

Message #45

Deuteronomy 34:1-12

One of the most amazing men in the Bible is Moses. His life's story is riveting. But as all men everywhere, eventually the life comes to an end. No matter how great the man of God, no matter how much God used His man, the life eventually comes to an end.

He had an incredible career in ministry and life. He wrote five books of the Bible - Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. Just to expound all verses in these books took 313 studies. He led a nation from captivity to freedom. He did things by the power of God that no other man has ever done.

In the famous faith hero chapter of Hebrews 11, there are more verses dedicated to Moses than any other man. But his ministry was over. And it is right here in Deuteronomy where it ends.

The story of Moses' ending is what we would expect it to be:

MOSES' CAREER AND MINISTRY ENDED WITH HIM OBEYING GOD AND SERVING GOD UNTIL THE VERY MOMENT HE DIED.

We come now to the final moments of Moses' life and his death. There are four concluding episodes concerning his life and death:

**CONCLUDING EPISODE #1 – Moses goes up the mountain to see the Promised Land.
34:1-4**

Now Moses did not get up one morning at age 120 and say I think I'll meander up to the top of this mountain. God had told him to go up on that mountain to see the Promised Land and to die (Deut. 32:49-50). So the reason Moses is going up this mountain is he is obeying God. That was the habit of his life. His habit was to obey the word of God. His habit was to obey God no matter what God told him to do.

Moses began his public ministry on a mountain, Mt. Sinai, and he will end his public ministry on another mountain, Mt. Nebo. Mt. Nebo ascends to an elevation of well over 2,600 feet. This is no small climb for a man 120 years old. In fact, this is no small climb for any one of any age. But it shows you that Moses still had enough physical strength and stamina to make the climb.

This reminds me of a story I read about a couple in their 90's who decided to get married. They were out for a drive one day and the future husband drove to a pharmacy and they went in and asked to speak to a pharmacist. The man said, "We are about to get married and wonder if you would be willing to answer some questions." The pharmacist said, "Sure." The man said, "Do you sell heart medication?" and the pharmacist said, "Certainly we do." "Do you sell blood pressure medicine?" the pharmacist answered, "Certainly." "Do you sell medicine for rheumatism?" and the pharmacist said, "Yes." "Do you sell medicine for memory issues, cholesterol issues and sugar issues?" "Yes."

“Do you sell vitamins, sleeping pills, antacids and Geritol?” The pharmacist said, “Certainly we do.” “Do you sell wheelchairs and walkers and canes?” and the pharmacist said, “Yes, we have all sizes and shapes and speeds.” The man said to the pharmacist, “Good, we would like to register for our wedding gifts here, please.”

Moses was 120 and he still was in shape to climb to the top of this mountain.

Mt. Nebo is part of a mountain range that is located east of the Dead Sea and the Jordan River. Now “Pisgah” was apparently the NW part of the mountain range and many think it is the part that slopes to the west that would make it an awesome place for a view. This spot is located about 15-16 miles west of Jericho.

Actually from this spot one can see the Jerusalem area, which is about 24 miles away and also Bethlehem, which is about 30 miles away. In the far horizon one is able to see the Mediterranean. So from this vantage point, Moses would not only have a view of the Promised Land, but also the key spots that would be in the Promised Land.

While Moses is up on that mountain, the LORD Himself pointed out things to him and showed him things in the distance. He apparently pointed out where the tribes would be located as far as the Mediterranean Sea. God gives Moses a panoramic view in a counter-clockwise direction from north to west.

As Moses looked to the north he would see the land from Gilead to Dan. As he looked to the northwest he would see all the land of Naphtali, the territory of Ephraim and Manasseh. As he looked to the west he would see all the land of Judah to the Mediterranean Sea. As he looked to the south he would see the Negev and the Valley of Jericho as far as Zoar.

We want to make a critical theological point about this. The O.T. law can only show you the righteousness of God at a distance. It cannot give you the righteousness of God. The O.T. law can point out all the areas of failure where we have lived in our lives, but it cannot save us. Only Jesus Christ can save us. After Moses saw all of this, God spoke to Moses in **verse 4** and revealed messages:

Message #1 - This is the land that I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. **34:4a**

Now let’s think through the time frame of this. In our study of the history and importance of Israel, we established some key dates of various things.

- 1) We date Abraham somewhere around 2100 BC.
- 2) We date Isaac somewhere around 2065 BC.
- 3) We date Jacob somewhere around 2005 BC.
- 4) We date Moses’ birth somewhere near 1524 BC.
- 5) We date Moses’ death somewhere near 1404 BC (1524-120 = 1404).

So what this means is this. Since God made this initial promise of land to Abraham about 2100 BC until this moment, nearly 700 years have transpired. During that time, God has not forgot about one inch of that Promised Land and in Moses' final moments of life, He is telling him that he is looking at the very land that He promised to those patriarchs. Even though Israel does not have this land right now, God has not forgotten about one inch of it.

Message #2 - This is the land that I will give to your descendants. **34:4b**

Now notice the statement, God says, "I will give it to your descendants." He does not say I might give it or I am considering doing this; He says, "I will give it to your descendants."

Here is what we know about God, Israel and land. **Just because there is a multiple year gap between the land promise and the fulfillment of the land promise, does not mean it will not be fulfilled.**

This is why we know that God will one day give the physical descendants of Moses every inch of this land. Time from our perspective and time from the Eternal God's perspective are two different things.

In 1406 BC, Joshua did lead Israel across the Jordan into the Promised Land, but she has never had the totality of it even to this day. The only time in Israel's history where she had the most land was during the days of David and Solomon. But she has never had the totality of the land promised to her. But one day she will.

Message #3 - This is the land I have let you see. **34:4c**

God promised Moses that He would let him go up on the mountain to see the land (Num. 27:12). This was a fulfillment of God's promise to Moses. God fulfills His word literally. It is a tremendous blessing of God when He lets His people see things about the future.

Message #4 - This is the land that you will not enter. **34:4d**

We know from Numbers 20:12 and Numbers 27:14 that the reason God would not let Moses enter the land was because he struck the rock twice at Meribah rather than speaking to the rock (Num. 20:8,11).

It is significant to see that God does not bring up the reason here as to why Moses would not enter the land. Moses knew the reason (Deut. 32:48-52). Let's be very clear on this point - those who follow Moses will not ever enter heaven. Those who try to go to heaven by following the O.T. Mosaic law will never make it. Moses didn't make it and neither will any who follow him.

Moses is about to die and God does not bring up his failures in his final moments of life. In fact, as we shall see the final epitaph of Moses' life is positive.

CONCLUDING EPISODE #2 – Moses dies in the land of Moab. 34:5-8

Eugene Merrill, in his commentary, made an interesting observation when he said, “The account of Moses’ death and burial is both succinct and mysterious” (*Deuteronomy*, p. 453).

There are nine very specific facts brought out here:

Fact #1- Moses died in the presence of God. 34:4

The one Person you really want there when it comes time to die is God. It is nice if family happens to be there, but it is not the end of the world if they are not there. God is there. No believer ever dies alone. Whether we live or die, we are the Lords.

Fact #2 - Moses was the servant of the LORD. 34:5a

Moses had done some amazing things in life. He had performed amazing miracles. He was a God called leader. He was the ultimate prophet. But of all the accolades that were true about him, the greatest of all is he was a “servant of the LORD.” This is very high praise coming from God.

Fact #3 - Moses died in the land of Moab. 34:5b

The factual evidence is stressed that he did not die in the Promised Land, but in the land of Moab.

Fact #4 - Moses died according to the word of the LORD. 34:5c

Moses death was no accident. It was the moment God decided he would die. No person’s death is an accident. It is a moment determined by God. God’s sovereignty is involved in the death of every person. This is true concerning men, women and children.

Fact #5 - Moses was buried by God in an unmarked grave. 34:6

This is the only person we know of that was actually buried by God. This fact alone testifies of Moses’ greatness. We learn from Jude 9 that God had an archangel in this burial whose name was Michael. We also learn that Satan wanted the body of Moses, but was not permitted to get it. God is the only One who knows the burial spot of Moses’ body.

Perhaps the reason why God buried this body so no one could find it was because of the theology of this. If people knew where Moses was buried, they would most likely have moved his body into the Promised Land and reburied it. God is making sure that people realize Moses and the Law he wrote will not ever take anyone to the Promised Land or to heaven. That comes through Jesus Christ and the grace of God.

In fact, we learn from Matthew 17:3, Mark 9:4 and Luke 9:30 that Moses was present at the Transfiguration of Jesus Christ. This clearly proves that only Jesus Christ could take Moses into the Promised Land. Israel needs to know this and so does every sinner need to know this. Following Moses cannot take one into the Promised Land or Heaven. Only Jesus Christ can get you there.

Fact #6 - Moses was 120 years old when he died. **34:7a**

Moses' life may be broken down into three 40 year segments:

- 1) 40 years were spent in a plush life in Egypt.
- 2) 40 years were spent in a humble life as a shepherd.
- 3) 40 years were spent as a great leader for God.

What we may see from this is that the greatest years of our lives may be our final years of life. We may learn more of God's word and do more for God in our final years rather than our earlier years.

As I was preparing this on May 11, 2022, there were five men living between the ages of 111-116. They were from France, China, Japan, Malaysia, and Venezuela.

There were eight women living between the ages of 114-118. They were from United States, Columbia, Japan (two women), Argentina, Spain, Poland and France.

So even to this day there are those who live to be at this age. But the next two facts are very rare.

Fact #7 - Moses died with good eyesight. **34:7b**

Certainly by virtue of the fact that he could look and see all of the Promised Land indicates he still had good eyesight. Typically as we age, we lose eyesight. Moses still had his and was not wearing glasses. This was a blessing of God.

Fact #8 - Moses died with good vigor. **34:7c**

So the reason he is not going into the Promised Land is not because he lacks strength and vigor. He could have crossed that Jordan as well as any of them.

Fact #9 - Israel mourned for Moses for 30 days. **34:8**

We have various national days of mourning. Typically, for example, if a President dies, we have a day of mourning. When Moses died, there was a 30 day time of mourning. They had done the same for Aaron (Num. 20:29), Moses' brother, and now they were doing the same for Moses.

You don't replace a man like Moses. There will never be another. You just go on without him.

CONCLUDING EPISODE #3 – Joshua succeeds Moses. 34:9

Joshua had been Moses' understudy for many years. He first showed up with Moses back in Exodus 17:8-16 in a victory as commander of Israel in their victory over the Amalekites.

When Moses went up on the mountain to get the law tablets from God, he took Joshua part way up with him (Ex. 24:12-13). We often find Joshua at Moses' side (Ex. 32:17; 33:11). Now that Moses was gone, Joshua was given the responsibility to lead Israel.

According to **verse 9**, he was filled with the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him and the sons of Israel listened to him and did as the LORD commanded Moses.

Having the Spirit of wisdom meant one was equipped for the assignment to lead. Such was the case with Joshua.

CONCLUDING EPISODE #4 – Moses is exalted. 34:10-12

The final words pertaining to Moses are moving and monumental:

Final Word #1 - There has never been another prophet in Israel equivalent to Moses. **34:10a**

The only prophet greater than Moses was the God/Son/Savior, Jesus Christ (Hebrews 3:1-6).

Final Word #2 - There has never been another prophet in Israel with whom God spoke face-to-face. **34:10b**

Literally we see in Exodus 33:11 that in the tent, God spoke with Moses face-to-face. Moses had unique communication with God. He had unique, special conversations with God.

Final Word #3 - There has never been another prophet in Israel who performed the signs and wonders that Moses performed. **34:11**

No other prophet has ever done the things Moses did to Pharaoh and the Egyptians. Moses had a power and authority no one else has ever had or will ever have.

Final Word #4 - There has never been another prophet in Israel who did the things Moses did in the sight of all Israel. **34:12**

There has only been one other Person who came to this earth who was greater than Moses and that one Person is Jesus Christ.

What a privilege it has been to go through this book of Deuteronomy. We thank God for this book. We thank you for taking time to journey through it. Very few in Israel took this book seriously and God will always bless those who do.