

Meditation on Deuteronomy 33

THE PROPHETIC BLESSING OF THE TRIBES OF ISRAEL BY MOSES (vs.1-29)

In contrast to the millennial blessings prophesied by Jacob to his sons in Genesis 49 which relate more widely to the whole earth the blessings prophesied by Moses to the tribes in Deuteronomy 33 relate more specifically to Israel. Each tribe is given specific blessings but these specific blessings no doubt will be for all of Israel.

#	Birth Order	Blessing Order Genesis 49	Blessing Order Deut. 33	Meaning of Name
1.	Rueben	Rueben	Reuben	"see a son"
2.	Simeon	Simeon	-----	"heard"
3.	Levi	Levi	Judah	"Praise"
4.	Judah	Judah	Levi	"attached"
5.	Dan	Zebulun	Benjamin	"Son of the right hand"
6.	Naphtali	Issachar	Joseph	"He will add"
7.	Gad	Dan	Zebulun	"dwelling" "habitation"
8.	Asher	Gad	Issachar	"hire" "wages"
9.	Issachar	Asher	Gad	"a band" "a troop"
10.	Zebulun	Naphtali	Dan	"he that judges"
11.	Joseph	Joseph	Naphtali	"that struggles or fights"
12.	Benjamin	Benjamin	Asher	"happy"

Deuteronomy is a book largely focused on admonition but Chapter 33 beautifully closes God's message for Israel by pronouncing blessing that is high above all the demands of law. This blessing is prophetic of the millennial blessing of future Israel.

It is introduced with the Lord coming from Sinai, leaving behind the covenant of law and dawning on Israel from Seir and shining forth from Paran. Paran means "their beautifying" and is a contrast indeed to Sinai reminding us that in the millennium "the beauty of the Lord God" will be put on Israel (**Ps. 90:17**).

The coming "with ten thousands of His saints" (**vs. 2**) refers to the Lord's coming in majestic glory to establish His millennial kingdom. "From His right hand came a fiery law for them." The Hebrew word translated "law" is not the usual word, but is translated in the Numerical Bible as "mandate". For the first covenant (that of law) will give place to the New Covenant, under which God says, "I will put my law in their minds, and will write it on their hearts" (**Jer.31:31-33**).

"Yes, He loves His people" (**v.3**) has always been true but it will be realized by Israel in that day as it never has been before. "All His saints are in thy hand" speaks of Him who holds them in His hand of power. They will then sit down at the feet of the Lord Jesus, ceasing from their own works. Every one at that time will gladly receive His words. What a change from the previously rebellious nation!

Verse 4, 5 recalls the giving of the law by Moses, the law being a heritage in which Israel should have rejoiced but here Moses is said to be "King in Jeshurun" (Jeshurun is a symbolic name for Israel signifying 'righteous') typifying Christ, who will have the place of King in the coming day, when all Israel will be gathered in a unity they have never before displayed.

REUBEN (v.6)

Reuben was the beginning of Jacob's strength (**Gen.49:3**) the strength of the flesh. Such strength must be brought down to nothing, yet grace would preserve his life and it is stated that he would not die. Yet his men would be few. (J.N.D.) This perhaps emphasizes the remnant blessing for most of Israel is not saved and blessed. **Rom. 9:27**

JUDAH (v.7)

Though Reuben (the firstborn) has been referred to first, the order of birth is not then followed. The Messiah was to come from Judah and God would hear Judah's voice, as indeed He hears every prayer of His beloved Son, and will bring Him to His people at that time when they are reduced to utter helplessness. "His hands will be sufficient for him" can only be said of Christ, the works of whose hands are absolute perfection. God also would be His help against His enemies, defeating them in the day of His glory.

LEVI (vs.8-11)

Simeon is left out of this list entirely, possibly because of Simeon's taking the lead in corrupting Israel in committing fornication with the Midianites (**Num.25:14**), while there is much said about Levi. Levi was given the place of priesthood to draw specially near to God. Levi's thummim and urim are said to be "with your holy One" meaning "perfections and lights," seen in the reflections of the precious stones in the ephod. (**v.8**) This was used by the priests when inquiring of God when needs of discernment of His will arose and in the millennium Israel will gladly commit this entirely to God's Holy One, the Lord Jesus Christ. He alone is all-wise and discerning.

The things of God were paramount to Levi. Because of this he says of his father and mother, "I have not seen them" (**v.9**). He recognized no natural relationship that could compare with his relationship to God. This reminds us of the words of the Lord Jesus at a time when He was told His mother and His brethren sought for Him. He answered, "Who is My mother, or My brethren?" (**Mk.3:33**). "And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said, Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother" (**Mk.3:34-35**). Every natural relationship must give way to a true spiritual relationship. This is emphasized in the words, "they have observed thy word and kept thy covenant."

So the Levites were to teach Israel (**v.10**) and they would also lead Israel in worship, offering incense to God and burnt offerings as stated in their prayer, "Bless his substance, Lord, and accept the work of his hands," while on the negative side, God's judgment is asked against those who rise against him or who hate him.

BENJAMIN (v.12)

Benjamin, whose name means "Son of my right hand" a place of nearness and communion with God and beloved of the Lord is seen dwelling between God's shoulders. It is another characteristic of Israel which will be beautifully seen in the coming day of her glory as Benjamin is a type of the Lord Jesus.

JOSEPH (vs.13-17)

Much more is said of Joseph, however, for Benjamin did not go through the deep suffering and pressure that Joseph did. This section speaks of the abundance of fruitful prosperity that Israel will yet enjoy in the age to come. **Psalms 4:1** tell us, "In pressure Thou hast enlarged me" (JND), a truth beautifully true of Joseph, and indicative of the great blessing that Israel will yet receive as a result of their deep pressure of years, culminating

in the Great Tribulation. God will show how He is able to bring about the greatest blessing from the greatest suffering.

The Lord will bless the land with precious things of heaven (**v.13**), for even the heavenly city, the new Jerusalem, the metropolis of God's creation, will have its twelve gates inscribed with the name of the tribes of Israel (**Rev.21:12**). From that heavenly city the grace of God will pour its abundant blessing on the earthly people of God. The dew from heaven, typical of the Spirit of God, will moisturize the nation, to prosper the growth of fruit for God. "The deep lying beneath" seems to infer that depths of evil will be changed into depths of goodness, so that nothing will be against them, but everything ministering to the spiritual energy of bearing fruit.

As well as moisture, the sunshine must be added that there may be precious fruit (**v.14**). The sun is typical of the Lord Jesus, "the Sun of righteousness" spoken of in **Malachi 4:2** as arising on Israel with healing in His wings. "The precious produce of the months" connects with **Revelation 22:2**, though that verse refers to the Lord Jesus as the Tree of life yielding twelve fruits, one each month. He Himself, the Tree of life, will be in heaven, in the midst of the Assembly, the Church of God. The twelve fruits are for Israel, while the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the Gentile nations. Wonderful prosperity!

Verse 15 adds another lovely feature of the fruitfulness of Israel, "With the best things of the ancient mountains, with the precious things of the everlasting hills." Ancient mountains speak of authority established from time immemorial. Israel will then recognize that the Lord Jesus is indeed "the Lord, the King of Israel," "the Redeemer, the Lord of hosts," who says, "I am the First and I am the Last; beside Me there is no God" (**Isa.44:6**). When they accept His authority, which has been from eternity past, this submission will be a vital part of the fruit they bear for God.

Israel will also be blessed with the precious things of the earth and its fullness (**v.16**). Their land, their earthly possession, will bear fruit abundantly because of "the favor of Him who dwelt in the bush" referring to **Exodus 3:2**, where Moses saw the bush burning but not being consumed. The burning bush pictures Israel going through the fires of tribulation, but being preserved through it.

All this blessing comes "on the head of Joseph, on the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brothers." Joseph, separated from his brothers, is a type of the Lord Jesus, who, through His solitary sufferings and death, is the great Recipient of all blessing from God. Yet, as Joseph shared with his brothers the blessing that came to him in Egypt, so the Lord Jesus will share with Israel all these blessings that are said to be the portion of Joseph.

"His majesty is as the firstling of his ox". (J.N.D.) He is seen here as having strength to subdue every enemy, with horns like those of the wild ox. Thus He pushes all enemies before Him. This is Christ in His people Israel victorious over the entire world. The two sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh, fathered the tribes that had this honor of representing Joseph, and indeed representing all Israel (**v.17**). The One who endured the piercing of the cross (the horns of the unicorns) is now seen in His power. (**Rev. 1:7**)

ZEBULON AND ISSACHAR (vs.18-19)

These two tribes are considered together with Zebulon going out and Issachar in his tents. Both are told to rejoice (v.18). The nation Israel will be privileged to enjoy both of these in the day of her glory.

In going out they shall call the peoples to the mountain, no doubt the mountain of the house of the Lord (**v.19**). And there the character of nearness to the Lord will have its place, with sacrifices of righteousness, sacrifices that will call to remembrance the one great sacrifice of the Lord Jesus on Calvary. Sharing in this blessing will be precious, just as today it is precious to share with saints of God the enjoyment of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus.

More than this, they shall partake of the abundance of the seas and of the treasures hidden in the sand. This speaks of the Gentile nations also contributing to the blessing of Israel. "The abundance of the seas" is a significant expression, for the population of the seas is tremendously great. The sand of the seashore (**Gen. 22:17**) also speaks of Gentiles, so that "treasures hidden in the sand" tell us that though the Gentiles have been previously strangers to the covenants of God, yet God has endowed them with hidden treasures that will eventually be brought into the open by the manifestation of the Lord Jesus, who will turn many Gentiles to Himself. Israel will share in the joy of this also. This is beautifully pictured in **John 21:11, 12**.

GAD (vs.20-21)

Gad means "a troop," and indicates a warrior character, which will be most evident in Israel when God restores them to their inheritance. God "enlarges Gad" (**v.20**) for Gad represents Israel in the conflict of gaining their inheritance, as a lion "dwells," not running away, but tearing the arm raised against him, and "the crown of his head," evidently the enemy's crown. In the future the king of the north shall enter "into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon," **Dan. 11: 40, 41**; these will be left for Israel to punish: cf. **Isa. 11: 14**.

"He provided the first part for himself" (**v.21**) being typical of Christ, who is always the Representative of His people, and must be carefully distinguished from all others. He has the lawgiver's portion reserved for Him. This is not the law in the sense in which Moses gave it, but that of the New Covenant in His writing His laws upon Israel's heart (**Jer.31:31-33**).

Thus "He came with the heads of the people; He administered the justice of the Lord, and His judgments with Israel." His administration will include others as heads of the people, but in contrast to all other administrations, His will be according to the perfect justice of the Lord. How wonderful a day indeed!

DAN (v.22)

Dan means "judge," and thus is closely connected with Gad, and being "a lion's whelp" indicates power against enemies. Bashan means "soft rich soil" and this reference to Dan leaping from Bashan may have reference to the prosperity and richness of the land in that millennial day.

NAPHTALI (v.23)

The prosperity of Naphtali represents also the prosperity of Israel, "satisfied with favor and full of the blessing of the Lord." This perhaps speaks more of the spiritual blessings.

ASHER (vs.24-25)

Asher, meaning "happy," appropriately concludes the blessing of the tribes. "Asher is most blessed of sons: let him be favoured by his brothers, and let him dip his foot in oil" (**v.24**). Again, all Israel is represented in the lasting joy of which Asher speaks. "They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (**Isa.35:10**). Dipping his foot in oil speaks of the Holy Spirit influencing Israel's walk from this time onward.

"Your sandals shall be iron and bronze (or copper)." Iron speaks of strength and copper holiness. There will be no weakening of a consistent walk before God in holiness throughout the millennium. Their days will be "as the days of a tree" (**Isa.65:22**), continuing for the thousand years of the millennial age, and "as your days, so shall your strength be" (**v.25**). Their strength will not fail even after 1000 years!

A SUMMARY OF ALL (vs.26-29)

After dealing with each of the tribes and the blessings for Israel that they represent, Moses gives a lovely summary. How appropriate that he emphasizes the greatness of the Lord Himself in this last message for Israel!

"There is none like the God of Jeshurun, who rides the heavens to help you, and in His excellency on the clouds" **(v.26)**.

Jeshurun means "the righteous one." Israel will be designated as "the righteous one" in that day, because her faith in Christ their King then will be counted as righteousness.

From the height of heaven this great God will work in the hearts of the people to produce a marvellous change, and they will realize that "the eternal God" is their refuge, and underneath them the everlasting arms **(v.27)**. How wonderful a revelation to their hearts that the Lord Jesus whom they crucified is the eternal God! His arms of eternal strength will uphold them.

In that day the enemy will not be able to stand as God will thrust him out, with the solemn sentence, "Destroy them".

Then only will Israel at last dwell in safety, with a fountain of never failing blessing, "alone," or secluded from any danger of pollution **(v.28)**, in a land of grain and new wine, the best of food and unhindered joy. The heavens will also drop dew, not a downpour of rain, but sufficient moisture gently provided.

How happy will Israel be, depending on Him who is the shield of their help and the sword of their majesty, -- the shield for defensive warfare and the sword for the offensive. Then Israel will be the head and not the tail. **(Deut. 28:13)**