

AM Deuteronomy 34 Death and Glory

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[0 : 00] Two fairly short readings. The first one is Deuteronomy, chapter 34. I've been speaking on texts from Deuteronomy for quite a long time now, working our way through, and this of course is the end of that series.

It's headed up the death of Moses. Sounds a very solemn theme, but there are some wonderful things for us in this chapter.

Deuteronomy 34. Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho.

And the Lord showed him all the land, Gilead as far as Dan, all Naphtali, the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Western Sea, the Negev and the plain, that is the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, as far as Zohar.

And the Lord said to him, This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to your offspring.

[1 : 25] I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not go over there. So Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord.

And he buried him in the valley, in the land of Moab, opposite Beth Peor. But no one knows the place of his burial to this day. Moses was 120 years old when he died.

His eye was undimmed, and his vigour unabated. And the people of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab for thirty days.

Then the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended. And Joshua, the son of Nun, was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him.

So the people of Israel obeyed him, and did as the Lord had commanded Moses. And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face.

[2 : 40] None like him for all the signs and the wonders that the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land.

And for all the mighty power, and all the great deeds of terror, that Moses did in the sight of all Israel.

And we turn over for our second reading to the New Testament, to 2 Timothy, chapter 4. 2 Timothy 4 and the first eight verses.

I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom, preach the word.

Be ready in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth, and wander off into myths.

[4 : 05] As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come.

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day.

And not only to me, but also to all who have loved his appearing. Let's bow together in prayer.

Now to the word of God and Deuteronomy, chapter 34. Our last study in this series on Deuteronomy.

I've remarked from this pulpit before how many great events in the Bible took place on mountains. Noah's ark came to rest on Mount Ararat.

[5 : 35] Abraham went up Mount Moriah to offer up Isaac. Moses met with God in the burning bush on Mount Horeb, or Sinai.

Later on the same mountain, the Ten Commandments were given. Jerusalem was built on Mount Zion. Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel.

In the New Testament, Jesus was tempted on the mountaintop, where the devil showed him all the kingdoms of this world.

It's almost like a parody of this passage here in Deuteronomy 34, isn't it? Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount.

He prayed on a mountain. He was transfigured on a mountain. He ascended to heaven on the Mount of Olives.

[6 : 38] Right at the end of the Bible, Revelation 21, John is carried away in the Spirit up onto a high mountain.

And he sees the holy Jerusalem coming down from God. Well, here we have the death of Moses on a mountain.

Mount Nebo. Now Moses was unique. It says here in verse 10, There has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses.

Or at least there hadn't up to the time that Deuteronomy was written. There has now. Because the Lord Jesus Christ has come. And Jesus is greater than Moses.

But apart from Jesus, there was no one like him. Moses was unique. And his death is unique.

[7 : 47] But even so, there are some very precious lessons for us to learn from this chapter. I want us to consider from verses 1 to 8, The mountaintop view, A magnificent death, A mysterious burial, And the mourning for Moses.

And then from verses 9 to 12, Provision for the future, And a look back at the past. And then we're going to leap briefly at the end, To the New Testament.

To the hope that we have beyond death. Hence my title, Death and Glory.

So first, the mountaintop view. In verses 1 to 4, Let me just read that again. Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab, To Mount Nebo, To the top of Pisgah, Which is opposite Jericho.

And the Lord showed him all the land. Gilead, as far as Dan, All Naphtali, The land of Ephraim and Manasseh, All the land of Judah, As far as the western sea, The Negev and the plain, That is the valley of Jericho, The city of palm trees, As far as Zoar.

[9 : 15] In other words, The promised land. So far so good. But then there's a sting in the tail.

In verse 4, The Lord said to him, This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, To Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to your offspring. I have let you see it with your eyes, But you shall not go over there.

I have actually been to Mount Nebo, And it is a magnificent view.

A member of our congregation years ago, Had a son in Jordan, Working with the United Nations, And he invited me to stay with him for a few weeks.

And one evening, He asked if I would like to go with him to Mount Nebo. Yes, please. It seemed very strange, Driving along and seeing signs on the motorway, Mount Nebo.

[10 : 25] But there it was, The mountain where Moses died. There's a cross at the top, With a serpent wrapped around it. And there's a monastery.

We also met two men, Who were planning to build a restaurant there. It was a bit different in Moses' day. Rather more wild. It is a magnificent view, Though the evening that I was there, Around sunset, It was rather misty, And I couldn't see all that much.

But for Moses, This was no ordinary view. This was the promised land. This was what he had lived for, For the past 40 years.

God had said to him, Back in Exodus 3, That he would lead them to a land, Flowing with milk and honey. And here it was. And he, Was not going there.

We're told why, In Deuteronomy 32, It was, Because you broke faith with me, In the midst of the people of Israel, At the waters of Meribah Kadesh, In the wilderness of Zin, And because you did not treat me as holy, In the midst of the people of Israel.

[11 : 57] The story is told, In Numbers 20, How the people had demanded water, And Moses had struck the rock, In anger, Rather than speaking to it, As God had commanded him.

And for that one, Momentary lapse, Moses, Misses out, Of actually going, Into the land.

It's a reminder to us, That much will be required, From those to whom, Much is given. It's a reminder too, That under the law of God, To break one command, Is to break it all. And maybe it was fitting, That Moses didn't, Actually go into the land, In case we should think, That salvation is through the law.

Was Moses disappointed? Well, I'm sure he was. And yet, Simply to see it, Was wonderful.

[13:11] Here was the proof, That God is faithful. He had kept his covenant, He had brought his people, To the promised land.

God, Always, Always, Always, Keeps his word. Always has, And always will. Is there any parallel, To this in our lives?

Well, Yes. Because God, Will keep his word, To us also. He will keep his promise, To bring us, To heaven.

To our promised land. And as a pledge of that, He's given us, As it were, Mountaintop glimpses, Of heaven, In his word.

Think of Revelation 7, For example, That glorious vision there, Of the great multitude, Around the throne, Praising God, With the promise, Given to them, And to us, They shall hunger no more, Nor thirst anymore, The sun shall not strike them, Nor any scorching heat, For the lamb, Who is in the midst of the throne, Will be their shepherd, And will guide them, To springs of living water, And God will wipe away, Every tear from their eyes, What is that, But a mountaintop vision, Of the heaven, That is awaiting us, And sometimes, As the Lord's people, Approach death, That vision, Of Emmanuel's land, Becomes very real, And very personal, Think of Stephen,

[15:09] As they were about to stone him, In Acts 7, Behold, I see heaven opened, And the Son of Man, Standing at the right hand, Of God, He's there, Isn't he?

He's on the mountaintop, He's almost in heaven, Old divines, Used to talk about, Being on Pisgah's mount, Did you notice, Pisgah was an alternative name, For Mount Nebo, Being on Pisgah's mount, With heaven in sight, With this difference, That we are going there, Now Moses too, Of course, Had heaven, To look forward to, Although it's not stated here, There can be no doubt, He was going to heaven, He might miss out on Canaan, But he was not, Going to miss out on heaven, But right now, He must die, Right there, On that mountain,

So let's come now, Secondly, To a magnificent death, In verse 5, So Moses, The servant of the Lord, Died there, In the land of Moab, According to, The word of the Lord, Why do I call this, A magnificent death, Well, Because of the obedience, Involved, God had, Commanded, Moses, To go up in, To the mountain, And die, Back in chapter 32, And here he is, Doing exactly that, Doesn't plead with God, For more years, Doesn't argue, With God's decision, That he's not going, Into Canaan, Doesn't even complain, About having to, Climb yet another mountain, You can imagine him saying, Can't you, What?

At my age, I'm 120, Can't I just die in comfort, Here in the plain, But no, He accepts, The will of the Lord, We're reminded of Jesus, Aren't we?

Who we're told, Was obedient, To death, Even the death, Of the cross, What an extraordinary, Climb that must have been, I hesitate to climb, A mountain at the age of 71, He was 120, He could do it, Because he was still healthy, His eye was undimmed, And his vigour, Unabated, He still had the strength, And he still had the sight, To find his way up that path, And to see the view, And the reason why, He was still healthy, Was not because, He went to the gym every day, Or, At healthy food, Though I'm sure, Manna was healthy, It was because, God, Had preserved him, Moses was unusual, In this, He himself says, In Psalm 90, The years of our life, Are 70 years, If by reason of strength, There are 80, Yet is there strength, Labor, And sorrow,

[18:34] And some of us feel that, Moses was an exception, God had preserved him, To this extraordinary age, And the reason, He had preserved him, Was because, He had work for him to do, Leading Israel, To Canaan, The promise was fulfilled in him, As your days, So shall your strength be, We can be sure, That God will give us, Strength, For whatever tasks, He has in store for us, But, Now he must die, We all must, Even Moses, It was the end of an era, He was the oldest man, In Israel, The Israelites, Couldn't remember, Another leader, But he must die, God had, Decreed it, I wonder if we will face death,

With the same, Courage, And with the same, Submission, As Moses, There follows, A mysterious, Burial, In verse 6, God buried him, In the valley, In the land of Moab, Opposite Beth Peor, But no one knows, The place, Of his burial, To this day, This is truly unique, God himself, Burying a man, That shows, How much value, God placed upon him, The secrecy, The secrecy, Perhaps, Was so,

That people, Wouldn't make, Pilgrimages there, And idolize, Moses, Though, The shrine, Was still built, Built there, Years later, In the supposed, Place, Where, Moses, Might have been buried, The, Maqam, Al-Nabi Musa, Can still go there,

To this day, There is a strange story, In the book of Jude, About the devil, Contending with the archangel, Michael, Over the body of Moses, It's thought to come from, The apocryphal book, The Assumption of Moses, Michael, Of course, One, That isn't mentioned here, Simply, This, Wonderful burial, And this burial, Reminds us, Doesn't it, Of the importance, Of an honorable, Burial, God himself, Setting us an example, I know, That cremation, Is very, Popular nowadays, I'm not going, To enter into that, Debate, God can, Of course, Raise a body, Out of the ashes, But in the Bible, The saints were, Always buried, With honor, And no one received,

A more honorable burial, Than Moses, We now have a period, Of mourning for Moses, In verse 8, The people of Israel, Wept for Moses, In the plains of Moab, For 30 days, Then the days of weeping, And mourning for Moses, Were ended, It's right and proper, That we mourn, Mourn, The loss of those, Whom we have loved, Even Jesus wept, At the tomb of Lazarus, Here the whole nation, Had lost, A beloved father, When our late queen died, Ten days of mourning, Were announced, With flags at half mast, Here, All Israel, Israel, Wept, For 30 days, And then it ended, The sorrow remains,

In our hearts, Of course it does, But life must go on, Which brings us to verse 9, Where we have, A provision for the future, Joshua, Joshua the son of Nun, Was full of the spirit of wisdom, For Moses had laid hands on him, So the people of Israel, Obeyed him, As did, As the Lord, Had commanded Moses, Moses had in fact, Chosen Joshua, As his successor, Right back at the beginning, Of the wilderness journey, Right back in Exodus 17, He was chosen as Moses' assistant, He'd formally appointed him, As the new leader, In Deuteronomy 31, How important it is, To make provision, For the future, Whether it's for the family, Or for the church, Or for the nation, Israel wasn't left, [23 : 44] To drift along, Without a leader, No group of people, Can survive for long, Drifting along like that, We need, Leadership, That's one reason, Why we should be praying, Earnestly, For a new minister here, They weren't left, To fight over, Who was going to be, The new leader, They didn't have to have, Some complicated, Voting procedure, With all kinds of, Hustings, And arguments, And accusations, Of lying, And so on, Wasn't necessary here, Because God, Had appointed that new leader, If only, Every transition, Of leadership, Could be as smooth, As this, The chapter, Ends with a glance, Back to the past, And an appraisal, Of Moses, Verse 10, There has not arisen, A prophet in Israel,

Like Moses, Whom the Lord knew, Face to face, None like him, For all the signs, And wonders, That the Lord sent him, To do in the land of Egypt, To Pharaoh, And to all his servants, And to his land, And for all the mighty power, And all the great deeds, Of terror, That Moses did, In the sight, Of Israel, This effectively, Is Moses' epitaph, There may be no tombstone, But the spirit, Has caused it, To be written for us, Here in scripture, Moses is remembered, As the great prophet, Who spoke with God, Face to face, And as the great deliverer, Who led them out of Egypt, To Canaan, With signs, And wonders, And mighty power, And all this he did faithfully, As the servant of God, He is called that, In verse 5, All that he did, Was at the command of God, And in the power of God, And for the glory of God, Moses was faithful,

In all God's house, I wonder what kind of epitaph, You and I will have, I sometimes think, I would like to write, My own epitaph beforehand, But we're not allowed, To do that are we, Someone else, Will make their assessment, Of us, We won't have an epitaph, Quite like Moses, But hopefully, We will be remembered, As servants of God, Who have trusted in God, And have done some good, In our lives, Great though Moses was, However, There is someone greater, Moses was a great prophet, Who spoke the word of God, To Israel, Our Lord Jesus Christ, Was a greater prophet, He is, The word of God, Moses spoke with God,

Face to face, On Mount Sinai, Our Lord Jesus Christ, Was constantly, In communion, With his heavenly father, Moses worked, Signs, And wonders, Both at Egypt, And in the wilderness, In the power of God, Christ worked, Many more miracles, In his own power, Some of those miracles, Echoed Moses, The feeding of the five thousand, Echoes the manna, In the wilderness, Others went, Far beyond Moses, Healing the sick, Raising the dead, Walking on water, These all proclaim, One greater than Moses, Is here, Moses delivered them, Out of Egypt, With signs of judgment, Christ, Delivers us from sin, Bearing the judgment himself, On the cross,

