of God.

Moses' Forthcoming Death (Deut 32:48-52)

On which he finished the reading of the law, and the above song, which was the seventh of Adar or February; according to the Targum of Jonathan, the day he died on; according to the Egyptian Calendar (a), it was the sixteenth of that month (see Deut 34:5).

1. God here reminds him of the sin he had been guilty of, for which he was excluded Canaan (v51), that he might the more patiently bear the rebuke because he had sinned, and that now he might renew his sorrow for that unadvised word, for it is good for the best of men to die repenting of the infirmities they are conscious to themselves of. It was an omission that was thus displeasing to God; he did not sanctify God, as he ought to have done, before the children of Israel.

2. He reminds him of the death of his brother Aaron (v50), to make his own the more familiar and the less formidable. Note, It is a great encouragement to us, when we die, to think of our friends that have gone before us through that darksome valley, especially of Christ, our elder brother and great high priest.

3. He sends him up to a high hill, thence to take a view of the land of Canaan and then die (v49,50). The remembrance of his sin might make death terrible, but the sight God gave him of Canaan took off the terror of it, as it was a token of God's being reconciled to him, and a plain indication to him that though his sin shut him out of the earthly Canaan, yet it should not deprive him of that better country which in this world can only be seen, and that with an eye of faith.

Note: Those may die with comfort and ease whenever God calls for them (notwithstanding the sins they remember against themselves) who have a believing prospect and a well-grounded hope of eternal life beyond death.

The Glory of God (Deut 33:1-5)

Before ascending Mount Nebo to depart this life, Moses took leave of his people, the tribes of Israel, in the blessing which is very fittingly inserted in the book of the law between the divine announcement of his approaching death and the account of the death itself, as being the last words of the departing man of God. The blessing opens with an allusion to the solemn conclusion of the covenant and giving of the law at Sinai, by which the Lord became King of Israel, to indicate at the outset the source from which all blessings must flow to Israel (v2-5).

Moses opened and closed his speech by extolling the greatness of God and then he named each tribe except Simeon (which was absorbed into Judah) and gave them a blessing from the Lord. Moses looked over his long life and the one scene that gripped his mind was the revelation of God's glory at Mount Sinai (Ex 19:16-25; 24:15-18; Heb 12:18-21) and the giving of the law. He had seen God's glory close up when he had been on the mount interceding with the Lord (Ex 33-34). This same description was used in Deborah's song (Judg 5:4-5) and also by Habakkuk as he praised the Lord (Hab 3:3). The better we know the Word of God, the more able we are to express proper worship to Him.

God came from the myriad of angels in heaven to meet with sinful Israel! Why? Because He loved the people (v3). Through the book of Deuteronomy, Moses has emphasized God's special love for Israel and His grace in choosing them to be His special people (Deut 4:31-40; 7:6,13; 14:2; 26:19; 28:9). God's sovereign grace and love are never reasons for pride on the part of sinful people. Rather, they are truths that should humble us and make us want to serve Him with all our hearts.

Moses describes our exalted position because of God's grace: loved by God, secure in His hand and submissive at His feet (v3). We also dwell between His shoulders (v12) and have His everlasting arms beneath us (v27).

Moses didn't see the law as a burden from God, but as a rich inheritance (v4). Israel would inherit a good land, but their greatest inheritance was the Word of God that nourished them, protected them, and guided them. Unlike the nations around them, Israel didn't have a human king ruling the people, for God was their King and His throne was the mercy seat on the ark of the covenant (v5). How tragic that later Israel asked for a king and put their faith in the arm of flesh (Deut 17:14-20; 1Sam 8-9).

God's Blessings for the Tribes (Deut 33:6-25)

Reuben was Jacob's firstborn and his sin (Gen 35:22) cost him the rights of the first-born (Gen 49:3-4) which were given to Joseph (1Ch 5:1-2). Jacob said that the tribe would not excel, but Moses prayed that the tribe would live, i.e., grow and prosper. While the verse promises that the tribe shall endure and prosper, yet it is so worded as to carry with it a warning. The Reubenites, occupied with their herds and flocks, appear, soon after the days of Joshua, to have lost their early energy, until in later times its numbers, even when counted with the Gadites and the half of Manasseh, were fewer than that of the Reubenites alone at the census of Num. 1 (Compare 1Ch 5:18 with Num 1:20). No judge, prophet, or national hero arose out of this tribe.

Many eminent biblical scholars, resting on the most ancient and approved manuscripts of the Septuagint, consider the latter clause as referring to Simeon; "and Simeon, let his men be few," a reading of the text which is in harmony with other statements of Scripture respecting this tribe (Num 25:6-14; 1:23; 26:14; Josh 19:1).

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Judah was also the royal tribe (Gen 49:10), but it was also a military tribe, for the men of Judah marched at the front of the army during the nation's journeys (Num 2:9). Moses prayed that God would hear Judah's prayers, give them victory on the battle field and bring their armies back home safely.

Levi was to be the priestly tribe and Jacob said and Jacob announced he would be scattered throughout Israel (Gen 49:5-7). The Levites lived in 48 special cities assigned to them (Josh 21). Scattering the Levites turned out to be a blessing for the Jews because the Levites knew and taught the law and could instruct the people. The priests had the Urim and Thummim (Ex 25:7; 28:30). Moses was sorely tested at Massah (Ex 17:1-7) and at Meribah (Num 20:1-13), and the priests and Levites stood with him. It was the Levites who slew the idolaters after the golden calf incident (Ex 32:25-29), showing their zeal for the Lord. They put obeying the Lord ahead of their love for their own families and nation. Moses prayed that Levi would be given strength for their many ministries and be protected from their enemies.

Benjamin was greatly beloved by his father (Gen 35:18; 44:20) and also beloved of the Lord and protected by the Lord. Since the sanctuary would be at Jerusalem, Benjamin would be close to the Lord who dwelt there with His people. Like a father caring for a son, God would carry Benjamin on His back, between His shoulders, and shelter him from danger. The men of Benjamin had quite a reputation as warriors (Judg 5:14).

What Jacob desired and solicited for his son **Joseph**, Moses also desires for this tribe, namely, the greatest possible abundance of earthly blessing, and a vigorous manifestation of power in conflict with the nations. But there is an important difference, namely, that in the case of Jacob the main point of the blessing is the growth of Joseph into a powerful tribe, whereas with Moses it is the development of power on the part of this tribe in the land of its inheritance, in perfect harmony with the different times at which the blessings were pronounced. Jacob described the growth of Joseph under the figure of the luxuriant branch of a fruit-tree planted by the water; whilst Moses fixes his eye primarily upon the land of Joseph, and desires for him the richest productions. To the blessings of the heaven and earth there are to be added the good-will of the Lord, who appeared to Moses in the thorn-bush to redeem His people out of the bondage and oppression of Egypt and bring it into the land of Canaan, the land flowing with milk and honey (Exo 3:2).

Zebulun and **Issachar** are two tribes who will receive rich blessing from land and sea. Jacob identified Zebulun with the sea (Gen 49:13) and Issachar with the land (Gen 49:14-15). The two phrases "going out" and "in your tents" cover all of daily life; going out to work, coming home to rest. Moses was blessing every aspect of their life.

Moses praises the Lord, who enlarged **Gad**, i.e., who not only gave him a broad territory in the conquered kingdom of Sihon, but furnished generally an unlimited space for his development (Gen 26:22), so that he might unfold his lion-like nature in conflict with his foes. Its possessions were larger than they would have been had they lain west of Jordan; and this tribe had the honor of being settled by Moses himself in the first portion of land conquered. In the forest region, south of the Jabbok, "he dwelt as a lion" (compare Gen 30:11; 49:19). Notwithstanding, they faithfully kept their engagement to join the "heads of the people" [Deut 33:21] in the invasion of Canaan.

Whilst Jacob compared him to a serpent by the way, which suddenly bites a horse's feet, so that its rider falls backward, Moses gives greater prominence to the strength which **Dan** would display in conflict with foes, by calling him a young lion which suddenly springs out of its ambush. Dan's proper settlement in the south of Canaan being too small, he by a sudden and successful irruption, established a colony in the northern extremity of the land. This might well be described as the leap of a young lion from the hills of Bashan.

If the gracefulness of **Naphtali** is set forth in the blessing of Jacob, by comparing it to a gazelle, here Moses assures the same tribe of satisfaction with the favour and blessing of God, and promises it the possession of the sea and of the south, i.e., an inheritance which should combine the advantages of the sea - a healthy sea-breeze - with the grateful warmth of the south.

Asher, the prosperous (Gen 30:15), was justly to bear the name. He was to be a child of prosperity; blessed with earthly good, he was to enjoy rest all his life long in strong fortresses. To use precious olive oil on your feet would be a mark of wealth, and Asher's territory was blessed with many olive groves.

The Happiness of God's People (Deut 33:26-29)

These last words of Moses focus on the happiness of the people of God because of His blessings. As Moses finished blessing the tribes, he visualized the whole nation and the joy Israel ought to have because they know the true and living God. Their God rides the heavens to come to their aid (see Ps 18:10; 68:33). But even more, God is Israel's "home" and dwelling place (see Ps 90:1) and they abide in Him no matter where they go. As they go forward by faith, He defeats the enemy and holds them up in battle. Israel would face many enemies and fight many battles as they conquered the Promised Land but God would give them victory. They would dwell in a safe and productive land, separated from the pagan nations but bearing witness to them about the God of Israel. God would be their helper, their shield, and their sword, so they had nothing to fear.

Israel's greatest danger wasn't the armies around them so much as the appetites within them. Their hearts needed to be weaned away from their love for idols and the sins associated with idol worship. In the end, the Jews accepted and worshiped the gods of the nations they defeated; and this led to the spiritual and moral decay of the nation. Instead of treading on their high places (v29), Israel sank lower and lower into the pits of sin, until God sent them into captivity.

The Death of Moses (Deut 34)

A Warning for God's Servants (Deut 34:1-8)

The emphasis here isn't so much on his death as the fact that the Lord couldn't allow him to enter the Promised Land because of his rash sin at Kadesh (Num 20). He would see the Promised Land from Mount Nebo (about 6 miles from the border of the Promised Land). The Lord assured Moses that He would keep His covenant with the patriarchs and give Israel this wonderful land. After viewing the land, Moses died and the Lord and the Archangel Michael (Jude 9) buried him on Mount Nebo in a place no one could locate or identify.

An Example for God's Servants (Deut 34:9-12)

Moses was an example of faithfulness to God (Heb 3:1-6). The secret was not his abilities – he claimed he had none – or even his education in Egypt (Acts 7:22), but his humble walk with the Lord. He spent time with God, listened to God's word and followed God's orders. He also set the example in devotion to his people. On 2 occasions, God offered to wipe out the nation and begin a new nation with Moses and Moses rejected the offer (Ex 32:9-14; Num 14:10-25). Moses was a true shepherd who was willing to lay down his life for his sheep (Ex 32:30-35). Moses was also a faithful intercessor. He focused on prayer and the ministry of the word (Acts 6:4). He taught the people the Word and then prayed for them to receive it and grow.

Moses was also a type of Jesus. Our Lord was meek and lowly of heart (Matt 11:28-30) and Moses was described as the meekest man on earth (Num 12:3). Moses finished the work God gave him to do (Ex 39:42-43; 40:33) so did the Son of God (John 17:4). Before He ascended into heaven, Jesus left trained disciples behind Him to finish the work of world evangelism and Moses left Joshua and the elders behind to guide the people in the ways of God. Our Lord's face shone on the Mount of Transfiguration, and Moses' face shone when he came down from meeting God on the mount (Matt 17:2; Ex 34:29-30). Moses was "mighty in words and deeds" (Acts 7:22) and so was Jesus when He was ministry on earth (Luke 24:19).

The only perfect example is Jesus Christ but when we read about Moses, he reminds us of our Lord and encourages us to become more like our Savior in all things.