

AM Deuteronomy 31:28-32:47 The Song of Moses

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[0 : 00] The Word of God, Deuteronomy, chapter 32. Continuing with our studies in Deuteronomy, we're going to look at the Song of Moses.

We're going to begin our reading in chapter 31, verse 28. This is a very long reading, but Moses himself insisted that the people of Israel should hear these words, says in verse 30, until they were finished.

So that's what we're going to do. Going to read down to chapter 32, verse 47. So, Deuteronomy 31, 28.

Assemble to me, all the elders of your tribes and your officers, that I may speak these words in their ears, and call heaven and earth to witness against them.

For I know that after my death you will surely act corruptly and turn aside from the way that I have commanded you.

[1 : 22] And in the days to come, evil will befall you, because you will do what is evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking him to anger through the work of your hands.

Then Moses spoke the words of this song until they were finished, in the ears of all the assembly of Israel.

Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak. And let the earth hear the words of my mouth. May my teaching drop as the rain, my speech distill as the dew, like gentle rain upon the tender grass, and like showers upon the herb.

For I will proclaim the name of the Lord, ascribe greatness to our God. The rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice.

A God of faithfulness, and without iniquity, just and upright is he. They have dealt corruptly with him.

[2 : 39] They are no longer his children, because they are blemished. They are a crooked and twisted generation. Do you thus repay the Lord, you foolish and senseless people?

Is not he your father who created you, who made you, and established you? Remember the days of old.

Consider the years of many generations. Ask your father, and he will show you. Your elders, and they will tell you. When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, and he fixed the borders of the peoples, according to the number of the sons of God.

But the Lord's portion is his people, Jacob, his allotted heritage. He found him in a desert land, and in the howling waste of the wilderness.

He encircled him. He cared for him. He kept him as the apple of his eye. Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that flutters over its young, spreading out its wings, catching them, bearing them on its pinions.

[4 : 04] The Lord alone guided him. No foreign god was with him. He made him ride on the high places of the land, and he ate the produce of the field.

And he suckled him with honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock, curds from the herd, and milk from the flock, with fat of lambs, rams of bashan, and goats, with the very finest of the wheat.

And you drank foaming wine made from the blood of the grape. But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked.

You grew fat, stout, and sleek. Then he forsook God who made him, and scoffed at the rock of his salvation.

They stirred him to jealousy with strange gods. With abominations they provoked him to anger. They sacrificed to demons that were no gods, to gods they had never known, to new gods that had come recently, whom your fathers had never dreaded.

[5 : 21] You were unmindful of the rock that bore you, and you forgot the God who gave you birth. The Lord saw it and spurned them, because of the provocation of his sons and his daughters.

And he said, I will hide my face from them. I will see what their end will be, for they are a perverse generation, children in whom is no faithfulness.

They have made me jealous with what is no God. They have provoked me to anger with their idols. So I will make them jealous with those who are no people.

I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation. For a fire is kindled by my anger, and it burns to the depths of Sheol, devours the earth and its increase, and sets on fire the foundations of the mountains.

And I will heap disasters upon them. I will expend my arrows on them. They shall be wasted with hunger, and devoured by plague and poisonous pestilence.

[6 : 36] I will send the teeth of beasts against them, with the venom of things that crawl in the dust. Outdoors the sword shall bereave, and indoors terror, for young man and woman alike, the nursing child with the man of grey hairs.

I would have said, I will cut them to pieces. I will wipe them from human memory, had I not feared provocation by the enemy, lest their adversaries should misunderstand, lest they should say, our hand is triumphant.

It was not the Lord who did all this. For they are a nation void of counsel, and there is no understanding in them. If they were wise, they would understand this.

They would discern their latter end. How could one have chased a thousand, and two have put ten thousand to flight, unless their rock had sold them, and the Lord had given them up?

For their rock is not as our rock, our enemies are by themselves. For their vine comes from the vine of Sodom, and from the fields of Gomorrah.

[7 : 56] Their grapes are grapes of poison. Their clusters are bitter. Their wine is the poison of serpents, and the cruel venom of asps.

Is not this laid up in store with me? Sealed up in my treasuries. Vengeance is mine and recompense, for the time when their foot shall slip.

For the day of their calamity is at hand, and their doom comes swiftly. For the Lord will vindicate his people, and have compassion on his servants, when he sees that their power is gone, and there is none remaining, bond or free.

Then he will say, where are their gods, the rock in which they took refuge, who ate the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink offering?

Let them rise up and help you. Let them be your protection. See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no God beside me.

[9 : 08] I kill and I make alive. I wound and I heal. And there is none that can deliver out of my hand. For I lift up my hand to heaven, and swear, as I live forever, if I sharpen my flashing sword, and my hand takes hold on judgment, I will take vengeance on my adversaries, and will repay those who hate me.

I will make my arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh, with the blood of the slain, and the captives, from the long-haired heads of the enemy.

Rejoice with him, O heavens. Bow down to him, all gods. For he avenges the blood of his children, and takes vengeance on his adversaries.

He repays those who hate him, and cleanses his people's land. Moses came and recited all the words of this song in the hearing of the people, he and Joshua the son of Nun.

And when Moses had finished speaking all these words to all Israel, he said to them, Take to heart all the words by which I am warning you today, that you may command them to your children, that they may be careful to do all the words of this law.

[10 : 39] For it is no empty word for you, but your very life. And by this word you shall live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess.

Well, let us bow once again in prayer. Well, let's turn now to Deuteronomy 32.

Though my text is at the end of chapter 31. Then Moses spoke the words of this song until they were finished in the ears of all the assembly of Israel.

I notice, by the way, that the clock is rotating very quickly and time is short.

I hope that you will be patient with me and won't be offended if the service goes on a little bit longer than usual. Such a long and wonderful passage. I don't think I want to crush it all into 18 minutes before 12 o'clock.

[11 : 51] When you think of Moses, what do you think of? The man who led Israel out of Egypt, perhaps?

The man who gave the Ten Commandments? You probably don't think of him as a songwriter.

But here it is, the song of Moses. And it isn't the only song that he wrote. In Exodus 15, we have another song of Moses, the song of triumph triumph after the Israelites had passed through the Red Sea.

Then there's Psalm 90, described as a prayer of Moses, the man of God, but written as poetry to be sung. In Revelation 15, the victorious saints in heaven sing the song of Moses and the Lamb.

Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God Almighty, just and true are your ways, O King of the nations. Which is a summary of Exodus 15.

[13 : 18] Well, here is another song of Moses. Moses. But this is no ordinary song. The songs of this world are intended mainly for entertainment.

This one is intended for warning. Moses is about to die.

And he's concerned about what will happen afterwards. Says chapter 31, verse 29, I know that after my death you will surely act corruptly and turn aside from the way that I command you.

It's a little bit like Paul's warning to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in.

Moses has also gathered the elders here. And he speaks these words in the presence of all Israel. He wants them all to hear this song and to hear all of it until it is finished.

[14 : 38] And to take it to heart. He calls heaven and earth to bear witness. This is a warning to them against unfaithfulness.

And it was important for Israel to hear it. But it's not just for ancient Israel. This is for us as well.

We serve the same God and we too are expected to be faithful. It's important to us as individuals.

It's important to us as a church. It's important even to this nation of Scotland. Scotland is not Israel.

But after all the blessings that Scotland has received God surely deserves better thanks than he receives from this land which has rebelled against him and brought trouble upon itself.

[15 : 54] This song is often quoted in the Old Testament as we will notice. But strangely it's very little known today.

and it should be. We only have time for a very brief overview but I trust that God will speak to us through it.

We can divide it into four parts. There's an introduction proclaiming the greatness of God and accusing Israel of unfaithfulness.

then a reminder of the goodness of God then a warning of disasters to come but then finally a promise of redemption.

Scholars have noted that the first three parts are similar to ancient lawsuits for breach of covenant but the last part is unique.

[17 : 03] Ancient kings offered no redemption. Break their laws and you would be punished full stop but with God there is plentiful redemption which makes this ultimately a song of hope.

And all the way through there is that repeated theme of the rock which reminds us of course of our Lord Jesus Christ the rock of ages.

So first then the introduction in verses 1 to 5 having called heaven and earth to witness Moses prays that his teaching might drop as the rain and distill as the dew.

Maybe here in Scotland we get a little weary of rain sometimes but in a dry land rain is a good thing. Moses wants this song to be refreshing to our souls.

He begins on a note of praise in verse 3 I will proclaim the name of the Lord ascribe greatness to our God the rock his work is perfect for all his ways are justice a God of faithfulness and without iniquity just and upright is he.

[18 : 33] Here is that rock theme for the first time we'll notice it five times through this song and this is in fact the very first time in the Bible that God is described as the rock we have it many times afterwards in the Bible particularly in the Psalms Psalm 18 for example which I preached on here a few months ago and which we will sing from later the Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer the Psalm 27 28 31 61 62 they all speak about the rock Psalm 92 which we've just sung actually quotes Deuteronomy the Lord is upright he is my rock and there is no unrighteousness in him

Christians have always seen this as a picture of Christ the rock of ages the thought is strength security and reliability for years the Israelites had been wandering about in the desert amongst all the shifting sands a rock was a place where they could stand with confidence protected from the elements protected from their enemies a place of safety and the same is true of our Lord Jesus Christ in him we are safe and secure through him alone we are saved even on the day of judgment God had been their rock in those days in the wilderness and in every way he had proved himself to be perfect his ways were perfect his laws were perfect his character was perfect there was no iniquity in him no injustice no unrighteousness what he did and said was always right as it says in

Psalm 18 again quoting Deuteronomy this God his way is perfect the word of the Lord proves true he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him and the same could be said and is said of Christ this perfect God had been faithful to Israel he is it says here a God of faithfulness he had been their rock he had been unfailingly reliable he had never once let them down but what about them what about Israel had they been faithful to God sadly no they have dealt corruptly he says they are no longer his children because they are blemished they are crooked and twisted generation they had broken his covenant this had been true already in the past they had rebelled against him in the wilderness and the warning is that it will be true again even when they enter the promised land they will break

God's covenant covenant and that sadly is so often true of us too isn't it God has done such wonderful things for us and yet we still rebel against him now developing these themes we have next a reminder of God's goodness in verses 6 to 14 do you thus repay the Lord you foolish and senseless people he says and he reminds them of all the good things that God has done for them takes them back to the beginning God was their father who created them how could they reject him takes them back through history remember the days of old and if you can't remember ask your fathers will tell you God had given them the land a land prepared for them from the beginning the land was theirs because they were his he'd rescued them out of

Egypt he'd kept them in the wilderness found them it says verse 10 in a desert land in the howling waste of the wilderness he encircled him he cared for him he kept him as the apple of his eye lovely image you know how carefully you protect your eyes you blink if something comes near them you wear goggles if you're close to sparks or flying rocks because your eyes are precious to you and Israel was precious to God and we as Christians are precious to him the apple of his eye likens himself then in verse 11 to an eagle that verse that I spoke of to the children stirring up the nest fluttering over its young spreading out its wings carrying them eagle is a majestic bird it's a bird of prey that can swoop down on its enemies and kill them but it is remarkably protective of its young so likewise

[24 : 48] God is protective of his people same image is used by the way in Exodus 19 about God bringing Israel out of Egypt I bore you on eagle's wings and brought you to myself as Christians we can apply this to ourselves also we're carried through this life by Christ we're lifted up into the spiritual realms we've taken refuge under his wings as Psalm 91 says slightly different image under rather than over but the same thought and one day we will be born on eagle's wings to heaven it's a lovely picture of our salvation God had guided them also verse 12 with a pillar of cloud and fire he'd made them to ride on the high places triumphantly and looking ahead prophetically he speaks of future blessings in Canaan provided for them richly honey out of the rock oil out of the flinty rock curds and milk and fat of lambs the finest of the wheat the best wine was after all the land of milk and honey honey out of the rock is an especially beautiful thought isn't it not just water out of the rock but honey out of the rock the sweetest of food in the hardest of circumstances and how often is that our experience the sweetness of Christ amidst all our troubles

Psalm 81 quotes this as a lament for lost opportunity if only they had listened it says I would have fed them with the finest of the wheat but they didn't how true that is of Scotland today which leads us to the third part of the song the warning of disasters to come because of their unfaithfulness verses 15 to 33 Jeshurun grew fat he says looking ahead prophetically Jeshurun being another name for Israel they became prosperous and they no longer cared about God he forsook God who made him he scoffed at the rock of his salvation that rock theme again isn't that true of our land today people scoff at God make fun of him make jokes about him the only

God who can save them Israel turned away from God they worshipped idols instead they were unmindful verse 18 of the rock that bore you and that would lead to disaster verse 19 the Lord saw it and spurned them they had turned away from him he would turn away from them the song goes on now in the first person God himself is speaking they've made me jealous he says they have provoked me to anger I will make them jealous and provoke them to anger with a foreign nation I will heap disasters on them hunger plague pestilence wild beasts serpents they'll perish by the sword there's nothing new here this is all exactly what he warned them when the covenant was made

Deuteronomy 28 all these disasters were warned of there they are a foolish nation he says verse 28 if they were wise they would understand this they would discern their latter end isn't this so true of people today a foolish nation who give no thought to the future no thought for the ultimate consequences of their actions things could have been so different they could have triumphed over their enemies one could have chased a thousand but instead their rock had sold them the fourth time that title is used and it's deeply shocking isn't it the lord who bought them had now sold them and they themselves would be chased by their enemies speaking perhaps of the captivity in Babylon these are dark warnings but he says their rock is not as our rock that's the fifth time the rock is mentioned and there is hope in this our god is not the same as the gods of the nations therefore there is hope which brings us to the final part the promise of redemption verses 34 to 43 the lord himself is the speaker still and he speaks of vengeance on the nations and deliverance for his people speaks of it as something that he'd been planning all along is not this laid up in store with me sealed up in my treasures vengeance is mine and recompense for the time when their foot shall slip the authorised version translates that their foot shall slide in due time and this was the text that

Jonathan Edwards preached on in a famous sermon in Enfield Massachusetts in 1741 entitled sinners in the hands of an angry god when revival broke out it said that as Edwards spoke on these words people could feel their feet sliding into hell and they cried out for mercy how we long for people to cry out for mercy today we're promised in Psalm 121 that our foot shall not be moved but the feet of the wicked shall slip and slide to destruction for the nations the day of their calamity is at hand but for Israel verse 36 the Lord will vindicate his people and have compassion on his servants when he sees that their power is gone gods of the nations won't be able to help them then their rock won't save them but God will be a true rock to his people he can do this because he is the sovereign

[32 : 44] God verse 39 see now that I even I am he and there is no God beside me I kill and I make alive I wound and I heal and there is none that can deliver out of my hand life and death are in God's hands he is the almighty God he can bring down the mighty and raise up the humble and the meek Israel would be brought down because of their unfaithfulness but God can give them life again that is the note of hope in this song and that is the way that God works in our lives too bringing us low so that he can raise us up again sometimes he uses his word William preached to us a while ago on the word of God being living and active sharper than any two edged sword he wounds us with the law in order that he might heal us with the gospel people sometimes he uses providence think of

Nebuchadnezzar full of pride struck down in a moment reduced to eating grass like an animal but when he was humbled God restored him and he praised the God of heaven or think of Paul breathing out threats and slaughter struck blind on the road to Damascus literally wounded by God but then healed and called to be an apostle this is something that resonates with me I was brought low 50 years ago with a nervous breakdown but I look back and I give thanks to God for it he saw me in my arrogant pride and realized that I was heading for destruction so he wounded me he brought me low until I began to look up for mercy brought me low that I might come to Christ

I didn't know this verse then but when I read it soon afterwards I felt this fits my case perfectly but it finds its ultimate fulfillment in Christ he was wounded and killed for our sins on the cross and then raised again for our justification and his resurrection points to our own after we have died God is able to make us alive again but to return to our text the song concludes with a vivid description of God's judgment on the nations and an invitation to rejoice yes rejoice both in judgment and salvation the last line of the song is especially precious

God cleanses his people's land a footnote in my bible says that it could be translated he atones for them and that wonderfully is what God has done sending his son to atone for our sins not just for the sins of Israel but for the sins of his people worldwide that is the great hope that we draw from this song Moses tells the people to take these words to heart the words of this song and all his words because these words will be life to them and we need to take them to heart too perhaps this morning you are walking faithfully with God that's good keep doing so be warned though of the consequences if you ever become unfaithful

God is your rock hold fast to him perhaps you are not walking quite so faithfully perhaps there is rebellion in your heart again take heed provoke God to anger and you will regret it and yet however far you have fallen there is still hope if you have turned away turn back remember Psalm 130 with him there is plentiful redemption perhaps you have never really trusted in God well now is the time to do so you don't want to be found amongst God's enemies at the day of judgment perhaps your foot is already sliding if it is hold on to the rock and if you are his pray for those who are not we live in a nation that has rejected

[38 : 34] God a foolish people who give no thought to their latter end oh that the Lord would make them wise and bring them to to the rock of their salvation amen