

# Explore the Bible: Promised

February 4, 2020

- *The Explore the Bible lesson for Feb. 23 focuses on Deuteronomy 32:48-52; 34:4-7.*

Fear of death ranks in the top 10 most common human fears and phobias. No one wants to die. No one wants to experience the mystery of the afterlife.

When my mom past away in 2006, I tried not to cry but, I couldn't resist it. I knew that we had hope, but it was shocking to see someone you love inside a casket. As Christians, we know death is not the end of our lives, but the beginning of a new life in Christ.

When Moses died, the people mourned, but that was not the end of the story. God raised another great leader from among the people that would led them into the promised land. God's presence and power remained faithful even in the midst of chaos.

## Our Sin Realized (Deuteronomy 32:48-52)

This was a heartbreaking moment for Moses. In Numbers 27:12-17, God foretold Moses' death. Because Moses disobeyed, this great leader of Israel was not allowed to set foot in the Promised Land. To some people, this situation may seem unfair. After all, Moses spent 40 years in the dessert wandering until the rebellious generation was gone. So often, we forget our God is a God of justice—a God who punishes sin.

When God instructed Moses to climb Mount Nebo to view the Promised

Land, Moses knew his time on Earth was nearing its end. God told Moses on that mountain he was going to die. Sometimes, I wonder what went through his mind as he climbed the mountain.

God explained to him that because of his disobedience (see Numbers 20:6-12) in the desert, he was disqualified from entering the land. Moses failed to trust God enough to honor him as holy in the presence of the Israelites. This act of disloyalty kept him from entering the Promised Land.

## **God's Presence Assured (Deuteronomy 34:4)**

In this section, we can see two sides of God's character. God showed his justice, mercy and grace throughout the wilderness experience. Sometimes God was gracious and merciful. Other times, God revealed his rage against sin and disobedience. Moses did almost everything right, despite being in charge of a heavy burden. As he came to the end of his life, God revealed his mercy by allowing Moses to see the Promised Land and to hear God's assurance that, in fact, the Israelites were going to receive the land God promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

God also revealed the other side of the coin with regard to his character. Moses learned that even though God is merciful and slow to anger, God keeps his promises. God reminded Moses that he was not crossing over the land. God is love. God is merciful and gracious, but oftentimes we forget that our God is consuming fire, a God of justice, a God who does not leave the guilty unpunished. He punishes people for their sin (Numbers 14:18).

## **God's Mercy Discovered (Deuteronomy**

## 34:5-7)

God's promise about Moses' death was fulfilled that day. Moses was 120 years old when he died. There are a few highlights in this story. First, even though God kept his promise about Moses' death and prohibited his crossing into the Promised Land, God took care of him until his last breath. The author of Deuteronomy accentuates that God himself buried Moses. When Aaron died, Moses and Eleazar (Aaron's son) were there to witness and to assist with the burial. When Moses died, no one else was there except God.

Second, Moses was 120 years old. Before the flood described in Genesis 6-8, it was common for people to live hundreds of years (see Genesis 5). After the flood, the long lifespan decreased dramatically. Highlighting Moses' age demonstrated God's care for him.

Last, despite Moses being old, his eyes were not weak nor his strength gone. When Isaac was old, his eyes were so weak he could no longer see. However, Moses' eyes were sharp, and he retained his strength.

The people grieved for Moses 30 days. God's mercy was revealed in the time of death. Moses, the great leader who tolerated the Israelites for 40 years in the wilderness, was gone, but God's presence was still with the people and their new leader, Joshua. God did not abandon them. God kept his promises. *How can you start trusting God with all your heart even in the midst of distress?*

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