

## **Deuteronomy 31:1-29 (August 13, 2021)**

**Reflection:** *If you had a few weeks left to live, what would you focus on doing? Do you think the things you focused on are indicative of things you found important throughout your life?*

**Goal:** To have people contrast how their last days might look like compared to Moses and have people think about what they prioritize in life

### **Read Deuteronomy 31:1-13**

**1. Moses speaks of his impending death; how does he encourage the people of Israel? (v.1-6) What does Moses say to Joshua, and what is the significance of reminding Joshua that the Lord goes before him? (v.7-8) What was Moses' command to the elders and priests, and what was the purpose of this action? (v. 9-13)**

#### **i. Moses speaks of his impending death; how does he encourage the people of Israel? (v.1-6)**

1. Moses announced death
2. Moses promises the continued presence of God. Specifically:
  - A. Yahweh would lead them
  - B. Yahweh would deal with Canaanite himself
  - C. Israel is tasked with collecting the victory that God wins over Canaanite by fighting Canaanites
3. Moses encourages Israel to take courage and to be confident

#### **ii. What does Moses say to Joshua, and what is the significance of reminding Joshua that the Lord goes before him? (v.7-8)**

- Joshua will bring them into land and take possession of it
- Joshua is told to be strong and be courageous: because God would be with them, and this should lead them not to be fearful of dismayed
  - o The significance is why they can be strong and courageous because God would be with them

#### **iii. What was Moses' command to the elders and priests, and what was the purpose of this action? (v. 9-13)**

- Hands 1<sup>st</sup> copy to elders and priests to be used to read the Torah regularly to the community (and possibly for safe keeping so that the text would not be tampered with)
- The instructions for reading:
  - o End of seventh year, at the time of appointed for canceling debts and releasing Israelite servants, on festival of Booths of Sukkoth
  - o When all Israel is gathered at the central sanctuary
  - o Purpose: reading yields hearing which leads to learning, fearing, obedience, and life (as when anyone reads cf. 17:19-20) (Daniel Bock, Deuteronomy)
    - o Children would hear at least twice in their life since it is every 7 years.

#### **LN:**

- Why was Moses not allowed into Promised Land: Numbers 20 when Moses strikes the rock at Meribah and failed to trust God. God forbid Moses and that generation from entering the Promised Land
- This scene is a reminder that though their leaders may change their king, God, has not changed, and will continue to be with them even as their national leaders die.

**2. We see a glimpse of the end of Moses' life. What was Moses focused on in the last period of his life, and do you think this is indicative of the focus of Moses' entire life? In your own thinking, how might Moses' focus in these last days be different than a foreign ruler's last days?**

**i. What was Moses focused on in the last period of his life, and do you think this is indicative of the focus of Moses' entire life?**

Moses was focused on obedience to the Lord. Yes, this is indicative of Moses' life. He was mighty in word and deed (Acts 7:22), he was called the man of God (33:1) and Servant of the Lord (34:5). God spoke to him face to face as man speaks with friend (ex 33:11)

**ii. In your own thinking, how might Moses' focus in these last days be different than a foreign ruler's last days?**

Foreign rulers often build memorials and focus on their own legacy before end of their lives. Moses focused on God's legacy and setting the nation to know that the Lord would be with them. Though we can joke that Moses is called the humblest man (Numb 12:3), there definitely is a portrayal here of Moses humility.

**3. A significant theme in these passages is God being with the nation of Israel even as Moses passes and Israel comes under the leadership of Joshua. What do you think was the importance to the Israelites to know that God was with them? (Gen 26:24, Psa 124:1-3)**

*Lots of different answers here are acceptable, but ultimately the idea is that God was Israel's everything. With God they were strong, and blessings would come. However, without God it was ruin and disaster.*

- Gen 26:24 – Fulfill his covenant promises to Israel, and they would experience the blessing of God (Deu 28)
- Psalm 124:1-3 – They would be protected by their enemies

**4. What is the value for us in the New Covenant when we think of God being with us? (cf. Gal 2:20, Eph 3:12, 2 Cor 5:17, Matt 28:20)**

*Lots of different answers. However, the passages help us to see that everything we experience comes from God being with us.*

- Gal 2:20 - speaks of the salvation of Christ who lives in us now
- Eph 3:12 - access to God
- 2 Cor 5:17 - transformation
- Matt 8:28 - On our mission to make disciples

**Read Deuteronomy 31:14-29**

**5. Describe Joshua's commissioning. What do you think is the significance of the Lord's appearance at the tent? (v.14-15,23) What does God say about Israel's future idolatry? Moses is given a song to teach to Israel (which we will look at in a few weeks in Deuteronomy 32), what is the purpose of this song? (v.16-22) What is Moses' command and declaration to the Levites? (v.24-29)**

**i. Describe Joshua's commissioning. What do you think is the significance of the Lord's appearance at the tent? (v.14-15,23)**

- God charges Moses to commission Joshua in the Tent of meeting
  - o The tent is the place where God would meet with His people, Israel.
  - o God met with Moses in a temporary tent of meeting in Ex 33:7,9
  - o That just as God met with Moses, so now that privilege is also now extended to Joshua. This is to know that God communes with Joshua now and know he is the appointed leader.

**ii. What does God say about Israel's future idolatry? Moses is given a song to teach to Israel (which we will look at in a few weeks in Deuteronomy 32), what is the purpose of this song? (v.16-22)**

- Beginning with Moses dying this will lead to a chain of idolatry that will lead to Israel's ultimately apostasy.
  - o This idolatry is described as prostitution, since relationship with Israel is portrayed in martial terms
  - o What Israel lusted for in the false gods of the nations was prosperity and security (which ironically is what their God offered them)
  - o This is what happens when God is not with them
    - o The people's fate is indeed the result of divine wrath, but the ultimate cause is their abandoning of the covenant that Yahweh made with them
    - o This song is to function as a witness, that that the people of Israel would know their sins they are committing against God. Hence, this song was meant to address people in the future that God had forsaken them, but rather they would know that it is they who have forsaken God

**iii. What is Moses' command and declaration to the Levites? (v.24-29)**

- Moses gives the 2<sup>nd</sup> copy of the Law to be put into the ark of the covenant, that it maybe here as a witness against you
  - o It was a witness against them because the Torah speaks of God's grace to them in establishing Israel as his covenant partner and warns the Israelites of consequences of rebellion
- Moses also makes a declaration to the Levites of his awareness of Israel's predisposition to rebel against God

**LN:**

Ark of the covenant: As a sign of His covenant He had the Israelites make a box according to His own design, in which to place the stone tablets containing the Ten Commandments. This box, or chest, was called an "ark" and was made of acacia wood overlaid with gold. The Ark was to be housed in the inner sanctum of the tabernacle in the desert and eventually in the Temple when it was built in Jerusalem. This chest is known as the Ark of the Covenant. The real significance of the Ark of the Covenant was what took place involving the lid of the box, known as the "Mercy Seat." The term 'mercy seat' comes from a Hebrew word meaning "to cover, placate, appease, cleanse, cancel or make atonement for." (Gotquestions)

**6. One of the great issues in Israel is the problem of the human heart to follow idols, and in our own walk of faith, we are often confronted with the temptation of idolatry. What are some things in your life that you are tempted to live for (worship)? How does the New Testament tell us to deal with idolatry? (cf. Ex 20:3-6, 1 Cor 5:11, Col 3:5, Rom 6:17-19)**

**i. What are some things in your life that you are tempted to live for (worship)?**

**Goal:** Idolatry are not just things that we worship but things we devote our lives to or focus our lives on (For instance, when Israel is enslaved to Pharaoh, one of the major issues is because they devoted all of their energy to him they were worshipping him). This can include family, pets, games, work, money, etc.,

**ii. How does the New Testament tell us to deal with idolatry? (cf. Ex 20:3-6, 1 Cor 5:11, Col 3:5, Rom 6:17-19)**

*This answer can go different ways. However, your group should arrive at that God hates idolatry, and we are to rid ourselves of idolatry.*

- Ex 20:3-6 should help us to realize that God hates idolatry and that we should idolize anything. God is always first
- 1 John 5:21 – Keep yourself from idols

- 1 Cor 5:11 – flee from idols
- Col 3:5 – Put idolatry to death
- Rom 6:17-19 – To no longer be enslaved by idolatry, but be slaves to righteousness

**7. Though it doesn't use the words here, Israel clearly suffered from hardness of heart, and God's word and song was to stir them into action. However, many Israelites still harden themselves against God despite hearing him. For us in the New Covenant, the writer of Hebrews reminds us to not harden our hearts when we hear God's voice (Heb 3:15). How would you define a "hardened heart", and what causes people to harden their hearts? (Ob 3:1, 1 Tim 4:1-2, Rom 1:18-24) How does God's word help us to overcome our hardened hearts? (Ezk 37:1-10, Heb 4:12, 2 Tim 3:16-17)**

**i. How would you define a "hardened heart", and what causes people to harden their hearts? (Ob 3:1, 1 Tim 4:1-2, Rom 1:18-24)**

The heart represents the total being of a person and for it to be "hardened" it means a person who is unresponsive to God.

- "Hardness of heart thus describes a negative condition in which the person ignores, spurns, or rejects the gracious offer of God to be a part of his or her life." (bible.org)
- Ezekiel 11:19: "I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh."

*Causes: basically, everything falls into the category of sin. Continual sin and blindness cause us to harden our hearts.*

- Obadiah 3:1 – Pride
- 1 Tim 4:1-2 - a seared conscience (If the conscience is "seared"—literally "cauterized"—then it has been rendered insensitive. Such a conscience does not work properly; it's as if "spiritual scar tissue" has dulled the sense of right and wrong) (Gotquestions) by deceitful spirits and teaching of demons.
- Romans 1:18-24 - Suppression of the truth

**ii. How does God's word help us to overcome our hardened hearts? (Ezk 37:1-10, Heb 4:12, 2 Tim 3:16-17)**

Many ways to answer this question. The verses should help us to realize that God is the one who unhardens our hearts, and his word interacts with the Holy Spirit in us to be sensitive to our sanctification.

- Ezk 37:1-10 – That God has already done the ultimate overcoming in giving us life. He has turned spiritual death into spiritual life. Making us new and able to experience God's presence and word deeply in our life
- Heb 4:12 – God's word helps us to be sensitive the thoughts and intentions of our heart
  - o One of the functions of the Word is that penetrates deep into us and makes known our hearts and intentions
- 2 Tim 3:16-17 - God's word overcomes our hearts by teaching us, training us, and making us complete in God

**In this chapter, we see a glimpse of the final days of Moses and the future of Israel. In Moses, we see a man at the end of his life focused on glorifying God and calling Israel to be faithful covenant partners to God. On the flip side, Israel's heart will wander, and they will turn away from God. Which one are we: are we fully God's or fully in rebellion? Whichever we are, let us turn to the Word of God. If we truly love God, let us continue to ground our faith in his Word. If we are rebellious, we need to hear his Word, repent, and love him. I hope we all spend some time this week reflecting on our relationship with God.**