

# BIBLE BRIEFING

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## DEUTERONOMY 30-34

### Introduction

Some people want to know the end of a book before they read it. I wish I had done that in college when I read Franz Kafka's novel, *The Castle*. Only when I got to what I thought was the end, after 400 pages, did I learn that Kafka *had never finished the book!*

If you wanted to find out what happened in Deuteronomy, you'd read Chapter Thirty. It's the last chapter Moses wrote. Chapters Thirty-one through Thirty-four are the appendices – added after Moses died.

**Chapter Thirty** opens assuming the people will be disciplined for failing to be faithful and walk by faith. But God remains faithful, and will restore them; they need only repent (as it says at the end, in verse ten).

Deuteronomy 30:1 “Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call *them* to mind among all the nations where the Lord your God drives you,

Deuteronomy 30:2 and you return to the Lord your God and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul,

Deuteronomy 30:3 that the Lord your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the Lord your God has scattered you.

Deuteronomy 30:4 If *any* of you are driven out to the farthest *parts* under heaven, from there the Lord your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you.

Deuteronomy 30:5 Then the Lord your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers.

Deuteronomy 30:6 And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.

Deuteronomy 30:7 “Also the Lord your God will put all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate you, who persecuted you.

Deuteronomy 30:8 And you will again obey the voice of the Lord and do all His commandments which I command you today.

Deuteronomy 30:9 The Lord your God will make you abound in all the work of your hand, in the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your land for good. For the Lord will again rejoice over you for good as He rejoiced over your fathers,

Deuteronomy 30:10 if you obey the voice of the Lord your God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this Book of the Law, *and* if you turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

Turn; repent, return, be renewed. Should be so glad God constantly provides a second chance, time after time.

What are the nuts and bolts of repenting?

First – Rely on the Spirit of God:

Deuteronomy 30:11 “For this commandment which I command you today *is* not *too* mysterious for you, nor *is* it far off.

Deuteronomy 30:12 It *is* not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’

Deuteronomy 30:13 Nor *is* it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’

Deuteronomy 30:14 But the word *is* very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it.

God’s Word is God’s enabling. When He tells you to do something, it carries in it the ability to carry it out. You must only believe this to be true. The problem with God’s Word is never “*I can’t*”, but “*I won’t*.”

Second - Romance

Deuteronomy 30:15 “See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil,

Deuteronomy 30:16 in that I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the Lord your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess.

Deuteronomy 30:17 But if your heart turns away so that you do not hear, and are drawn away, and worship other gods and serve them,

Deuteronomy 30:18 I announce to you today that you shall surely perish; you shall not prolong *your* days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to go in and possess.

Deuteronomy 30:19 I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, *that* I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live;

Deuteronomy 30:20 that you may love the Lord your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He *is* your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them.”

Yes, I said romance. The heart of this passage is your choice, your willing choice, to love the Lord. It’s a matter of the heart, first and foremost. God is (I think I can say this) romantic. It’s infectious, contagious, to realize the length, and depth, and breadth, of His love for you. It fires your romance.

## Chapter Thirty-one

The Book is really ended, in the sense that Moses was done talking about God’s Law. Now we get the appendices, with some interesting historical notes.

With Moses off the scenes, Joshua would assume the leadership, taking the people into the Promised Land.

Deuteronomy 31:1 Then Moses went and spoke these words to all Israel.  
Deuteronomy 31:2 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.’”

It wasn’t because he was too old. In just a while, we’ll see him go mountain climbing! It was because he had sinned that God would not allow him to go in to the land. The reason was *spiritual*, not physical.

Deuteronomy 31:3 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.

Deuteronomy 31:4 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.

Deuteronomy 31:5 The Lord will give them over to you, that you may do to them according to every commandment which I have commanded you.

It would be the Lord giving them victory; but not without Joshua in the lead, as their leader. God does the work – but He does it through men and women who make themselves available to Him.

Deuteronomy 31:6 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.”

This was a good charge for everyone. Over and over, Moses encouraged this new generation to go forward, into the land. He remembered too well the failure of their fathers at Kadesh-Barnea.

Calling up Joshua, Moses instituted a seventh-year covenant ceremony designed to assure the renewing of the covenant:

Deuteronomy 31:7 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.

Deuteronomy 31:8 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.”

Deuteronomy 31:9 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.

Remember that Deuteronomy began, **These are the words which Moses spoke**. There are about eight orations of Moses in the book - given orally, then written down. Moses wrote this book. These last chapters were added by others.

Deuteronomy 31:10 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,

Deuteronomy 31:11 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.

Deuteronomy 31:12 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,

Deuteronomy 31:13 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.”

This seven-year national focus on God’s word was especially important for the children among the people of Israel. Through His word, they could come to a personal relationship with the Lord.

This was a fantastic ceremony. It was an ordination ceremony for Joshua; it was a retirement ceremony for Moses; it was an inaugural ceremony of the reading of the law every seventh year. Moses was tying up all the loose ends. It would become a funeral, then a memorial, in a few chapters!

Deuteronomy 31:14 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.

Deuteronomy 31:15 Now the Lord appeared at the tabernacle in a pillar of cloud, and the pillar of cloud stood above the door of the tabernacle.

Deuteronomy 31:16 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.

Deuteronomy 31:17 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?'

Deuteronomy 31:18 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 definitely NOT the retirement speech Moses had in mind! Let's grab some encouragement here: Moses' ministry was a success, despite the failure of his followers both at Kadesh-Barnea and after his death.

Rather than get depressed, Mose wrote a song; it's recorded in most of the next chapter.

Deuteronomy 31:19 "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.

Deuteronomy 31:20 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.

Deuteronomy 31:21 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.*"

Deuteronomy 31:22 Therefore Moses wrote this song the same day, and taught it to the children of Israel.

Not too many of our songs record this kind of thing...

Deuteronomy 31:23 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."

Joshua would hear this charge, in his life, no less than seven times.

The law was then placed in the Ark, the final part of this ceremony:

Deuteronomy 31:24 So it was, when Moses had completed writing the words of this law in a book, when they were finished,

Deuteronomy 31:25 that Moses commanded the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying:

Deuteronomy 31:26 "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;

Deuteronomy 31:27 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?

Deuteronomy 31:28 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.

Deuteronomy 31:29 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."

Whoa! Not exactly a crowd-pleaser; but true.

**Chapter Thirty-two** begins with *The Song of Moses*, in verses one through forty-three. It reads more like a narrative poem. The nation of Israel was to learn it. It was a song given to them by God; every Israelite was to learn it and teach it to their children.

Someone has said, "Let me write the music of a nation, and I do not care who writes the laws." In other words, the songs have more influence than do the laws! I'm not sure how true that is; but it does point to the importance of music in our walk with God.

Deuteronomy 32:1 "Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak;

And hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.  
Deuteronomy 32:2 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.  
Deuteronomy 32:3 For I proclaim the name of the Lord:  
Ascribe greatness to our God.  
Deuteronomy 32:4 *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.

The word **Rock** is used about seven times in the song. This is the song about the **Rock**. The Lord Jesus Christ is called the Rock. He was the Rock that followed them in the wilderness, providing their water. A rock speaks of strength and stability, of foundations and security.

In the interest of time, I'm not able to read the entire song. It is interesting to note that, though they learned it and sang it, they did not listen to it by taking it to heart.

Drop down to verse forty-four:

Deuteronomy 32:44 So Moses came with Joshua the son of Nun and spoke all the words of this song in the hearing of the people.  
Deuteronomy 32:45 Moses finished speaking all these words to all Israel,  
Deuteronomy 32:46 and he said to them: "Set your hearts on all the words which I testify among you today, which you shall command your children to be careful to observe - all the words of this law.  
Deuteronomy 32:47 For it *is* not a futile thing for you, because it *is* your life, and by this word you shall prolong *your* days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to possess."

It was quite an end to his reading of the law.

Deuteronomy 32:48 Then the Lord spoke to Moses that very same day, saying:  
Deuteronomy 32:49 "Go up this mountain of the Abarim, Mount Nebo, which *is* in the land of Moab, across from Jericho; view the land of Canaan, which I give to the children of Israel as a possession;  
Deuteronomy 32:50 and die on the mountain which you ascend, and be gathered to your people, just as Aaron your brother died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people;

Deuteronomy 32:51 because you trespassed against Me among the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah Kadesh, in the Wilderness of Zin, because you did not hallow Me in the midst of the children of Israel.

Deuteronomy 32:52 Yet you shall see the land before *you*, though you shall not go there, into the land which I am giving to the children of Israel.”

Before he complied, we read of his blessing each of the tribes, in Chapter Thirty-three:

Deuteronomy 33:1 Now this *is* the blessing with which Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death.

Deuteronomy 33:2 And he said:

“The Lord came from Sinai,  
And dawned on them from Seir;  
He shone forth from Mount Paran,  
And He came with ten thousands of saints;  
From His right hand  
*Came* a fiery law for them.

Deuteronomy 33:3 Yes, He loves the people;  
All His saints *are* in Your hand;  
They sit down at Your feet;  
*everyone* receives Your words.

Deuteronomy 33:4 Moses commanded a law for us,  
A heritage of the congregation of Jacob.

Deuteronomy 33:5 And He was King in Jeshurun,  
When the leaders of the people were gathered,  
All the tribes of Israel together.

This idea of blessing seems a bit odd to us. We don't really gather around our dying relatives and listen as they bless us with prophetic insight!

After the general introduction to his blessing, Moses turned to each tribe in turn – giving a prophetic blessing that turns out to be true to their future history.

Deuteronomy 33:6 “Let Reuben live, and not die,  
*Nor* let his men be few.”

Deuteronomy 33:7 And this he said of Judah:

“Hear, Lord, the voice of Judah,  
And bring him to his people;  
Let his hands be sufficient for him,  
And may You be a help against his enemies.”

Deuteronomy 33:8 And of Levi he said:



“Let Your Thummim and Your Urim *be* with Your holy one,  
 Whom You tested at Massah,  
 And with whom You contended at the waters of Meribah,  
 Deuteronomy 33:9 Who says of his father and mother,  
 ‘I have not seen them’;  
 Nor did he acknowledge his brothers,  
 Or know his own children;  
 For they have observed Your word  
 And kept Your covenant.  
 Deuteronomy 33:10 They shall teach Jacob Your judgments,  
 And Israel Your law.  
 They shall put incense before You,  
 And a whole burnt sacrifice on Your altar.  
 Deuteronomy 33:11 Bless his substance, Lord,  
 And accept the work of his hands;  
 Strike the loins of those who rise against him,  
 And of those who hate him, that they rise not again.”  
 Deuteronomy 33:12 Of Benjamin he said:  
 “The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by Him,  
*Who* shelters him all the day long;  
 And he shall dwell between His shoulders.”  
 Deuteronomy 33:13 And of Joseph he said:  
 “Blessed of the Lord *is* his land,  
 With the precious things of heaven, with the dew,  
 And the deep lying beneath,  
 Deuteronomy 33:14 With the precious fruits of the sun,  
 With the precious produce of the months,  
 Deuteronomy 33:15 With the best things of the ancient mountains,  
 With the precious things of the everlasting hills,  
 Deuteronomy 33:16 With the precious things of the earth and its fullness,  
 And the favor of Him who dwelt in the bush.  
 Let *the blessing* come ‘on the head of Joseph,  
 And on the crown of the head of him *who was* separate from his brothers.’  
 Deuteronomy 33:17 His glory *is like* a firstborn bull,  
 And his horns *like* the horns of the wild ox;  
 Together with them  
 He shall push the peoples  
 To the ends of the earth;  
 They *are* the ten thousands of Ephraim,  
 And they *are* the thousands of Manasseh.”  
 Deuteronomy 33:18 And of Zebulun he said:  
 “Rejoice, Zebulun, in your going out,  
 And Issachar in your tents!  
 Deuteronomy 33:19 They shall call the peoples *to* the mountain;  
 There they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness;  
 For they shall partake *of* the abundance of the seas

And of treasures hidden in the sand.”  
Deuteronomy 33:20 And of Gad he said:  
“Blessed *is* he who enlarges Gad;  
He dwells as a lion,  
And tears the arm and the crown of his head.  
Deuteronomy 33:21 He provided the first *part* for himself,  
Because a lawgiver’s portion was reserved there.  
He came *with* the heads of the people;  
He administered the justice of the Lord,  
And His judgments with Israel.”  
Deuteronomy 33:22 And of Dan he said:  
“Dan *is* a lion’s whelp;  
He shall leap from Bashan.”  
Deuteronomy 33:23 And of Naphtali he said:  
“O Naphtali, satisfied with favor,  
And full of the blessing of the Lord,  
Possess the west and the south.”  
Deuteronomy 33:24 And of Asher he said:  
“Asher *is* most blessed of sons;  
Let him be favored by his brothers,  
And let him dip his foot in oil.  
Deuteronomy 33:25 Your sandals *shall be* iron and bronze;  
As your days, *so shall* your strength *be*.

Done with each of the tribes, Moses closes by exalting God:

Deuteronomy 33:26 “*There is no one like the God of Jeshurun*, [another name for Israel]  
*Who rides the heavens to help you,*  
*And in His excellency on the clouds.*  
Deuteronomy 33:27 *The eternal God is your refuge,*  
*And underneath are the everlasting arms;*  
*He will thrust out the enemy from before you,*  
*And will say, ‘Destroy!’*  
Deuteronomy 33:28 *Then Israel shall dwell in safety,*  
*The fountain of Jacob alone,*  
*In a land of grain and new wine;*  
*His heavens shall also drop dew.*  
Deuteronomy 33:29 *Happy are you, O Israel!*  
*Who is like you, a people saved by the Lord,*  
*The shield of your help*  
*And the sword of your majesty!*  
*Your enemies shall submit to you,*  
*And you shall tread down their high places.”*

We've come to the death of Moses – predicted some years earlier by God as a discipline for striking the Rock the second time.

The question arises whether Moses wrote of his own death. He could have. The Lord had told him he would die. However, a great many believe that this is part of the Book of Joshua. This certainly may be, since originally there were not the book divisions that we have today. The Old Testament was written on scrolls with one book following another. Therefore, this may actually be the beginning of the Book of Joshua.

When your time comes to die, the important thing is not the grandeur of your funeral but the greatness of your life.

Moses often met God on mountains. He lived on earth as if he were in the high places with God. It was fitting he should meet Him again on one to die.

Deuteronomy 34:1 Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is across from Jericho. And the Lord showed him all the land of Gilead as far as Dan,

Deuteronomy 34:2 all Naphtali and the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Western Sea,

Deuteronomy 34:3 the South, and the plain of the Valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, as far as Zoar.

Deuteronomy 34:4 Then the Lord said to him, "This *is* the land of which I swore to give Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your descendants.' I have caused you to see *it* with your eyes, but you shall not cross over there."

Deuteronomy 34:5 So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord.

Deuteronomy 34:6 And He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth Peor; but no one knows his grave to this day.

Deuteronomy 34:7 Moses *was* one hundred and twenty years old when he died. His eyes were not dim nor his natural vigor diminished.

Deuteronomy 34:8 And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days. So the days of weeping *and* mourning for Moses ended.

Deuteronomy 34:9 Now Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him; so the children of Israel heeded him, and did as the Lord had commanded Moses.

Deuteronomy 34:10 But since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face,

Deuteronomy 34:11 in all the signs and wonders which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt, before Pharaoh, before all his servants, and in all his land,

Deuteronomy 34:12 and by all that mighty power and all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.

It is somehow fitting that the Book of Deuteronomy closes with the death of Moses. The law came through Moses; but the law – for all its glory – brings to you the knowledge of sin and the penalty of death. Grace and truth come not through the law, but from Jesus Christ perfectly fulfilling the law and then dying on your behalf.

Why was his sepulchre unknown? Because of the fact that Moses was to be raised from the dead and brought into the Promised Land. You will remember that when the Lord Jesus was transfigured on the mount, both Moses and Elijah appeared with Him and spoke about His approaching death. So, you see, Moses did get to the Promised Land eventually. The Law could not bring Moses into the land, but the Lord Jesus Christ brought him in.

Although to us it may seem like a lonely death, one translation has it, [He died by the kiss of God](#). It is a lovely thought that God just kissed Moses and put him to sleep.

*By Nebo's lonely mountain,  
On this side Jordan's wave,  
In a vale in the land of Moab,  
There lies a lonely grave.  
And no man knows that sepulchre,  
And no man saw it e'er,  
For the angels of God upturned the sod,  
And laid the dead man there.*

Cecil Frances Alexander, *The Burial of Moses*.

