

APRIL 9

Believe it or not, this is our last full day in Deuteronomy. If you open your Bible and hold Genesis to Deuteronomy together, that is a hunk of Bible. The same goes for what you've read in The Psalms and the Gospels. You've actually read about a third of the Bible since you'll be reading The Psalms twice. Tomorrow we meet Rahab, a woman of incredible faith.

Deuteronomy 33

This is sort of like Jacob's blessing of his sons at the end of Genesis. What things stand out to you? I only have a few of my own observations.

Vs. 1-5 Moses begins this blessing with God's coming to Sinai with His angels to show great love to His people Israel.

V. 6 Reuben is mentioned first as Jacob's firstborn, but interestingly, Moses says his men would be few. It may be that the penalty for his incest was still there and had some influence in the tribe.

V. 7 Judah is mentioned here because he is the son/tribe who really received the birthright. As it will say today in Psalm 78, the blessing went to Judah. Can you remember why?

Interestingly, Simeon isn't mentioned although he was the second son. This tribe was eventually absorbed into Judah.

Vs. 8-11 Notice the space given to the Levites. Of all the things that God gave this tribe, Moses mentions the Thummim and Urim. These were incredible gifts to the nation. I still don't understand why the nation didn't avail itself of this blessing, except that to get this answer you had to come to the tabernacle.

V. 10 Notice what the Levites were supposed to do. They were to be the teachers of Israel.

V. 12 Benjamin is mentioned with Joseph since both were sons of the loved wife, Rachel.

Vs. 13-17 This is a lot of text and blessing for Joseph. Israel was to remember that God used Joseph to save them. Compare this to v. 67 in today's psalm. Everyone looked to Joseph and Ephraim, but God chose Judah. In v. 17 Ephraim is mentioned first. Also note the "ten thousand - thousand" comparison. This must have been a motto in the culture. This saying will play a funny role when we get to King Saul and David.

Vs. 18-25 I find it interesting that so much text is given to the tribe of Gad. Maybe this had something to do with the choice of the 2.5 tribes to settle on the east side of the Jordan.

V. 22 Apparently there is a possible wordplay here, because "Bashan" can mean or sound like "serpent." This could mean something like, "strong like a lion, but afraid of snakes." When Jacob blessed Dan in Genesis 49:17, he called him a snake on the road. All of this is interesting because Dan becomes the first tribe to completely defect into idolatry and they are not a part of the 144,000 in Revelation.

V. 23 The lake of Naphtali is the Sea of Galilee.

Vs. 24-25 A lot is said about Asher and I wonder why.

Vs. 26-29 This is the finale of the blessing on Israel (Jeshurun= the upright one).

V. 27 This sounds like Psalm 90. If you really want to get the rest of Moses' last words, you should read Psalm 90, which he must have written around this time. As Laura observed, the Song of Moses in the previous chapter should really be called the Song of God. Psalm 90 is the real Song of Moses.

V. 29 This could be applied to the church too, *"Who is like you, a people saved by the Lord..."* Now we need to get the word out in the harvest, following our Lord to reach the lost and make disciples, who make disciples, who make disciples.

In reading v. 26 and the imagery of God coming on the clouds to help Israel, I have to think of the Lord coming at the end of the Tribulation. Jesus spent 40 days after His resurrection teaching His disciples. He gave them the Great Commission and told them to wait for the Spirit to have the power to perform their mission. Then He was taken into heaven. The angels said He would return the same way, but it will be different. Only a few saw Him leave, but everyone will see Him return. He left silently, but He will come back with might and power to save Israel and all those who believe in Him. He is Risen, and returning. Let's be willing to sell all we have, gird ourselves for our work in the harvest and wait expectantly with joy for His return.

Luke 13:1-21

Jesus had been teaching the disciples and then addressed the multitude. His word to them was that they were living like hypocrites. They knew the weather, but refused to understand His presence among them. Jesus told them they needed to make peace quickly with God.

Vs. 1-5 Apparently when Jesus finished saying this, somebody spoke up, probably trying to say something that would get some respect or acknowledgment from Jesus. Jesus turned the point and kept teaching the crowd. There are always people who want to point to a disaster and make a one-to-one connection to that event and sin. What's interesting is that Jesus doesn't deny the connection, but points the situation to the people who were talking. It is almost to say, "Don't worry about that, but worry about yourselves." Notice that Jesus says that all of them need to repent.

The reality is that sometimes there is a correlation between events and God's hand of judgment. In all things, God is free to allow something to happen in order to make others wake up. Ultimately, all souls appear before the throne of God. That's where we'll all wind up. The question is, are we ready, and if we are ready, in light of this coming event, we need to be moved with compassion, not judgment, and help others find Christ.

Vs. 6-9 As Jesus tells this story, He is really building on something that John the Baptist said earlier in Luke 3:8-9. If you look back there you'll find repentance, trees and fruit, too. Jesus uses the previous question of God's judgment in situations to point to God's mercy. Every person on this planet is in trouble. God's patience is incredible. Instead of judging quickly, God is kind and shows mercy. This is His daily posture as He works that none should perish. Many will perish, but it won't be because He didn't provide opportunities to hear the truth and respond.

Repentance is a "turning" from our sin to God. It is a decision of heart and soul, and need not be accompanied by doing anything. But the point of true repentance is that once a person has repented and turned to God, it should begin to become evident. The evidence is the fruit.

Vs. 10-17 So here is a case in point of religious fruitlessness. This woman had been bound by Satan 18 years. It doesn't say it was because of sin. The implication, like the man born blind in the Gospel of John, is that God allowed this for His glory. God works as He chooses so that we have opportunities to believe, follow Him and tell others.

V. 12 Notice that as soon as Jesus saw her, He called her and healed her. He knew it was of the Father and He had no regard for the fact that it was in a synagogue or on the Sabbath.

Vs. 13-14 Notice the contrast. She glorified God, and the ruler of the synagogue had a fit.

Vs. 15-16 Jesus had used this kind of example before. It is interesting to me that it is similar, yet different from the others. For me it makes Jesus' teaching more personal and understandable. Verse 16 was a homerun.

V. 17 You wonder why Jesus was willing to continually face conflict. Here is the reason. It was to give the people a chance to respond to the truth.

Vs. 18-21 Jesus has used the parables of the mustard seed and the leaven earlier in His ministry and we've read this in Matthew 13 in a completely different context. This telling of those parables is almost verbatim with that earlier occasion. Commentators are tempted to put a negative spin on both tellings of these parables because of the presence of the ruler of the synagogue and because of the conflict, but it seems that since these renditions are verbatim, the meaning is the same. Jesus could have used different wording to suggest negative influence. It seems to me that the message was to the disciples. The kingdom is seen by faith. It will begin small and will grow great, and it is hidden, but is among them. In spite of the resistance, the kingdom will not be stopped.

Psalm 78:65-72

So, after all of the disaster in the history of Israel, God rises confidently without inhibition and brings victory, order, and peace through David. I think this is the main point of the psalm. Instead of rebelling as Israel has in the past, they are to submit to the order God has made, submitting to the rule of David. After Joshua, 400 years would pass in trouble and insecurity. The reign of David would be the next time the nation was secure. It was the visible blessing and working of God.

Proverbs 12:25

Encouragement is an incredible need. Yet, the Lord lets us walk without it at times to see where our real treasure is and where it is that we find our ultimate security. It is amazing how often Jesus told His disciples not to be anxious or to fear. It is what we are to learn as we follow, but I still pray for encouragement every day.