



November 27, 2011

# Adopt the Right Perspective



## **Background Passage**

*Deuteronomy*  
31:24–32:43

## **Focal Verses**

*Deuteronomy* 32:1-9,  
36-39,43

## **What This Lesson Is About**

This lesson examines the song Moses recited at

the end of his life, a song that centers all of life in knowing and living under the greatness and grace of God.

## **Why This Lesson Is Important**

Adults live busy lives and rarely take the time for self-reflection. There is value in taking the

time to step back, to see the big picture, and to determine what really is important and worthwhile.

## **How This Lesson Can Impact Your Life**

This lesson can help you center your life under the gracious and loving rule of God.

**D**o you text? tweet? facebook? instant message? e-mail? An entirely new vocabulary is developing, with signals arising from these and other social media. Here are some examples: ?4U means, "I have a question for you"; 10X = thanks; AAK can mean either "asleep at the keyboard" or "alive and kicking"—I suppose context helps you determine which. Depending on your age, it can be especially disconcerting to be out of contact with others for a considerable length of time.

Unfortunately, we have so much information coming our way that we seldom have time to give it much thought. Serious thinking and reflection take time and require at least a measure of solitude. Most of us would do well to take the time to truly evaluate what is important in our lives. This week we will examine events in which Moses revealed what he considered important as he neared the end of his life.

## **God Is Worthy** Deuteronomy 32:1-4

**<sup>1</sup>Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.**

**<sup>2</sup>My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distill as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass:**

**<sup>3</sup>Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God.**

**<sup>4</sup>He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.**

The book of Deuteronomy is, for the most part, a record of a series of speeches delivered by Moses to the Israelites as they came to the close of their wilderness wanderings and prepared to enter the promised land. The book includes a brief retelling of the history of the people during the period of time they wandered in the wilderness (see Deut. 1:19-3:29); a restating of the Ten Commandments (see 5:6-21), as well as various laws God had

given to Moses; and a clear statement of the blessings or the curses that would come to the people, depending on whether they obeyed or disobeyed God.

Moses had reminded the people they had a covenant relationship with God (see 1:8). He “commanded the Levites” to “Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee” (31:26). Then immediately afterward, in the passage known as the Song of Moses (see 32:1-43), he proceeded to tell the people they would rebel against God and disaster would come upon them. They would be without excuse because they had written instruction as well as Moses’ spoken words to guide them.

### ➔ *How much time do you spend in God’s Word?*

As Moses neared the end of his life, he must have felt a variety of emotions. He had brought the people to the edge of the promised land, but he would not lead them in. He had proven himself a faithful leader, but now he was about to complete the transfer of leadership to Joshua. Moses was still strong, but his time on earth was about to close: “And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated” (34:7). Such an occasion can and should lead to serious reflection on one’s life. Moses easily could have boasted of his success as a leader, of his faithfulness to God and to the people, and of the special relationship he had with God. He focused instead on the **greatness of God**.

Moses called on the heavens and the earth to bear witness to his words. In the future, should the people attempt to excuse their rebellion by pleading ignorance of what was expected of them, all of creation would declare that Moses had spoken the truth to them. Moses wanted his words to bring refreshment to the people, just as **the dew,...rain..., and...showers** bring refreshment to the earth.

Moses said the subject of his proclamations would be **the name of the LORD**. He said **God is the Rock**—a sure foundation—and **his work is perfect**—“complete,” “sound,” “full of integrity.”

## ***Discover Deeper Meaning***

Because rocky sites often provided a place of refuge and safety, it was natural for the Israelites to use a **rock** to describe God's protective character. "The mighty God of Jacob" was "the stone of Israel" (Gen. 49:24). He was "the Rock that begat" Israel (Deut. 32:18), and "the Rock of" their "salvation" (Deut. 32:15; Ps. 89:26). "There is no unrighteousness in" this Rock (Ps. 92:15). There was—and is—no rock like God (see Deut. 32:31; 1 Sam. 2:2), "the rock of" protection and "refuge" (Ps. 94:22).

Indeed, this Rock was and is personal. He hears our prayers (Ps. 28:1-2,6), but He is a stumbling block to those who reject Him (see Isa. 8:14).

**All God's ways are judgment or just; a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.** These characteristics reflect in part who God is, His very nature. God had demonstrated His faithfulness to the covenant relationship He had established with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and with the people. The people God had chosen had not always shown themselves to be faithful to the covenant He had made with them, but God always had shown Himself to be faithful (see 2 Tim 2:13).

➔ ***Explain why the analogy of a rock is appropriate to describe God. How has God been like a rock to you?***

### **Humanity Is Willful**

**Deuteronomy 32:5-9**

**<sup>5</sup>They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of his children: they are a perverse and crooked generation.**

**<sup>6</sup>Do ye thus requite the LORD, O foolish people and unwise? is not he thy father that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee?**

## **Remember Who You Are**

I had a friend who said when he was a teenager, the last words his dad said to him every time he got ready to go out were, "Remember who you are." He said it was his dad's way of reminding him that he represented the family and a certain quality of behavior was expected of him. He was to do nothing to dishonor his family name. The people of Israel forgot who they were. *What factors influence Christians to forget who they are? What are the consequences of forgetting? What steps can we take to remember on an ongoing basis?*

**<sup>7</sup>Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will show thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee.**

**<sup>8</sup>When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.**

**<sup>9</sup>For the LORD's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.**

The people of Israel acted as if they did not know God. **They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of his children: they are a perverse and crooked generation.** Often, young teenagers go through a period when they are embarrassed to be seen with their parents. Typically, the period usually does not last too long, and the parents and child eventually look back and laugh about it. Do you remember your own experiences as a teen and/or as a parent? Sometimes children rebel openly against their parents and carry that attitude into adulthood. Very few things inflict more hurt and pain than a rebellious child, regardless of the child's age. Israel was God's rebellious child.

Moses described the **people** as **foolish...and unwise**. God was their **father**—and their Creator—**Hath he not made thee, and**

**established thee?** Yet they had treated God with utter contempt. The people had no appreciation for God and for the many things He had done for them. They were self-centered and self-absorbed.

Moses challenged the people to **remember** God's gracious dealings with them in the past. While Moses, Joshua, and Caleb could have been the only men over 60 at this time—(see Num. 14:22-38; 32:11-12), a few in the older generation still may have been living who soon would die, before the people entered the land. Still, most if not all the people would have known of God's call of Abram and the special relationship He intended to have with the patriarch's descendants.

Certainly the people would have heard how God had provided for them and had delivered them from captivity. They would have heard from those who had experienced firsthand God's provision for them during the wilderness wanderings—if indeed they hadn't experienced this provision themselves. Taking their focus off of themselves and placing it on God would have helped to foster a spirit of gratitude rather than rebellion. Rebellion and self-centeredness tend to go together!

Moses reminded the people that God had **set the bounds of all the nations**, but they—the **children of Israel**—were the **LORD's portion...his inheritance** (see Ex. 19:1,3-6; Deut 7:6; 14:2). God had a special purpose for His chosen people, but they had forgotten God. Unfortunately, the history of all humanity, not just of Israel, is that people willfully choose to disobey God.

## **God's Ways are Wonderful**

**Deuteronomy 32:36-39,43**

**<sup>36</sup>For the LORD shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left.**

**<sup>37</sup>And he shall say, Where are their gods, their rock in whom they trusted,**

**<sup>38</sup>Which did eat the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink offerings? let them rise up and help you, and be your protection.**

**<sup>39</sup>See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand.**

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**<sup>43</sup>Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people.**

In Deuteronomy 32:10-35, Moses expounded on Israel's behavior and how God had dealt, and would deal, with their disobedience. Moses spoke both historically and prophetically—of things past and of things to come. Verses 10-14 speak of how God had chosen His people and had blessed them. Then, when they should have shown appreciation and gratitude for all God had done, they “provoked...him to anger” (v. 16). Israel had worshiped the golden calf and would sacrifice to idols in the future (vv. 17-18).

In verses 19-35, we see that God does not tolerate rebellion against Him, and He made it clear to Israel He would not. The people were lacking spiritual insight: “they are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them” (v. 28). How often we see this same pattern repeated in our own day. God blesses us beyond measure, but instead of being grateful and deepening our commitment to Him, we become complacent and act as if we don't need Him. God allows things into our lives to compel us to return to Him, but instead we turn to human ways and wisdom. Just when it seems we have provoked God to the point of judgment, He acts in mercy (see Hos. 11:8-12). Yet we must never presume upon God.

➤ ***What are some influences God uses to bring people back to Him?***

**For the LORD shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants.** *Repent* carries the idea that in His pity and mercy, God would turn from destroying the people. Yet their actions still would bring consequences. When they cried out to false gods and the idols could not act, they would realize the Lord alone is

God. **See now that I, even I, am he,...I wound, and I heal.** No one, He said, **can deliver out of my hand.** Israel's God is the only God. The power of life and death is in His hand.

God will execute His righteous judgment on all who oppose Him (see Deut. 32:40-41). When God acts in behalf of His people, all the nations should rejoice. **Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he...will be merciful unto his land, and to his people.** The Hebrew word translated *merciful* most often is translated by the English term *atone* or a form thereof. The word can mean "to cover, purge, or make reconciliation." Two ideas are conveyed in these words. First, God is merciful; He will have compassion and forgive those who turn to Him. Second, God would act in such a way that all peoples of all nations would be blessed. This promise was fulfilled when Jesus gave his life on the cross (see 1 Tim. 2:5-6). We have the wonderful promise that all who call on Him will be saved (see Rom. 10:13).

## The Life Word

We cannot come to the close of these lessons involving Moses without considering the man himself. Moses came to the close of his life facing a great disappointment—he would not lead the children of Israel into the promised land. He could have been bitter toward those he was called to lead, toward God, and toward life itself. Instead, his focus was not on himself, but on God. As a result, he correctly evaluated life. Therefore, this lesson has been about having the right perspective.

This week, I would like for you to rent a cabin at the beach or in the mountains and go spend two or three days reflecting on what is important in your life. OK, even if you can't rent the cabin, you can still do the reflecting! Take your Bible with you and meditate on the truths it conveys. I pray your reflection will help you regain a clear perspective on God's holiness, mercy, and kindness—along with His love for you, despite your unworthiness.