

# Glimpses of Heaven

*Then the Lord said to [Moses], “This is the land of which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob... I have caused you to see it with your eyes, but you shall not cross over there.”*

## Deuteronomy 34: 4

A Sermon by Rev. Derek Elphick

### Introduction

Picture Moses at the top of this mountain

What might he have been thinking?

- Gratitude or disappointment?
- Gratitude for being given this “glimpse” of the Promised Land before he died?
- Or disappointment, regret that he couldn’t enter it?
- A failed mission or was this panoramic view below him a powerful reminder of what he’d been fighting for all along?

### Mountain Top Experiences

There’s something very special, even sacred, when standing atop a mountain

Particularly exhilarating if we hiked up the mountain on foot

A physically elevated view, perspective

So high we can actually “look down” and survey what’s below us

Just for a moment, all our cares and worries are put aside

We feel at peace, all is right with the world

### Mountains in the Word

Think of how many important events, watershed moments, took place on the top of a mountain

Mt. Sinai – the giving of the Ten Commandments

Mt. Carmel – the showdown between Elijah & 450 prophets of Baal  
 Mt. of Olives – became a “sanctuary” for the Lord Himself  
 “Sermon on the Mt.” – sometimes forget Lord delivered His sermon from  
 the top of a mountain (from an elevated position)

Today, we are considering the spiritual significance of Moses being led by the Lord to the top of Mt. Nebo so that he could get a glimpse of the Promised Land before he died.

What was the use? What was the point?

### **The Elevation of the Intellect or Understanding**

Consider the *correspondence* of mountains in the Word, and what climbing a mountain represents:

It has to do with our intellect or understanding and the miraculous, life-saving function it serves

In our reading from *True Christianity* this morning you heard the astonishing declaration that the human mind not only has the capacity to be raised up into the light of heaven but can actually “dwell with angels in heaven” (see TC 69).

Listen to what we’re taught about the understanding with respect to its *capacity and function*:

Our intellect makes known what is good and what is evil.

It advises the will in order that the will may choose between the two and do that which it prefers.

The intellect alone persuades and when it does it draws to it the will and so reduces it into compliance.

An elevated understanding or intellect enables people to be reformed for everyone is reformed by means of their understanding.

Without the ability to elevate the intellect above the love of the will, we would not be human but animals. Consequently, neither could we make choices and by choice do that which is good and useful, and thus we could not be reformed and be led to heaven and live to eternity.

**Married Love nos. 490, 491, 495, 498 (portions)**

This human capacity to rise above our present circumstances is an act of pure mercy. It's a gift from the Lord.

The Lord gives us a way to detach ourselves from our feelings and emotions

A way to break free from the grip of angry, cruel, unkind thoughts feelings which drag our minds down, far away from the light of heaven

What are the practical implications of these teachings?

1. It's a reminder of what we learned in our reading this morning that we all walk midway between heaven & hell *for the duration of our lives here on earth!* Sometimes we choose to look upward to heaven, sometimes we choose to look downward to hell.
2. It explains why we sometimes feel like a fraud or unauthentic – one day we are thoughtful, charitable and helpful; two days later we are unthinking, uncharitable and unhelpful.
3. Keeping our mind elevated is highly preferable over basement level thinking because this is how we maintain spiritual perspective.

When it comes to our faith, our religion, our spiritual journey, we need to take advantage of those moments when the Lord gives us these “ah ha” moments, when He speaks directly to our intellect because, as we just learned...

...it's the intellect that teaches our old will how to live and act  
 ...it's the intellect that can differentiate between good & evil  
 ...it the intellect that “advises” and “persuades” our old will (self) to choose a higher, more elevated path

But most importantly, it's an informed or enlightened intellect, a mind that has been edified, uplifted, moved and stirred by the teachings of the Lord's Word that offers a way forward

### **Appreciating the View**

Let's go back to the top of Mt. Nebo and ask the question we began with...

What might Moses have been thinking?

- Gratitude or disappointment?
- Gratitude for being given this "glimpse" of the Promised Land?
- Or disappointment, regret that he couldn't enter it?

When looking at Moses' long and eventful life we might get stuck on the fact that he only got to peak into the Promised Land, not enter it.

We might be tempted to view his life as a failed mission, as merely one crisis after another, one negative setback after another...

with little forward motion, little relief  
little peace or happiness

After all, Moses had to

- confront Pharaoh in Egypt to let his people go
- endure repeated challenges to his leadership
- withstand random attacks from vicious enemies in the wilderness
- experience excruciating hunger and thirst
- convince people not to give up and go back to their old life in Egypt

But like everyone else, Moses learned to adapt and grow stronger as he accepted help from the Lord.

He was privileged to know the Lord "*face to face...*" (Deut. 34:10).  
to receive the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai

to oversee the construction of the Tabernacle which provided worship of the Lord during the wilderness years.

Moses clearly had his moments of peace, calm and happiness.

### **Wilderness Tasks**

And so this view of the Promised Land from the top of Mt. Nebo serves as a reminder that everything which had come before was worth it!

It wasn't a waste, a pointless exercise...

It wasn't even a punishment.

It was part of the Lord's plan, a part of His providence...

“Wandering” in the wilderness for 40 years?  
Sounds directionless, w/out purpose. It's not.  
40 = temptation/trial/struggle

We aren't born again without struggle, without conflict.

Imagine a different route for Moses and the Children of Israel

No confrontation w/Pharaoh, no hardship, no trials, completely “smooth sailing” from beginning to end – no conflict, no argument, no hard-feelings, jealousy, anger, disappointment, or resentment.

We couldn't even identify with this version of the Exodus  
It's not how life works

We become who we are by virtue of our choices

- by virtue of how we choose to interpret setback & disappointment
- by learning from our mistakes, by realizing that our faith and trust in the Lord is directly proportional to us turning more and more of our life over to Him

This, of course, is what life in the wilderness represents.

1. Obedience to God's law (10 commandments)
2. Trusting that the Lord will provide (food & water)
3. Becoming a warrior for the Lord (battling evil)
4. Spending time in prayer w/the Lord (Tabernacle)

## Glimpses of Heaven

Even though Moses never got to enter the Promised Land, the Lord still took him to the top of a mountain to get a glimpse of it.

The same is true for us.

We can't fully enter heaven while living in this world but the Lord still gives us a glimpse of it. In fact, we get *many* glimpses of heaven during our lifetime, more than we perhaps realize.

We get a taste of it

- when holding a newborn child
- when walking in the woods
- when biking a trail
- when swimming in a pristine lake
- when flying high above this planet in a plane

We get a taste of it

- when engaged in good conversation
- in life-long learning
- in friendship
- in laughter
- in marriage
- in forgiveness and reconciliation

We get glimpses of what heaven's like

- when we do something kind and useful for others
- when we read the Word

- when we, with the help of the Lord, battle against our own selfishness and come out the other side feeling grateful and happy we did.

### **Accepting the Lord's Invitation**

The Scriptures are full of the Lord's invitation to rise up

**Psalms** - *"Lead me to the Rock, the truth, that is higher than I..."*

**Gospel of Matthew...** *"And seeing the multitudes, Jesus went up on a mountain..."*

**Isaiah** - *"Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord...He will teach us of His ways, and we shall walk in His paths..."*

Let us remember to accept the Lord's invitation

- because this is how we gain spiritual clarity.

Only from an elevated mental height, heaven's light, are we able to look down on our life below...

...and make sense of what's going on and what needs to change (see ML 490, 491, 495, 498).

The Lord is giving us "mountain top" experiences, periodic glimpses of heaven, to remind us of the good fight

- that no matter the hardship or difficulty we may be going through, our decision to put the Lord and others first will always be the right one.

**AMEN.**