

Deuteronomy 34:4-8

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Having viewed the Promised Land from the top of Mount Nebo, Moses died there in the land of Moab. The LORD Himself buried him in the valley in the land of Moab.

After Moses viewed the Promised Land from afar, *the LORD said to him, This is the land which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your descendants'* (v. 4). The Suzerain God made some unconditional grants to Abraham as a reward for the loyal service Abraham had rendered. An example was a covenant of grant concerning the possession of the Promised Land, in which God specifically declared to Abraham, *to your descendants I have given this land* (Genesis 15:18).

God kept His word because He is a faithful God (Deuteronomy 32:4). He used Moses to lead Abraham's descendants, Israel, from Egypt to the wilderness. Now God's people were on the edge of the Promised Land, ready to cross over to possess the reward of the inheritance God promised to Abraham.

Unfortunately, Moses, the *servant of the LORD* who ministered to Israel for forty years, would not enjoy the privilege of entering the land of promise. He had dishonored God and failed to treat Him as holy in the presence of the Israelites (Numbers 20:12; Deuteronomy 32:50-51), which was why the LORD reminded Moses that *I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not go over there*. To allow Moses to see the Promised Land was an act of grace on His part. Even though the LORD had forgiven Moses for his act of unfaithfulness, Moses still had to experience the consequences of his choice. God's dealing with Moses demonstrates that He is an impartial God. Choices have consequences, and God is an impartial judge. However, to whom much is given much is required (Luke 12:48). For Moses, this one mistake was sufficient to prevent him entrance into the Promised Land. However, God honored Moses greatly for his faithful service.

It is difficult to believe that Moses, Israel's leader, would be denied access to the Promised Land. After all, he had such a close relationship with the LORD that "the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to

his friend” (Exodus 33:11). This means that the LORD spoke with Moses directly.

The Bible tells us that Moses was chosen by God to lead Israel out of slavery in Egypt to the Promised Land. For the most part, Moses did as God commanded him and remained faithful to his Suzerain God. However, Moses was held to a high standard, and his disobedience in the wilderness of Zin was severe enough to preclude him from entering and possessing the land of Canaan (Numbers 20:12).

After he was shown the Promised Land from a distance, *Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD* (v. 5). This happened just as the LORD had said (Numbers 20:12; Deuteronomy 3:27).

Note that the time of death was *according to the word of the LORD*. Moses was not in ill health, nor was he physically weak or disabled at the time of his death (see v. 7). It was simply time for Moses to *lie down with his fathers* (Deuteronomy 31:16).

Being denied access to the Promised Land did not disqualify Moses from being declared *the servant of the LORD*, a designation that very few people in Scripture received (Joshua 2:29; Psalm 18:1, 36:1). It is reserved for people who dedicate their whole lives to the service of the LORD. They may fail on occasion (as Moses and David did), but there is nothing more wonderful than to be called a *servant of the LORD*.

For his special service, Moses received a special burial in that the LORD Himself *buried him in the valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-Peor* (v. 6). The *valley opposite Beth-peor* was *in the land of Moab*, north of Mount Pisgah (Mount Nebo), about ten miles east of the Jordan River (see map in Additional Resources). This is the *valley* where the Israelites had remained all this time (Deuteronomy 3:29). Furthermore, *no man knows Moses’ burial place to this day* because the Suzerain God buried him in an unmarked grave. All these points confirm Moses’ special relationship with God.

The LORD probably hid the burial place to

- Prevent the Israelites from digging up Moses’ body and taking it with them into the Promised Land, or

- Prevent the location from becoming a shrine or a “holy place” where the people would go on a pilgrimage, or
- Prevent enemies from desecrating the grave.

It is interesting that Satan staked some sort of claim to Moses’s body, and was resisted by the archangel Michael, according to the New Testament (Jude 1:9). Apparently Satan had a plan to use Moses’s bones for his purposes. But God and his angelic servants thwarted it.

Finally, it is worth noting that *although Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died* (v. 7), it was not due to the infirmities of old age or his death at 120 years old. This was evident in the fact that *his eye was not dim, nor his vigor abated*. Rather, he died because it was the LORD’s will. Though he lost a portion of his ability to lead due to age (Deuteronomy 31:2), Moses’ mission was completed in the eyes of the LORD.

So, Moses was still strong when he died, but he was not as strong as before (Deuteronomy 31:2). Moses died because his mission was completed in the eyes of God. This is true of every human being. The writer of Ecclesiastes tells us that there is a time for everything, and it is God who determines the cycles of life. Every event under heaven has an appointed time (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8).

After Moses’ death, *the sons of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days; then the days of weeping and mourning for Moses came to an end*. The *plains of Moab* refer to the steppe region located just north of the Dead Sea and east of the Jordan River, opposite the plains of Jericho (Joshua 4:13— see map in Additional Resources . It was from here that the Israelites would enter the Promised Land.

The Israelites wept and mourned for Moses, their leader and mediator, for *thirty days*, a normal time for mourning a great person. They mourned for Aaron the same length of time (Numbers 20:29). The normal time for mourning a loved one was seven days (Genesis 50:10).

Biblical Text:

⁴Then the Lord said to him, “This is the land which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, ‘I will give it to your descendants’; I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not go over there.” ⁵So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of

the Lord. ⁶ And He buried him in the valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor; but no man knows his burial place to this day. ⁷ Although Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died, his eye was not dim, nor his vigor abated. ⁸ So the sons of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days; then the days of weeping *and* mourning for Moses came to an end.