

Encounters with God - Mount Nebo

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[0 : 00] Let's turn to the reading that we, in Deuteronomy, the last chapter of Deuteronomy 34. And reading from the beginning 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.

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. 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 land, in the valley, in the land of Moab, opposite Beth Peor. But no one knows the place of his burial to this day.

[1 : 17] In verse 10, of course, reflects on the life of Moses. There has not risen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face.

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

We've been looking over the course of this weekend at Moses' encounters with God. There are many of these and many more that we could have chosen had our time been longer.

We could have gone all the way back to the beginning, to the burning bush, to where Moses was called by God out of the flames of the burning bush and sent back to Egypt to bring out the people of Israel.

We could have looked at, and we did look for a short time, yesterday to the way in which Moses met with God on the top of Mount Sinai.

[2 : 23] And when he received the Ten Commandments, God spoke to him again face to face. And he was given the law, which he was to take back to the people of Israel.

We remember this morning how Moses built an actual place that became the meeting place between him and God on a regular basis.

And what we saw in all these things was that his privilege was no greater than ours in the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus has made that possible in us. He has given us access into this grace in which we stand.

So we don't need to say, I wish I was Moses. I don't wish I was Moses at all. I think Moses had horrendous responsibilities. And he was stretched to the limit of his abilities on many occasions.

But he had this great privilege that belongs to those who belong to Jesus Christ. That he knew God face to face. That he was connected with God intimately.

- [3 : 23] And that he listened to the voice of God. And he was then required to share that with Israel. But now we're coming to the very last encounter that Moses had with God.
- Which was the moment that he died. God had spoke to him in chapter 33. He spoke to him before that. And he had warned him. He told him beforehand. That because of a particular sin that he had committed.
- That he would not be allowed to lead the people across the Jordan River into the promised land. And so he was to die on the east side of the Jordan. Before the Israelites crossed into the promised land.
- But he was also promised that he was given to see the land before the Israelites. Before he died and before the Israelites. And I want to suggest to you tonight that this was Moses' final, ultimate, permanent, eternal encounter with God.
- Because the certainty that any believer has is that death is the doorway to the presence of God as never before.
- [4 : 33] Now that's not to say we don't enjoy God's presence as his nearness in this world. We do. Right now. We are in the presence of God. And that's something we ought to remind ourselves when we come together.
- It's something we remind ourselves continuously. That we are never other than in the presence of God. And yet there is a promise given to all of God's people.
- That when they die. That they don't die. That death for them is a doorway. It's a threshold.
- Death for them is not an experience at all. It is the gateway from this world into the dimension that Jesus and God, the Father, has prepared for his people.
- And that's what it was for Moses. And so whilst we're tempted to feel a certain degree of sadness. Remember that Moses had to die sometime.
- [5 : 39] And that for him his death was a victory. As it is for every Christian. Every person that lives in the Lord Jesus Christ dies in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- And for that person it is his ultimate victory. It's the moment that he meets with Jesus. And that he sees him face to face. And he goes forever to be with the Lord.
- So I want us to look just very briefly at some of the features of Moses' death. And I want us to look at it not as an ultimate failure.
- It was a failure in a way. We're going to see that in a few moments time. But ultimately God is able to transform our failures into his victory. And that's something he's able to do for all of his people.
- The first thing that Moses was commanded to do then as it comes to the end of his life. Was he was to climb the mountain and see the land that God had promised to them.
- [6 : 46] Now that has loaded with significance. First of all because it gave him the opportunity to see once and for all. That the children of Israel were on the threshold of all the promises that God had promised.
- Not just to him at the beginning of his ministry. But way back to Abraham and to Isaac and to Jacob. When God called Abraham and took him out of Ur of the Chaldees.
- And brought him into the land of Canaan. He promised that one day his descendants would possess the land of Canaan. Now there were times in the Israelite history when that didn't appear to be very likely.
- Particularly when they were ensconced in Egypt. And when they were held as slaves. It looked as if there was no way in which they would ever be delivered. But they were delivered miraculously by God through Moses.
- And here is the point at which God is about to finally fulfill his promise. That they would possess the land of Canaan. Before that time his people had to live in faith.

- [7 : 50] Now Moses was able to see with his own eyes. What he beforehand saw by faith. This was the moment. This was the threshold.
- When Moses got to see the fulfillment of God's promise. Now you might ask. Well if God wasn't allowed. If Moses wasn't allowed to actually go into the promised land.
- Then why would God show him the promised land? It's almost an act. It does appear on the surface as if it's an act of cruelty. To show Moses the land. And at the same time say to him.
- Well here it is but you're not going there. Is that not a little bit nasty? Absolutely not. God isn't in the business of being nasty.
- God showed Moses the land. Because to show someone land was a very significant action at that time. According to the law.
- [8 : 53] When you bought a piece of land. It became yours when you saw it. We find that in the New Testament for example.
- You remember when the devil took Jesus up a mountain. And he showed him all the kingdoms of the world. He showed it to him. And that's a very significant statement.
- He's not just displaying all the kingdoms of the world. He's actually saying. This is a way of the devil saying to Jesus. It'll become yours.
- Look at it. Look at it. And it is yours. If you fall down and worship me. And then there's another passage in the New Testament. That says that where Jesus is giving a parable.
- And he says that one person made excuses to the invitation that he had been given to the wedding. I have just bought a field. And I must go and see it.
- [9 : 54] You see the seeing of the field was the acquisition of it. That was the moment when he took possession of it. When it became his. And it's the same here. God is showing Moses the land of Canaan.
- The land of promise. And in showing it to him. And in Moses seeing it. It is becoming his. This is his inheritance. This is the land for the taking.
- This is the moment in which God is saying to Israel. It is yours. Remember Moses is not just acting on his own behalf. He's acting as a mediator for Israel. And so when he saw it.
- Israel saw it. The promise is now once and for all complete. The second feature I want us to think together about is.
- The fact that God makes his promise known one more time. In other words that in dying. Moses dies as he's listening to the very promise of God.
- [10 : 56] Which means that he is dying in the promise of God. Hebrews tells us that these all died in faith.
- Hebrews 11. Talking about Moses and Abraham and Isaac. And all of the saints that lived in the Old Testament. These all died in faith. Not having received the things promised.
- But having seen them. And greeted them from afar. And having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles in the earth. So Moses is still in the land of not yet.
- But he's allowed to see the ultimate fulfillment. Of all that God is going to give. And beyond. Because there were several points in Moses life.
- When God hinted at what he was going to do. Way beyond Canaan. And way beyond the prophets. And way beyond the kings. To when Jesus was going to be sent into the world.
- [11 : 54] To seek and to save those who were lost. So Moses dies in the promise of God. And that's true for every Christian.
- Anyone who has come to faith in Jesus. Comes to be united to Jesus. Which means that we live united to him. And we die united to him.

And we die in his promise. And then thirdly. Moses died according to the word of the Lord.

Verse 5. Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab. According to the word of the Lord. What that means of course is that. First of all he died in consequence of God's judgment on him.

You find the story in Numbers chapter 20. It goes all the way back to. When the Israelites complained that they had no water. God led them to the rock.

[12 : 57] This was the second time where God led them to a rock. And God commanded that Moses should speak to the rock. But Moses was so frustrated with the people.

That he lost sight of that command. And that he overlooked that command. And instead of speaking to the rock. He hit the rock. He smote the rock with a staff. And sure enough water came gushing out.

The Israelites went in and they drank. But Moses in failing to obey precisely. The command of God. He sinned against God.

And the wages of sin is death. And I know what you're thinking. You're thinking. Are you telling me that after a lifetime of service. After all of these years.

In faithfully leading the people of Israel. With all the danger and the responsibility that Moses had. And in a lifetime of knowing God face to face.

[13 : 57] He's just been saying. Are you telling me that God is going to. That God is going to. Forbid Moses to go into the promised land. Just. Because.

He hits the rock instead of speaking it. That is exactly what happened. That is what happened.

And the reason why that is so serious. And the reason why it's so trivial to you. And.

Perhaps myself. If we read it. If you take it as first reading. Is that because we don't take sin seriously. We don't take. We don't see what sin really is. That it's an offense. Against the command of God.

And when we offend God. And when we. Sin against him. We render ourselves liable to the judgment. And to the chastisement of God. Now you think about it.

[14 : 54] In another way. If God had said to Moses. We'll speak to the rock. And Moses went ahead and smote the rock. And God said. Oh well it doesn't really matter. We'll overlook this.

What do you think the Israelites would have done? The Israelites would have gone and lived any way they wanted to. Because they think. Well if Moses gets away with it. Then we can get away with anything we want. God has to be consistent.

To himself. He has to be true to his word. He has to mean what he says. And he does mean what he says. And that's why. Tragically.

In this case. Moses had to suffer the consequences. Of his own actions. The wages of sin. Is death.

It's a picture. In a way. Of where we're all at. This evening. We've all been born in sin. And God has said. To our forefather.

[15 : 51] Our first father. Adam. In the day you eat thereof. Of the forbidden fruit. You will surely die. So all death. We don't need to point to Moses. All death.

Within the human race. Is a consequence. Of sin. Adam's sin. And our sin. That is why we're all liable. Romans 1 tells us. That we stand under the judgment.

And the condemnation. Of God. The wages. Of sin. Is death. That's why there's a gospel. That's why we're here. This evening. If there wasn't a gospel.

There would be nothing to preach. We would all be lost. There would be no answer. There would be no good news. There would be no light. In the darkness. But.

If there is going to be good news. There has to. We have to start with. The condition. That we're all in this evening. Which is one of condemnation. Every one of us. Hebrews tells us.

[16 : 48] That it is appointed. Unto man. Once. To die. That belongs to all of us. That applies to every single one of us. This evening. And yet.

And there is. A yet. Death for Moses. Was not the end. Moses was. A man of God. A man who failed. And yet.

A man who was. Who was. Ultimately. A servant. A servant. Of the Lord. And who God. Ushered into. His kingdom. At the end.

Of his life. On the top. Of Mount Pisgah. And that is the good news. Of the gospel. Because the good news. Doesn't end. At death.

It continues. Into what God has prepared. For his people. Through. The Lord Jesus Christ. Christ. Fourthly. It tells us that. That.

[17 : 43] Moses. Was buried. By God. He says. In verse six. 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. Now I have to say that. You're probably reading that. And you're thinking. Well I hope he's going to say something. About that. I have to say. This is one of the most mysterious. Verses in the Bible. And I don't have a lot.

To say about it. Principally. Because there isn't a lot of information. About it. That's all we're told. There's a verse in Jude. That talks about a dispute. Between the devil.

And the angel. Over the burial of Moses. Over the body of Moses. But that verse itself. Jude one. Verse nine. Is so. Enigmatic.

That I wouldn't even know where to begin. Jude is making a point. He's making a very serious point. And he uses this story. As an illustration. I wouldn't even begin.

[18 : 39] To elaborate on it. And if you don't. If you don't know what you're going to say. Then don't say it. This is a mystery. All we know is that God buried him. The place of his burial.

Is unknown. To this day. I can't help thinking that. If his burial place. Had been known. That it might have become a shrine. For the people of Israel.

And that people in centuries. Afterwards. Might have come to. Worship. At that. Burial place. And very often. A place of worship. Very often becomes an object.

Of worship. But that's all. That's speculation. In itself. So we'll move on. The fifth. And the last thing. I want us to say this evening. And I want us to spend more time.

On this than anything else. Is that Moses did. Enter into. The promised land. It sounds a bit of a paradox.

[19 : 37] But Moses did. Actually. Enter into. The promised land. Not. On that day. At that time. But he. Was brought back.

Into. The promised land. Because that was where Jesus. Lived. A thousand plus years. Later. And on the occasion. When Jesus took his disciples.

Up to the mount of transfiguration. Like we read in Matthew chapter 17. He was transfigured. Before them. His. His whole appearance. Became radiant.

Like the sun. And there appeared. With him. Moses. And. Elijah. Elijah. Both of whom. Had lived. Hundreds of years.

In the past. But both of whom. Were alive. And well. When they appeared. With Jesus. To discuss. His own. Exodus. In the cross.

[20 : 38] Both of these men. Men. One of them. At least. Having been buried. Moses. Definitely. Died. He wasn't like Elijah. Who was. Translated. From this world.

Into heaven. In a chariot of fire. Or in a whirlwind. Moses. Really did. Die. But yet. Nonetheless. Both of these men.

Ended up in the same heaven. With the same Lord. With the same Jesus. And both of them. Were brought back. Momentarily. To. Have a discussion. With Jesus.

To encourage him. To point the way. Forward to him. In his time of weakness. And as he faced. The horrors of the cross. To. To bring to him. The reason.

Why he had come. Into the world. Afresh. To seek. And to save those. Who were lost. So Moses. Did enter the promised land.

[21 : 36] There he was. The disciples. Saw him. But more immediately. He entered into the promised land. There and then. When he died. Because that's the promise.

That belongs to all. Of God's people. And that's what I want us. To think about. This evening. Death might be.

Far away. From your consciousness. This evening. For various reasons. We're not encouraged. To think. About death. Are we? In fact.

We're actively. Discouraged against it. We're told. Well what you need to do. Is to make the most. Of this life. And don't. More. Don't acquire.

A morbid obsession. With death. Death. But that's another way. Of saying. Well let's not think about it too much. Let's concentrate on what we are doing. For the moment.

[22 : 34] Let's concentrate on making the most. Of the opportunities that we have. In this life. Life. But the Bible tells us. A different story.

It tells us that. Beyond death. There is. Something. There are all kinds of. Of legends. That belong to other cultures. About what they believed.

With regard to life. After death. Some of the most fascinating. Are the Egyptian cultures. Where they believed. All kinds of elaborate processes. Would take place. When a person died.

And when that person. Would go into. The land of the gods. Or whatever. In boats. And in chariots. And whatever. But the Bible gives. An absolute certainty.

As to what will. Definitely happen. After death. And I think it is. Irresponsible of us. This evening. To ignore that. It is so dishonoring.

[23 : 31] To God. When God has said. Here is. My message. To you. Here is what. I am bringing. Before you. With all the authority. Of God himself.

And you are just going to. Ignore it. That is okay. If you are going to live forever. But you are not. None of us. Are going to live forever. I remember.

When I was younger. Death seemed. So far away. And it does. When you are young. You have got your whole. We say to our young people. Oh you have your whole life. Ahead of you.

That. But. Actually. We don't know. What the future brings. For any one of us. And as we get older. As I am.

Then. We do become more conscious. Of. The reality of death. As it becomes closer. But it may be. It doesn't matter. What age we are. This evening. It is only one step.

[24 : 28] Away from. Any one of us. One hair's breadth. Away from. Any one of us. And I am not trying to manipulate. By the way. You may say. Oh well. Here we go. Here we go. Sunday night of a communion.

This man is going to frighten us. Well. If frightening. Means. Coming to faith in Jesus. Ultimately. Then so be it. But. It is also a reality.

And it is one that we all know. Because we have all experienced it. With people that we have known. And have walked with. And lived with. In this world. And for us.

To have. The message of God. As to how to be prepared. For death. And for us to ignore that message. Is the height of ultimate folly.

How can we ignore what God is telling us. Especially when we know that he is. Inviting us freely. And graciously. And lovingly. To everlasting life.

[25 : 29] How can you ignore that? I don't understand how anybody can. Unless of course.

You've come to the conclusion. That there is no God. And we're all here. As a. Consequence of random chance. I don't know how many of you were at.

The fellowship on. On Friday night. I found it fascinating. What. Mark McLeod was. Telling us. His. His. His. His own story. As to how he. Came to faith in Jesus.

And it was either one or the other. It was either no God. Or. There was. A God. In which case. The Bible is true. And in which case.

He had to come to faith in Jesus. And one of the things he said was that. It took more faith to not believe. Than it does to believe. And that's absolutely true.

[26 : 26] It takes more faith not to believe. Than to believe. But the ultimate proof. For me anyway.

Is one moment in history. Where Jesus Christ. Rose from the dead. On the third day. After he gave his life at Calvary.

That's what I say to everyone who asks me. Why are you a Christian? Why do you believe. In Jesus? The first thing I would say to that person.

Is because of Jesus. Resurrection from the dead. Because what that means. Is that Jesus holds the key.

To life and death. Here is this one man in history. Who has reversed. Death. And has brought life. Out of death.

[27 : 26] Here is this one man in history. Who was actually. Really. Physically. Historically. Dead. He is placed in a grave.

In a tomb. For three days. And three nights. Wrapped in the linen cloth. Which alone would have been enough. To suffocate him. And yet. He rises. And yet.

After three days. He rises. From the dead. And he stands. Before his disciples. He has the marks. Of the cross. No one ever.

Ever stood. Alive. After having been crucified. Except Jesus. Jesus. So all the evidence.

Is that this. Momentous miracle. Took place. In which this Jesus. Rose from the dead. Now I'm. Asking you tonight. To go away. And to think about.

[28 : 23] How life. Changing. This moment is. And how earth. Shattering. It is. It makes all the difference. It is the ultimate. Game changer. I'm not asking you.

To believe in Jesus. For no reason. I'm not asking you. To believe. Because it's some kind of. Nice mystical feeling. That you get. I'm not asking you. To believe. Because you get.

This kind of. Sense of peace. Or you get. Prosperity. Or you get. Some kind of. Solace. Hereafter. It's not like that at all. I'm asking you to believe. Because. Jesus actually.

Rose from the dead. Go back. Check it out. Read about it. For yourself. And ask God. Remember that the Christian faith. Is a personal faith.

Don't wait for some kind of. Scientific proof. Because you're not going to get it. But the Christian faith. Is a personal faith. So. As we come to terms. With the resurrection of Jesus.

[29 : 21] I hope that you're asking God. God. Is this true? Because if it is. I can't be the same person again. I can't live anymore.

The way I'm living. My life has to be oriented. Towards you. You have to be the center. Of everything that I am. You have to take the reins. The control. And I have to come home to you.

I have to rediscover. Why I'm here. Who my true identity is. See. We live in a world today. That is. Racked.

With anxiety. About identity. It is so pitiful. I feel so. So. Utterly sorry. For the current generation. In a so-called.

Advanced world. Where there's so much. Technological advancement. We can do anything. We want. Nowadays. Practically. If it's on a technological level.

[30 : 21] And yet. There is an unprecedented. Crisis. Amongst the current generation.

Who are. At their wits end. Because they don't know who they are. Isn't that awful? Isn't that a tragedy?

And all the time. Right. In front of us. Is the answer. The answer. Is God. Who's saying.

To this world. Listen. To me. I can tell you. Who you are. Because I have made you.

I've brought you. Into this world. And I can. Bring. You to. Know me. As your savior.

[31 : 20] And as your lord. And the moment. A person comes to faith. In Jesus Christ. They discover. Who they are. As never before. They come home. And that's the only way.

To prepare. For what ultimately lies. Ahead. Of every one of us. I'm not saying. That the only reason. To become a Christian. Is. So that we.

Die well. And so that we make sure. That. There is everything. To live for. As a Christian. In this world. Before God takes us. Whenever that will be.

It might be. A year from now. It might be. A week from now. It might. But however long it is. There's everything. To live for. In this world. Don't think that. Well.

I'm going to get. All the happiness. I can get out of this world. And then I'm going to become a Christian. What. What a waste. Give the Lord your life now. Give him the young years of your life.

[32 : 18] Because to serve the Lord. Is the greatest way to live. In this world. And it's the only way.

To prepare. For the ultimate moment. When God. Will end our life. In this world.

And bring us. Into. Eternity. Jesus says. I am the resurrection. And the life. He who believes in me.

Though he were dead. Yet shall he live. And what that means is. That death is a reality. And that a death. Body and soul separate.

The body is. Normally. Buried in a grave. And. The soul. Our soul. Whatever that means.

[33 : 22] I'm not entirely sure. We were discussing this the other day. I'm not entirely. I don't have a great understanding. Of what our soul is. But the Bible talks about it. So I believe it.

Our soul is. Who you really are. And who I really am. And we will be ushered. Into the presence of God. To wait. For that moment. Where the body and soul.

Will reunite. At the day of resurrection. When Jesus comes again. But then Jesus also says. He who lives. And believes in me.

Will never die. Never die. Which means that. For a Christian. Death. Is. Not an experience at all.

I believe that when Moses. Lay down on the top of Mount Pisgah. It was like. Going to sleep for a few moments. And waking up.

[34 : 16] In heaven. That. Dimension that God has prepared. For his people. That dimension. Where the dwelling of God. Will be amongst. Men and women.

That dimension that will one day. Become visible. When. There will be the new heaven. And the new earth. Where all tears. And disappointment.

And death. And sadness. Will be taken away. And where God will wipe away. All our tears. From our eyes.

Oh I hope. That we'll all be there. Because the alternative is unthinkable.

Don't even think about it. Believe. In the Lord Jesus Christ.

[35 : 12] And you will be saved. Let's pray. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.