

SESSION 13

God's Power

DEUTERONOMY 33:1-5,26-29

BELIEVERS CAN LIVE WITHOUT FEAR KNOWING THAT THEY SERVE THE ONE TRUE GOD.



In this scene, we may have been the parent or the child. The child is standing on the side of the pool. The parent is in the water, arms outstretched and saying, “You can do it. I’ll catch you. I promise you’ll be fine.” The child is hesitating. “Ready? On the count of three.” Still hesitant, but finally the child lunges and is grabbed safely just as he reaches the water.

WHAT IS THE CONNECTION BETWEEN FEAR AND INSECURITY?
BETWEEN TRUST AND SECURITY?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Deuteronomy records what occurred while the Israelites stood at the threshold of the promised land. They had left Egypt forty years before.

The story involving Egypt actually began when Joseph’s jealous brothers sold him into slavery. He ended up in Egypt. While there, Joseph experienced a complete reversal of status. He went from being a nobody to a somebody, becoming the second in command in all of Egypt. Joseph, and eventually his entire family, came to know the luxuries of the house of Pharaoh. For 400 years, Joseph’s descendants, the Hebrews, remained in Egypt.

During that time they also experienced a complete reversal of status. They came to know the misery of back-breaking, forced labor. They knew what it was to have no home, no land to call their own.

God, though, would raise up a man who would lead them from Egypt to the land He promised to Abraham and his descendants. Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers record events that occurred during their journey.

Once again, the Israelites’ situation was about to completely change. They had been sojourners; they were about to be inhabitants of Canaan. The people had known only Moses as their leader. But Moses’s successor, Joshua, would lead them into Canaan.

Deuteronomy 31:1–34:12 contains the last recorded words of Moses. It tells of his commissioning Joshua to be his successor. Chapter 32 contains a hymn that extols God’s goodness and calls His people to live faithfully by the covenant. Chapter 34 tells of Moses’s death.

This week’s study focuses on God’s blessings for His covenant people—His protection, presence, and provision. The text will include words and concepts we encounter in the New Testament: blessed, loved, happy, everlasting, and saved. It affirms the great message of Scripture—none other is like our Lord; He alone is God and worthy of our worship.



1 This is the blessing that Moses, the man of God, gave the Israelites before his death. **2** He said: The LORD **came from Sinai** **A** and appeared to them from Seir; he shone on them from Mount Paran and came with **ten thousand holy ones**, **B** with lightning from his right hand for them. **3** Indeed **he loves the people**. **C** All your holy ones are in your hand, and they assemble at your feet. Each receives your words. **4** Moses gave us instruction, a possession for the assembly of Jacob. **5** So he became King in **Jeshurun** **D** when the leaders of the people gathered with the tribes of Israel. (. . .) **26** There is none like the God of Jeshurun, who **rides the heavens** **E** to your aid, the clouds in his majesty. **27** The God of old is **your dwelling place**, **F** and underneath are the everlasting arms. He drives out the enemy before you and commands, “Destroy!” **28** So Israel dwells securely; Jacob lives untroubled in a land of grain and new wine; even his skies drip with dew. **29** How happy you are, Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD? He is the shield that protects you, the sword you boast in. Your enemies will **cringe** **G** before you, and you will tread on their backs.

A. Using poetic imagery, Moses described how God revealed Himself to Israel at points throughout their wilderness journey.

B. The Hebrew suggests a divine Hero, leading an angelic army in protecting and providing for Israel. From God’s perspective, forty years of wandering was an unstoppable march toward His ultimate purposes.

C. God’s love for Israel is reiterated across Deuteronomy. He loved the forefathers (4:37; 10:15), chose Israel as His own (7:8), and multiplied them (7:13). His presence and protection demonstrated His love (23:5).

D. A term of endearment that means “upright” (32:15; 33:26; Isa. 44:2). Despite missteps, God saw Israel as true to her name, responding in love to her King.

E. Canaanites thought their god, Baal, rode on the clouds, but Moses corrects that theology. The Lord alone rides in the heavens to support His people (Pss. 18:10; 68:33; Isa. 19:1; Ezek. 1).

F. God had made His dwelling among His people, but Israel’s security in the promised land would depend on them taking refuge in Him.

G. Israel’s enemies would be revealed as false and would be forced to submit to God’s people.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. King

(Deut. 33:1-5)

Believers can trust in God's love for them.

- **Why do you think the Bible portrays God in so many ways, such as a Warrior, King, and Shepherd?**
- **Which biblical portrait or title comes to mind first when you think of Him and why?**

2. Dwelling Place

(Deut. 33:26-29)

Believers should find their security in God alone.

- **What does it teach us about God that He is our "dwelling place"?**

Apply the Text

- **How have you seen God to be sufficient in times of need? Discuss with your Bible study group why people tend to look for security in something they can see and touch.**

KEY DOCTRINE:

God

There is one and only one living and true God. (See Isaiah 46:9; 1 Timothy 2:5.)

BIBLE SKILL:

Dig deeper into the background and usage of key words and concepts.

In Deuteronomy 33 Moses blessed the tribes of Israel. Focus on the word "blessing" in verse 1. Look up the word in an English dictionary to discover its basic meaning. Read the article on "bless, blessing" in a Bible dictionary to discover the biblical usage of "bless." Write any insights you learn in the space below. Read examples of blessing others in Genesis 27:27-29; Numbers 6:22-27; 2 Corinthians 13:13; and Hebrews 13:20-21. Finally, on a separate sheet of paper, write a blessing for each member of your family.

TALK IT OUT

Focus on Deuteronomy 33:29. According to this verse, why was Israel blessed?

In Deuteronomy 33, Moses spoke a blessing over the Israelites before they entered the promised land. He reminded the people of the greatness of their God. The Lord had led them from Egypt to the promised land, and He would continue to lead them in the days ahead. Moses assured them they would know security in the land He had given them because He is a faithful God. This was reason to rejoice.

In what ways is God your shield? In what ways is He your sword?

The identity of God's people was grounded in God's saving acts. Everything God had done for them in the past provided confidence for the present and future. The God who delivered them from Egyptian bondage would be their Shield, Protector, and Sword. This distinguished God's people from all other people: "Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD?" (v. 29).

What distinguishes you as a follower of Christ?

For the next seven days, make “He is the shield that protects you, the sword you boast in” a repeating event on your smart-phone calendar.

Prayer Requests / Notes

DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Deuteronomy 33:1-2

Note the warrior imagery in verse 2 and consider how that would encourage the Israelites as they were about to enter the promised land.

Verse 2 depicts God as a Divine Warrior. The imagery would encourage the Israelites as they faced military opposition on the other side of the Jordan. They would not be going alone or under their own power; God would be going before them (Deut. 31:3,8).

God marched, leading His people from Mount Sinai. The “them” is the Israelites mentioned in verse 1. Seir is the southern wilderness of Edom, which at the time began at the southern tip of the Dead Sea and stretched southward toward the Gulf of Aqaba (Red Sea). Today, we associate this region with ancient Petra. Mount Paran is the wilderness region west of Moab. The emphasis in this verse, though, is not on the geography or route; the focus is on the Lord as He led His people.

That God “shone” on His people refers to His gleaming brilliance (see Ps. 104:2; Hab. 3:4). Some scholars believe the “ten thousand holy ones” were angelic beings. The New Testament teaches that angels were involved in transmitting the law to God’s people (Gal. 3:19; Heb. 2:2). Others believe the holy ones were God’s people, the Israelites. God had called them to be holy as He is holy (Lev. 11:44; 20:26). The second option is the more likely one; the lightning in God’s “right hand” was “for them.”

How does the image of God as warrior encourage you today?



Day 2: Deuteronomy 33:3-4

Underline “he loves the people.”

Verse 3 declares that God loves His people. Giving evidence of that love, the Lord’s having His people in His hand meant they belonged to Him; He protected and provided for them. In response, God’s people assembled at His “feet.” This was where the student sat—at the feet of the teacher. Sitting there was an indication of humility and loyalty to the teacher. At God’s feet, His people would receive His words.

God gave His words to the Israelites, here called “the assembly of Jacob.” The term pointed back to Jacob calling his sons while on his deathbed. This unique word of instruction was for the Israelites. Earlier, God asked through Moses, “And what great nation has righteous statutes and ordinances like this entire law I set before you today?” (Deut. 4:8). Both in content and intent, God’s instruction to the Israelites was unlike any other religious teaching. It remains so today. God’s Word is a light that illuminates our lives (Ps. 119:105). It is our source of spiritual nourishment (1 Pet. 2:2). It is a sword that penetrates to the core of our being (Heb. 4:12-13). It is a mirror that reveals to us our true selves (Jas. 1:23).

Give thanks to God for the evidence of His love.



Day 3: Deuteronomy 33:5

Compare Deuteronomy 33:5 to Psalm 24:8-10.

Verse 2 identified God as the Victorious Warrior. In verse 5 He is proclaimed to be the “King in Jeshurun,” which is a poetic name for Israel. It means “upright one.” The title King underscores God’s ultimate authority. That God is King is a theme throughout Scripture. The Bible declares that God is King over all the earth (Ps. 47:7).

The King had the authority to gather the leaders and the tribes unto Himself. He did this to speak His blessings over them (Deut. 33:7-25). Because God alone is King, He could fulfill those blessings.

The declaration that God is King is significant. Reading through the story of Moses, one of the things we notice is that the Pharaoh of the exodus is not named. He is called either Pharaoh or the king of Egypt (Ex. 5:1,4). Biblical scholars have long speculated about his identity. Egyptians believed their pharaohs were divine; they worshiped them as gods. Omitting the pharaoh’s name was intentional; the only King and God who mattered was Yahweh. God alone was (and is) worthy of worship.

God’s being King should give us security and comfort. We have put our trust in the only One with the authority, power, and resources to fulfill all His promises.

Why do you think the Bible portrays God in so many ways, such as a Warrior, King, and Shepherd? Which biblical portrait or title comes to mind first when you think of Him and why?



Day 4: Deuteronomy 33:26-27

Pay attention to how these verses indicate God as both above His people and underneath them.

Verses 6-25 record Moses’s blessing the descendants of Jacob and their tribes. Verses 26-28 focus on the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The declaration begins by proclaiming that no other god is like Him. God riding “the heavens” and “the clouds” meant He was the triumphant King riding his stallion either to war or in victory. Being the triumphant King, He alone could give Israel (here called Jeshurun), aid. He alone was clothed in majesty. God would also be a refuge for His people. Only the Lord could provide the security His people would need. Only He would have “everlasting arms.”

Some commentators link God’s “dwelling place” with the heavens and clouds mentioned in verse 26. Thus, verse 27 highlights that God is above His people and His everlasting arms are beneath. Nothing could better picture God’s dependable protection and security for His people. Like a strong and loving Father, He safeguards His own in His caring embrace.

At the same time, He drove out the enemy before them. Thus, God was above them, His arms were beneath them, and He was at work in front of them. It is the picture of complete security. The New Testament takes this a step further. God is not only above, below, and before His people. The beloved disciple wrote, “the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world” (1 John 4:4).

Turn verses 26-27 into a prayer of praise to God.



Day 5: Deuteronomy 33:28-29

Circle the words “shield” and “sword” in verse 29.

The Hebrew verb translated “dwells” carries the idea of settling down and abiding. Since God would drive the enemy out and destroy it, Israel could settle down and live securely and untroubled in the land. This, of course, was speaking in the most idealized of terms; God’s people would experience battles and struggles. Israel’s real security would come only in God. The land would provide both peace and plenty. To people who had eaten manna for forty years, the thought of grain and drink had to be incomprehensible. Something besides manna would fall from the sky!

God was their “shield” and their “sword.” The shield was for protection; the sword was for fighting. He was both defender and warrior, battling on behalf of His people. God’s people could be assured that they would have victory, regardless of what they might face in the land of Canaan. That their “enemies” would “cringe” before them indicates the enemies’ previous boasting would be silenced. To place one’s foot on the “backs” of the conquered opponent was the ultimate symbol of victory. The Israelites did tread on the backs of their defeated. Joshua instructed his soldiers to each place a foot on the necks of five defeated kings. “So the commanders came forward and put their feet on their necks” (Josh. 10:24).

The Israelites had been victims in Egypt. By God’s hand and power, they would enter Canaan and be victorious!

**What do you put your trust in for security?
What kind of security does God offer you?**

APPLY THE TEXT

Reflect on your own spiritual journey. Have you ever doubted that God loved you? What were you going through that made you feel alienated from Him? Who do you know that might be going through something similar? What can you say or do to offer hope and reassurance?

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