

Deuteronomy Chapter 34

Verses 1-12

Moses is permitted to “see” the land, but not to enter it.

God was fulfilling His promises to Abraham from (Gen. 12:1-3; see also 3:27; 4:21-22; 32:52).

Moses was buried in the vicinity of “Beth-peor”, which was about 10 miles east of the Jordan at its mouth (3:29; 4:46).

Again reference is made to Moses as “the servant of the LORD”, like Paul in (Rom. 1:1), and so on.

“Joshua” was then filled with the “spirit of wisdom” to carry on Moses’ task as the leader under God in Israel.

This concluding chapter was obviously written by someone other than Moses (probably the writer of Joshua), to bridge out of Deuteronomy into Joshua.

Verses 1-4

“The LORD showed him”:

From the top of the mountain, Moses was allowed to see the panorama of the Land the LORD had promised to give (the Land of Canaan), to the patriarchs and their seed in (Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 15:18-21; 26:4; 28:13-14).

Moses seemed unwilling to leave his work; but that being finished, he manifested no unwillingness to die.

God had declared that he should not enter Canaan.

But the LORD also promised that Moses should have a view of it, and showed him all that good land.

Such a sight believers now have, through grace, of the bliss and glory of their future state.

Sometimes God reserves the brightest discoveries of his grace to his people to support their dying moments.

Those may leave this world with cheerfulness, who die in the faith of Christ, and in the hope of heaven.

Deuteronomy 34:1 "And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that [is] over against Jericho. And the LORD showed him all the land of Gilead, unto Dan,"

“Pisgah”:

The range or ridge of which Mt. Nebo was the highest point.

God had told Moses to go up to the top of this mountain, so he could see that God had truly brought them to the land of promise.

This is God's way of telling Moses, well done.

He has led these people 40 years, and now his work is over.

It was a super-natural view of the entire land.

He opens the window at one end, and Moses turns his head, and then God reveals to him each tribe's land.

Deuteronomy 34:2 "And all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim, and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, unto the utmost sea,"

Which lay in the northern part of the land, and where was Galilee of the Gentiles.

And so he had a sight of all that country most frequented by the Messiah when He comes (see Matt. 4:13).

"And the land of Ephraim, and Manasseh":

Which lay in the midland part of the country.

And all the land of Judah; which lay to the south.

"Unto the utmost sea":

The Mediterranean sea, which was the western boundary of the land, called the "hinder sea" (Zech. 14:8).

And might as well be so rendered here, for the same word is used.

Jarchi would have it read, not the "hinder sea", but the "latter day".

For, he says, the LORD showed to Moses all that should happen to Israel until the resurrection of the dead.

And so, the Targum of Jonathan paraphrases the above passages, and observes that the LORD showed Moses the mighty deeds of Jephthah of Gilead, and the victories of Samson, who was of the tribe of Dan.

The idolatries of that tribe, and Samson the savior that should spring from them.

Deborah and Barak, and the princes of the house of Naphtali.

Joshua the son of Nun, of the tribe of Ephraim, that should fight with and slay the kings of Canaan.

And Gideon the son of Joash, of the tribe of Manasseh, that should fight with Midian and Amalek.

And all the kings of Israel, and the kingdom of the house of Judah.

The king of the south, that should join the king of the north to destroy the inhabitants of the earth.

And even the destruction of the antichrist, and the war of Gog and Magog, and the great affliction Michael shall save from.

The utmost sea is the Mediterranean sea.

Notice again the two portions of land for Joseph's son's Ephraim's and Manasseh's tribes.

Deuteronomy 34:3 "And the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, unto Zoar."

The southern part of the land, even all of it.

And having shown him that, he is directed eastward to take a view of;

"The plain of the valley of Jericho":

Which lay before him, a delightful plain (see Joshua 5:10).

"The city of palm trees, unto Zoar":

So Jericho was called, because of the multitude of palm trees which grew there.

And which Josephus not only testifies, who speaks of it as a plain planted with palm trees.

And from whence balsam comes.

But several Heathen writers: Pliny says Jericho was set with palm trees.

Diodorus Siculus speaks of the country about Jericho as abounding with palm trees.

And in a certain valley, meaning the vale or plains of Jericho, is produced that which is called balsam.

So, Strabo says, Jericho is a plain surrounded with mountains abounding with palm trees.

Where there is a plantation of palm trees, with other fruit trees, the space of a hundred furlongs.

Jericho will be the first city they enter.

This valley extends from the Dead sea to Jericho.

The Jordan river flows through this.

Deuteronomy 34:4 "And the LORD said unto him, This [is] the land which I swear unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed: I have caused thee to see [it] with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither."

The Word of the LORD, as the Jerusalem Targum, having shown him all the land of Canaan.

"This is the land which I swear unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed":

To Abraham (Gen. 15:18); to Isaac (Gen. 26:3); to Jacob (Gen. 28:13).

"I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes":

Not only had indulged him with a general view of it, but had strengthened his eyesight, that he had a full, clear, and distinct sight of it.

"But thou shalt not go over thither":

Which he had said more than once before and abides by it.

And this because of the behavior of Moses at the waters of Meribah (Num. 20:12; see Deut. 3:25).

No human eye in the natural could see this far.

God has greatly increased his sight, so that Moses could see this land of promise.

We see the reminder that this is that land that was first promised to Abraham and his seed.

The three patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are mentioned here, because God specifically promised this land to their descendants.

Moses will not be allowed to go over, because of striking the Rock instead of speaking to it as God had commanded him.

Verses 5-8

Moses obeyed this command of God as willingly as any other, though it seemed harder.

In this he resembled our Lord Jesus Christ.

But he died in honor, in peace, and in the easiest manner.

The Savior died upon the disgraceful and torturing cross.

Moses died very easily; he died at the mouth of the LORD, according to the will of God.

The servants of the Lord, when they have done all their other work, must die at last, and be willing to go home, whenever their Master sends for them (Acts 21:13).

The place of his burial was not known.

If the soul be at rest with God, it is of little consequence where the body rests.

There was no decay in the strength of his body, nor in the vigor and activity of his mind.

His understanding was as clear, and his memory as strong as ever.

This was the reward of his services, the effect of his extraordinary meekness.

There was solemn mourning for him.

Yet how great our losses have been, we must not give ourselves up to sorrow.

If we hope to go to heaven rejoicing, why should we go to the grave mourning?

Deuteronomy 34:5 "So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD."

The report of Moses' death kept Moses from being magnified beyond what a man should be.

Meanwhile, the title "servant of the LORD" maintained the LORD's high esteem of Moses in the eyes of the people.

Moses may have begun tenuously, killing a man in Egypt, fleeing in fear, living 40 years in anonymity in the desert, and arguing with God about doing His will.

But he arrived at the end of his life in faithfulness, having accomplished what God gave him to do.

Moses died on the top of the mountain at the age of 120 years.

The LORD told him he would die here and he did.

Deuteronomy 34:6 "And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor: but no man knoweth of his sepulcher unto this day."

“He buried him”:

The context indicates that the LORD is the one who buried Moses, and man did not have a part in it.

Compare (Jude verse 9), which recount’s Michael’s and Satan’s dispute over Moses’ body.

At the time of his death, the natural processes of aging described in (Eccl. 12:1-7), had not taken their toll on Moses; he was still a strong, vital man.

These words are striking.

Moses did not die because he had “worn out”, he had been given strength and longevity by God so that he might lead the people into the land of Canaan despite his advanced age.

Yet as strong as he was at his death, Yahweh still restrained him for leading the people to the final destination (Num. 20:2-13).

It appears that God buried Moses.

There is no evidence of a burying place that men have found.

God possibly, hid his body and took Moses home with Him to heaven.

Some people believe that Moses did not go the way of the grave, but went directly to heaven, as did Elijah and Enoch.

The Scripture here says he was buried however.

We do not know for sure what happened, except what the Scriptures say.

The main reason God would not let them find the grave of Moses, was because they might begin to worship him.

Deuteronomy 34:7 "And Moses [was] a hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated."

“Not dim ... abated”:

Moses’ physical vision and physical health were not impaired.

It was not death by natural causes that kept Moses from leading Israel into the Promised Land; it was his unfaithfulness to the LORD at Meribah (see Num. 20:12).

Moses had lived in divine health.

His eyes were as good as they had been in his youth.

It seemed he was still strong enough to climb this tallest mountain to meet with God.

He still had his strength.

Deuteronomy 34:8 "And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days: so the days of weeping [and] mourning for Moses were ended."

“Thirty days”:

The mourning period for Moses conformed to that of Aaron (Num. 20:29).

This is the same amount of time the people mourned for Aaron. He had been their leader for forty years.

Verses 9-12

Moses brought Israel to the borders of Canaan, and then died and left them.

This signifies that the law made nothing perfect (Heb. 7:19).

It brings men into a wilderness of conviction, but not into the Canaan of rest and settled peace.

That honor was reserved for Joshua, our Lord Jesus, of whom Joshua was a type, (and the name is the same), to do that for us which the law could not do (Rom. 8:3).

Through him we enter into the spiritual rest of conscience, and eternal rest in heaven.

Moses was greater than any other prophet of the Old Testament.

But our Lord Jesus went beyond him, far more than the other prophets came short of him.

And see a strong resemblance between the redeemer of the children of Israel and the Redeemer of mankind.

Moses was sent by God, to deliver the Israelites from a cruel bondage.

He led them out, and conquered their enemies.

He became not only their deliverer, but their lawgiver.

Not only their lawgiver, but their judge.

And, finally, leads them to the border of the land of promise.

Our blessed Savior came to rescue us out of the slavery of the devil, and to restore us to liberty and happiness.

He came to confirm every moral precept of the first lawgiver; and to write them, not on tables of stone, but on fleshly tables of the heart.

He came to be our Judge also, inasmuch as he hath appointed a day when he will judge all the secrets of men.

And reward or punish accordingly.

This greatness of Christ above Moses, is a reason why Christians should be obedient and faithful to the holy religion by which they profess to be Christ's followers.

God, by his grace, make us all so!

Deuteronomy 34:9 "And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as the LORD commanded Moses."

“Spirit of wisdom ... laid his hands”:

Joshua received:

- (1) Confirmation of the military and administrative ability necessary to the task the LORD had given him, as well as;
- (2) The Spiritual wisdom to rely on and to be committed to the LORD through the laying on of Moses' hands.

The anointing of Moses had transferred to Joshua, when Moses laid his hands on him.

The anointing for the ministry is confirmed by the laying on of hands.

Moses had already informed the people, who the choice of the LORD was, and to follow him as their leader.

At the death of Moses, they accept Joshua to lead them.

Verses 10-12

Until Christ, no one ever lived who was greater than “Moses”.

The statement here is quite remarkable in the context of the entire Word of God: there was no one else “whom the LORD knew face to face”.

Deuteronomy 34:10 "And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face,"

“Not a prophet ... like unto Moses”:

Moses was the greatest of all the Old Testament prophets, one whom the LORD knew intimately.

Not until John the Baptist was there another prophet greater than Moses (see Matt. 11:11).

After John, the Prophet came of whom Moses wrote (compare John 1:21, 25; 6:14 with Deut. 18:15; Acts 3:22; 7:37).

Moses next appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration together with Elijah and Jesus Christ (Matt. 17:3; Mark 9:4; Luke 9:30-31).

Moses was a special prophet of God.

He met with God.

He was on the mountain two different times 40 days and nights with the presence of God.

He asked God to let him see Him, and God passed by and let him see His back side.

He was in the presence of the Light of the world, and when he came down the mountain, his head shone so brightly there had to be a veil over his head to keep from blinding the people.

He was allowed closer to the presence of God than any other living person.

Deuteronomy 34:11 "In all the signs and the wonders, which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land,"

The same Targums also paraphrase here, "which the Word of the LORD sent him to do".

For He it was that appeared to him in the burning bush, and sent him to Egypt to work miracles, which he did by him.

"In the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land":

To whom they were visible, and who were all affected by them more or less.

This respects chiefly the ten plagues inflicted on the Egyptians.

The Jews observe that the superior excellency of Moses to the rest of the prophets lay chiefly in his superior degree of prophecy rather than in miracles.

And not so much in the nature or the quality of the miracles.

The stopping of the sun by Joshua, and the raising of the dead to life by Elijah and Elisha, being greater than his.

But either in the duration of them, as the manna which continued near forty years.

Or especially in the quantity of them, he working more than all the rest put together.

The signs and wonders God did at the request of Moses far surpassed any other prophet.

Only the miracles of Jesus were greater.

God sent ten plagues on Egypt to convince Pharaoh to let the people go.

The Red sea parted at the prayer of Moses.

God had given him a staff to do mighty miracles with.

Over and over, God wrought mighty miracles through Moses.

Deuteronomy 34:12 "And in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses showed in the sight of all Israel."

In all done by his hand, which he stretched out over the sea and divided it.

To make a passage through it for the Israelites, and with his rod in his hands, smote the rocks, and waters gushed out for them.

"And in all the great terror which Moses showed in the sight of all Israel":

Meaning either the terror the Egyptians were struck with by him.

In the sight of all Israel, when he publicly and before them wrought the wonders he did in the land of Ham.

Which often threw them into a panic, especially the thunders and lightning, the three days of darkness, and the slaying of their firstborn (see Psalm 78:49).

Or the terror the Israelites were in at the giving and receiving of the law (Exodus 19:16).

God had placed in the hand of Moses, great power.

Moses was God's ambassador upon the earth.

In fact, Moses was a very meek man.

His greatness lay in his fellowship with God.

He went to God with everything.

The only time he ever disobeyed God was at Meribah.

The people had angered him, so that he acted in anger in striking the Rock.

God sent Moses to deliver Israel from one of the mightiest armies in the world.

God's power operating through Moses, made him one of the most powerful men who ever lived.

The lesson we need to take from this, is the fact that our ability to serve God is not in ourselves.

God working through us makes us mighty servants of God.

Philippians 4:13 "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Deuteronomy Chapter 34 Questions

1. Where did Moses go to see the Promised Land?
2. This is God's way of telling Moses _____.
3. Moses led them _____ years.
4. What is the utmost sea spoken of here?
5. Who were Joseph's two sons?
6. What will be the first city they enter?
7. How far does this valley extend?

8. What were the names of the three patriarchs?
9. What had God done to Moses, so he could see the Promised Land?
10. Why will Moses not be allowed to enter the Promised Land?
11. Where did Moses die?
12. How old was Moses, when he died?
13. Who buried Moses?
14. What is a possibility, that is not mentioned in the Bible, about Moses' death?
15. Why would God not let them find Moses' grave?
16. What was unusual about Moses at the time of his death?
17. How long did the children of Israel mourn Moses' death?
18. Who took over in Moses' place?
19. What does the Bible say, he was full of, that helped him minister?
20. How had he received this?
21. Did the people accept Joshua as their leader?
22. When were some special times that Moses met with God privately?
23. Only the miracles of _____ were greater than Moses'.
24. The Red sea parted at the prayer of _____.