

Chapter 31

Good morning and thank you for joining us. Would you turn in your Bibles please to Deuteronomy chapter 31? After taking a break last week as we studied the birth of Jesus, we resume our study in this 5th book of Moses and after today, we only have 2 more chapters remaining, as we'll be studying both chapters 31 and 32 this morning.

If you remember, Moses has now finished giving the law to the new generation of Israelites as they are about to enter the promised land. And this morning we see Moses formally install Joshua as the new leader, and chapter 32 gives us an unlikely national anthem for Israel...

The title of our message this morning is THE SONG OF REMEMBRANCE

LETS PRAY

1 Then Moses went and spoke these words to all Israel. 2 And he said to them: "I am one hundred and twenty years old today. I can no longer go out and come in. Also the LORD has said to me, 'You shall not cross over this Jordan.' Moses is 120 years old, but age wasn't the reason he couldn't enter the promised land. Rather Moses couldn't enter the promised land because of his own disobedience to God.

Back in Numbers 20 God told Moses to speak to the rock to provide water to the thirsty Israelites. Numbers 20:7 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 8 "Take the rod; you and your brother Aaron gather the congregation together. Speak to the rock before their eyes, and it will yield its water; thus you shall bring water for them out of the rock, and give drink to the congregation and their animals." 9 So Moses took the rod from before the LORD as He commanded him.

10 And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock; and he said to them, "Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock?" 11 Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank.

12 Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them."

God commanded Moses to speak to the rock, but in his frustration, Moses struck the rock twice.

When we studied Numbers 20, we saw that Moses' sin in disobeying God was actually rooted in unbelief.

Now Moses didn't fail to believe that God could or would provide water for the people.

Rather, Moses failed to believe that simple obedience to God's command was best, so he took matters into his own hands, and Moses did it his way. Taking matters into our own hands is always the result of unbelief.

But the unbelief Moses demonstrated was much more damaging than he ever imagined, because Moses misrepresented the heart and character of God before the people.

Moses comes out screaming at the Hebrews, venting 38 years of frustration on the nation.

That was not God's attitude at all. God loved these people. God was prepared to be as patient with the new generation as he had been with their parents.

Now we're given additional insight into Moses' disobedience in

Psalm 106:32-33 “They angered Him also at the waters of strife,[fn]

So that it went ill with Moses on account of them;

33 Because they rebelled against His Spirit,

So that he spoke rashly with his lips.”

Moses' responsibility was to speak on behalf of God to the people, not vent his own frustrations.

Without realizing it, by striking the rock, Moses marred a beautiful picture God was painting for future generations – including us.

See Paul speaks of the rock in the wilderness, and says, “that Rock was Christ”. 1 Corinthians 10:1 Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, 2 all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, 3 all ate the same spiritual food, 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.

The rock was an OT picture of Jesus. See the rock was already struck one time back in Exodus 17 when God instructed Moses to strike the rock to bring forth water.

Jesus, being struck once, died for all our sins. Jesus alone provides the living water for all who would drink of Him.

So it would be totally unnecessary that Jesus would need to be struck again, because the Son of God needed only to die once.

Moses misrepresented God, and marred the picture of Jesus, and it cost him severely. And because of his disobedience Moses is prohibited from entering the Promised Land.

3 The LORD your God Himself crosses over before you; He will destroy these nations from before you, and you shall dispossess

them. Joshua himself crosses over before you, just as the LORD has said. Moses reminds the nation that his time as a leader is just about finished, and it will be Joshua leading them into the land of Canaan.

Godly leaders are a blessing to the Church, but God has a way of reminding us that no leader is indispensable. Leaders come and go, but God's work continues.

If I dropped dead tomorrow - or if the Lord called me to move on - I don't think this fellowship would skip a beat because you've been taught to look to God, not to a pastor.

4-5

4 And the LORD will do to them as He did to Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites and their land, when He destroyed them. 5 The LORD will give them over to you, that you may do to them according to every commandment which I have commanded you. 6 Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the LORD your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you." Human leaders come and go, but God is the One who never leaves you nor forsakes you.

7 Then Moses called Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, "Be strong and of good courage, for you must go with this people to the land which the LORD has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall cause them to inherit it.

8 And the LORD, He is the One who goes before you. He will be with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed." God was going to bring the people into the Promised Land. But God almost always does His work through men and women who make themselves available to Him, and faithful Joshua had done that.

This is a massive moment. Moses has now passed the leadership reigns over to Joshua.

9-11

9 So Moses wrote this law and delivered it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel.

10 And Moses commanded them, saying: "At the end of every seven years, at the appointed time in the year of release, at the Feast of Tabernacles, 11 when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing." Every 7 years the priests of Israel were to gather the people for a public reading of the Law of Moses.

12 Gather the people together, men and women and little ones, and the stranger who is within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the LORD your God and carefully observe all the words of this law, 13 and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God as long as you live in the land which you cross the Jordan to possess." The first time this is practiced is in Joshua 8:30. There's no record of another public reading of the Law until the days of King Jehoshaphat - 2 Chronicles 17:7, 500 years later.

The third recorded reading doesn't occur for another 250 years – in the days of Josiah in 2 Chronicles 34:30.

And the fourth reading doesn't take place until after the captivity in Babylon – 175 years later - in the days of Nehemiah (8:1).

There may've been other readings of the Law, but more than likely God's Word was neglected until the nation was in a crisis situation.

And this is what so often happens today isn't it? People refuse to read the Bible until they're in a place of desperation, instead of letting the Bible speak to them as a means of prevention before they get to that place of desperation.

Psalm 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet

And a light to my path.

Yet too many folks go running in the dark!

14-18

14 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, the days approach when you must die; call Joshua, and present yourselves in the tabernacle of meeting, that I may inaugurate him."

So Moses and Joshua went and presented themselves in the tabernacle of meeting. 15 Now the LORD appeared at the tabernacle in a pillar of cloud, and the pillar of cloud stood above the door of the tabernacle.

16 And the LORD said to Moses: "Behold, you will rest with your fathers;" and this people will rise and play the harlot with the gods of the foreigners of the land, where they go to be among them, and they will forsake Me and break My covenant which I have made with them. 17 Then My anger shall be aroused against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide My face from them, and they shall be devoured. And many evils and troubles shall befall them, so that they will say in that day, 'Have not these evils come upon us because our God is not among us?'

18 And I will surely hide My face in that day because of all the evil which they have done, in that they have turned to other gods. This is exactly what God said would happen to Israel in chapter 28. If they obey His Law they'll be blessed, but if they disobey, they'll be cursed.

19-22

19 “Now therefore, write down this song for yourselves, and teach it to the children of Israel; put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for Me against the children of Israel. 20 When I have brought them to the land flowing with milk and honey, of which I swore to their fathers, and they have eaten and filled themselves and grown fat, then they will turn to other gods and serve them; and they will provoke Me and break My covenant. 21 Then it shall be, when many evils and troubles have come upon them, that this song will testify against them as a witness; for it will not be forgotten in the mouths of their descendants, for I know the inclination of their behavior today, even before I have brought them to the land of which I swore to give them.” God commands Moses to write a national anthem for Israel, perhaps its because God knows that words are more memorable when set to music.

Yet this was not a cheery national anthem that would invoke national pride, because the purpose of this anthem was to testify against the nation as a result of their disobedience to the Lord.

22 Therefore Moses wrote this song the same day, and taught it to the children of Israel.

23 Then He inaugurated Joshua the son of Nun, and said, “Be strong and of good courage; for you shall bring the children of Israel into the land of which I swore to them, and I will be with you.” Now we’ll begin the book of Joshua on Wednesday nights once the book of Acts is finished. But you’ll find that 7 total times God gives this command to Joshua-to be strong and of good courage.

24-27

24 So it was, when Moses had completed writing the words of this law in a book, when they were finished, 25 that Moses

commanded the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD, saying: 26 “Take this Book of the Law, and put it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there as a witness against you; 27 for I know your rebellion and your stiff neck. If today, while I am yet alive with you, you have been rebellious against the LORD, then how much more after my death? Ouch-talk about tough discouraging words at a retirement party!

Moses says ‘if my presence didn’t hinder your rebellion, how will you behave in my absence?’

28 Gather to me all the elders of your tribes, and your officers, that I may speak these words in their hearing and call heaven and earth to witness against them. 29 For I know that after my death you will become utterly corrupt, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you. And evil will befall you in the latter days, because you will do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger through the work of your hands.

30 Then Moses spoke in the hearing of all the assembly of Israel the words of this song until they were ended:

Chapter 32 contains the words of the song God just told Moses to teach the Hebrews. We’re going to study to verse 43.

1 “Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak;
And hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.

2 Let my teaching drop as the rain,
My speech distill as the dew,
As raindrops on the tender herb,
And as showers on the grass.

3 For I proclaim the name of the LORD:

Ascribe greatness to our God.”

4 He is the Rock, Pause here-Obviously, God left us with the lyrics of this song – not the tune or the beat. For all we know, it may’ve been a hard rock song.

Throughout the Bible we see God referred to as a rock. Yet this is the very first time God describes Himself this way to the Israelites. And why is a rock a fitting description of God? Because of a rock’s permanence and the rocks constancy.

Verse 4 continues...

His work is perfect;

For all His ways are justice,

A God of truth and without injustice;

Righteous and upright is He. Now it’s easy for us to acknowledge this with our lips, but the difficult circumstances we face sometimes seem to fly against this statement of God. How could God’s works be perfect and righteous and His ways justice when we see the injustices all around us?

I don’t know.

In Nov 2020 Kim and I were introduced to a CC Pastor and his wife-they’re about our age, but have been in FT ministry a long time. And we’ll never forget cuz we talk about it, the wife whom we just met a moment before, asked how long we’ve been in FT ministry and we told them we were about to enter our 3rd year in 2021. And she looked at us and said the “3rd year is the hardest” and broke down in tears, crying over us. Kim and I just looked at each other and said ‘that was bizarre’

Little did we know how prophetic her words were. Last year, 2021 was by far the most difficult year we’ve ever had. We

experienced things this year in ministry and outside of ministry that we had no way of preparing for. Kim and I have shed more tears this past year than probably all the other years combined. Some of the things I've seen with my eyes this year, just can't wrap my head around.

We've all had those moments in the stillness of night questioning God like 'why would You allow such a thing'

BTW, I want to let you know it's ok to ask God why. Jesus did!

Matthew 27:46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" And heaven was silent.

There is no indication that any angels ministered to Him like they did during His temptation.

Jesus cries out why, and Moses and Elijah aren't there ministering to him like they did on the mount of transfiguration.

Jesus asks why-and heaven was silent.

After you and I cry out to our Father and ask 'why', and when heaven is silent, it's critical to move from what we don't know, back to what we do know. What do we know? Read verse 4 one more time with me:

4 He is the Rock,
His work is perfect;
For all His ways are justice,
A God of truth and without injustice;
Righteous and upright is He

As our world spirals further into darkness, I recommend we all cling to this verse.

Yet despite the many signs and wonders the Israelites saw God do, the nation would turn their back on God repeatedly.

5-10

5 “They have corrupted themselves;

They are not His children,

Because of their blemish:

A perverse and crooked generation.

6 Do you thus deal with the LORD,

O foolish and unwise people?

Is He not your Father, who bought you?

Has He not made you and established you?

7 “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:

8 When the Most High divided their inheritance to the nations,

When He separated the sons of Adam,

He set the boundaries of the peoples

According to the number of the children of Israel.

9 For the LORD’s portion is His people;

Jacob is the place of His inheritance.

10 “He found him in a desert land

And in the wasteland, a howling wilderness;

He encircled him, He instructed him,

He kept him as the apple of His eye.” I love this description of God’s care in verse 10... He finds, encircles, instructs, keeps, and treasures them as the apple of His eye.

11 As an eagle stirs up its nest,

Hovers over its young,

Spreading out its wings, taking them up,

Carrying them on its wings,

12 So the LORD alone led him,

And there was no foreign god with him.

13 “He made him ride in the heights of the earth,

That he might eat the produce of the fields;

He made him draw honey from the rock,

And oil from the flinty rock;

14 Curds from the cattle, and milk of the flock,

With fat of lambs;

And rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats,

With the choicest wheat;

And you drank wine, the blood of the grapes.

Considering that this song was meant to be a witness against a rebellious Israel, God is reminding the nation of His goodness to them. This would remind them of God's love and grace they could return to.

15 “But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked; Jeshurun is another title for Israel, which literally means the upright one (Isaiah 44:2).

You grew fat, you grew thick,

You are obese!

Then he forsook God who made him,

And scornfully esteemed the Rock of his salvation. This is a tragedy that we’ve all experienced. When we’re fat and happy, when everything is going great, we tend to forget about God.

16 They provoked Him to jealousy with foreign gods;

With abominations they provoked Him to anger.

17 They sacrificed to demons, not to God,

To gods they did not know,

To new gods, new arrivals

That your fathers did not fear.

18 Of the Rock who begot you, you are unmindful,

And have forgotten the God who fathered you. In forsaking God, Israel turned to the pagan idols of the nations around them and actually worshipped demons. Paul echoed and warned against this in **1 Corinthians 10:20 Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons.**

19-21

19 “And when the LORD saw it, He spurned them,

Because of the provocation of His sons and His daughters.

20 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 faith.

21 They have provoked Me to jealousy by what is not God;
They have moved Me to anger by their foolish idols.

But I will provoke them to jealousy by those who are not a nation;

I will move them to anger by a foolish nation.” Paul alludes to this verse in Romans 10:19, when he says that the Lord will provoke His people to jealousy by bringing the gospel to the Gentiles and allowing them to be grafted into the Bride of Christ.

The next section of the song deals with the repercussions Israel will face as a result of rebelling against God.

Let's read verse 22-27

22 For a fire is kindled in My anger,
And shall burn to the lowest hell;
It shall consume the earth with her increase,
And set on fire the foundations of the mountains.

23 'I will heap disasters on them;
I will spend My arrows on them.

24 They shall be wasted with hunger,
Devoured by pestilence and bitter destruction;
I will also send against them the teeth of beasts,
With the poison of serpents of the dust.

25 The sword shall destroy outside;

There shall be terror within

For the young man and virgin,

The nursing child with the man of gray hairs.

26 I would have said, "I will dash them in pieces,

I will make the memory of them to cease from among men,"

27 Had I not feared the wrath of the enemy,

Lest their adversaries should misunderstand,

Lest they should say, "Our hand is high;

And it is not the LORD who has done all this." ' " We talked at length about the calamities of the Hebrews throughout their history in Deuteronomy 28. Here God tells them the reason He won't wipe out the Hebrews is He doesn't want their enemies claiming victory.

28 "For they are a nation void of counsel,

Nor is there any understanding in them.

29 Oh, that they were wise, that they understood this,

That they would consider their latter end!" Israel's problem was their short-sightedness. And so often this is our problem too! We tend to focus on the immediate instead of the "latter end".

30 How could one chase a thousand,

And two put ten thousand to flight,

Unless their Rock had sold them,

And the LORD had surrendered them? The Jewish people are heroic fighters. Look at David and Joshua, at Moshe Dayan and David Ben Gurion, at Old Testament stories and present-day

heroes. There was a time when only armed with rocks the Israelites turned back enemy tanks! Only rocks!

How, then, could it be that Israel would go through periods in their history where a single enemy soldier could chase 1,000 of them? There's only one explanation: the Lord's hand against them.

31 For their rock is not like our Rock,
Even our enemies themselves being judges.

32 For their vine is of the vine of Sodom
And of the fields of Gomorrah;
Their grapes are grapes of gall,
Their clusters are bitter.

33 Their wine is the poison of serpents,
And the cruel venom of cobras.

34 'Is this not laid up in store with Me,
Sealed up among My treasures?

35 Vengeance is Mine, and recompense;
Their foot shall slip in due time;
For the day of their calamity is at hand,

And the things to come hasten upon them.' The most famous sermon preached in American history was inspired by these verses. A man named Jonathan Edwards ushered in the Great Awakening with his message entitled, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God."

Let's read till verse 43 and we'll stop there...

36 "For the LORD will judge His people

And have compassion on His servants,
When He sees that their power is gone,
And there is no one remaining, bond or free.

37 He will say: 'Where are their gods,
The rock in which they sought refuge?

38 Who ate the fat of their sacrifices,
And drank the wine of their drink offering?

Let them rise and help you,
And be your refuge.

39 'Now see that I, even I, am He,
And there is no God besides Me;
I kill and I make alive;
I wound and I heal;
Nor is there any who can deliver from My hand.

40 For I raise My hand to heaven,
And say, "As I live forever,

41 If I whet My glittering sword,
And My hand takes hold on judgment,
I will render vengeance to My enemies,
And repay those who hate Me.

42 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 heads of the leaders of the enemy.” ’

43 “Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people;[fn]
For He will avenge the blood of His servants,
And render vengeance to His adversaries;
He will provide atonement for His land and His people.”

We studied this at length in Deuteronomy 30, how the time is coming when Christ will return to the earth, which takes place at the end of the tribulation. The remnant of Israel who survive the great tribulation will be saved, and the Lord will establish His kingdom on this earth with Jerusalem as its capital. And both Jew and Gentile alike who’ve trusted Jesus will worship Him!