

## YOUR LIFE SENTENCE

*The Life of Moses: Deliverance Through Faith*  
**Numbers 27:12-23; Deuteronomy 34:1-12**  
 Chadron Berean Church

This morning we want to talk about *your life sentence*. No, not a sentence to life in prison (at least I hope not). I'm talking about your epitaph—the sentence written in your memory summarizing your life. How would someone summarize your life in one sentence? What might they chisel on your tombstone? How would you be remembered? On one tombstone in England is chiseled the words, “*Sir John Strange. Here lies an honest lawyer, And that is Strange.*” No doubt, that man is remembered for a sense of humor! At times I'm surprised by how the Bible summarizes a person's life. Of Enoch it was said that “*Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him*” (Gen. 5:24). Of a king named Omri, the Bible says, “*He did evil in the sight of the Lord and sinned more than all those before him*” (1 Ki. 16:25). Big difference between those two, huh? Well, this morning we get to read Moses' epitaph as we finish our study on his life and glean some principles from his final moments.

### I. MOSES VIEWS THE PROMISED LAND. (Num. 27:12-14)

*12 Then Yahweh said to Moses, “Go up to this mountain of Abarim, and see the land which I have given to the sons of Israel. 13 So when you have seen it, you too will be gathered to your people, as Aaron your brother was, 14 for in the wilderness of Zin, during the strife of the congregation, you rebelled against My command to treat Me as holy before their eyes at the water.” (These are the waters of Meribah of Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin.)*

So before Moses dies, God has Moses go up a **mountain (Nebo)** on the northeast corner of the Dead Sea. It's almost straight west of Jericho and about 8 miles from the Jordan River. And it's from this peak that he gazes across the **land promised** to Israel. It's a special moment. It's bittersweet because he sees God's promised land and that God has kept His promise but knows that Israel could've entered 40 years ago if it wasn't for their disbelief, and he doesn't get to enter it because of what we saw last week with his recent moment of disbelief. Even though Moses prayed for God to reverse that judgment, God basically said, “*No, and don't ask again.*” So Moses will not enter the promised land with them but God graciously allowed him to see it. And I do think you see a subtle message that God uses here—the message of Hebrews that it is not the Law or Moses that can bring us into the promised land, but *Joshua* (Hebrew, *Yeshua*; Greek, *Jesus*) who carries us into our ultimate inheritance. I think we see that God can use even our failures for something good.

But you see Moses' **meekness** in that he accepted God's discipline. You never see Moses here shaking his fist and saying to God, “*How could you?*” He isn't bitter. He isn't angry. He isn't in a state of panic or self-pity. He never quit just because things didn't go his way. He demonstrates incredible maturity by continuing to serve God in ways that he can until God takes him home. It's a great testimony to his acceptance of Yahweh's sovereignty in his life. As we read on, we see that he even near his death he was more concerned with Israel than himself.

## II. THE COMMISSION OF JOSHUA. (NUM. 27:15-23)

*15 Then Moses spoke to Yahweh, saying, 16 “May Yahweh, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation, 17 who will go out and come in before them, and who will lead them out and bring them in, so that the congregation of Yahweh will not be like sheep which have no shepherd.”*

As Moses gazed upon the land that God would give the Israelites, his soul was stirred and he was reminded that Israel needed a strong leader to replace him. So **he prays for a man with two qualities: 1) A man of God’s choosing.** Moses understood that **the God of the spirits of all flesh**—who knows every man inside and out and looks at the heart (1 Sam. 16:7)—knows just the man to lead Israel. **2) A man with a shepherd’s heart.** Israel doesn’t need a mystic, scholar, CEO, or entertainer. They need a shepherd—someone who will care for the flock of God. Someone who will speak truth in love and help them know God and His ways. You know, Moses had his moments where he was frustrated with the sheep, but he was a self-sacrificial shepherd. On two occasions when God offered to wipe out the nation of Israel altogether and begin afresh, Moses interceded for the people by offering himself instead. He was Christlike, seeing the people needing a shepherd and was willing to lay down his life for them. That’s how we remember Moses and how we want to be remembered—self-sacrificial; servants; Christlike.

### **Be remembered as a Christlike, self-sacrificial servant.**

*18 So Yahweh said to Moses, “Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him; 19 and have him stand before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation, and commission him in their sight. 20 And you shall put some of your splendor on him, in order that all the congregation of the sons of Israel may obey him. 21 Moreover, he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before Yahweh. At his command they shall go out, and at his command they shall come in, both he and the sons of Israel with him, even all the congregation.” 22 So Moses did just as Yahweh commanded him; and he took Joshua and had him stand before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation. 23 Then he laid his hands on him and commissioned him, just as Yahweh had spoken by the hand of Moses.*

So God chooses **Joshua** to be the next key leader of Israel. No one wants to fill the shoes of a great leader, but this is something that God long-prepared Joshua for. Joshua was **Moses’ servant from his youth** (Num. 11:28). He was one of the two **faithful** spies. He was a man who was **filled with the Spirit**. He was **battle-hardened** militarily. He was courageous and qualified—a perfect fit to lead the nation into the promised land.

But I want note that though Joshua is the man to fill Moses’ shoes, *he is not Moses*. Israel doesn’t need another Moses. God said in Numbers 12 that He spoke to some people, like the prophets, through dreams or visions or dark sayings (Num. 12:8). Joshua will hear from the Lord through the high priest and the Urim and Thummim.<sup>1</sup> But Moses had a unique calling and met with God face to face. Does that make Joshua any less God’s man? Not at all. It just means things are changing. Leadership is changing. The primary means of revelation is changing.

Different people. Different leaders. Different forms of revelation. But it's the same God and same divine mission that is moving forward.

**Leaders and methods come and go, but God and His purposes never will.**

That's a good way to look at the early church when the apostles moved off the scene, or to look at the way a church or ministry moves forward after some great leader leaves. New people. New leaders. Same mission. Same God. And it's all by His design and timing. We need to appreciate the different types of leaders. I personally think "General" Joshua is better prepared to lead Israel into the promised land. God knows what exactly He's doing.

Moses was a great man of God. He had a special place in God's program. He was a unique individual. But *so are you*. Just because you won't be climbing any mountains to receive the Law like Moses doesn't mean that you too don't have a special place in God's program. Every individual believer, young and old, plays a key part in God's program. Each of us is a member of His "body" and a brick in His "temple." He has a place for Moses. He has a place for Joshua. He has a place for you. He uniquely wired your personality, talents, and interests. In Christ through the Spirit, He uniquely gifts you with spiritual gifting to serve your church with. There is only one Moses and there's only one you. Moses was the man for his time. We are here now by God's sovereign appointment (Acts 17:26). My encouragement: don't try to be Moses or someone else. Be who He made you to be.

**Be remembered for being who God wants you to be.**

But in a public commissioning, Moses **lays his hands on Joshua**, demonstrating that Moses' authority is now passing to Joshua. Again, no sign of jealousy or complaining on Moses' part. But now we're going to turn to **Deuteronomy 34:1-8**, where we read further detail on these final moments of his life.

**III. MOSES' FINAL MOMENTS & EPITAPH. (DEUT. 34:1-12)**

*34:1 Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho. And Yahweh showed him all the land, Gilead as far as Dan, 2 and all Naphtali and the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah as far as the western sea, 3 and the Negev and the plain in the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, as far as Zoar. 4 Then Yahweh said to him, "This is the land which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your seed'; I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not go over there." 5 So Moses the servant of Yahweh died there in the land of Moab, according to the command of Yahweh. 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 Now Moses was 120 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.*

So after showing Moses the promised land, God takes him home. I find comfort in this fact that God takes us home in His timing. He is sovereign over our life from birth to death (Ps. 139:16). And I don't know if you noticed but look who **buried** him: Yahweh himself! That says a lot

about who Moses is. But it's strange for such a great figure to have a private burial. The first century Jewish historian Josephus, probably writing Jewish tradition, said Moses went up the mountain with Eleazar and Joshua and a cloud stood over him and he suddenly disappeared.<sup>2</sup> Interesting thought: the next time we see him reappear is with Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration with Jesus!

There's also an interesting comment in Jude about Satan disputing with Michael the archangel over the body of Moses. Apparently, Satan was interested in or displeased with how God handled Moses' burial. Some speculate that his interest is related to God's future plans for Moses—that he might be one of the two witnesses in the tribulation since they perform similar signs (Rev. 11:3-12). OT scholar, Eugene Merrill, wrote, *"Most likely the sepulchre remained hidden precisely to prevent the Israelites from taking Moses' body with them to Canaan, thus violating the divine command to disallow Moses entry there."*<sup>3</sup> Some think that Satan wants Moses, the greatest figure in the OT and a man who made an incalculable impact on history, to have his own burial site so people can come and worship Moses. If people today knew where Moses was buried, Swindoll said it would be like a second Mecca. Outside of Christ's tomb, it would be the greatest pilgrimage site on earth! Whatever the reason, it's incredible that God personally buries Moses. **Psalm 116:15** says, *"Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints."*

### **God remembers His saints who are precious to Him.**

In **verses 10-12** we find what is essentially Moses' **epitaph**: *"10 And there has not yet arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom Yahweh knew face to face, 11 in regard to all the signs and wonders which Yahweh sent him to do in the land of Egypt against Pharaoh, all his servants, and all his land, 12 and in regard to all the mighty power and in regard to all the great terror which Moses did in the sight of all Israel."* I think that's a wonderful summation of Moses' life. There's no one like Moses. He knew Yahweh face to face. God used him to do incredible signs and wonders in accordance with the revelation given him. Yes, there were times when Moses was tired and ready to quit. There were times when he blew up. But the overall projection of his life was that he was **a faithful servant of Yahweh** (v. 5). **Hebrews 3:1-6** calls him **a faithful servant in God's household**. He wasn't known for being popular or wealthy or successful or perfect. He was known for being *faithful*. He kept serving His Savior actively, selflessly, faithfully, until his dying breath. What a life sentence!

### **Be remember for being faithful.**

So how about *your life sentence*? *Your epitaph*? How's it going to read? How are you going to be remembered? I don't know about you, but I don't want to just be remembered as "a nice guy." I don't want to be remembered for having "nice stuff" that I couldn't take with me. I want to be remembered for being faithful and finishing well. We should all want more than anything to hear those words from Jesus: *"Well done, good and faithful servant"* (Matt. 25:23).

---

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Doug Bookman and Dr. Mary Buck discuss The Urim and Thumim on the *On Script Biblical World* podcast, October 27, 2021. <https://www.podbean.com/ep/pb-yrepy-111541b>

<sup>2</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities*, 4:8:48

<sup>3</sup> Merrill, Eugene H. *Deuteronomy* (NAC; Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 453.