

THE OTHER SONG

Those in heaven will sing the “song of Moses” (Rev. 15:4). That song was first sung when God delivered Israel from the Egyptians (Ex. 15:1-21). From first to last it is a song of praise to God for delivering Israel and drowning the Egyptian army. The point of this song is to glorify God and not men. That’s why we will be singing it in heaven.

The other song of Moses is different. It is filled with dire warnings. **“Moses recited the words of this song from beginning to end in the hearing of the whole assembly of Israel” (Deut. 31:30).** After reciting the song Moses warned: **“Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law. They are not just idle words for you – they are your life. By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess” (Deut. 32:46,47).** His final words were made more memorable because on that very day Moses went up on Mount Nebo and died (Deut. 32:48-52).

Two things stand out in this song. First, the greatness of God. **“He is the Rock, his works are perfect and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he” (Deut. 32:4).** The second great lesson involves the sinfulness of Israel: **“They have acted corruptly toward him; to their shame they are no longer his children, but a warped and crooked generation” (Deut. 32:5).** Both of these truths, of course, are still relevant today.

The Roman letter reminds us that the “law was powerless” to transform man and make him righteous (Rom. 8:1-4). Moses knew this! That’s why he gave this command to the Levites: **“Take this Book of the Law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God. There it will remain as a witness against you. For I know how rebellious and stiff-necked you are. If you have been rebellious against the Lord while I am still alive with you, how much more will you rebel after I die” (Deut. 31:26,27).** This “old covenant” engraved on tablets of stone was actually a covenant of death (2 Cor. 3:7). 3,000 died when it was given (Ex. 32:28). As you know, when the “new covenant” was given 3,000 were saved (Acts 2:41).

Actually, this last song of Moses presents a panoramic view of history. It reminds us to **“remember the days of old; consider the generations long past” (Deut. 32:7).** It points out that after the flood God divided all mankind and set up boundaries for the peoples. They knew that out of all these nations God selected Israel **“For the Lord’s portion is his people, Jacob his allotted inheritance” (Deut. 32:9).** Yet **“They made him jealous with their foreign gods and angered him with their detestable idols” (Deut. 32:16).** **“Their vine comes from the vine of Sodom and from the fields of Gomorrah. Their grapes are filled with poison, and their lusters with bitterness. Their wine is the venom of serpents, the deadly poison of cobras” (Deut. 32:32,33).**

Those to whom Moses taught this song had seen their fathers die in the wilderness. They were painfully aware that the wages of sin is death. They agreed with what Isaiah would later say: **“Woe to me . . . I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips” (Is. 6:5).** So the Song of Moses concludes with the blessed assurance that God is on His throne and there is no other god besides Him. God said: **“I lift my hand to heaven and declare: As surely as I live forever, when I sharpen my flashing sword and my hand grasps it in judgement, I will take vengeance on my adversaries and repay those who hate me” (Deut. 32:40,41).**

For forty years God had guided Israel with a pillar of a cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night (Ex. 40:36,37). Now, however, they would no longer be guided in this way. Now, they would have to meditate on the Law day and night to determine where God was leading them (Josh. 1:8). This song was a part of that learning process. As we have already said, it emphasizes both the sinfulness of man and the righteousness of God. When properly understood, it makes us confess with the Prodigal: **“Father, I have sinned against heaven and you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son, make me like one of your hired men” (Lk. 15:18,19).** Once this conviction is firmly in our mind, the song sets the stage for returning to God and doing whatever He commands. Moses composed at least two songs, both of them are worth singing, and both of them ultimately give glory to God!