

MOSES BLESSES THE TWELVE TRIBES

BIBLE TEXT : Deuteronomy 33:1-29

LESSON 142 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD" (Deuteronomy 33:29).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Deuteronomy 33:1-29

¹ And this *is* the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death. ² And he said, The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand *went* a fiery law for them. ³ Yea, he loved the people; all his saints *are* in thy hand: and they sat down at thy feet; *every one* shall receive of thy words. ⁴ Moses commanded us a law, *even* the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob. ⁵ And he was king in Jeshurun, when the heads of the people *and* the tribes of Israel were gathered together. ⁶ Let Reuben live, and not die; and let *not* his men be few. ⁷ And this *is the blessing* of Judah: and he said, Hear, LORD, the voice of Judah, and bring him unto his people: let his hands be sufficient for him; and be thou an help *to him* from his enemies. ⁸ And of Levi he said, *Let* thy Thummim and thy Urim *be* with thy holy one, whom thou didst prove at Massah, *and with* whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah; ⁹ Who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant. ¹⁰ They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law: they shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon thine altar. ¹¹ Bless, LORD, his substance, and accept the work of his hands: smite

BIBLE REFERENCES:

NOTES:

The Lawgiver

God had used Moses to give His Law to the people. After they had been delivered from Egypt, and led through the Red Sea, they camped before Mount Sinai (**Exodus 19:1-2** ¹ In the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they *into* the wilderness of Sinai. ² For they were departed from Rephidim, and were come *to* the desert of Sinai, and had pitched in the wilderness; and there Israel camped before the mount). God said that the Children of Israel would be "an holy nation" and "a peculiar treasure" if they obeyed Him. They told Moses, "All that the LORD hath spoken we will do." As the representative of the people, Moses talked to God.

Before Moses went up on the Mount to receive the Law from God, all the people were told to prepare and sanctify themselves, for they would hear the voice of God from a thick cloud as He talked with Moses (Exodus 19:9). How much more Moses must have prayed, consecrated himself, and searched his heart to prepare to talk to God! The people were not even to touch the mountain, for the Holy God was there, but Moses was commanded to go into His presence.

There was no doubt in the minds of the people that God was there. He showed forth His power and glory by the thunderings, lightnings, and fire (**Exodus 19:16** ¹⁶ And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that *was* in the camp trembled. **Exodus 19:18** ¹⁸ And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly). The people trembled and drew back while Moses was shut in alone with God. For forty days and forty nights (**Exodus 24:18** ¹⁸ And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights), Moses was in the cloud-covered Mount to receive the Law written with the finger of God (**Exodus 31:18** ¹⁸ And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God), on two tables of stone (**Exodus 34:1** ¹ And the LORD said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon *these* tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest). When Moses returned from being with God his face shone brightly with the light and glory of God (**Exodus 34:29** ²⁹ And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him).

God's Call Answered

Moses was the lawgiver, a mighty man of God, because he was willing to answer God's call and to fill the place that the Lord wanted him to fill. Moses went through a period of

through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again.¹² And of Benjamin he said, The beloved of the LORD shall dwell in safety by him; *and the LORD* shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders.¹³ And of Joseph he said, Blessed of the LORD *be* his land, for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath,¹⁴ And for the precious fruits *brought forth* by the sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moon,¹⁵ And for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills,¹⁶ And for the precious things of the earth and fulness thereof, and *for* the good will of him that dwelt in the bush: let *the blessing* come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the top of the head of him *that was* separated from his brethren.¹⁷ His glory *is like* the firstling of his bullock, and his horns *are like* the horns of unicorns: with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth: and they *are* the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they *are* the thousands of Manasseh.¹⁸ And of Zebulun he said, Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out; and, Issachar, in thy tents.¹⁹ They shall call the people unto the mountain; there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness: for they shall suck *of* the abundance of the seas, and *of* treasures hid in the sand.²⁰ And of Gad he said, Blessed *be* he that enlargeth Gad: he dwelleth as a lion, and teareth the arm with the crown of the head.²¹ And he provided the first part for himself, because there, *in* a portion of the lawgiver, *was he* seated; and he came with the heads of the people, he executed the justice of

preparation for God's service. He denied himself and was separated from his family at times. Perhaps God would use you to be a great blessing to others if you, too, would be willing to prepare to be what He wants you to be.

Moses' work was nearly finished. He knew that he would soon leave the Children of Israel (**Deuteronomy 31:14**¹⁴ And the LORD said unto Moses, Behold, thy days approach that thou must die: call Joshua, and present yourselves in the tabernacle of the congregation, that I may give him a charge. And Moses and Joshua went, and presented themselves in the tabernacle of the congregation). Moses had learned to love them as his own children. He had taught them and worked for them that they might have the best of everything — a goodly inheritance from the Lord. He could do no more for them than pronounce a blessing in farewell. In like manner, Jacob had blessed his sons before his death (Genesis 49). The families of these sons became the tribes of the Children of Israel. When Moses blessed the individual tribe, the blessing was upon all the family, not just upon the one man at its head.

As True Believers

Moses desired the Children of Israel to be true followers of the Lord. The outstanding feature of each blessing applies to God's people today, too. To Reuben, Moses' blessing was that his family would live, and not die. Spiritual life has been promised to the true believer in contrast with death that awaits the sinner. "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

The blessing of the tribe of Judah was that God would deliver him from his enemies, and hear his voice, as God would hear the prayer of His people. "The LORD is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous" (Proverbs 15:29). "The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles" (Psalm 34:17).

Priests unto God

The Levites had volunteered to be on the Lord's side. They had been made priests unto God. Upon the breastplate of the high priest were the Urim and Thummim which gave understanding and discernment to bear the judgment of the Children of Israel (**Exodus 28:30**³⁰ And thou shalt put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be upon Aaron's heart, when he goeth in before the LORD: and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel upon his heart before the LORD continually). The priests were anointed, consecrated, and sanctified (**Exodus 28:41**⁴¹ And thou shalt put them upon Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him; and shalt anoint them, and consecrate them, and sanctify them, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office.) in order "to minister in the holy place" (Exodus 28:43). As well as being holy, the priest wore upon the mitre or headpiece these words: "HOLINESS TO THE LORD" (Exodus 28:36).

The Levites received no land when Canaan was divided among the Children of Israel, for the Lord was their inheritance (**Numbers 18:20**²⁰ And the LORD spake unto Aaron, Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, neither shalt thou have any part among them: I *am* thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel). Many times their work demanded that they be away from their families. Yet they were faithful to God and to the Children of Israel to teach them the Law and to make offerings unto the Lord. Moses blessed the Levites and asked God to accept their work and protect them.

the LORD, and his judgments with Israel. ²² And of Dan he said, Dan *is* a lion's whelp: he shall leap from Bashan. ²³ And of Naphtali he said, O Naphtali, satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the LORD: possess thou the west and the south. ²⁴ And of Asher he said, *Let Asher be* blessed with children; let him be acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil. ²⁵ Thy shoes *shall be* iron and brass; and as thy days, *so shall thy strength be.* ²⁶ *There is* none like unto the God of Jeshurun, *who* rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. ²⁷ The eternal God *is thy* refuge, and underneath *are* the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy *them.* ²⁸ Israel then shall dwell in safety alone: the fountain of Jacob *shall be* upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew. ²⁹ Happy *art* thou, O Israel: who *is* like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD, the shield of thy help, and who *is* the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places.

Beloved of the Lord

Moses called Benjamin the beloved of the Lord, and said that he would dwell in safety, depending upon the Lord.

**"Just lean upon the arms of Jesus,
He'll help you along, help you along;
If you will trust His love unfailing,
He'll fill your heart with song.**

**"Lean on His arms, trusting in His love;
Lean on His arms, all His mercies prove;
Lean on His arms, looking home above,
Just lean on the Savior's arms!"**

The blessing for Joseph (his two sons — Ephraim and Manasseh) was pronounced upon his land — the precious things of Heaven and earth. This included spiritual blessings as well as temporal blessings. To him was given great plenty and great authority, which was fulfilled in part by two great leaders — Joshua from the lineage of Ephraim, and Gideon from the lineage of Manasseh.

The tribes of Zebulun and Issachar were blessed together. They were told to rejoice, or to have joy, each in his own place. "For the joy of the LORD is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10). They would do service unto the Lord by offering sacrifices of righteousness, as well as by calling others to worship the Lord. Some think that the people of Zebulun became merchants, as they lived near the sea; and that the people of Issachar became husbandmen or farmers; but each was of service in his own place to honor the Lord.

The Gadites were some of those Children of Israel who preferred to settle on the east side of the Jordan River and not to go into the land of Canaan. They first provided for their families and for their cattle (**Numbers 32:16** ¹⁶ And they came near unto him, and said, We will build sheepfolds here for our cattle, and cities for our little ones). Then the men of war went with the rest of the Children of Israel into Canaan to fight for them (**Joshua 4:12** ¹² And the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh, passed over armed before the children of Israel, as Moses spake unto them). It is understood by the blessing pronounced upon Gad that his tribe would grow. Paul encouraged true believers to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Peter 3:18).

Of Dan it was said that he was a young lion — perhaps meaning lionhearted, courageous, and bold. One man of this tribe, Samson, proved himself to be strong, for at one time he slew a young lion (**Judges 14:5-6** ⁵ Then went Samson down, and his father and his mother, to Timnath, and came to the vineyards of Timnath: and, behold, a young lion roared against him. ⁶ And the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid, and *he had* nothing in his hand: but he told not his father or his mother what he had done). Samson was bold, and killed many of the enemies of the Children of Israel. At his death he slew more enemies "than they which he slew in his life" (Judges 16:30). God wants His people to be strong in Him and very courageous (**Joshua 1:7** ⁷ Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest).

Naphtali was to be satisfied and full of the blessing of the Lord. "My people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the LORD" (Jeremiah 31:14).

**"Hallelujah! I have found Him
Whom my soul so long has craved!
Jesus satisfies my longings;
Through His blood I now am saved."**

To Asher was given the promise of prosperity, the fellowship of those about him, and strength as his days. "The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psalm 27:1).

Moses reminded the Children of Israel that there is none like unto the Lord and that He would be their refuge and rest. Moses concluded by saying that the Children of Israel should be happy to be so blessed of the Lord Cannot a Christian say the same?

QUESTIONS

- 1 How did Moses know that he was about to die?
- 2 What had he done for the Children of Israel?
- 3 Whom did he bless?
- 4 How do we know that God loved the people?
- 5 Compare the blessings of the Children of Israel to those of a child of God today.