

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Deuteronomy: Moses' Great Appeal For Israel To Obey God For Blessing Part VIII: Planning For Maintaining God's Treaty With Israel Beyond The Life Of Moses B. Learning From Moses' Life To Heed God's Will Over Self-Fulfillment (Deuteronomy 32:44-34:12)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Many people today focus on self-fulfillment as their ultimate goal in life, a fact we can illustrate as follows:

(1) Peggy Noonan's article, "Apathy in the Executive" in her "Declarations" column of The Wall Street Journal, May 3-4, 2014, p. A13, wrote of President Obama that you get "a sense he's telling people as much as he feels he can within the parameters of political safety, and no more." In "governing, . . . only the most demanding and important of jobs" seem "consistently" to "arouse his engagement and focus . . ." Then, "(t)he aspect of the presidency he seems to enjoy most is the perks -- the splashy vacations, the planes, the hoops, the golf." (Ibid.)

According to Ms. Noonan, the president is focused on making self-fulfillment his ultimate goal in life.

(2) The high importance of attaining self-fulfillment appears in many business leaders, too: Investor-advisory firm, Glass, Lewis & Co. recently reported of Goldman Sachs Group, Inc.: "Overall, the company paid [executives] more than its peers, but performed moderately worse than its peers." (Saabira Chaudhuri and Joann S. Lublin, "Advisory Firm Flunks Goldman's Pay Plan," Ibid., p. B2) With top executives being allowed to revel in big salaries while not leading their companies to perform even with the competition exposes a preoccupation with self-fulfillment.

(3) Yet, the focus on self-fulfillment exists in many evangelicals: Millie Ziegler Hemingway's article, "To Heaven and Back Is an Old Story" in the journal's "Houses of Worship" column (Ibid., April 25, 2014, p. A11) wrote of best seller, "Heaven Is for Real," that tells how 3-year-old Colton Burpo in a "serious appendix surgery" allegedly "left his body and visited heaven," with Colton later vividly describing "relatives who had died decades prior and events that happened before he was born," Ibid. Colton's father, Pastor Todd Burpo of Crossroads Wesleyan Church in Imperial, Nebraska, believed and recorded his son's experience that was then made into the best seller, Ibid.

Ms. Hemingway critiqued: "Where Christians once longed for complete communion with God, many now think of the great hereafter as the best family reunion imaginable, where God is relegated to the role of guest star." [We will address questions often raised about such near-death experiences in our sermon conclusion.]

Need: We then ask, "What does GOD think of making one's ultimate goal in life personal fulfillment, and why?!"

- I. **After Moses taught his "Song of Moses" to Israel in Deuteronomy 31:30-32:45, he urged her to heed the entire Law of God that she might PROLONG her life in the Promised Land, Deuteronomy 32:44-47.**
- II. **However, this appeal for a PROLONGED LIFE for ISRAEL is SHARPLY CONTRASTED in the context with MOSES' own REDUCED LIFE due to a SELF-GLORIFYING sin, Deut. 32:48-52; Num. 20:7-11:**
 - A. After Moses told Israel to obey all of God's Law to **prolong** her **days** in the Promised Land, the Lord told him to climb a mountain and view the Promised Land, but then to **die** on that mountain much like his brother Aaron had died since Moses with Aaron had not sanctified God at Meribah, Deut. 32:44-47 with 32:48-52.
 - B. If we review that Numbers 20:7-13 event, we note that Moses and Aaron had not spoken to the rock to yield water as a miracle that would glorify God as the Lord had told them to do, but Moses rather struck it after he and Aaron had said, "Hear now, ye rebels; must *we* fetch you water out of this rock?" (Numbers 20:10 KJV)
 - C. Their *sin* was an act of *self-glorification* though **GOD** had intended to *use* these *men* to *glorify HIMSELF!*
- III. **TRAGICALLY, when God then directed Moses to DIE, even at age 120, Moses STILL POSSESSED the HUMAN RESOURCES to have CONTINUED to have LIVED SIGNIFICANTLY LONGER (as follows):**
 - A. Physically, even at age 120, Moses was in excellent health, humanly capable of living significantly longer:
 1. God had Moses climb a "very high" Mount Pisgah (Z. P. E. B., v. Four, p. 800; Deut. 32:49-50; 34:1) and there die, a climb that no one who was close to death due to physical weakness would be able to do.
 2. Deuteronomy 34:7 reports that though Moses died at age 120 years, his eyesight was still sharp and his "vigor unabated" (ESV), a report of a person who **physically** still had a lot more years to live!
 - B. Occupationally, the day he died, Moses was capable by God's power to continue to serve as a prophet as seen in his blessing that **extensively** predicting events that would occur to each of Israel's tribes, Deut. 33:1-29:
 1. On the **day** God had Moses climb the mountain, see the Promised Land and die, Moses preceded heeding that order by giving Israel a blessing like a father about to die (Deut. 32:48-52; 33:1ff with Gen. 49:1-33).
 2. That blessing **accurately** and **extensively predicted** the **future** of *each tribe*, Deuteronomy 33:2-29:

- a. Moses' Deuteronomy 33:6 appeal for the tribe of Reuben to thrive shows the future threat of the tribe's decline as it would be exposed to Moab east of the Jordan, *Ryrie St. Bible, KJV*, 1978, fn. to Deut. 33:6.
 - b. Moses called for God to bring the tribe of Judah into leadership of Israel (Deut. 33:7) in conformity to Jacob's earlier prediction (Gen. 49:8-12) about the later rise of David's throne and the Messiah from Judah.
 - c. Moses also predicted that Levi would be responsible to be faithful as he himself had done in leading Israel to understand the Law and in leading the nation in worship at the tabernacle, Deuteronomy 33:8-11.
 - d. The tribe of Benjamin was predicted by Moses one day to be the dwelling of the Lord, and the temple mount was much later located just inside Benjamin's border, Deut. 33:12; *Ibid.*, Ryrie, fn. to Deut. 33:12.
 - e. Joseph's sons, represented in the tribes of Ephraem and Manasseh, were predicted by Moses to have the "choicest part of the land" of Israel, Deut. 33:13-17; *Ibid.*, Ryrie, fn. to Deut. 33:13-17.
 - f. Moses predicted the tribe of Zebulun would succeed in "commercial dealings, including sea trade, and Issachar, in his agricultural pursuits (in thy tents)," Deut. 33:18-19; *Ibid.*, fn. to Deut. 33:18-19.
 - g. The tribe of Gad, according to Moses, would obtain a piece of land fit for a lawgiver, but that he would help the other tribes conquer the land of Canaan, Deut. 33:20-21; *Ibid.*, fn. to Deut. 33:20-21.
 - h. Moses predicted that the tribe of Dan would aggressively establish itself in Bashan in Israel's far north, though its original allotment was in Southern Israel, Deut. 33:22; *Ibid.*, fn. to Deut. 33:22; Judges 18.
 - i. The tribe of Naphtali was predicted by Moses to obtain the "fertile land west and south of the Lake of Galilee," Deuteronomy 33:23; *Ibid.*, fn. to Deuteronomy 33:23.
 - j. Moses claimed that the tribe of Asher would gain notoriety for its olive production, and "be given strength to secure Israel's northern border," Deut. 33:24-25; *Ibid.*, fn. to Deut. 33:24-25.
 - k. In summation, Moses predicted how the Lord in His divine attributes would bless the tribes in the Promised Land and enable them to gain victory and peace over her enemies, Deuteronomy 33:26-29.
- C. Then, at age 120, in a patristic culture, Moses was at his peak for influencing others, Deuteronomy 31:2; 34:7.
- IV. Yet, REGARDLESS of his capacity to have lived SIGNIFICANTLY LONGER, Moses DIED for having lusted in SELF-FULFILLMENT for more GLORY, Deuteronomy 34:1-6.**
- V. Incredibly, that self-fulfilling goal was FOOLISH, for GOD had ALREADY GREATLY HONORED him:**
- A. God so honored Moses before *Israel* that she (1) mourned for him for 30 days and (2) readily heeded Joshua, for Moses was the one who had laid hands on Joshua publicly to condone him, Deuteronomy 34:8-9.
 - B. God so honored Moses before the *world* that he ended up with an unrivaled record, Deut. 34:10-12: (1) all through his ministry, God spoke to Moses face to face unlike He did to any other person (Deut. 34:10; Num. 12:6-8) and (2) the miracles Moses performed in God's might surpassed those of all others, Deut. 34:11-12.

Lesson: For focusing on fulfilling himself with more glory versus doing God's will, Moses, the man God already highly honored, tragically saw his lifespan shortened just when he was at his human peak about to enter Canaan.

Application: (1) May we trust in Christ to be saved, John 3:16. (2) Then, may we learn from Moses' life that our lives are NOT for US to use for SELF-FULFILLMENT, but for GOD'S GLORY, and so FOCUS on God's WILL.

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

In our sermon introduction, we cited an article by Mollie Ziegler Hemingway that critiqued the book, "Heaven Is for Real" about a 3-year-old boy who allegedly went to heaven and returned. Ms. Hemingway complained that the book relegated God to being a guest star in heaven with a focus on man over God opposite our sermon lesson. Thus, we address this book and its focus, and answer questions that such near-death accounts often raise (as follows):

(1) First, Ms. Hemingway's critique of the book, "Heaven Is for Real" is **CORRECT**. The fact that the book focuses heavily on human relationships over relating to God discredits the book's whole story line, for **wherever heaven is described in the BIBLE, God is its CENTRAL ATTRACTION, NOT a GUEST STAR!**

(2) Also, near-death experiences are just that, **experiences**, and Deuteronomy 13:1-4 with 2 Corinthians 1:13-15 reveal **experiences CAN be false**, and **Satan** often masquerades as an angel of light and can **use** them to **deceive**. God wills that we heed His **Word in honor of HIMSELF above self-fulfilling experiences, Deuteronomy 13:3b-4.**

(3) Then, **Jesus** has the keys of Hades and of death, He is sovereign over where the soul goes at death and over the dying process itself (Revelation 1:17-18), and He does not author near-death experiences that have unbiblical elements (John 1:14)! All experiences that depart from or influence men away from Biblical truth are not of God!

May we trust in Christ for salvation and eternal life, John 3:16. Then, may we have as our life's focus God's will for us, not some self-fulfillment idea authored by another source, and so attain our highest calling.