

Session 2

June 11, 2023

MOSES AND JOSHUA

Numbers 27:12-23

Being a good mentor doesn't mean replicating oneself. Rather, it means investing what you have learned into someone else who can make good with the values you instill. It's not about passing *personalities*; it's about passing *principles*. The example of Moses and Joshua reminds us that God didn't need another Moses to lead in the conquest of Canaan. He needed a Joshua! And when the time came, Joshua was ready...because Moses had prepared him. The exchange in Numbers 27 has four parts.

Conclusion (vv. 12-14). Life is lived in chapters and seasons. And so it is with nations. For Moses, this was the end of one incredible journey, but it was also the beginning of a new one; one already traveled by his ancestors, that began with an earthly sojourn and would end with them in a heavenly one (see Heb 11:8:10). For the nation, this was it: their previous generation—and hopefully the rebellion that went with it—had died in the wilderness (see Num. 14:20-35), but this nation of wanderers was finally ready to establish their homeland. The tenor of these verses is interesting. Moses is recording his own fate. The penalty of his own personal rebellion was about to be faced (see Deut. 32:51-52); yet there is no bitterness in his words. He even recounted the context of his costly sin (v. 14). Perhaps he had through the years resigned himself to the fact that he would never enter the land of promise. But more likely than resignation was anticipation; his faith had grown. He would not join his brethren in the land of Canaan, but rather would join his fathers in the land of glory! For reflection: *At what point do you think our focus must change from the earthly to the heavenly? Why do you think it is that so hard to do?*

Continuation (vv. 15-17). Just because Moses would not enter the land with his people, did not mean he didn't care about them and their fate. No one knew the good, bad, and ugly of Israel better than Moses. And no one was more concerned about their wellbeing than he was. "So Moses *appealed* to the Lord..." The phrase is well translated here. The word *appeal* has a variety of meanings, all related to communication. But here it is in an *emphatic position*. The idea is one of strength and concern. Moses was *pleading* with God not to leave His "sheep without a shepherd" (v. 17). For reflection: *This metaphor shows up in Matt. 9:36ff. What exactly does it mean? What do you think the implication is in both the OT and NT contexts? What is the application today?*

Consecration (vv. 18-21). Lest we think that Moses was twisting God's arm, the text is clear: God had already ordained a man to lead His people. Notice the connection between Moses' plea, "May the Lord, the God of the *spirits of all flesh* (v. 16); and God's response "a man who has the *Spirit in him*" (v. 18). The connection is clearly a spiritual one. The God who is a Spirit, and the God who rules all spirits, is the God who has already filled Joshua with His Spirit! Now Moses must present him as his successor. First, Moses is directed to "lay his hands on him." As in the New Testament act of ordination, this was likely symbolic. But as an affirmation of his office and a bestowal of authority (v. 20), it would have meant much to Moses, to Joshua, and to the people. That it was done before Eleazar the priest (v. 21) was a reminder to Joshua and the nation, that his leadership was not only divinely appointed, but would be divinely guided. For

reflection: *If God had already chosen Moses' successor, then why did Moses plead with God? What role do you think Moses played in this exchange?*

Commission (vv. 22-23). Although Moses was the one who interceded on behalf of the nation, it was God who ordained his successor in response, and God who put in order the passing of the mantle. Thus Moses "did as the Lord commanded him." That Joshua represented God's leadership was indicated by the presence of Eleazar the priest. That his leadership was to be unquestioned was indicated by his presentation "to the entire community" (v. 22). Imagine the satisfaction Moses must have felt knowing that the nation was in good hands...and the incredible honor it was for Joshua to follow the only prophet whom the Lord knew "face to face" (Deut. 34:10). For reflection: *Moses' chapter was ending, and Joshua's was just beginning. What applications can you make for your own life? The life of your church?*