

Sermon – 15/10/2006 pm

God's Greatest Servant

Study Text: Deuteronomy 34

We have come to the end of this book of Deuteronomy, the book of the Law of God. This was the book of life for the people of God as they entered the land that the Lord was giving them. We have also come to the end of the life of God's greatest servant, Moses. This man dominated the history of God's people for over eighty years. This man dominates four whole books of the Bible, and is mentioned in many others. His legacy has not been forgotten to this day.

Moses was a prophet like no other man, a man whom the Lord knew face to face. He performed many signs and wonders before the people. He was leader like no other, even though the Lord appointed Joshua to succeed him and lead the people into Canaan. He died and was buried in an unmarked and unknown grave.

We will include the passage Deuteronomy 32:48-52 in this study. Some think that the last two chapters were written after Moses' death, but a man like Moses could well have written about his own death in this way. The Lord clearly told him how he would die and he believed the word of the Lord. If the Lord said this will happen, then Moses believed it was done.

See the Land

Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mt Nebo, to the top of Pisgah which is across from Jericho. And the Lord showed him all the land... (34:1). Moses had renewed the covenant with Israel, and blessed them. He would not be crossing the Jordan with them, but the Lord took him up on a high mountain to see the land that he was giving to his people as their possession.

When God promised this land to Abraham he told him to look in all directions and see the land he was giving his descendants. He also told Abraham to walk through the length and breadth of the land (Genesis 13:14-17). Now, 700 years later, his descendants were about to enter into their inheritance – except for Moses.

Moses was allowed to see the land where the people would settle and live in peace and prosperity. He saw the land from Dan in the north to Zoar in the south and the Mediterranean in the west. The sea is not naturally visible from Mt Nebo but somehow the Lord showed Moses the land. 'A viewing of the land like this may have been part of a known legal process which was normal when acquiring a possession'.

The Lord was gracious to Moses in showing him the land even though he would not enter at this time. Moses did enter the land after his death. He appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration talking with Jesus, while three disciples of Jesus watched in wonder.

If you received a house or land as an inheritance you would soon be off to look the place over would you not. You would be so excited. What about your heavenly inheritance? How eagerly do you look to your inheritance in Christ Jesus? Abraham did. Moses did. Paul did.

John did. *After these things I looked and behold a door standing open in heaven* (Revelation 4:1). Do you see that door and what lies beyond?

See the Man

Moses had been a faithful servant of the Lord. He was now 120 years old but could still see clearly and was strong enough to lead the people as he had done for the past 80 years. God spoke to Moses and empowered him to do mighty signs and wonders before Pharaoh in Egypt. He led the people out of bondage, the second greatest story of redemption in history. On the mount of Transfiguration he spoke with Jesus about the greatest story of redemption, that of Jesus Christ dying to save you and me.

The Lord spoke to Moses face to face as a man speaks to his friend (Exodus 33:11). He did not speak to him in dreams and visions as he did to the other prophets (Numbers 12:6-7). The Lord would speak to Joshua through the priests but to Moses he spoke face to face (Numbers 27:21).

Moses died in the land of Moab and *He* (i.e. the Lord) *buried him in a valley in Moab*. It is specifically stated that *no one knows his grave to this day* (34:6). Yet still you can read in a commentary these words – ‘the context suggests it was Yahweh who buried Moses, although no doubt he had his agents’. The point is that no one knows where Moses was buried.

Why was this you might ask? ‘Probably this was a way of preventing the Israelites from carrying his bones to a new burial place in Canaan’. They were carrying the bones of Joseph, but it would not be so for Moses. Abraham and Isaac were already buried in Canaan at the cave of Machpelah, but it would not be so for Moses.

David was also buried in Canaan and *his tomb is with us to this day* said Peter at Pentecost (Acts 2:29). Paul made note of the same fact (Acts 13:36). Peter and Paul were declaring that Jesus was greater than David because his flesh did not see corruption or decay. Jesus was raised from the dead by the power of God.

Now the bones of Moses are still on the earth – although not in Canaan. But no one can say ‘here is the tomb of Moses’. In this way and many others Moses points forward to, or prefigures, Christ. No other man in history comes as close to being like Christ as Moses. Moses was prophet priest and king for 80 years. Jesus is Prophet, Priest and King eternally, for he died but rose again.

The Jews always held Moses in great awe. In fact they condemned Jesus for not upholding the law Moses gave. Jesus did uphold the law and told the Jews that if they believed Moses they would believe him, for *he wrote about me* (John 5:46). While recognising the greatness of Moses as a faithful servant in God’s house, the writer to the Hebrews points out that Jesus is greater because he is the builder and owner of the house (Hebrews 3).

Moses acknowledged that he was not permitted to enter the land because of sin (3:26, 32:51). He did not hallow the Lord before the people at the Rock of Meribah Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin. Great and faithful as Moses was as God’s servant, he was not without sin. He was not worthy of worship. Even if the Jews, or the Church of Rome, did want to venerate the remains of Moses they would not be able to find them, according to this Scripture.

See the Lord

Moses saw the Promised Land but died before entering. He saw from a distance the inheritance God promised his people. Since leaving Egypt, Moses *looked to his reward...and endured as seeing him who is invisible* (Hebrews 11:26, 27). He wanted to enter but did not fear when the Lord told him he would die in Moab. He trusted the Lord no matter what. Moses knew that his reward was not in Canaan. Like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, other men of great faith, Moses looked to the heavenly country, the home of righteousness.

What sort of inheritance are you looking forward to? Maybe you have received your inheritance and are satisfied. To what or to whom do you look for a future? Moses saw the land, he saw the earthly inheritance of the people of God, but he saw beyond this to the heavenly reward in Christ Jesus. He did not fear that death would deprive him of his inheritance. He looked to his eternal inheritance that no one could take from him, not even death.

You may not enter your inheritance before you die, but you likewise can be assured that you have a wonderful inheritance in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is an inheritance imperishable and undefiled that does not fade away, kept in heaven for you (I Peter 1:4). It is yours by faith in Jesus Christ; it is yours by the grace of God. One day you will enter just like Moses and you will see Jesus in all his glory just like Moses. Will you trust in the Lord and his word?

Set your eyes and your heart upon things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. *For you died and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears you also will appear with him in glory* (Colossians 3:2-4).

This is what Moses believed and this is what he found to be true. He died and he did appear with Christ in glory. The disciples only saw them for a moment, but this was a glimpse into heaven itself. When Jesus appears again we will be changed. *We shall be like him for we shall see him as he is* (I John 3:2).

Is this the glorious hope you have as a child of God? Do you believe that one day you will join Moses and Elijah, with a glorified body, in the glorious presence of Jesus Christ? This is what the Lord tells us in his word. This is what he shows us in the life of his faithful servant Moses.

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