

# **The life of Moses**

## **Moses' Sin and His Home Going**

**Numbers 20:13  
Deuteronomy 34:15-8**

### **Chapter 13**

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### MOSES' SIN AND HIS HOME GOING

*“This is the water of Meribah; because the children of Israel strove with the LORD, and he was sanctified in them.”*

(Numbers 20:13)

*“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 a valley in the land of Moab, over against Bethpeor: but no man knoweth of his sepulcher unto this day. And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated. And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days: so the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended.”*  
(Deuteronomy 34:5 – 8)

I think that Moses is probably one of the most unique individuals in the entire Bible. We know a great deal about his life. We know more about his life story than anyone else in the Scriptures. God tells us his story from the time of his birth till the time of his burial one hundred and twenty years later. His story reveals that the Bible is truly a God given book. If the Bible were a man-made invention it would have left out the negative portions of this man life. Moses is certainly a hero in many ways. He was the savior of his entire

nation. He led them out of bondage in Egypt and across a vast wilderness. He is, and of right ought to be, held up and revered by his people. A man-made book of his life would have, no doubt, left out the times of his life when he failed or was less than heroic. However, God's Word, the Bible, tells the entire story. It tells us of his weakness and his failings but always points to the goodness of God. It shows Moses as a man who was compelled to depend on God at every turn in his life. Moses was a great man. We have learned much about the book of Exodus as we have been studying the life of this man. We have seen Moses go from being an arrogant son of Pharaoh to becoming a humble shepherd. We then saw God take him and make him the leader of a nation of over three million people. God's purpose in the book of Exodus, I believe, was to reveal Himself to a people and world that knew nothing of His greatness. The Lord took this shepherd and demonstrated the greatness and power of our great God through Him. There are many more places in the Scripture that we could examine and see parts of Moses' personality and strength. An in depth study of how God used Moses to reveal His Law from Mt. Sinai would be most profitable. We study his reaction when the people of God sinned and began to worship the Golden calf while he was on the mountain receiving the Ten Commandments from God. We also see his leadership during this event. One of my favorite episodes in the life of Moses was when God spared the people's lives after they had sinned. He had Moses make a bronze image of a fiery serpent. The

people were told that if they would believe God enough to simply look to the image that they would be healed. In the New Testament the Lord Jesus referred to that story when speaking to Nicodemus in John chapter three verses fourteen and fifteen when He said, *“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.”* Jesus was telling that searching Pharisee that salvation could not be earned. Entrance into Heaven was only as we looked to the Lord Jesus Christ and placed our trust in Him for our healing.

There are two more instances from the life of Moses I would like for us to examine before we conclude our study in the life of this great man. In the book of Numbers we see that the people of Israel had been in the wilderness for almost forty years by the time we get to chapter twenty. We know it was forty years because in chapter twenty-one we find the death of Aaron recounted. In Numbers 33:38 Scripture tells us that, *“And Aaron the priest went up into mount Hor at the commandment of the LORD, and died there, in the fortieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the first day of the fifth month.”* In Numbers chapter twenty the people were again in a place where there was little water. They were complaining to Moses. *“And the people chode with Moses, and spake, saying, Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the LORD! And why have ye brought up the congregation of the LORD into this wilderness, that*

*we and our cattle should die there?” (Vs. 3 - 4)*  
They were referring to a group of leaders of the people that God destroyed because of their great sin in opposing Moses’ leadership. Moses became angry with the people when they came again with the same old complaint. We saw this same kind of thing back in Exodus seventeen when the Lord gave water from the rock. *“And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us, or not?”* (Exodus 17:7)

The word “Massah” means temptation while the word “Meribah” means chiding, or strife. The people had lived for almost forty years in the wilderness and for that time their shoes had not even worn out. How could they now be complaining about a lack of water? Yet, are we not just like them? God has done marvelous things for us but when we are faced with a new trial of faith do we not begin to cry and complain just as they did? When will we trust the Lord’s goodness and grace? He does all things for our good and His glory. Let’s trust Him. Moses had led these unruly people for all these years. He was no doubt weary of their pettiness and complaints and here he finally loses patience. When we are tired and stressed Satan knows that we are at our weakest. We are easily frustrated and many times we will react in the flesh rather than act in the Spirit. It is easy to become angry and lash out at those persons and things that frustrate and make us angry. We need to ask God to give us the grace of self-control and the

ability to realize when we are getting to the end of our emotional tether. Things done and said in anger are never productive. Even things that need to be said, when said in anger will always cause harm and will need to be apologized for later. Unfortunately, by that time the damage will already be done and can never be completely undone. This was the case with Moses. In Numbers chapter twenty and verse ten hear him lash out at the people even after he had received instruction from the Lord. *“Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also.”* God knew that the people needed water. He recognized their need. *“Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink.”* God had made provision for their need. Moses became angry with the people and their attitude and actually struck the rock instead of speaking to it as the Lord had commanded. This caused the Lord’s testimony to be greatly tarnished before the people. Because of this God punished Moses by taking away from him the privilege of entering the Promised Land. Many have puzzled about the severity of this punishment upon Moses and Aaron. Why did God take this infraction so seriously? Didn’t he realize Moses’ frustration with these people? Schofield, in his notes on this

passage gives us eight different sins that Moses and Aaron committed when Moses struck the rock.

He said that:

- 1) Moses took credit to himself for what God had done (He said “must we”);
- 2) He disobeyed God in not speaking to the rock
- 3) He lost his temper;
- 4) He used a harsh expression in addressing the people (He called them rebels)
- 5) He was provoked about their need and resented them (He said, “must we” );
- 6) He was guilty of unbelief, because he did not trust the power of God, as thought the power of God needed his help (He said in verse 12 “Ye believed me not”)
- 7) He failed to glorify God before his people (God said that he failed “to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel.)
- 8) He rebelled against God.

In verse twenty-four God said that Aaron would not be allowed to enter the Promised Land, *“because ye rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah.”* God holds His leaders to a higher standard than He does other people. A leader represents God to the lives of His people. People often understand God because of how He is revealed in the lives of those in spiritual leadership. God expects greater faithfulness and obedience from His spiritual leaders. He holds them to a higher standard and expects more from them. That did not excuse the people from their lapse of faith.

God dealt with them accordingly but because of Moses' lapse he was refused entrance into the land of promise. This was the land that he had looked forward seeing for all those long forty years.

God used Moses to pen the first five books of the Bible. When we come to the end of that part of the Bible we find the story of Moses' home going and burial. In the last few chapters of Deuteronomy we find Moses giving final instructions and then in chapter thirty-four he takes a walk up Mt. Nebo with the Lord. Scripture says that the "*Lord knew Moses face to face.*" There have been those who questioned how Moses could have written about his own death and burial. The obvious answer is that God revealed it to him and he wrote about it as if it had already happened. We saw in Numbers that God revealed to Moses and Aaron that Aaron would die and his mantle would be passed to his son, Eleazar. It is logical that God had communicated to Moses in like manner that his earthly life would end on the mountain. God had given Moses extraordinary health and strength for the task that he had to accomplish. Now the task of leadership would change from leadership in the wilderness to leadership in battle as the land of Canaan was claimed and conquered. God's task for Moses was at an end. Joshua was trained and ready to lead the people across the river. "*And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as the LORD commanded Moses.*" (Deuteronomy 34:9) It was time for Moses to go home. Scripture tells us that

God led Moses to the top of the mountain and showed him all the lands that the people would occupy. I am sure that Moses was disappointed that he would not be allowed to go with them into the land. However, at that moment he was on the mountain with the God he had known so well and loved so completely. In my mind's eye I see Moses look over the land and then simply lie down on a place that God had prepared for him, fold his hands and fall asleep. His soul slipped out of his body and into the presence of God. He never saw the earthly Promised Land but he was granted entrance into that land of promise that is now opened to all who love and follow the Lord Jesus. The book of Hebrews says about Him that Jesus, "*was counted worthy of more glory than Moses,*" (Hebrews 3:3). Moses could enter into his rest in Heaven because he looked forward to the Son of God, who would someday come and redeem us back unto himself with His sacrifice on the cross. If you are reading this and have never placed your trust in the Lord Jesus as your Savior, please trust Him today. Do not put it off one more day or even an hour. Death for the believer is but a shadow. David in Psalm twenty three calls death the "*valley of the shadow of death.*" A shadow is dark, mysterious, and frightening but in the end non-substantial. For the one who has placed his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ it is a passage through a dark valley that emerges in the presence of the Savior. Without the Savior it is a separation from God for all eternity.

God uses Moses to do a great work in this world. Then, He very sweetly and simply ushered

him to Heaven and conducted his funeral with only the angels to attend. The Scriptures simply say, “*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 a valley in the land of Moab, over against Bethpeor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.*” (Deuteronomy 34:5-6) I have often wondered why God did not let the people bury Moses. I think that because of Moses’ unique life and power with God that people would have been tempted to worship him and his remains. God did not want that. I think that the relationship that God had with Moses was special and God had a special place for Moses’ body. The thing to remember is that God buries His men but blesses His ministries. The people of Israel went on to take and possess the land that God had promised to their ancestors many years before. God always keeps His promises. We now have a wonderful legacy of a man that God chose from his mother’s womb. God prepared him in the courts of Pharaoh. He matured him in the sheepfolds of Midian. He used him in the wilderness. God revealed Himself through this man to a world that did not know God. He then used Moses to take His people to a place where He could show them what He expected from them when He gave them his law. Moses is a testimony to faith, obedience and faithfulness. Someone is reading this who now feels that God may be calling them into a lifetime of service. Are you willing to leave your sheep? Your sheep may be many different things. Are you willing to step away from what you have been doing and follow God and do what He wants

you to do? Yes, you may make mistakes but if you follow God's leading you will accomplish so much more than you ever could where you are now. May God give you the courage to step out for Him.

To aid our learning:

1. What was Moses' reaction to the people's worship of the golden calf?
2. How did Moses show leadership at the time of the worshiping of the golden calf?
3. When have you ever reacted in anger and solved a troublesome situation?
4. Why do you think that God was being overly harsh with Moses by not allowing him to enter the Promised Land? Or, why was this a fitting punishment in your opinion?
5. In what way does Moses' death and burial demonstrates the truth and sweetness of Psalm 116:15?
6. How, in your opinion, was Moses able to write about the story of his own death?
7. What task is God calling you to do? How is the story of Moses' life an encouragement to you?