

## ***Present Truth in Deuteronomy***

### ***The Resurrection of Moses***

Lesson #13 for December 25, 2021

Scriptures: Numbers 20:1-13; Deuteronomy 31:2; 34:1-12; Jude 9; 1 Corinthians 15:13-22.

1. We have discovered in our study this quarter that the book of Deuteronomy consists of four separate sections: Three speeches by Moses and a kind of appendix which some regard as a fourth speech. Obviously, the report of his death was not written by Moses!
2. Much of Deuteronomy is a report of Moses's work with the children of Israel over the prior 40 years. In almost every case, Moses acted in a way one would have expected God to act. He was a very competent, reliable, and loved leader. We now come to the end of Deuteronomy; with it is described the end of the life of Moses.

Moses knew that he was to die alone; no earthly friend would be permitted to minister to him in his last hours. There was a mystery and awfulness about the scene before him, from which his heart shrank. The severest trial was his separation from the people of his care and love—the people with whom his interest and his life had so long been united. But he had learned to trust in God, and with unquestioning faith he committed himself and his people to His love and mercy.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*\* 470.3-471.0.

3. What can we learn about God from the life and approaching death of Moses? The most obvious thing to talk about is the fact that no one buried him except God. And then, he was resurrected from the dead! Did God give Moses any idea of what was going to happen?
4. But, to pick up our story earlier, we need to go back and remember what happened at Kadesh near the end of their 40 years. God, and Moses acting on God's behalf, had been incredibly gracious to the very rebellious and undeserving Israelites on many, many occasions. Imagine having your food provided without any major effort on your part and water provided by God every day just automatically. Paul commented on that in 1 Corinthians 10:4 when he said: "They drank from the spiritual rock that went with them; and that rock was Christ himself."—*Good News Bible*.\* [At the time, how many people recognized that?]<sup>‡</sup>
5. Ellen White commented:

Wherever in their journeyings they wanted water, there from the clefts of the rock it gushed out beside their encampment.—Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*\* 411.1.

6. But, then, they arrived at Kadesh. Look at that story in Numbers 20:1-13.

**Numbers 20:1-13:** <sup>1</sup>In the first month the whole community of Israel came to the wilderness of Zin and camped at Kadesh. [The prior time they were at Kadesh was when they sent in the spies!] There Miriam died and was buried.

<sup>2</sup> There was no water where they camped, so the people gathered round Moses and Aaron <sup>3</sup>and complained: "It would have been better if we had died in front of the LORD's Tent along with our fellow-Israelites. <sup>4</sup>Why have you brought us out into this wilderness? Just so that we can die here with our animals? <sup>5</sup>Why did you bring us out of Egypt into this miserable place where nothing will grow? There's no corn, no figs, no grapes, no pomegranates. There is not even any water to drink!" <sup>6</sup>Moses and Aaron moved away from the people and stood at the entrance of the Tent. They bowed down with their

faces to the ground, and the dazzling light of the LORD's presence appeared to them.

<sup>7</sup> The LORD said to Moses, <sup>8</sup> **“Take the stick** that is in front of the Covenant Box, and then you and Aaron assemble the whole community. There in front of them all **speak to that rock** over there, and water will gush out of it. In this way you will bring water out of the rock for the people, for them and their animals to drink.” <sup>9</sup>Moses went and got the stick, as the LORD had commanded. [Did they think striking any rock would cause water to come out?]

<sup>10</sup> He and Aaron assembled the whole community in front of the rock, and Moses said, **“Listen, you rebels! Do we have to get water out of this rock for you?”** <sup>11</sup>**Then Moses raised the stick and struck the rock twice with it** [as Moses had done on a prior occasion, following God's command], **and a great stream of water gushed out, and all the people and animals drank.**

<sup>12</sup> But the LORD reprimanded Moses and Aaron. He said, **“Because you did not have enough faith to acknowledge my holy power before the people of Israel, you will not lead them into the land that I promised to give them.”**

<sup>13</sup> This happened at Meribah, where the people of Israel complained against the LORD and where he showed them that he was holy.—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation\** (2nd ed., Numbers 20:1–13). New York: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible*].<sup>†‡</sup>

7. It certainly is not difficult to understand the dynamics of the situation. For years, Moses had been leading them through all their troubles. There they were, next to the land of Canaan, having received their food and water every day at the hand of the LORD; and then, because the water seemed to be delayed, the people were complaining and complaining. Shouldn't it have been obvious that it was God's activities and not the activities of Moses and Aaron which provided water for them? Had the people as well as Moses and Aaron come to actually believe that Moses and Aaron were the ones providing water for them?
8. The sad part is that Moses almost began to reflect that idea. So, what do you think? Was Moses angry? Was he frustrated? Or, what? Moses knew perfectly well that he had no power to bring water out of any rock!
9. How often are we tempted to do something in a fit of anger or frustration? Could we learn to stop, pray, and seek God's will before we do anything like that?
10. The big question in Numbers 20 was: Why did God say that Moses's and Aaron's problem was that they lacked faith? What does that have to do with bringing water out of a rock?

**Numbers 20:12-13:** [Reading again:] <sup>12</sup> But the LORD reprimanded Moses and Aaron. He said, **“Because you did not have enough faith to acknowledge my holy power before the people of Israel, you will not lead them into the land that I promised to give them.”**

<sup>13</sup> This happened at Meribah, where the people of Israel complained against the LORD and where he showed them that he was holy.—*Good News Bible*.<sup>\*†‡</sup>

**Deuteronomy 31:2:** [Moses said:] “I am now 120 years old and am no longer able to be your leader. And besides this, the LORD has told me that I will not cross

the Jordan.”—*Good News Bible*.<sup>\*†</sup>

**Deuteronomy 34:4:** Then the LORD said to Moses, “This is the land that I promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob I would give to their descendants. I have let you see it, but I will not let you go there.”—*Good News Bible*.<sup>\*</sup>

11. Moses had been working on entering the land of Canaan for at least 40 years! The children of Israel had come to regard Moses as a “God-figure.” He was the one who went into the tent. He was the one that went to the top of the mountain, and they came to think that whatever Moses said or did was exactly what God would have done. So, what is faith?

**Faith** is [just] a word we use to denote a relationship with God as with a Person well known. The better we know Him, the better the relationship may be. [We cannot say “will be” because we remember the story of Lucifer!]

Faith implies an attitude toward God of love, trust, and deep admiration. It means having enough confidence in Him, based on the more than adequate evidence revealed, to be willing to believe whatever He says [as soon as we are sure He is the One saying it], to accept whatever He offers [as soon as we are sure He is the One offering it], and to do whatever He wishes [as soon as we are sure He is the One wishing it]—without reservation—for the rest of eternity.

Anyone who has such faith is perfectly safe to save. This is why faith is the only requirement for heaven. [See Acts 16:30-31]

[Faith also means that, like Abraham, Job, and Moses, God’s friends, we know God well enough to reverently ask Him, “Why?”]—Graham Maxwell, *You Can Trust the Bible* 81.<sup>†</sup> [Content in brackets is added based on Dr. Maxwell’s lectures.]<sup>‡</sup>

12. Step back for a moment and think about the larger context. The people had been rebellious and disobedient again and again and again during those 40 years. Meanwhile, Moses had stood up firmly and faithfully for God. He had carried out God’s will many, many times. And on this occasion, God had told Moses just to speak to the rock.
13. Remember that on a previous occasion when they complained about not having enough water, Moses had been told to strike the rock and water poured out of it. (Exodus 17:6) On that occasion, Moses had followed God’s instructions. That stick was kept in the Most Holy Place! But, on this occasion, Moses was told to speak to the rock; instead, he struck it twice. Moses had followed God’s instructions to go into the tent or tabernacle and to take Aaron’s rod. But, instead of going to the rock and speaking to it, he took that rod that had budded and borne fruit; and he struck the rock twice!
14. What would you have done if you had been God under those circumstances? Superficially, from a human standpoint, it seemed like God was quite unfair with His friend Moses. One rash act, and he was excluded from entering the land of Canaan which he had been hoping to do for at least 40 years!
15. God had plans for Moses, and He knew about what those plans were through all of this. God had a better plan for Moses! So, the question which remains is: What do you think the children of Israel learned from what happened to Moses? Did the children of Israel know what instructions God had given to Moses? Did they realize that Moses had been told to speak to the rock and instead he had struck it? If so, then, it is clear that this was an obvious case of disobedience. And God, having given many laws and rules to the children of Israel, could not overlook a case of direct disobedience—especially in His most prominent

representative. The Israelites might have come to think that if one was an important enough person, like Moses, disobedience really would not be really serious!

16. Try to imagine how Moses felt when God declared that he would not be allowed to enter Canaan. Moses himself had written repeatedly in the books of Genesis through Deuteronomy of God's promise to Abraham's descendants that they should inherit the land. Then, he was the leader of that group of people; but, he was not going to be allowed to enter.
17. So, what actually happened to Moses?

**Deuteronomy 34:1-12:** Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Mount Pisgah east of Jericho, and there the LORD showed him the whole land: the territory of Gilead as far north as the town of Dan; <sup>2</sup>the entire territory of Naphtali; the territories of Ephraim and Manasseh; the territory of Judah as far west as the Mediterranean Sea; <sup>3</sup>the southern part of Judah; and the plain that reaches from Zoar to Jericho, the city of palm trees. <sup>4</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses, "This is the land that I promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob I would give to their descendants. I have let you see it, but I will not let you go there."

<sup>5</sup> So Moses, the LORD's servant, died there in the land of Moab, as the LORD had said he would. <sup>6</sup>The LORD buried him in a valley in Moab, opposite the town of Bethpeor, but to this day no one knows the exact place of his burial. <sup>7</sup>Moses was 120 years old when he died; he was as strong as ever, and his eyesight was still good. <sup>8</sup>The people of Israel mourned for him for thirty days in the plains of Moab. [How did they know that Moses was dead?]

<sup>9</sup> **Joshua son of Nun was filled with wisdom, because Moses had appointed him to be his successor.** The people of Israel obeyed Joshua and kept the commands that the LORD had given them through Moses.

<sup>10</sup> **There has never been a prophet in Israel like Moses; the LORD spoke with him face to face.** <sup>11</sup>No other prophet has ever done miracles and wonders like those that the LORD sent Moses to perform against the king of Egypt, his officials, and the entire country. <sup>12</sup>No other prophet has been able to do the great and terrifying things that Moses did in the sight of all Israel.—*Good News Bible*.<sup>\*†</sup>

In solitude Moses reviewed his life of vicissitudes and hardships since he turned from courtly honors and from a prospective kingdom in Egypt, to cast in his lot with God's chosen people. He called to mind those long years in the desert with the flocks of Jethro, the appearance of the Angel in the burning bush, and his own call to deliver Israel. Again he beheld the mighty miracles of God's power displayed in behalf of the chosen people, and His long-suffering mercy during the years of their wandering and rebellion. Notwithstanding all that God had wrought for them, notwithstanding his own prayers and labors, only two of all the adults in the vast army that left Egypt had been found so faithful that they could enter the Promised Land. As Moses reviewed the result of his labors, his life of trial and sacrifice seemed to have been almost in vain.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*\* 471.4-472.0.

18. Reviewing, the children of Israel were camped on the plain across the flooded Jordan River from Jericho. Moses was told to turn around, go back up the steep mountain cliff behind

them into the country of Moab to the top of Mount Nebo which is actually a kind of outcropping from the high plains above where they were camped, and there he would die. But, before he died, he was shown what the land of Canaan would have been if the children of Israel had entered it and they had prospered and followed God's will for them. It was a beautiful land flowing with milk and honey. He viewed it from the far north, down to the south with miraculous vision. With ordinary vision, it would be impossible to see all that Moses saw.

19. How would you like to have God as your undertaker? If I could be raised in a few days, I would be happy! Deuteronomy 34:5-6 mentions that God buried him, and no one knows where his grave was/is to this day. Thus ended the central figure in the history of Israel to that point. The amazing thing in the "Moses story" is that his life was not over!

**Jude 9:** Not even the chief angel Michael did this. In his quarrel with the Devil, when they argued about who would have the body of Moses, Michael did not dare to condemn the Devil with insulting words, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"—*Good News Bible*.\*

**Had not the life of Moses been marred with that one sin, in failing to give God the glory of bringing water from the rock at Kadesh, he would have entered the Promised Land, and would have been translated to heaven without seeing death. But he was not long to remain in the tomb. Christ Himself, with the angels who had buried Moses, came down from heaven to call forth the sleeping saint. [How many inhabitants of the universe were watching?] Satan had exulted at his success in causing Moses to sin against God, and thus come under the dominion of death. The great adversary declared that the divine sentence—"Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Genesis 3:19)—gave him possession of the dead. The power of the grave had never been broken, and all who were in the tomb he claimed as his captives, never to be released from his dark prison house.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*\* 478.2 (1890).<sup>††</sup>**

20. Imagine the entire universe including Satan and all his evil angels watching as Christ Himself descended to this earth and resurrected Moses after arguing with Satan about who could have his body. Remember that Satan had claimed that anyone who died belonged to him. He claimed that the land of the dead was his territory. This is the first time we are aware of that any dead person had been raised to life. Furthermore, Moses was not just raised to human life, but rather, he was raised to everlasting life. Satan was extremely angry.
21. Remember what it says in Isaiah 14:14 about Satan and his thinking: ""I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High."" (NKJV\*) These were the very words of Lucifer/Satan—while still in heaven. Satan wanted to take the place of God. **And in striking the rock again, Moses had basically tried to take the place of God as well!**
22. Let us be very clear: God would like to save every one of His children; but, He "cannot." Many of them would just start the great controversy over again in heaven! So, God can save only those who are safe to live next door to for the rest of eternity!

In consequence of sin Moses had come under the power of Satan. In his own merits he was death's lawful captive; but he was raised to immortal life, holding his title in the name of the Redeemer. **Moses came forth from the tomb glorified, and ascended with his Deliverer to the City of God.**—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*\* 479.1.<sup>†</sup>

23. For those who believe in a very evangelical, even legal, plan of salvation, the resurrection of Moses and taking him to heaven poses a problem. The belief is that it was/is the death of Christ, paying the price for our sins, that allows God to take sinners to heaven. But, Moses is someone who died and was resurrected and taken to heaven before any of that had actually happened! Could it be that Moses was taken to heaven because God knew that it was safe to take him there? **It was not because Christ had already somehow paid the price for his sins; Christ had not yet come to this earth.**
24. Looking at the overall picture, would anyone not have chosen to be taken to the heavenly Canaan instead of to the earthly Canaan?
25. We know from Genesis 5:24 that earlier, Enoch had been taken to heaven; but, he had not died. Later, we know that Elijah was taken to heaven in a fiery chariot; but, he had not died either. (2 Kings 2:11)
26. We do not know how long Moses was dead. Probably not for long because God, no doubt, was excited to continue the Moses story! However, we do know that the time from his death to his resurrection passed instantly for Moses. As far as Moses was concerned, whether it was a matter of minutes or a matter of years did not matter.
27. Most of us have the option of doing God's will and being resurrected at the second coming of Christ and being taken to heaven for the millennium. Those who will be left behind, designated as the wicked, will not be raised until the third coming, at which time after a brief period following Satan in his attempt to conquer the new Jerusalem, they will perish forever. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul was answering a group of Christians to whom it had been suggested that Jesus had not been raised from the dead.

**1 Corinthians 15:13-22:** <sup>13</sup>If that is true, it means that Christ was not raised; <sup>14</sup>and if Christ has not been raised from death, then we have nothing to preach and you have nothing to believe. <sup>15</sup>More than that, we are shown to be lying about God, because we said that he raised Christ from death—but if it is true that the dead are not raised to life, then he did not raise Christ. <sup>16</sup>For if the dead are not raised, neither has Christ been raised. <sup>17</sup>And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is a delusion and you are still lost in your sins. <sup>18</sup>It would also mean that the believers in Christ who have died are lost. <sup>19</sup>If our hope in Christ is good for this life only and no more, then we deserve more pity than anyone else in all the world.

<sup>20</sup> But the truth is that Christ has been raised from death, as the guarantee that those who sleep in death will also be raised. <sup>21</sup>For just as death came by means of a man, in the same way the rising from death comes by means of a man. <sup>22</sup>For just as all people die because of their union with Adam, in the same way all will be raised to life because of their union with Christ.—*Good News Bible*.\*

28. How important is the promise of the resurrection to you? Would you live a Christian life if there were no resurrection? Do you feel, as Paul apparently did, that there would be no hope at all without a resurrection? Or, is it also possible that living a Christian life is the best kind of life to live, even now? Furthermore, we have the promise connected with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that all of God's faithful children will be raised.
29. Let us look at two summary statements.

When they [Moses and Aaron] angrily cried, "Must we fetch you water out of this rock?" they put themselves in God's place, as though the power lay with

themselves, men possessing human frailties and passions. Wearied with the continual murmuring and rebellion of the people, Moses had lost sight of his Almighty Helper, and without the divine strength he had been left to mar his record by an exhibition of human weakness. The man who might have stood pure, firm, and unselfish to the close of his work had been overcome at last. God had been dishonored before the congregation of Israel, when He should have been magnified and exalted.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*\* 418.2.<sup>‡§</sup>

Upon the mount of transfiguration Moses was present with Elijah, who had been translated. They were sent as bearers of light and glory from the Father to His Son. And thus the prayer of Moses, uttered so many centuries before, was at last fulfilled. He stood upon the “goodly mountain,” within the heritage of his people, bearing witness to Him in whom all the promises to Israel centered. Such is the last scene revealed to mortal vision in the history of that man so highly honored of Heaven.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*\* 479.3. [Moses finally got his chance to enter Canaan!]<sup>‡</sup>

30. As mentioned above, we do not know exactly how long Moses slept in the grave. Can you imagine his disappointment as he observed what happened to the children of Israel and to us down through the centuries?
31. Why do you suppose it is not mentioned anywhere in the Old Testament that Moses was resurrected from the dead? And how did Jude find out about it? As far as we know, it is only in the book of Jude where we find the conclusion to the story of Moses! Without that, we would have a hard time explaining how Moses could have come down to the mount of transfiguration! (Matthew 17:4)
32. As you review all that you know about the life of Moses, would you say that he was a true friend of God? Did he have the right kind of “faith relationship” with God? Remember that on at least one or probably two different occasions, he had argued for God’s own reputation! What an incredible friend. Friends stand up for their Friend’s reputation.
33. The resurrection of the dead at the second coming is proof that God could have created man in the beginning! It completely wipes out the idea that we must have evolved from some one-celled sea creature! **If God did not and could not have created man in the beginning, how can He raise millions of human beings back to life at the second coming?**
34. Notice the specific directions that God gave to Moses about the end of his life on this earth.  
**Deuteronomy 32:48-52:** <sup>48</sup> That same day the LORD said to Moses, <sup>49</sup> “Go to the Abarim Mountains in the land of Moab opposite the city of Jericho; climb Mount Nebo and look at the land of Canaan that I am about to give the people of Israel. <sup>50</sup>You will die on that mountain as your brother Aaron died on Mount Hor, <sup>51</sup>because both of you were unfaithful to me in the presence of the people of Israel. When you were at the waters of Meribah, near the town of Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin, you dishonored me in the presence of the people. <sup>52</sup>You will look at the land from a distance, but you will not enter the land that I am giving the people of Israel.”—*Good News Bible*.\*
35. So, what have we learned from this lesson about God’s dealings with rebels and sinners? What have we learned about death and resurrection? Have we learned anything about the great controversy? Will Jesus Christ have to argue with the Devil about every faithful follower who is resurrected at the second coming? Imagine what those conversations might be like!
36. The book of Genesis begins: “In the beginning God created....” And it ends with: “A coffin in

Egypt!” What an incredible summary of the results of sin. The book of Deuteronomy begins with Moses reviewing all that they had accomplished in their 40 years. They had conquered the lands of Og and Sihon and had taken over their entire territories. It ends with Moses dying and being buried by God.

37. At that point, they were camped on the plain of Moab, and Moses repeated to them the promise given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that the land of Canaan would be theirs. But, Deuteronomy ends with the death of Moses and his burial. We know that that was not the end of the story. The entire Scripture begins with creation and ends in Revelation with the new earth.
38. Why do you suppose there is nothing in the book of Deuteronomy, including in chapter 34 where Joshua apparently talked about the death of Moses, about the resurrection of Moses? Are there any hints in what was said by God about His plans for Moses?
39. Deuteronomy 34:6, *NKJV\** says, “No one knows his grave to this day.” We do not have any evidence that any other being in Scripture was buried by God. Why that unusual situation? Deuteronomy 34:5, *NKJV\** adds these interesting comments about his death saying it was, “According to the word of the LORD” which, literally, in Hebrew says, “On the mouth of the LORD.”
40. An ancient Jewish commentary says that Moses died with a kiss from God, strangely reminding us of God, breathing the breath of life into Adam (Genesis 2:7)—thus suggesting the miraculous re-creation of Moses.
41. Ellen White added these interesting words about his vision of the land before he died:

Still another scene opens to his view—the earth freed from the curse, lovelier than the fair Land of Promise so lately spread out before him. There is no sin, and death cannot enter. There the nations of the saved find their eternal home. With joy unutterable Moses looks upon the scene—the fulfillment of a more glorious deliverance than his brightest hopes have ever pictured. Their earthly wanderings forever past, the Israel of God have at last entered the goodly land.

Again the vision faded, and his eyes rested upon the land of Canaan as it spread out in the distance. Then, like a tired warrior, he lay down to rest.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets\** 477.1-2.

42. We have suggested that Moses had acted as if he were God. Does that ever happen in our day?
43. What does Moses’s mistake teach you about your own mistakes? Can we learn anything about our personal sins from the experience of Moses?
44. As recorded in the Bible, a number of people were raised from the dead. Even in the Old Testament, Elijah and Elisha raised people from the dead; but, they were returned only to their human life. How many people in the Bible were raised from the dead and taken directly to heaven? Can you think of any besides Moses and Jesus? What about those who were raised from the dead and taken to heaven at the resurrection of Jesus? (Matthew 27:51-53)

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