

1. Congratulations, we made it to the final lesson on this book. The good news is that it's a lot more positive than the last few lessons. There are no more warnings about the dangers of turning from God. Instead we get a detailed blessing from Moses for all those Israelite and then we get the big "death scene" in Chapter 34. My big question is why does the book end this way? After all we're done studying God's laws. We're done describing how God wants us to live. Why do we need to have a big final blessing, given tribe by tribe? We can understand why it would be necessary for a big death scene as people would be curious what happened to Moses after he gave us the first five books of the bible. In summary, my question is, "why is this here and why should we care?"
 - a) First, we have to remember that we're not the primary target of this book. Moses is giving this speech to a few million Israelites living just outside of Israel. Yes of course, this book is full of things for us to learn, which is why we've been studying it for a good while now. Therefore, we're about to read of Moses blessing the Israelites tribe by tribe as that's how they are the group listening to him speak all through this book.
 - b) I can assume most of us reading this have sat through many a sermon given by pastors on the bible. We usually know when a pastor is wrapping up as it often ends with a blessing on us. For example a pastor or a priest might say something like, "May God bless you as you go through your week and apply this lesson to your lives". I always end these lessons with a prayer for God to guide us so we can make a difference for Him. In effect, Moses is doing something similar by blessing the tribes of Israel listening to Him.
 - c) Back to my big question of how does this blessing affect us? What are we to learn from it? History lessons are only relevant if we can apply them to our lives. Yes there is prophecy in this lesson. Yes there are aspects of Moses' big death scene that fit in with some New Testament events concerning Jesus' ministry that I'll cover in this lesson. However, since most of the text covers Moses' blessing the 12 tribes of Israel, explain why it is we should learn these details? What makes this lesson extra hard to be relevant is the fact that most Israelites today don't know what tribe they're from as those records haven't existed since the Temple was destroyed in 70AD?
 - d) OK, enough questions, time for the answers: In the New Testament book of Hebrews, we get a mention of a bunch of Old Testament saints in Chapter 11 who expressed their faith in God by their actions and (here's the key part) blessing their descendants about what is their future. Think of it this way: Moses knew he was about to die. He's all done giving the laws that God wants to obey. Moses knew the Israelites would fail to keep those laws as Moses was just told that by God a few chapters back. By giving this prophetic blessing Moses is teaching the Israelites what will happen to them by their obedience and a lack of, to God's laws. The lesson for us is not so much the specifics of what happens to each tribe but the reminder of what will happen to us when we live in obedience to God's laws and what will happen to us when we turn from His laws for our lives.
 - i) Want a shorter answer? These blessings remind us that God wants to bless us if we're obedient to Him and using our lives to make a difference for Him.
 - ii) All of the specifics given here give us some prophetic insight into Israel's history. What's more important to us is that they remind us that God wants to bless us if we're willing to trust Him with every (big emphasis on "every") aspect of our lives.
2. The final chapter of this book describes how Moses dies. Part of me hates the term "dies" because we read of an appearance of Moses in the New Testament. A better way to describe this 12-verse ending is simply, "This is God saying He's done using Moses after 120 years and it's time for him to rest in heaven until God needs him again". Our reward for serving God is we too get to rest in Him eternally in exchange for using our lives for His glory.

- a) You may say, that's not much of a reward. I want my big mansion in heaven, sitting on a couch watching television or something. Personally, that would be a boring way to spend eternity just sitting there doing nothing. The bible says little about what heaven's like as it is mainly designed to teach us how to live this life. My point is just as Moses got to rest in God's presence, we too will get that eternal privilege based on our trust in God paying the full price for our sins through Jesus, and out of gratitude for that payment using our lives to make a difference for Him in this world. Jesus promises us rest in God in exchange for being obedient to Him. That's what we'll read Moses getting as we wrap up this book. It is a model for us to use whatever time we have left to make that difference for Him so we can also rest in Him after using our lives for His glory.
 - b) With that happy ending stated, let us begin our "happy ending to this book" as we study the last two chapters of this book.
3. Chapter 33, Verse 1: This is the blessing that Moses the man of God pronounced on the Israelites before his death. ² He said: "The LORD came from Sinai and dawned over them from Seir; he shone forth from Mount Paran. He came with myriads of holy ones from the south, from his mountain slopes.
- a) The first thing I want you to catch is that this chapter switches from "present tense to past tense" in tone. It's no longer "Moses says this or that, but he said that". My point is we're reading what someone else (probably Joshua) added to this book. It's still records what it is Moses said and did, so it's an appropriate ending to this book.
 - b) Remember Moses is about to die. He's done saying all the things God wanted him to say to the Israelites (and us) about the importance of obedience. We're now at a point where Moses is saying "Let me bless you as you use your life to make a difference for God". All of this starts with God. After all, our love for God is always in response for the love He is showing us. My point is simply that this blessing that covers this whole chapter starts out with how God reached out to the Israelites so He can bless their lives by their obedience.
 - c) With that said, let me give the specifics: The focus here is where the 10 Commandments were given. The reference to Mount Sinai, the land of Seir and Mount Paran refer to those mountains that surround the place where those commandments were given. Didn't God first care for the Israelites when He called Abraham, or lead his descendants into Egypt or out of Egypt? Of course. The issue here is about obedience. My point is this mountain or series of mountains is where God first told the nation of Israelites what they had to do in order to be obedient to God, which in short, is to obey those commandments. Therefore it is important to see this location as the "starting point" of how God expects us to behave.
 - d) Speaking of specific's let me discuss the term "holy ones". Most likely this refers to angels that apparently came with God to proclaim those Commandments. Remember what's the purpose of angels: They are created beings designed to carry out God's will for us. What I suspect the purpose of the angels here is to emphasize the power God has and His ability to communicate to all of us what it His will for our lives. Angels were created to help us draw closer to Him by leading us as individuals and as groups to do His will.
 - e) Finally, let me explain why it says "the south". Remember that we had around 2,000,000 or more Israelites out there in the middle of "nowhere". The actual mountains mentioned in these verses were to the south of where the Israelites camped back then. All that means is that when God came from what appeared to be those mountains to speak to them, that is the direction it appeared they came from.
 - f) OK John, this would all be interesting if I was an Israelite living about 3,000 years ago out in the middle of the desert east of the land of Israel. Why should I care about this? It's so we realize that God wants to bless us if we're obedient to Him just as He wanted to bless them based on their obedience. Remember that being a "born again Christian" is just the first step of how God wants us to live. He made us "born again" so we can live our lives in obedience to His desires. His laws give us His guidelines of how we're to live.

- g) One more bit of bible trivia before I move on. This is the first time in the bible that Moses refers to himself as a "man of God". It's the first time that's spoken of anyone in the bible. It's not the last, but anytime a key phrase is used first, it's significant. That's a reason why it's significant that we're reading what someone else said about Moses and not what he is saying about himself. One of the few comments said about Moses in the first five books of the bible is that he was a very humble man. He didn't spend any time bragging about the ministry God gave him, but just accepted it humbly. My point here is that we're reading of someone else (probably Joshua) referring to Moses as a "man of God" as Moses isn't the type of person who would brag about himself that way.
 - i) That's why most of Deuteronomy focuses upon the good things God wants to do for those of us called to worship Him and what our response should be. Someone else was needed to explain that Moses himself was a "man of God". The point for us is if we want to be known as men and women of God, we let God Himself make us into the type of people He wants us to be and not brag about it ourselves.
- 4. Verse 3: Surely it is you who love the people; all the holy ones are in your hand. At your feet they all bow down, and from you receive instruction, ⁴ the law that Moses gave us, the possession of the assembly of Jacob.
 - a) Notice the focus is on what God's done for us as opposed to how special we are. The one who created the universe cares enough about us that He gave us a set of rules to follow so we can use our lives to make a difference for Him. The next time we think we're nothing special, consider that the God who made everything created us and wants to use our lives to make a difference for Him in the world around us. The simple fact that we've taken the time to read His laws and consider how they apply for our lives shows us how blessed we are as one of His followers.
 - b) Question: Who are the holy ones? One can make a case that it applies to the angels that exist as God created them just as He created us. One can equally make a case that in this case it also refers to saved people. Just as angels also make the choice to be loyal to God, recall that in Revelation 12:4 Satan took a third of the stars (referring to angels) with him in his rebellion against God, implying that angels have the power to choose, so we have the power to choose to follow God or rebel against Him. This concept also reminds me of the fact that in the Gospel of John, Chapter 10, Jesus said that all believers are in God's hands as well as Jesus' hands. My whole point here is simply that if we are saved, we're as safe as safe can be permanently in God's hands. I believe that's what's in view here.
 - i) This leads to the next clue as to who are the "holy one's". In the next sentence the text says, "They all bow down to receive instruction from God". Again we can say it refers to angels as it is their job to do as God desires. We can also argue it refers to those of us who've committed our lives to serving God as we willfully accept what it is God desires we do as we use our lives to make a difference for Him.
 - ii) Since this sentence ends in Verse 4 with a reference to the law that Moses gave, I'll end this cute little debate and say that the "holy one's" does refer to believers here in this context as I believe those laws are mainly designed for humans to obey and may also be for angels to obey as well.
 - iii) The point of this text is that if we're trusting Jesus for the payment of our sins and we then choose to live as God desires we live, we are among the "holy one's" that are in God's hands whether we feel special or not. It's not up to us to be saved, as we can't fall out of God's hands. What is up to us is how we use the time God has given us. I'm convinced there are rewards for believers based on what we've done with the time and lives we've received, but we can't fall out of God's hands.
 - c) The reason I'm spending so much time explaining this concept is so that when we read of "the holy one's" in these verses, I want all of us who are trusting in Jesus for the complete payment of our sins to realize how special we are, no matter what else happens to us.

5. Verse 5: He was king over Jeshurun when the leaders of the people assembled, along with the tribes of Israel.
- a) OK, who is this king and what is Jeshurun? Let me start with the latter term: It was first used in the last chapter. It's best to think of it as God's "pet name" for the Israelites. The idea is to realize that the Israelites are "something special" in that they got the privilege of receiving God's laws. This reminds me of the old joke of "What is a Jewish agnostic? It is a person who understand what the god he or she doesn't believe in, requires him or her to do." The point is many Jewish people who don't commit their lives to following God do at the least know of the 10 Commandments and understand that they apply to their lives.
 - b) All of that does lead me back to this verse. My simple point is "Jeshurun" is a pet name by God for those of us who understand that the 10 Commandments are applicable to our lives and that God expects obedience of those of us who are trusting in Him for salvation.
 - c) So if Jeshurun in the direct sense applies to Israel and in the indirect sense applies to all of us who are trusting in God for our salvation, who is the king over them?
 - i) To answer, recall that back in Verse 1, I made the point that this chapter is written in "third person". What I mean by that is it was Moses who gave this blessing to the Israelites, but it is being described as a "past tense deal" and not Moses giving it live as it happened. My point is even though Moses never held the official title of being a king over the Israelites, in effect he was their king appointed by God as Moses did lead the Israelites from Egypt to the outskirts of the Promised Land.
 - ii) Therefore, in a direct sense the word "king" applies to Moses. In an indirect sense one can easily argue it applies to God, as it was He who was guiding the Israelites from Egypt to the Promised Land. Just as Jesus stated in John 8:58 that He always existed, implying that Jesus was the voice of the burning bush that Moses spoke to, I could make the case that God the Son (Jesus) is the one who lead the Jewish people out of Egypt and is in effect the king being referred to in this verse. Yes I know my Jewish readers will hate me for that idea, but I'm convinced it is true.
 - d) In summary, all this verse is saying is that it was a "king" who led the Israelites as far as they've gotten so far, just as I believe it's the same king who really leads the Israelites into the Promised Land. In direct context one can also argue this king is referring to Moses.
 - e) At this point, the introduction to the blessing is completed. Now the focus will shift to the specific blessing on each of the 12 tribes of Israel. A few words before we start:
 - i) Israelites living today for the most part, don't know what tribe they belong to. I'll argue that at the time Israel split into two kingdoms, those loyal to God moved to the Southern Kingdom (Judah) as they were still loyal to God. Those who didn't want to follow God moved to the Northern Kingdom (Israel). My point is I don't believe there are any lost tribes of Israel. While the Israelites did live for centuries in the area assigned to each tribe, by the time of the kingdom split after Solomon, I'll argue that most Israelites stopped living in their assigned territories. For my support of this argument, see 2nd Chronicles 11:13-17.
 - ii) I'm stating all of this to understand why we should study the rest of the text in this chapter from our perspective. While the Israelites alive today are no longer part of any of the 12 tribes, the Israelites did live for centuries separated by tribes. As we read of the specific blessings to these tribes, realize that they are prophetic as what is being described fulfills specific historical truths about what happened to each of these tribes before they were split up.
 - f) OK even if we accept the idea that Israel was split into tribes for centuries, we know that they don't exist that way today. Why study this section other than to learn a little ancient history? How does any of this history apply to us today? How are we blessed by reading this? For starters, it's to realize that God cares for us as individuals as well as members of say a church or family. I'll give more answers for this as we go through the blessings.

- i) Just as God wants to bless the Israelites when they are obedient to Him, this text will give us clues as to how God wants to bless our lives when we are obedient to Him. It's to realize that "God doesn't change". Just as God wanted to guide them for His glory, so God wants to guide us for His glory.
 - ii) To sum all this up, we get clues as to how God wants to bless us by studying how God wanted to bless the Israelites historically. With that said, time to get blessed:
- 6. Verse 6: "Let Reuben live and not die, nor his men be few."
 - a) I have to admit, this doesn't read like much of a blessing. The tribe of Reuben was listed first as he was the oldest of the 12 sons of Jacob. As a general rule of thumb, the tribes are listed first as the legitimate children of Jacob's two wives, and then the children from the two "concubines". Before I start on Reuben, a quick word on multiple marriages and what is a concubine. The bible never directly condemns multiple wives, but nothing good ever came out of any situation where any bible character married more than one wife. We get the impression multiple wives were bad, based on the stories told of those men who had multiple wives. Enough on that for now. A concubine isn't officially a slave, but she is a "wife" with less rights than an official wife, but still had some rights. The point is Jacob had 12 sons from four women, that is two wives and two concubines. They're listed here not in birth order, but in groups by children of each of these four women.
 - b) Now that you know that bit of bible trivia, let me talk about Reuben for the moment. The point here is Moses is asking for God's blessing on them that they not be few in number. OK, what kind of blessing is that? It's a prayer or blessing for prominence. It would be like thinking at the end of my life, may my family name still be around and may there be more people who are descendants of my family. It's a little like asking God, may there not be a disaster that kills every last member of my family.
 - c) Since we don't know if any Reubenites exist today, did this blessing come true? Yes as for centuries, they did have a section in Israel. Realize there will be a future day as described in the last few chapters of Ezekiel that God will once again divide Israel's land by each of the 12 tribes. While we don't know who is a Reubenite is today, God does and there will be enough of them to fill a "section" of Israel after Jesus returns to rule from that land.
 - d) OK, time for tribe #2 to be blessed:
- 7. Verse 7: And this he said about Judah: "Hear, O LORD, the cry of Judah; bring him to his people. With his own hands he defends his cause. Oh, be his help against his foes!"
 - a) Judah is an important tribe, as when Jacob, the father of the 12 tribes gave his blessing on each of his 12 sons, back near the end of Genesis, the blessing given to Judas gave clues of how the Messiah would come from that tribe. Remember that it was Moses who gave us the book of Genesis, so he'd be aware of how Jacob blessed each of his sons. My point is that there are a lot of parallels between Jacob's blessing at the end of Genesis, with Moses final blessing here near the end of Deuteronomy.
 - b) That leads me to the first part of this blessing on Judah. When the text says, "bring him to his people", that's a hint here that the Messiah would come through Judah to bring him to the Israelites. In a direct sense, the verse is implying that the tribe of Judah will be among the other Israelites when they conquer the land. The hint here is how the Messiah (Jesus) is to come through this tribe. That hint is also in the second sentence with the reference to an idea of "his own hands he defends his cause". Remember that King David personally lead the armies of Israel to defeat their enemies. David was from Judah. The point is that King David and Jesus in His Second Coming, leads the Israelites to victory over all people who refuse to accept Jesus as the king over the world.
 - c) I admit, as important as the tribe of Judah is historically because many of the future kings of Israel were descendants of David (who was from Judah), and Jesus was also a direct descendant of David from both his mother and his father, Judah doesn't get a big section here. This blessing is short, but it also implies how Israel's leaders come by this tribe.

8. Verse 8: About Levi he said: "Your Thummim and Urim belong to the man you favored. You tested him at Massah; you contended with him at the waters of Meribah. ⁹ He said of his father and mother, 'I have no regard for them.' He did not recognize his brothers or acknowledge his own children, but he watched over your word and guarded your covenant.
- a) One of the longest sections of this blessing chapter is for the tribe of Levi. They get four verses. Moses was from this tribe. The Levites were to be the priests for all of Israel, as they didn't get a united, separate section of that country. Just as all Christians are called to be a witness to the world around us, so the Levites were singled out to be a witness to the other tribes on how God wants them to live, which is why they're scattered there.
 - b) OK, so what are the Thummim and Urim? That's been debated for thousands of years. If you don't know Joseph Smith who started Mormonism said it was a set of reading glasses that allowed him to see things about the bible that were "hidden". The problem with that view is there is no historical evidence to support that claim. There is no Jewish writing to even suggest that was true. My "most likely" answer is that they were a pair of stones or dice used to discern God's will. It would be like rolling a pair of dice and if they came up say, 12 over and over again, one would argue that either the dice are fixed, or that God is trying to communicate a message by having the same results occur over and over again. Whatever the Thummim and Urim were, they were kept in a breast vest pocket worn by the top priest in Israel to discern God's will.
 - c) The point of this blessing is simply that the Levites were chosen by God to lead the other Israelites closer to Him. The lead Levite was the top priest and he had the privilege of an ability to discern God's will via those two "things". The Levites were blessed in that they had the privilege of leading others closer to God (hint hint, for you and me.)
 - d) The second part of this blessing is a little strange and requires a historical explanation:
 - i) The event at "Massah; you contended with him at the waters of Meribah" is a story from Exodus 17. It's a time when all the Israelites ran out of water and they were ready to rebel against Moses and God. That's when Moses first struck a rock that produced enough water for that large group to drink. What's implied here in these verses in Deuteronomy is the Levites stood by Moses against that rebellion.
 - ii) What's implied in Verse 10 here is the Levites were blessed when they choose not to rebel with the other Israelites. The Levites were blessed for that. That Exodus passage doesn't mention how the Levites stood with Moses, but the fact they did is singled out here in Deuteronomy. The blessing is for doing the right thing.
 - iii) What's important for you and me is that God realizes the times where we've stood with Him (as in being a good witness for Him) and we'll be eternally rewarded for doing the right thing. I'm not saying we're saved if our good deeds outweigh our bad deeds. I am saying there are eternal blessings when we choose to obey all of His commandments even as saved believers. Just as the Levites were blessed for the fact they choose to "stand with God" so we can be blessed for that choice too.
 - iv) The "no regard for their brothers" refers to the fact the Levites "stood with God" and not with other Israelites who rebelled against God at that moment in history.
9. Verse 10: He teaches your precepts to Jacob and your law to Israel. He offers incense before you and whole burnt offerings on your altar. ¹¹ Bless all his skills, O LORD, and be pleased with the work of his hands. Smite the loins of those who rise up against him; strike his foes till they rise no more."
- a) Remember we're still focusing on how the Levites were blessed. They got the privilege of leading others closer to God (a good model of what Christians are to do). They also had the privilege of making offerings to God just as Christians get the privilege of praying to God to bring our requests to Him. The blessing asks God to appreciate what they do for Him and harm those who try to stop them. Keep those concepts in mind as we make our own difference for God as we pray and lead others closer to Him.

10. Verse 12: About Benjamin he said: "Let the beloved of the LORD rest secure in him, for he shields him all day long, and the one the LORD loves rests between his shoulders."
- a) A quick history lesson is needed here where the tribe of Benjamin settled in Israel. There was a time period described in the book of Judges Chapter 20 where this tribe almost was almost wiped out. Yet by the time of King David, maybe a few hundred years later, they were still a tribe. As a small tribe they were loyal to the descendants of King David and to God. They were part of the Southern Kingdom (Judah) as the Northern Kingdom turned from God. My point as it relates to this verse is despite their rebellion as stated in Judges 20, they were still loved by God and technically Jerusalem was part of their territory even though it became associated with the tribe of Judah, as Benjamin was almost wiped out.
 - b) My point is simply that despite their sins, God still cared for them and protected them, as a parent would hold their baby tightly in their grips. This verse is a blessing as it implies how much God loves them (this tribe) and protects them for their loyalty.
 - c) What this implies for us of course, is that God loves those of us who've committed their lives to Him and despite our sins God loves us and wants the best for us as He did for all the members of this tribe who've put their trust in Him.
11. Verse 13: About Joseph he said: "May the LORD bless his land with the precious dew from heaven above and with the deep waters that lie below; ¹⁴ with the best the sun brings forth and the finest the moon can yield; ¹⁵ with the choicest gifts of the ancient mountains and the fruitfulness of the everlasting hills; ¹⁶ with the best gifts of the earth and its fullness and the favor of him who dwelt in the burning bush. Let all these rest on the head of Joseph, on the brow of the prince among his brothers. ¹⁷ In majesty he is like a firstborn bull; his horns are the horns of a wild ox. With them he will gore the nations, even those at the ends of the earth. Such are the ten thousands of Ephraim; such are the thousands of Manasseh."
- a) Time for another 30 second history lesson: This is the tribe that got a "double blessing" as Joseph the father of the 12 tribes said to his son Joseph, "you're two sons are mine" in the sense that they get a "double blessing". Even though Joseph wasn't Jacob's firstborn son, Joseph got this privilege for not rebelling against his father. The "double blessing" is an ancient custom that says in effect, "when I die, you get a double portion of the family's estate in exchange for being in charge of the distribution of the estate".
 - b) My point as it relates here is that it's now been over 400 years since that double tribe was formed, and now Moses is blessing both tribes with this blessing. Now the details:
 - i) Notice the last sentence in Verse 17: It says the "ten thousands of Ephraim and the thousands of Manasseh". Ephraim grew to be a much larger tribe after they settled in the land, and Ephraim become the dominant tribe of the Northern Kingdom just due to their numbers. That's why Moses blessed them for being a larger number. I don't believe it was that dominant at the time of Moses' speech here, which is just another indication that all of these blessings are prophetic of what happened to all the Israelites after they entered that land.
 - ii) Wasn't it bad that these two tribes were dominant in their split of the kingdom at the time after Solomon? Yes it was, and that's why a "horns of a wild ox" is given in Verse 17. The positive news of this blessing is that northern kingdom did on a few occasions defeat outside enemies again based on the large "numbers" of those two tribes. Short version: Their large numbers blessed them.
 - iii) As to the rest of the blessing, the idea is the land these two tribes will receive will be "fruitful" in that it will be good land for raising their cattle.
 - c) OK John, it wouldn't be a blessing unless you explain how it applies to us. Go ahead and "hit us": One of the ways that God wants to bless our lives is with growth. It may refer to the size of our family (descendants) or our church or country. To state the obvious, we'd need growth is needed to survive and thrive. To be blessed with growth is to ask God to preserve our family name or say our church. It's a positive thing.

12. Verse 18: About Zebulun he said: "Rejoice, Zebulun, in your going out, and you, Issachar, in your tents. ¹⁹ They will summon peoples to the mountain and there offer sacrifices of righteousness; they will feast on the abundance of the seas, on the treasures hidden in the sand."
 - a) Hang in there as there are only a few blessings left and they're all good things. These two tribes ended up getting land by the Sea of Galilee. Remember that the distribution of the land didn't occur a good number of years after Moses died. My point is God gave Moses some prophesy in this chapter and I'm giving us some hints of how this played out.
 - b) The way these two tribes got blessed is that they prospered by fishing in that lake that we know as the Sea of Galilee. The simple point here of this blessing is that Moses predicted they'd be blessed by where they were located. The land they got around the lake was also surrounded by mountains and thus that reference. It would be like God saying to us, "I'll bless your life by giving you a place where you can prosper so you can make a difference for Me". This does not mean we have to live in a specific location to be blessed and used by God. It does mean that if we do dedicate our lives to Him, He promises that wherever we are, He'll bless that place as to make our life "fruitful" for Him. The point is a location is a blessing if we use it as a place to be a witness for Him. That's the point of this blessing.
13. Verse 20: About Gad he said: "Blessed is he who enlarges Gad's domain! Gad lives there like a lion, tearing at arm or head. ²¹ He chose the best land for himself; the leader's portion was kept for him. When the heads of the people assembled, he carried out the LORD's righteous will, and his judgments concerning Israel."
 - a) Time to recall for a quick second that much of this blessing is parallel to the blessing that Jacob gave his sons four hundred years earlier at his death. Remember that Moses wrote the book of Genesis, so he wrote down those blessings and knew of them as he wrote this section of the book. My point is back in Genesis the blessing on the tribe of Gad was, "A troop shall tramp upon him, but he shall triumph at last" (Genesis 49:19 KJV). What that blessing and this blessing appear to refer to as that the tribe of Gad was responsible for supplying a lot of troops to King David as David conquered all the enemies surrounding the nation of Israel. (See 1st Chronicles 12:14.)
 - b) The point of that ancient bit of history is that God wanted to bless this group as they were a big part of the effort to deal with the enemies of Israel and God. So does that mean God wants us to go attack those who don't believe in Him? No one converts to Christianity by "the sword" but by hearing the word of God and believing it. My point is just as the tribe of Gad was blessed by carrying out God's will, so we can be blessed if we carry it out too!
14. Verse 22: About Dan he said: "Dan is a lion's cub, springing out of Bashan."
 - a) The interesting historical fact about the tribe of Dan is they failed to conquer the land as it was assigned to them by Joshua in the southern part of Israel, so they moved to the north end of Israel. (See Judges 18.) That's why this blessing describes Dan as being like a strong young lion "springing forth" as they conquered land north of Israel. The blessing here is that God can call us to "spring forth like a lion" to make a difference for Him. It doesn't mean of course we physically attack nonbelievers, but we "spring forth" as to attack ideas that are contrary to sound doctrine.
 - b) A quick story about Dan that I can't resist sharing. This tribe is the first one to go into a form of idolatry as also discussed in Judges 18. If you carefully study Revelation Chapter 7, when Jesus returns, 12,000 will be gathered from every tribe except the tribe of Dan. I'll argue that's mentioned to give Dan a "payback" for being the first tribe to go into idolatry. If no one knows what tribe they're from today, how will this be possible? I'll argue that a day may come when through DNA, Israelites will learn their tribal heritage in the future, or it may be a case where God knows all things and who belongs to what tribe. My point is simply that Dan gets "slapped with the back of the hand" in Revelation for idolatry.
 - c) OK, we only have two more tribes to go. There's not much left to cover to finish the book so I ask you hang in there for a few more pages:

15. Verse 23: About Naphtali he said: "Naphtali is abounding with the favor of the LORD and is full of his blessing; he will inherit southward to the lake."
- a) This tribe also got land near the Sea of Galilee. This area is where Jesus did most of His teaching as described in the Gospels. Again it parallels the blessing Moses gave to this tribe when he said in Genesis 49:21 that this tribe "he uses beautiful words" (NKJV). What all that means is this tribe got to be a blessing by God as they were privileged with getting to hear what God the Son had to say to them. The same blessing is also for us as we also get that same privilege when we read what God has to say to us.
16. Verse 24: About Asher he said: "Most blessed of sons is Asher; let him be favored by his brothers, and let him bathe his feet in oil. ²⁵ The bolts of your gates will be iron and bronze, and your strength will equal your days."
- a) Final tribal blessing: This tribe was blessed with the land they got as it was a good place to grow olives, as olive oil is a source of comfort on a hot day as well as for cooking. The point is simply that the land they got was a good land for farming as well as a land where one can find iron and bronze used to make tools.
- b) Most likely, if I quizzed you on which tribe got what, you'd most likely forget this. All we should remember is that each tribe got blessed with the land they got, so they each could be a good witness for God. Some got good land to grow things, others got good land that produces products for trade like this tribe did. Others got good fishing ground. My point is if we're willing to trust God and go forward in that commitment, God provides us what we need to survive, thrive and make a difference for Him. Notice these blessings require us to work hard. My point is food doesn't grow by itself, as land still needs to be worked. So it is with our ministry opportunities that God gives us, we still have to work them as to make a difference for Him.
17. Verse 27: The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. He will drive out your enemy before you, saying, "Destroy him!" ²⁸ So Israel will live in safety alone; Jacob's spring is secure in a land of grain and new wine, where the heavens drop dew. ²⁹ Blessed are you, O Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD? He is your shield and helper and your glorious sword. Your enemies will cower before you, and you will trample down their high places. "
- a) At this point we're done with the "tribe-by-tribe" blessing and Moses is getting ready to dismiss everyone by blessing the multitudes as a whole: Remember that the issue at hand for the Israelites is to go conquer the land of Israel. As I love to state, the concept of living in the Promised Land is about trusting God with every aspect of our lives. In Verse 27 we have God saying, "Trust Me and I'll drive out your enemies". That's also God saying to us that if we're willing to trust Him, He'll give us the power to overcome whatever issues we have to face in our lives and He'll guide us to live as He desires if we let Him guide us.
- b) Verse 28 then says that the Israelites will live in that land alone and be blessed by God for doing so. That leads me to a discussion about Christians living among non-believers. We are not called to destroy nonbelievers, but to be a living witness to them. The concept of separation is about how we as Christians live our lives, not how nonbelievers live theirs. The way the church is commanded to grow is about how we as Christians show love to each other and nonbelievers. When we give of ourselves and put others first, that act is attractive and draws others to the church. I'm stating that here as the text says that Israel will dwell "alone" in the land. That's never been true historically or today. Again, God's not calling us to isolate ourselves from nonbelievers. The idea of being blessed for how we live as Christians is about separating our "lifestyles" in a way where others can see we are using our lives to make a difference for Him.
- c) So are you saying we're saved by good works? Of course not. We're saved in order to do good works. We're saved for a purpose, to use our lives to honor the God who created us and wants to use our lives for His glory. That's the blessing being described here.

- d) That little speech leads me back to this text. The point here is simply that God will bless us if we're willing to let Him lead us and guide us by His power so we can use our lives to make a difference for Him in the world around us. That's the purpose of this blessing.
 - e) Remember that Moses is about to die and he knows it. He wants his final words this large group (and you and me) to be effectively, we can't lose. No matter what happens to us in our lives, no matter what we go through, God's there guiding us through our lives so we can use it to make a difference for Him in the world around us. The goal of life is not to bring glory to us, but to God. Once we realize He's willing to prove us with the power to live that way, not only is it the best way to live our lives, but living that way will bring us far more joy than any other choice we can make as to how to use our time.
 - f) With that note of joy spread to the Israelites, we now wrap up Moses' five-book message to the Israelites and us over this book. The last 12 verses of Deuteronomy is an epilogue so we know what happened to Moses after he finished saying what God wanted him to say to the Israelites. With that said, time for the very short, Chapter 34:
18. Chapter 34, Verse 1: Then Moses climbed Mount Nebo from the plains of Moab to the top of Pisgah, across from Jericho. There the LORD showed him the whole land--from Gilead to Dan, ²all of Naphtali, the territory of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the western sea, ³ the Negev and the whole region from the Valley of Jericho, the City of Palms, as far as Zoar.
- a) Just east of Jericho, east of the Jordan River, east of the traditional border of Israel, there is a mountain called Nebo here that Moses climbed up. From that mountain, one can see all of Israel. It's a little like going to the top of a tall skyscraper where one can see for miles in all directions. Now recall that Moses is 120 years old. He had the strength on his own to go climb this mountain. It shows that his strength did not diminish with age, as God gave Moses the strength to do what God desires him to do all the way to the end of his life.
 - b) So you know, God's describing the land of Israel in a "counterclockwise" fashion. It's like saying look from the north, then to the west and then to the south. If you don't know the actual land of Israel wasn't divided up by tribes until late in the book of Joshua. My point is even though the Israelites did not know which tribe would get what section of Israel at this point in history, God knows all things and showed Moses the land of Israel as it was about to be divided. Remember that this section of Deuteronomy was probably added by Joshua after the land was divided. My point is Joshua knew Moses climbed this mountain to die and this is Joshua saying, "God's showing the land of Israel to Moses as it'll be once it is completely conquered. From God's standpoint, it's a "done deal" as God by definition is perfect and knows all things. Therefore, God could show Moses how that land of Israel will be divided up, even though it hasn't been conquered as of yet.
 - c) Let me state one final time why Moses wasn't allowed to enter that land himself. His sin was striking a rock that he was just supposed to speak to. Yes it's a model of Jesus as we are supposed to always ask for His guidance not effectively kill Him over and over again for our sins. Still you and I have probably committed worse sins in our lifetime. Why did Moses have to suffer that much? Part of it is the model: Moses will always be associated with God's laws. By having Moses not enter that land, it becomes a model that we can't enter into a relationship with God by obeying His laws by willpower. The only way we can live, as God desires is by relying upon His power and trusting Him to guide us in the first place. Yes God wants obedience, but He wants us to rely upon Him in order to have that obedience in the first place. If we get that, we "get" what Christianity is all about.
19. Verse 4: Then the LORD said to him, "This is the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob when I said, 'I will give it to your descendants.' I have let you see it with your eyes, but you will not cross over into it."
- a) Although Moses couldn't enter that land, in exchange for being used by God he was given the privilege of seeing that land. The emphasis here is that the Israelites don't get the land because they deserve it, but it's an unconditional promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

- b) This leads to a quick discussion of the modern nation of Israel. Does that land still belong to that nation? God's effectively saying in this verse that He promised that land to those three people (Isaac was Abraham's son and Jacob was Isaac's son) and that promise is not conditional upon their obedience. At the same time, God's been saying that the Israelites only get to live in that land if they're collectively obedient to how He wants them to live. The way I view it is one day, Jesus promised to return to rule the world from that land. It would be logical that Jewish people need to be living there for them to accept Him as the long promised Messiah. Do I know for sure "this is it" and they'll never be uprooted from that land again? Of course not. I simply live with the promises that God will bless me if I am willing to trust Him with my life and that He will return one day to rule from there.
 - c) So I can I say this is true after 2,000 years and counting? Think of it this way, if Jesus came back say 100 years ago, nobody alive today would have the privilege of spending eternity with Him. In effect, I'm grateful God's taken so long. The way to view that idea is simply to realize that God loves people and wants to have an unknown to us but fixed number of people with Him forever. Think of it this way: Is heaven going to have a finite number of people? Of course. Therefore, there has to be a final one. Be grateful that God's waited as long as He has to save us to be counted as part of that number to be with Him forever.
 - d) What about people born in Hindu or Muslim cultures? My view is God will judge people fairly based on what information they do have about Him. I have enough problems just trying to serve God Myself. My job and your job is to be a good witness for Him for those we deal with in our lives. I trust in a fair God that will judge all people fairly. That's why Christians are called to send missionaries to such places to spread the news about Him.
 - e) In the meantime, I've wandered from the text. Time to finish up:
20. Verse 5: And Moses the servant of the LORD died there in Moab, as the LORD had said. ⁶ He buried him in Moab, in the valley opposite Beth Peor, but to this day no one knows where his grave is. ⁷ Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died, yet his eyes were not weak nor his strength gone. ⁸ The Israelites grieved for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days, until the time of weeping and mourning was over.
- a) One thing to catch is that Moses didn't die of "old age". He still had good eyesight and he still had good strength. His ministry was over only because God said, "that's a wrap". Personally, I can't think of a better way to die than for God to say to me, "That's it for your ministry, thanks for serving Me. Now rest with Me so we can spend eternity together."
 - b) There are also other practical reasons for Moses to die this way: If he were buried in the land of Israel, I'd guarantee that his gravesite would be worshipped. By no one knowing where he was buried, it prevented the Israelites from worshipping his dead body.
 - c) In the New Testament book of Jude, there is a strange story of an angel named Michael who literally fought against Satan for Moses' body. I think the underlying point of that story is that God still wanted to use Moses, which is why he appeared with Jesus when he was "transfigured" in Matthew 17, Mark 9 and Luke 9. As great a testimony as Moses had for his life, God wasn't through using him. Moses appeared in the New Testament when Jesus wanted to show His disciples how Jesus is superior to Moses in power. The point is God preserved Moses' body for future use as stated in those three Gospel references.
 - d) Meanwhile, back at the "death scene" we read of the Israelites grieving for Moses for a 30-day period of time. It's hard for me to imagine a funeral lasting more than a day. I don't think it meant all the Israelites thought about Moses all day long for 30 days. I think that out of respect for Moses, nothing "else" happened to the Israelites for that time period. In other words, the effort to actually enter the land of Israel didn't begin for 30 days so that the Israelites could mentally accept the transfer of power to Joshua (as I love to point out, is technically the same name as Jesus) could lead the Israelites into the Promised Land.
 - i) Think of the 30 days as time for the Israelites to accept Joshua as the one who will lead them into what God promised them to conquer and live in that land.

21. Verse 9: Now Joshua son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him. So the Israelites listened to him and did what the LORD had commanded Moses.
- a) These last few verses are a "transition" that tie the end of the book of Deuteronomy to the beginning of the book of Joshua. The key point here is for us to understand that God was with Joshua as the Israelites actually entered into the land of Israel. That entrance scene is covered in the next bible book, the book of Joshua.
 - b) I want to discuss for a moment the phrase "laid hands on him". There are many people in Pentecostal churches that believe there is literal power being transferred when one person actually lays hands on another. This reminds me of a quote by Dr. J. Vernon McGee that effectively said, "The only thing that physically happens when you put hands on someone is you're transferring germs from one person to another". It's impossible to prove one-way or the other if there is any physical power transferred in the laying of hands. As you can tell, I lean toward the "no answer". I'll argue the way we do God's will is by studying His word, and spending time in prayer in order to do His will for our lives.
 - c) That leads me back to the verses. My point is the public laying of hands is so the Israelites knew that the leadership role was transferred from Moses to Joshua, nothing more or less. As to Joshua, I know from personal experience one of the hardest things to do in life is to follow a great leader. This is why we read in this chapter of Joshua being encouraged and we also read that in the first chapter of the book of Joshua. It's for you and I to realize, yes the leaders who came before you were used by me, but now its time to accept whoever is next as the leader when such times of transition do come.
22. Verse 10: Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face,¹¹ who did all those miraculous signs and wonders the LORD sent him to do in Egypt--to Pharaoh and to all his officials and to his whole land.¹² For no one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel.
- a) What made Moses unique among the Old Testament prophets is that no other person in the Old Testament got to lead the Israelites through so many miracles and got to listen to God as He explained to Moses all that's written in the first five books of the bible.
 - b) This leads me to a quick discussion of "face to face". I never thought of God as having any sort of physical face. God's too big for that. Plus there's a passage in Exodus 33 that says in effect that Moses could see the "back side" of God's presence. I believe what that meant is that God somehow explained part of His power to Moses, but only enough for Moses to comprehend some of God's power. It may be a shame that Moses couldn't actually enter into the Promised Land, but as I love to pound the point home, it's symbolic of God's laws taking us "near" that land, but actually doing God's will requires us to have His power in us to comprehend how God wants us to live, which is why Joshua (symbolic of Jesus only in that their names are the same) is the one who actually leads us into that land. My point is simply that to live, as God desires we live requires our trust in Jesus to guide our lives.
 - c) Meanwhile, Moses got the great privilege of seeing all the miracles in Egypt, seeing God in the "burning bush", the parting of the Red Sea and leading all those Israelites back then. All I'm saying is Moses shouldn't complain about what God wouldn't let him do, as God did give Moses everything written in these first five books and shows us how we can live as God desires by living according to the principals of these laws with God Himself being our power in order to obey those laws. The legacy of Moses lasts is that multitudes to this day study what he wrote, thousands of years after his "death".
23. Father, we can never thank you enough for providing us with guidelines and principals of how you want us to live as one of your disciples. Thank You for saving us and help us to realize that You've saved us for a purpose, to use our lives to make a difference for You. As we learned what it is Moses taught us, may we use that knowledge to glorify You and use the most valuable thing we own, our time for your glory. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.
24. The next page is my standard bibliography, if interested in more studies of this book.

Supplement: Bibliography

"If I have seen further, it is because I have stood on the shoulders of giants." (Isaac Newton)

Without prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, all these commentaries are useless. My prayer as I prepare these lessons was for God to show me the things He wanted me to learn, and second, the lessons He wanted me to pass on in my writings. I have quoted many sources throughout these lessons. If any of these writers appeal to you, I invite you to read or listen to them further via the places listed below. I have also quoted other sources not listed, and those names are usually listed in the lessons. These other authors were usually quoted from the materials listed below and taken from those sources.

First and foremost, the greatest commentary on the bible is the bible itself. Here are the bible versions I use in preparation of my lessons. I mostly quote The New International Version (NIV), Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society; The New King Deuteronomy Version (NKJV), Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.; The King Deuteronomy Version (KJV) (no copyright on that version); the English Standard Version. (ESV). The copyright information for the ESV is in point #5 below. The Living Bible (TLB) Copyright © 1971, 1986 by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, IL 60189; "The Message" copyright © 1993 by Eugene H. Peterson. All rights reserved. All the bible text used in these lessons (except the ESV) is taken from Parsons Software: Electronic Edition STEP Files Copyright © 1999, Parsons Technology, Inc., all rights reserved and from Zondervan Reference Software (32-bit edition) Version 2.6, Copyright © 1989-1998 The Zondervan Corporation.

Here are the commentaries I have referenced over these lessons. The specific commentaries on the book of Deuteronomy are listed first, and then the bible-wide commentaries. They are listed in alphabetical order by author. The reference to audio commentary means the information was gathered via the Internet in MP3® Format, unless otherwise stated:

1. Commentary on Deuteronomy by Jon Courson. It is in book form from Harvest House Publishing. It is also available in MP3® format at <http://www.joncourson.com/>.
2. Commentary on Deuteronomy by Bob Davis. They are available for free in MP3® format at <http://northcountrychapel.com/studies/Deuteronomy/>.
3. The New American Commentary Deuteronomy by Eugene H. Merrill. Copyright 1994 B&H Publishing Group ISBN 978-08054-0104-2.
4. Commentary on Deuteronomy by Chuck Missler, available at K-House Ministries 1-800-KHOUSE1. The web address is <http://www.khouse.org>.
5. The English Standard Version Study Bible; Copyright (2005-2009) The Standard Bible Society. The version itself is copyrighted 2008 by Crossway Bibles, a publication of "Good News Publishers".
6. The Expositor's Bible Encyclopedia, Zondervan Publications, (via CD-ROM 1998 release). This is a multi-volume encyclopedia with notes on every bible verse. It is available through Zondervan. Paperback books are published on individual Bible books from this same source. The actual text that is copied and pasted is taken from this source.
7. The Life Application Bible, Zondervan Publishing: www.zondervanbibles.com/0310919770.htm.
8. The MacArthur Study Bible with commentary by John MacArthur Nelson Bibles (1997) ISBN: 0849912229.
9. I also refer sometimes to J.P. Moreland apologetic ministry which is at www.jpmoreland.com and Greg Koukl's apologetic ministry, which is Stand to Reason at www.str.org.
10. My apology if I have quoted someone else and I have forgotten to include them here.