



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Deuteronomy 32: 1-33

“Moses' Swan Song: From Indictment to Hope, part I”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Our Heavenly Father, we turn again to Thee with gratitude and thanksgiving for the word of God. We thank Thee for the way in which through it we have the assurance that we have a word from Thee and we thank Thee for the way in which Thou hast confirmed the scriptures down through the centuries. Deliver us from doubt and distrust and failure to respond to them. Enable us Lord to treat them as the very words of the living God whose whole being is characterized by faithfulness and truth.

We ask Lord that Thy would guide and direct our study tonight. May the things that are said and our Thoughts and response be things that glorify the truth, which Thou hast revealed in Thy word. May we leave our meeting tonight with a deeper understanding of the Holy Scriptures and of that one to whom the scriptures point so plainly and so vividly, our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. And we make our prayer in his name who is the mediator standing between us and Thee for his names' sake. Amen.

[Message] Tonight we are continuing our study from Egypt to Canaan and we are turning to Deuteronomy chapter 31 and chapter 32. The children of Israel are in the plains of Moab making ready for their entry into the promised land and God through

Moses, the prophet, is preparing them for what lies ahead of them and tonight we are going to look at the Song of Moses which is found in detail in chapter 32, but we are going to look at chapter 31 just briefly as a kind of introduction to it and since this is really one of the great passages of the word of God, we are not going to try to finish it tonight. We will at least spend next Monday night on it as well.

I think after we read through it and after you read through it and after you realize how big a part it plays in the New Testament, you will recognize that this is a chapter that is extremely important for all Christians to understand and I mean Christians, that is those of us who live after the Day of Pentecost, but we will try to make some of those points shortly.

Now this famous Song of Moses that is recorded in Deuteronomy chapter 32 is often the subject of debate by scholars. For example, some of the questions that are often asked about it are what is the date of Deuteronomy 32, for some of the things that are said in it seem to suggest that what we have before us is the product of perhaps as late as the eleventh century and even later in the minds of some. Is it really the product of Moses as the Book of Deuteronomy sets it forth? Another debate, not quite as significant perhaps is just what kind of literature is Deuteronomy chapter 32 that bears on the other question. And then there is a question about its place in Deuteronomy, does it really fit in the book of Deuteronomy?

Now these are some of the things that Old Testament scholars will discuss and debate. I assume that it's not necessary for us in this audience to deal in matters like that and if you are interested in a rather simple and yet a fairly good treatment of the subject, go to some of the literature like the Tyndale series on the Old Testament and the book written by J. A. Thompson on the Book of Deuteronomy as an excellent brief treatment of Deuteronomy chapter 32 in the critical problems that are raised about it.

Now this is perhaps the most important. Surely it's one of the most important of the last acts that Moses performed before he died. Remember the Lord had already told

Moses he was not going to enter into the land and so he is fulfilling his ministry of mediator and there are a number of things that he does. We looked at chapters 29 and 30 last time and the covenant language that was used there, and now he is going to give them what is called the Song of Moses and probably this is the most important of his last acts. Now we are going to look just briefly at chapter 31 and I will just briefly set forth the headings and if you just pay attention to the headings of these sections, you will get the flow of the thought as we come to the song itself, but beginning with chapter 31 and verse 1, this is where we left off last week for those of you who were not here, Moses gives some parting words to the children of Israel and presents Joshua to them because Joshua is going to be the one to succeed him, and then in verse 9 through verse 13 of chapter 31, he outlines the seventh year covenant-renewal ceremony, which Israel was required to celebrate.

This is something rather new and it's instituted here for the first time, but Israel is required in the future to celebrate this covenant-renewal ceremony every seven years and they are to do it at the Feast of Tabernacles, and Moses outlines the arrangements for that. Then there is a charge that comes from the Lord God to Moses and to Joshua in verse 14 of chapter 31 through verse 23 and in this charge that is given to Moses and to Joshua, reference is made to the covenant and to the land. I am going to read just a few verses near the end of that section. We will read from verse 21.

“And it shall come to pass, when many evils and troubles are befallen them, that this song shall testify against them as a witness; for it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed: for I know their imagination which they go about, even now, before I have brought them into the land which I swear. Moses therefore wrote this song the same day, and taught it the children of Israel. And he gave Joshua the son of Nun a charge, and said, Be strong and of a good courage: for thou shalt bring the children of Israel into the land which I swear unto them: and I will be with Thee.”

And then in chapter 31 in verse 24 through verse 29, Moses gives instructions for the taking of the Ten Commandments and putting them in the Ark of the Covenant and you remember that that was something that was to be permanent that is until the time that the law was done away with and the writer of The Epistle to the Hebrews makes reference to that in the ninth chapter of The Epistle to The Hebrews. The law in the Ark of the Covenant carried with Israel with the Tabernacle ministry, and then ultimately in the temple was designed to be a witness against Israel, and they were to constantly remember that that law in the Ark of the Covenant was a testimony to the fact that they were responsible to keep the Law of Moses.

Notice the 29th verse where God gives again suggestions of what’s going to happen in the future. “For I know that after my death (Moses is speaking) you will utterly corrupt yourselves, 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.”

Then the Song of Moses itself follows in verse 30 of chapter 31 through chapter 32 and verse 47. So that there comes to be a second witness against the nation, perhaps we should say to the nation, from this song, that is from this remarkable prophecy which Moses is going to utter as given to him by the Lord God. He will point out the details of the future. He will point out what God has done in the past and so on and he will look on into the future.

Then the last part of the Book of Deuteronomy is devoted to Moses’ preparation for death and his blessing of the tribes. Chapter 32 verse 48 where the comments concerning the song end through chapter 33 and verse 29, Moses gives us his well-known blessing of the Tribes of Israel. It’s not quite as significant in detail as Jacob’s blessing of the sons in Genesis chapter 49, but it’s very similar to it and then in chapter 34, the final movement of these last few chapters is the description of the death of Moses. That was

obviously penned by someone after the death of Moses, but it's a necessary addition to the Book of Deuteronomy because it makes it very plain that as God had said, he was not going to go into the land.

The Lord was gracious to him. He took him up on Mount Pisgah and He had him look out all over the land, and He said there it is Moses, but you are not going to be able to go in, and we studied the reasons why when instead of speaking to the rock, Moses smote the rock twice and as a result of that act of rebellion, his failure to sanctify the Lord God before them, God in His righteousness and holiness did not permit the mediator to enter into the land. That gives you also some idea of the strain of holiness and righteousness and justice that lies in the character of God, and we shouldn't think of that as being something harsh. It's something true to His nature. He is a loving merciful God, but He is also a Holy God and He upholds His law.

Now turning to chapter 32 and the song itself, this song is what might be called a teaching poem because it's written in Hebrew poetic style. We occasionally miss this, but I think if you will look at the first few verses, you will see that there is a very orderly arrangement of clauses which suggests the kind of Hebrew poetry that one finds in the Old Testament. So it's a teaching poem related in parts to a covenant lawsuit.

Now it was customary and we talked about this before, it was customary in the Near East to have these treaties arranged in certain specified ways, and the Book of Deuteronomy itself we pointed out was arranged in a quite similar fashion. Of course, the material, the content is different from ancient treaties made between peoples, between the conqueror and the conquered, but the structure of the covenant treaties are very similar. Of course when we come to something like the Abrahamic Covenant or the Davidic Covenant, we have an unconditional kind of covenant while those covenants were generally conditional covenants in which certain responsibilities were laid out by the conqueror and the people who had been conquered were responsible to adhere to the stipulations of the agreement.

Now when you look at Deuteronomy 32, you will see a lot of similarity even in this one chapter. I will just outline them for you so you will get just the general idea of it. It's not something that you need to remember in order to understand the word of God. I am sure that most of you and I include myself have had a pretty good idea of what Deuteronomy 32 is about. If you have read it a few times and probably you had no idea that had anything to do with any kind of ancient Near Eastern type of treaty pattern, well that's something that theological professors like to point out and it's sometimes useful in understanding some particular parts of it, but it's not necessary to get the main thoughts of the section.

As in the case of many of these covenant lawsuit pattern forms, this is one which might be called a controversy pattern and there is an appeal to the accused in verses 1 through 4. There is in verse 5 and 6 interrogation and an implied accusation of the ones who are opposite the conqueror who in this case is the Lord God. Then in verse 15 through 18, there is a direct indictment of the second party. In verse 19 through verse 25, there is a sentence pronounced and a declaration of guilt, but then in verse 26 through verse 38 and really through the end of the song in verse 43, there is something that one does not find in ancient Near Eastern covenant lawsuit pictures.

The thing that is different is the fact that what we are talking about is spiritual things and what is found in the latter part of this Song of Moses is a word of hope and you don't find words of hope in those conditional treaties made between a conqueror and conquered people, but in the case of this you do find that, and so there is a word of hope concerning Israel's deliverance in verse 26 through verse 28 and then the Lord or Yahweh's own word of deliverance is given in verse 39 through verse 42. Notice verse 39. “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.” And he goes on to speak through the 42nd verse and then finally there is a call to worship God in verse 43.

So that's an overall picture of the Song of Moses, but let me say just a few words now about the importance of it because this is truly a very important part of the word of God and I think if you will bother to read this a few times now before next Tuesday night and get acquainted with it, you will see why it is important and even if you didn't do that, if you just had read the New Testament, I have a dozen times or so, and remembered anything you read, then you would realize too that this is important because it looms large in the New Testament.

First of all, it's important because of its content. It's a divine witness against the nation Israel. Look at chapter 31 and verse 19. “Now therefore write ye this song for you, and teach it the children of Israel: put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me against the children of Israel.” Verse 21. “And it shall come to pass, when many evils and troubles are befallen them, that this song shall testify against them as a witness; for it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed: for I know their imagination which they go about, even now, before I have brought them into the land which I swear.”

I got in the car this afternoon and I had been thinking about this for a good while and all day long looking at it in the Hebrew text and as you think about this, you will see why if people read and study the word of God, most of their problems are solved. And I said to Martha as I got in and got ready to come down, that if Israel was a student of the scriptures and that if they read Deuteronomy 32 today, well let's say they read 31 and 32 giving the introduction in 31, if they read 31 and 32 and read it as the word of God, they would understand their past and their present, and they would have a great deal of hope regarding their future. Because they do not read the word of God, because they do not study the word of God, they do not understand what has happened to them, they do not understand what is happening to them now, and they cannot understand what lies before them in the future. Moses has said it all out here. Past, present and future, it's all right

there in the word of God. So the content of this chapter itself is tremendously important and thus the song itself is important.

Now if you turn to the New Testament and why don't some of you do this now? Why don't you go home and say I will take up Dr. Johnson’s challenge. I will read through the New Testament this week. Again at Matthew. Of course read this half a dozen times before so you are familiar with the language and then read through the New Testament and come back next Tuesday and tell me how many times you found references to Deuteronomy 32 in the New Testament.

Now you would be interested to know that this passage is quoted a number of times. There are an even larger number of clear allusions to it, that is no direct quotation like it is written but the language is taken from this and obviously the author wants his readers to know that it came from Deuteronomy chapter 32. Now since my faith is so weak, and I have the feeling that there is not a person in this audience that is going to take up my challenge, neither one of you is going to read the New Testament through and do that, I will give you the answer ahead of time.

Now if there is one saint in the audience who is planning on reading the New Testament through, then you check my words and for those of you who are students, know how to look up things, then of course you can look in the back of a Greek New Testament where the quotations from the New Testament, from the Old Testament are set out and you can count them up for yourself. Five times this passage is cited as a quotation, we would call it a citation, is cited in the New Testament. About 18 more times, it is alluded to in the New Testament, specifically alluded to.

In fact, there are probably some other references, but these are all recognized by New Testament authorities. So 23 times this passage is referred to in the New Testament. Now it's not simply referred to by the Apostle Paul as if Paul Thought it was important, but the rest did not. Peter cites or alludes to it very plainly in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost. So he was acquainted with it. Paul is acquainted with it. Our Lord cites a

portion from it. Paul in Philippians cites a portion from it. And what makes it even more significant as far as I am concerned is that in Romans 9, 10, and 11 where Paul gives us the history of Israel and looks at the reason for Israel’s rejection in the present day and also sets out in the 11th chapter his conviction that Israel has a future as a nation gathering around Deuteronomy 32, is one of his chief arguments to prove the point. In other words, something we will study next Tuesday, he will point out that gentile salvation today is designed today by God to make Israel in their rejection jealous and that they will ultimately turn as a result of gentile salvation back to the Lord as a nation. In other words, one of his primary arguments is derived from Deuteronomy 32. He alludes to this chapter and that specific point in chapter 10 and then in Romans chapter 11 and verse 11, he repeats the reference and argues from that standpoint.

Now one final thing that makes this chapter so important is the fact that in this one chapter, Israel’s history is unfolded. It is tremendously clear that what we have here is in one chapter a history of Israel, that’s a good place to begin if you wanted to study the history of Israel. It’s a sublime song. An old German writer called it God’s manifesto in relation to the Jewish nation. And then in a Midrashic work older than the Talmud itself, there is a comment concerning Deuteronomy 32. Listen to it. “How great is this song! In it is to be found the present, the past, the future, and the events of the age to come.” That’s from Jewish writers, not Christian writers. From Jewish writers. The past, the present, the future and the events of the age to come.

Well as God said to Moses, there is a great stress on the future. He talks about the things that are going to happen to them in the latter days. Verse 29, and the words specifically are, “which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days; because ye will do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands.”

One of the finest of the Bible teachers who have been Jewish Christians was David Baron. Mr. Baron was a Britisher and he has written a number of very helpful books. If

you want to study Zechariah, his book on Zechariah is one of the finest study written by a Jewish man who knew the Hebrew language, but also was a Bible teacher who was able to communicate in language that the average person could understand and yet solidly grounded in the original text. Mr. Baron was the founder of a Jewish missionary society in Britain and that society had a wide ministry.

It's probably still in existence, although I don't know the details of it, but David Baron in one of his books has a study of this particular chapter and he calls his study *The National Song of Israel*, a divine forecast of the whole history of the Jewish people. He goes on to say something that I think is important. He said, “Let us note, just in passing, that this divine forecast, given at the very beginning of Israel’s history, has very fully verified itself. This is exactly what has happened. Jewish history contradicts in the most positive manner the evolutionary theory which is at the basis of modern criticism. And not only does Jewish history prove the fact that man cannot by his own searching find God, but it teaches also the fact that apart from divine grace and power, man is incapable of retaining the knowledge of the true and living God even after it has been divinely communicated to him.”

That’s a very important point and the first point that God communicated the truth to Israel through the appointed mediators of the promises of God is very important and He unfolded himself to them in divine revelation. But it is very important also to realize not simply that we cannot know truth apart from divine revelation, but we cannot retain truth apart from the continuing work of the Holy Spirit. The natural man and even the Christian man has a bent for evil that only God in His saving work can cure.

So Mr. Baron makes the point as you can see in the history of Israel, here is a people upon whom God has poured out the blessings of divine revelation, but even though they still have the mediator with them, the human mediator Moses, that wonderful prophet of God, even though they have him with them and God is giving them through Moses His word, they are already bent on departing from Him. That gives you a clue into

Jewish nature, no human nature. As a matter of fact if Israel could do that, how much more you poor gentiles because you didn’t have the relationship one might say I am speaking of course to Old Testament Gentiles, you do not have the relationship to the Lord God that they have.

Well let's now begin our study by taking a look at verses 1 through 3. I will try to keep you just about 20 minutes more and let you go at 20 after 8 because it's probably going to rain tonight. You believe that? Anyway let's read the exordium or the introduction verses 1 through 3. “Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass: (Moses is rubbing it in) Because I will publish the name of the Lord: ascribe ye greatness unto our God.”

Now whenever you see something begin like this and the truth replaces in the Old Testament where we have this kind of thing with the heavens and the earth called upon for witness, you can be sure that this is a very solemn thing that is going to be unfolded, and so to call upon the heavens and the earth to give witness to certain truth is to call God’s creation to witness to certain truth. And the thing that is striking about it is the fact that down through the centuries of the world’s history, the heavens and the earth are still there. So they are true witnesses to everything that happens in human history.

It is seen by the heavens. It is seen by the earth. Of course, this is figurative language but that’s the point that Moses is making and later on Isaiah read who read Deuteronomy uses the same figure in Isaiah chapter 1, and then Micah who also read the Book of Deuteronomy and read this chapter in the 6th chapter of his book uses again the same figure. So if you want to call to witness the eternal truth of God, you call upon the heavens and the earth creation His greatest work outside of redemption, and the creation is still here and that same heavens above there has seen everything that has transpired from the creation of Adam down to the present time. That’s the point of Moses in saying

“Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain.”

Now this word doctrine is a word that when we think of it, we think of theology and strictly speaking that’s what it is. The Bible is just a book of theology. When you begin with Genesis chapter 1 verse 1, you have sentences and those sentences are theological sentences. The whole Bible is just a collection of theological sentences. Sometimes those theological sentences have to do with the spiritual life of believers, sometimes they have to do with the spiritual thoughts of believers, but all of the sentences of the Bible are theological sentences. That’s why it’s so foolish to say I am not interested in theology. I am interested in life. It’s by these theological sentences that we learn what true life is.

Now this word is a very unusual word. It’s a word that comes from the Hebrew word that means to take or receive, and so it’s a word that suggests that the doctrine of which he is speaking is doctrine that has been received and of course that’s what it is. Moses is giving what God has given to him. And he speaks of it as that which he has received from the Lord God. My doctrine is a doctrine that has been received. I did not originate it.

Now if you remember the New Testament, Moses is not the only mediator who talks like that. The Lord Jesus talks like that too. He says, I will give you his precise words, “My doctrine is not mine but His that sent me.” So Moses is speaking as one who is a mediator of divine teaching and speaking like the Lord, he says my teaching which I don’t originate shall come like the rain, shall distill as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass.

Now if you are from Texas, any Texan can understand that these figures of speech here mean life and refreshment. Just think of those lovely drops of liquid coming down from the heaven slowly. Suppose you went out tonight and you went out and it was sprinkling outside and then it began to rain a little bit and when you went home and at 10

or 11 or 2, whenever you go to bed, it was still raining, you would think of that as a great blessing from the Lord God. You would say my grass is going to live. My flowers are going to manage to survive. that these are all beautiful figures of life and refreshment and the things that are most helpful to those who are needy like people in Texas. So what is designed by this simple figure is to stress the fact that the Word of God is like this for those who recognize their need. It's just like the rain would be for us here in Texas in the spiritual sphere.

Now he goes on to say because I will publish the name of the Lord. Now for those of you who have been here in our whole series, you will remember that we started back in the Book of Exodus in, well in the first chapter of the Book of Exodus and we went through the conflict that took place between Moses and Pharaoh and the children of Israel were delivered from Pharaoh and the Egyptian bondage and brought out. In the 6th chapter of the Book of Exodus, we laid a great deal of stress upon something that I am reminded of when I read this in Deuteronomy 32.

We read in Exodus chapter 6 in verse 1,

“Then the Lord said unto Moses, Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh: for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land. And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the Lord: And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty (El Shaddai), but by my name Yahweh I was not known to them. And I have established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers.”

A thing I want you to notice about this is that it seems as if it's contradictory because if you read the Book of Genesis just take it at it's normal sense, it's obvious they knew about Yahweh, and yet here we read, “I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and

unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name Yahweh was I not known to them.” But they did know the name Yahweh and we tried to point out that what is really said is something like this. The Lord is not denying that they knew the name Yahweh. He is just saying you didn’t know the significance of it. You use the name and the name was commonly used, but you didn’t understand the full significance of the name Yahweh. So the full significance of it was expressed to Moses for the first time.

Now remember the Lord said to him “I am who I am” one of the greatest revelations in the word of God and it marked out Yahweh as different from all other so-called gods and as different from all other beings in this universe, the absolute unchangeable infinite God who makes covenants with certain people. And of course in the context here, the covenant is established with Abraham, with Isaac, with Jacob, and with the seed, with the elect of God. So I think it's so fitting that Moses should be the one who is by God called upon to say, “Because I will publish the name of the Lord: ascribe ye greatness unto our God.”

If there was any person who was qualified to expound the greatness of Yahweh at that time, it was Moses the mediator to whom God had spoken and revealed himself in such remarkable ways. We don't have time to turn to passages such as Exodus 34 verse 5 through verse 7 where God unfolded to Moses those great aspects of His being the touch, His mercy and loving kindness and that type of thing, but that’s bound up in the covenant-keeping God. So he will expound the greatness of God and the name of Yahweh.

That really is the essence of the theme of this great Song of Moses. It's spelled out in details but that’s ultimately what is set forth, the greatness of the covenant-keeping Yahweh, and my dear Christian friends, you are sitting in the audience here. This God is your God and the kind of faithfulness that He has shown to the nation Israel is the kind of faithfulness that He offers to us. And not only does He offer to us, but let me say as solemnly to you as Moses said it to the children of Israel. When we turn away from His

faithfulness, we turn away from the same God from whom Israel turned away and it's obvious that it is not a pleasing thing to the Lord God.

So we go on and we notice verse 4 through verse 6. “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. They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of his children.”

Incidentally there are some characteristics this psalm that you will see now and then. If you have two different translations, you will see that the words in a number of places are quite different. There are some difficult places in the psalm so far as the Hebrew text is concerned and it's not easy to be absolutely certain of the sense of certain of the passages. I am reading the Authorized Version. It is a possible rendering. So we will just let it alone since it's not one of the things we want to stress.

At the end of verse 5, we read “they are a perverse and crooked generation.” Do you recognize those words? Well those are the words that our Lord used. Those are the words that Paul used. Those are the words that Peter used on the Day of Pentecost. Those fellows read these things and studied them and knew them so well that when they got up to preach, they just flowed it out of their mouths as part of their preaching equipment. Isn't it nice to hear a person preach who knows the word of God and who is able on as the occasion demands to bring forward the word of God, one of the great characteristics of C. H. Spurgeon and most really great preachers are preachers who know the scriptures in that way. Verse 6, “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?”

Now here is the theme and you can see that the theme is essentially God's perfection in His work and in His ways. He is solid, He is strong, He is reliable, He is immovable and He is unchangeable. To sum it all up, He is what? Well, He is perfect. Yes. To sum it all up, He is what? Moses has told us. He is The Rock. He is The Rock. Those are all characteristics of the rock. Now if you look at this in the Hebrew text, it's

like this. He doesn’t begin by saying He is The Rock. He says The Rock. His work is perfect. His work is perfect.

In other words, the term the Rock is thrown forward and an article is added to it, the. the Rock, not a rock, the Rock. The rock, His work is perfect. It's his way of laying stress upon the fact that God has all of the spiritual characteristics suggested by a great rock. Now people who live in places where sudden storms come and where there are caves and great masses of rocks, know how those things are often places of refuge and so consequently when you read He is the Rock, well certain people would think of that as a figure of refuge, of safety, of protection, of reliability.

It's always there and in fact Isaiah who lived in that kind of country speaks in chapter 32 and verse 2 of the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. So he is the Rock. Used in Exodus chapter 17, this word is there used of the smitten rock that was smitten out of which water came, but here for the first time in the Bible, it is used of the name of God, but then later on through the Bible it will be used a number of times. In fact in the Book of Psalms, the psalmist will say in Psalm 62 in verse 2, “He only is my rock and my salvation.” Mr. Spurgeon used to say with reference to this and it's so true. He said “Tell me anything that departs from this and it will be a heresy; and tell me a heresy, and I shall find its essence here, that it has departed from this great, this fundamental, this rocky truth He only is my rock and my salvation. Salvation is of the Lord.” In other words, what that means is if you read the Bible, you will be a Calvinist.

Now in verse 6, he says, “is he not Thy father.” Now when he talks here about in verse 5, “They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of his children,” I think he is saying and this is questionable because the Hebrew text is not plain here, I think that what he is saying is these people have a stain or a spot upon them that makes it clear that they are not really the Lord’s children, that is these who are departing from Him. So the reference is to the stain that characterizes those who are not His true children, that is the perverse and the crooked.

But notice the shameful contrast between this one who is called the Rock and then these other people who are a perverse and crooked generation. He has founded them, that is, as a nation, that’s the meaning of the expression. He bought them, He possessed them, He acquired them as the force of the Hebrew verb [Hebrew indistinct], which is used there. He acquired them and He acquired them in the sense that He founded them and He has made them into the nation Israel as His people. He has elevated them and He has established them as the redeemed nation by the covenant given to Abraham and the conditional covenant given to Moses designed to regulate their daily life, the law and the providential guidance that has characterized His dealings with them.

Now in verse 7 through verse 14, I will just read through these verses and make one or two comments and then we will stop at this point and leave the prophetic sections for our next study. In verse 7 he says, “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. 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.”

Isn’t that a striking statement? If you look at the Greek translation of the Old Testament of this point, it says that he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the sons of God. Now “the sons of God” in the Old Testament is an expression that refers to the angels. Many modern scholars feel that that’s probably the genuine reading because in the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls from Cave 4, one of the manuscripts found has this section and it has a section just as the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, and so it’s the opinion of a number of modern scholars that this really should be that he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the angels. That is, the angelic hierarchy is a hierarchy that is an organized hierarchy.

Remember in the Book of Daniel where the organization of the hierarchy of the angels is set out and remember how Paul talks about principalities and powers in

heavenly places. There is an organization of the angelic hosts. There is no doubt about that. Not just fundamentalists believe that. That’s set out in the word of God very plainly. If that is the reading here, then there is a suggestion perhaps that Moses has by God’s revelation recognized the organization of the spiritual world and the angelic beings have certain authority over certain areas. Remember the Prince of Persia and things like that in the Book of Daniel?

Now personally I am unpersuaded by that. I think that probably the text is that he has set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. What is meant by that I think is simply this that God’s purpose has been to set Israel at the center of His dealings with this universe. In other words, Moses is invited to trace the hand of God in the dealings that He has with the nation Israel, and to find the hand of God in them. And the way in which the nations are set out over the earth, and the providential way in which history is governed, is ultimately determined by what He has first of all determined for the Nation Israel, and that the Gentiles fit into the pattern with Israel having the preeminence in the unfolding of the plan of God. That is set out it seems to me so plainly in the prophets that there can hardly be any doubt about that. So Israel is the center of God’s covenantal dealings with men and Moses now will just give some of the details of the way in which God has led them.

“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.” We have read verse 8. “For the Lord’s portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye.” That’s of the pupil of his eye, one of the tenderest and one of the most important features of the human body which we guard with all that we have because it means so much to us. It’s a figure used in the Book of Zachariah by the Lord God. It expresses his ultimately strong concern for the children of Israel.

He continues “As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, bearing them on her wings.” You can see an eagle with a little eaglet and the little eaglet is being taught to fly and the eagle is underneath so that that eaglet will be saved by the eagle underneath. It's God's way of dealing with the children of Israel. He set them out into the wilderness but He was there to guard them and protect them.

“So the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange God with him.” Notice, God alone is the one who led them. Now already they have started to worship the false God. So Moses is told by the Lord God to lay stress upon the fact that He only is their rock and their salvation. “He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock; butter of kine, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat; and Thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape.” That's an interesting statement, isn't it? The pure blood of the grape. That's probably the reason ultimately why in the Lord's Supper, the wine is suggestive of the blood of the new covenant which was shed. It's called the blood of the grape and the connection is made, and our Lord uses that to represent the New Covenant.

Well, we will stop at this point and we will take it up next time and I assure you the most interesting parts of this song are yet to come. Let's bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we are grateful to Thee for these important words which Moses so many centuries ago gave to the children of Israel and which give such a bright light upon the history of Israel and our history as well. May our thoughts Lord be enlightened by the Holy Spirit as we reflect upon them and may they enable us to more faithfully and boldly serve Thee in our day for Jesus' sake. Amen.