

Bible Study – Deuteronomy Chapter 33 - 34 Israel’s blessings and Moses’ death

In our last study, we studied the song of Moses that he gave to the nation of Israel, with the purpose of being a witness against them in the future. At the same time, the Israelites are reminded that their ultimate hope and security can only be found in God alone.

In our study tonight, we conclude our study in the book of Deuteronomy with the blessings given to the tribes of Israel and the narrative of Moses’ death.

Read Deuteronomy 33:1-29

Moses has been a spiritual and theocratic father to the twelve tribes and in the tradition of Isaac and Jacob, pronounces his final blessings to Israel in his final address to the nation before they go into the Promised Land. It starts with a presentation of God before going into the blessings.

Q. (1-5) Moses introduces who God is by giving a vivid image of God rising as a sun over the mountains with the holy ones. What do you think this image is to convey to the Israelites? In v. 5, how is “... the Lord became king in Jeshurun...” to be understood, specifically, who is the Lord becoming king? Why is a correct understanding of this verse important?

Q. (6-25) Moses begins to bless the tribes, but there is one tribe missing. Which one is it and why? (cf. Genesis 49:7) What lesson can we take away from this? Describe the blessings given to the following tribes and why it may be significant: Levi, Joseph, Zebulun & Issachar, and Naphtali

Q. (26-29) As Moses closes his address, he focuses on Israel’s God again. What key message is Moses trying to convey?

Read Deuteronomy 32:48-52; 34:1-12

In the first part of the passage, God instructs Moses on how he will die and what will precede his death. The second part of the passage shows Moses following these instructions, while giving a eulogy for Moses and an epilogue to this section of the Old Testament.

Q. What was the incident at Meribah that prevented Moses from entering the Promised Land (Numbers 20:1-13)? How was Moses' action offensive to God?

Q. When Moses dies on Mount Nebo, why do you think God did it in this specific way? How does his death fulfill the promise of God? Why was it necessary for Moses to die at this time?

Q. Moses was a foreshadow of someone greater to come, namely Jesus Christ. In what way are Moses and Jesus similar in terms of their ministry?

As Moses ends his ministry in the book of Deuteronomy, as his last act before the nation of Israel, he confers blessings to the tribes of Israel, similar to how Jacob conferred blessings to his sons. These blessings have been partially fulfilled in history, but will be fully realized in the future, when Israel repents, and God brings her back into her land.

We also witness how God is calling one of his faithful servants home to him. Though Moses' sin at Meribah prevents him from entering the Promised Land, it is his faith that saves him (Hebrews 11:26). We see the comparison of Moses and Jesus Christ, showing many similarities from how they were born and their ministry to the people. However, Moses was only a foreshadow of a greater priest-king that was to come, one who would save people from the destruction of their sin and to turn their hearts toward their God. As great as Moses was, Jesus Christ is the ultimate Saviour of his people and creation.