

# GOD'S MERCY AND VENGEANCE

**BIBLE TEXT** : Deuteronomy 31 :16-22; 32:1-47

LESSON 141 Senior Course

**MEMORY VERSE: "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end:" (Deuteronomy 32:29).**

## **BIBLE TEXT in King James Version**

### **Deuteronomy 31:16-22**

<sup>16</sup> And the LORD said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go *to be* among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them. <sup>17</sup> Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God *is* not among us? <sup>18</sup> And I will surely hide my face in that day for all the evils which they shall have wrought, in that they are turned unto other gods. <sup>19</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> For when I shall have brought them into the land which I swear unto their fathers, that floweth with milk and honey; and they shall have eaten and filled themselves, and waxen fat; then will they turn unto other gods, and serve them, and provoke me, and break my covenant. <sup>21</sup> 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

## **BIBLE REFERENCES:**

### **I Moses' Song a Witness Against Israel**

- 1 The Lord foretells Israel's idolatry and the breaking of their covenant in the Promised Land, Deuteronomy 31:16-18
- 2 He commands Moses to write the song and to teach it as a witness against Israel, Deuteronomy 31:19
- 3 When they shall prosper, they will turn to other gods, and evil shall come upon them, Deuteronomy 31:20-22

### **II An Ascription to God and Israel's Pending Downfall**

- 1 His doctrine is as the rain and His speech as the dew which falls upon the grass, Deuteronomy 32:1-3;  
**Isaiah 44:3-4**  
<sup>3</sup> For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring:  
<sup>4</sup> And they shall spring up *as* among the grass, as willows by the water courses.
- 2 He is Israel's ROCK who bore them through the wilderness, as the eagle bears her young, Deuteronomy 32:4-12;  
**Exodus 19:4**  
<sup>4</sup> Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and *how* I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.
- 3 He made him ride on the high places of earth, but Jeshurun kicked, and served other gods, Deuteronomy 32:13-17

### **III The Lord Provoked to Anger with Israel's Idolatry**

1. Israel forgot the God who begat them, and are abhorred of Him because of their evil doings, Deuteronomy 32:18-21
- 2 A fire is kindled to the lowest hell and curses are sent upon them, Deuteronomy 32:22-25;  
**Leviticus 26:14-19**  
<sup>14</sup> But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments;  
<sup>15</sup> And if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments, *but* that ye break my covenant:  
<sup>16</sup> I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart: and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it.  
<sup>17</sup> And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you; and ye shall flee when none pursueth you.  
<sup>18</sup> And if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins.  
<sup>19</sup> And I will break the pride of your power; and I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass:  
**Psalm 9:17**  
<sup>17</sup> The wicked shall be turned into hell, *and* all the nations that forget God.
- 3 They would be scattered and remembrance of them cease, except that their enemies would vaunt themselves, Deuteronomy 32:26, 27

them into the land which I swear.  
<sup>22</sup> Moses therefore wrote this song the same day, and taught it the children of Israel.

### Deuteronomy 32:1-47

<sup>1</sup> Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. <sup>2</sup> My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass: <sup>3</sup> Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. <sup>4</sup> *He is* the Rock, his work *is* perfect: for all his ways *are* judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right *is* he. <sup>5</sup> They have corrupted themselves, their spot *is* not *the spot* of his children: *they are* a perverse and crooked generation. <sup>6</sup> Do ye thus requite the LORD, O foolish people and unwise? *is* not he thy father *that* hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee? <sup>7</sup> Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee. <sup>8</sup> When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. <sup>9</sup> For the LORD'S portion *is* his people; Jacob *is* the lot of his inheritance. <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: <sup>12</sup> *So* the LORD alone did lead him, and *there was* no strange god with him. <sup>13</sup> He made

### IV God's Vengeance Threatened when Their Gods Fail Them

- 1 Israel is a people without understanding; their rock is not our ROCK, Deuteronomy 32:28-34
- 2 The Lord shall judge His people and repent Himself of them when He sees their power gone, Deuteronomy 32:35-39
- 3 Yet the Lord will whet His sword and avenge their enemies and be merciful toward Israel, Deuteronomy 32:40-43;

#### Genesis 12:3

<sup>3</sup> And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

### V The Israelites Taught the Song of Moses

- 1 Moses and Joshua teach all the words of the song to the people for a warning, Deuteronomy 32:44, 45
- 2 Moses commands them to set their hearts upon these words and to teach their children to keep the Law, Deuteronomy 32:46
- 3 It is not a vain thing, but it is their life by which they shall prolong their days in the land, Deuteronomy 32:47

### NOTES:

#### Warnings Against Idolatry

The first two commandments of the Decalogue are a prohibition of any form of idolatry: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them" (Exodus 20:3-5). And a penalty is attached for the breaking of these two commandments: "For I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me" (Exodus 20:5). But He also pronounces a blessing upon those who keep His commandments: "And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments" (Exodus 20:6). The Lord too opens the Ten Commandments by reminding Israel of their deliverance out of Egypt: "I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." And these commandments were graven on stone by "the finger of God" and delivered to Israel at Mount Sinai about 50 days after their departure from Egypt. The younger generation also knew what happened to their fathers for setting up the golden calf and worshiping it. All Israel therefore knew in the beginning that idolatry was a great offense against God, the penalty for which was death.

Israel was prohibited from entering into any covenant with the nations around about them in the Promised Land. These idolatrous races were to be exterminated, their groves cut down, and their images destroyed. "Thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire. For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth" (Deuteronomy 7:5, 6). And the Lord further reminded them, "But if ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you; then it shall come to pass, that those which ye let remain of them shall be pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell" (Numbers 33:55).

him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock; <sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered *with fatness*; then he forsook God *which* made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation. <sup>16</sup> They provoked him to jealousy with strange *gods*, with abominations provoked they him to anger. <sup>17</sup> They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new *gods that* came newly up, whom your fathers feared not. <sup>18</sup> Of the Rock *that* begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee. <sup>19</sup> And when the LORD saw *it*, he abhorred *them*, because of the provoking of his sons, and of his daughters. <sup>20</sup> And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end *shall be*: for they *are* a very froward generation, children in whom *is* no faith. <sup>21</sup> They have moved me to jealousy with *that which is* not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with *those which are* not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation. <sup>22</sup> For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains. <sup>23</sup> I will heap mischiefs upon them; I will spend mine arrows upon them. <sup>24</sup> *They shall be* burnt with hunger, and devoured

### The Prediction of Israel's Fall into Idolatry

Yet with these stern commandments and instructions against idolatry taught Israel, God knew their hearts and foretold their turning to other gods when they were come into the Promised Land. And the Song of Moses is an amazing revelation of their shameless fall into idolatry and their apostasy from the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob — the God who chose them for His people, a royal priesthood and a holy nation, the God who led them by the hand, out of Egyptian bondage, and now was about to bring them into a land flowing with milk and honey.

**"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.**

**"As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings:**

**"So the LORD alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him.**

**"He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and 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.**

**"But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation" (Deuteronomy 32:9-15).**

Here was something for the Israelites to think about when they came into the Promised Land. During those forty years in the "waste howling wilderness," God led them about, He instructed them, and kept them "as the apple of his eye." He cared for Israel as the eagle cares for her young, although many times they had risen up in rebellion against their God. And now God was about to bring them over Jordan into a land of plenty where blessing upon blessing would be bestowed upon them. And what would Israel do? The Song of Moses is the answer: "Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked . . . he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation." "Jeshurun" is an endearing name which God gave Israel. But in spite of His love for this rebellious people, and the blessings bestowed upon them, they would turn to other gods.

### The Lord's Anger Incurred by Israel

It is written, "They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they him to anger. They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up. . . . And when the LORD saw it, he abhorred them" (Deuteronomy 32:16-19). The covenant was broken, the bond was severed, and He determined to send trouble upon them. He said, "A fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell. . . . I will heap mischiefs upon them; I will spend mine arrows upon them. They shall be burnt with hunger, and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter destruction. . . . O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" (Deuteronomy 32:22-

with burning heat, and with bitter destruction: I will also send the teeth of beasts upon them, with the poison of serpents of the dust.<sup>25</sup> The sword without, and terror within, shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling *also* with the man of gray hairs.<sup>26</sup> I said, I would scatter them into corners, I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men:<sup>27</sup> Were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy, lest their adversaries should behave themselves strangely, *and* lest they should say, Our hand *is* high, and the LORD hath not done all this.<sup>28</sup> For they *are* a nation void of counsel, neither *is there any* understanding in them.<sup>29</sup> O that they were wise, *that* they understood this, *that* they would consider their latter end!<sup>30</sup> How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their Rock had sold them, and the LORD had shut them up?<sup>31</sup> For their rock *is* not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves *being* judges.<sup>32</sup> For their vine *is* of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah: their grapes *are* grapes of gall, their clusters *are* bitter:<sup>33</sup> Their wine *is* the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps.<sup>34</sup> *Is* not this laid up in store with me, *and* sealed up among my treasures?<sup>35</sup> To me *belongeth* vengeance, and recompence; their foot shall slide in *due* time: for the day of their calamity *is* at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste.<sup>36</sup> For the LORD shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that *their* power is gone, and *there is* none shut up, or left.<sup>37</sup> And he shall say, Where *are* their gods, *their* rock in whom they trusted,<sup>38</sup> Which did eat the

29).

### The Prophecy Against Israel Fulfilled

And did they consider their latter end? They did not. Moses taught the Children of Israel the song, but their subsequent history tells the story. All that was prophesied came to pass. Great prophets were raised up in Israel, the Truth was proclaimed, and the temple worship was continued; but step by step their love for God waxed cold, and their worship became Only a form. Eventually the nation was divided. Ten of the tribes moved into Samaria where idols were set up, and they were led into the abominable practices of the nations around about them by "the sins of Jeroboam." Baal became their god, and the time came when they were carried into captivity and scattered in Assyria.

For a season the temple worship was continued at Jerusalem, but in due time Judah and Benjamin also turned to other gods. And of them it is written, "My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jeremiah 2:13). And a little later they, too, were carried away to Babylon. The Temple was destroyed, the walls of Jerusalem broken down, and the city burned.

### God's Love Unrequited

God loved Israel, not because they were a great nation, nor because of any virtue in them. They proved by their conduct that there was nothing good in them. He loved them, because of the Covenant made with their father Abraham hundreds of years before. It is recorded in the Word, "The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: but because the LORD loved you, and because **he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD** brought you out with a Mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations" (Deuteronomy 7:7-9).

These words were taught the Children of Israel, before they ever entered the Promised Land. And even though they had gone through many hard trials in the wilderness and were fed with manna to humble them (**Deuteronomy 8:2-3** <sup>2</sup> And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, *and* to prove thee, to know what *was* in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no. <sup>3</sup> And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every *word* that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live), yet when they began to prosper in the land of plenty, they did not requite His love and keep His commandments, as He taught them. Of the Rock that begat them they were unmindful, and forgot the God who formed them.

### "The Little Flock"

When the Child Jesus was born in Bethlehem, a new age dawned, as has often been truly said. The **Old Covenant**, made with Israel at Mount Sinai, was about to cease because Israel had broken it and turned away from the God who loved them. And

fat of their sacrifices, *and* drank the wine of their drink offerings? let them rise up and help you, *and* be your protection. <sup>39</sup> See now that I, *even* I, *am* he, and *there is* no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither *is there any* that can deliver out of my hand. <sup>40</sup> For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever. <sup>41</sup> If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me. <sup>42</sup> I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh; *and that* with the blood of the slain and of the captives, from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy. <sup>43</sup> Rejoice, O ye nations, *with* his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, *and* to his people. <sup>44</sup> And Moses came and spake all the words of this song in the ears of the people, he, and Hoshea the son of Nun. <sup>45</sup> And Moses made an end of speaking all these words to all Israel: <sup>46</sup> And he said unto them, Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law. <sup>47</sup> For it *is* not a vain thing for you; because it *is* your life: and through this thing ye shall prolong *your* days in the land, whither ye go over Jordan to possess it.

the New Covenant, promised to Abraham (**Genesis 12:3** <sup>3</sup> And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed), was fulfilled when Jesus went forth, bearing His cross, and shed His own Blood on Calvary. With His last words upon the cross He cried, "It is finished." And He might have added, "Now may all the world go free," for redemption's price was paid and the door of mercy was opened wide to a lost humanity. Upon Calvary was revealed the deep significance of John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

The world, like Israel, has not responded to that love, but there are a few who have. Even in Israel's time there was a faithful band who cleaved to the Lord and refused to turn to other gods. The Lord reminded Elijah, "Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him." And so today, while the multitudes have turned to other gods and are going the broad way to destruction, there is still a "little flock" unto whom it is the Father's good pleasure to give the Kingdom.

**"Lord, I have started to walk in the light  
Shining upon me from heaven so bright;  
I bade the world and its follies adieu,  
I've started in, Jesus, and I'm going through.**

**"Many they are who start in the race;  
But with the light they refuse to keep pace;  
Others accept it because it is new,  
But not very many expect to go through."**

### **QUESTIONS**

- 1 "Songs" are frequently hymns of praise, but what was the purpose of the Song of Moses?
- 2 What manner of sin is prohibited in the first two commandments of the Decalogue?
- 3 What relationship with the nations in the Promised Land was Israel forbidden to enter into?
- 4 What danger attended Israel's entering into a covenant with these nations?
- 5 Certain critics of the Bible say it was unjust for God to have these nations exterminated. Why was it not unjust?
- 6 The Promised Land abounded in cattle, fruits, and grains. What effect did this prosperity have on Israel?
- 7 What was God's prophecy concerning Israel when they were about to cross Jordan? Who was "Jeshurun"?
- 8 Give an outstanding event in Israel's history which is a fulfillment of this prophecy.