

Moses the Man of God

We come each week to remember the offering up of Messiah, and his resurrection by which we are saved. In many particulars, the life, death and resurrection of our Lord are foreshadowed by Moses – indeed, Moses himself spoke of he who was to come:

“For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, *like unto me*; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people” (Acts 3:22-23).

We come therefore, to hear the words of the Prophet like unto Moses, and to heed his sayings, that we might not be destroyed, but saved from our sins. There is much instruction in considering Moses himself as a *type* of our Lord, and the example that he gave of being the meekest man in all the earth, and this we shall endeavour to do this morning.

The story of Moses really begins with the outstanding faith expressed by two Hebrew women, by the names of Shiphrah, and Puah. Few in our day will ever have heard of these women, but they were arguably the most faithful women of their day. They were the Hebrew midwives, who defied Pharaoh’s command to destroy the male children of Israel: “the midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men children alive” (Exod. 1:18). It was because of their faithfulness to the God of their fathers, that the baby Moses was spared death, and be permitted to be hidden by his parents: “By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw that he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king’s commandment” (Heb. 11:23). But as time went on, it became increasingly difficult to hide the growing child, and so further action was required. The Exodus narrative informs us how that his mother, “when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river’s brink. And his sister stood afar off, to wit what would be done to him” (Exod. 2:3-4).

Sometimes these actions are thought to be out of fear and desperation, with Amram and Jochebed not knowing what to do to save their son. But the Scripture is plain: despise their straitened circumstances, “they were not afraid of the king’s commandment”. They were strong in faith, to such an extent that they are referred to in Hebrews chapter 11 as an example for us to follow. They feared the God of Abraham, and in their actions, they had the faith that Yahweh would not permit their son to perish. It would appear that their actions were influenced by the Ark constructed by Noah, by which he survived the judgments of God which were to come upon the earth. They constructed an ark, and placed their son within it. And by a twist of irony, circumstances were brought about whereby Pharaoh’s own daughter saw the 3 month old baby, seeing his tears and hearing his crying: “when she saw the ark among the flags, she sent her maid to fetch it. And when she had opened it, she saw the child: and behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews’ children” (Exod. 2:5-6). It has truly been said that here were the tears that saved a nation: through her compassion on the crying baby, Pharaoh’s daughter preserved the future leader of Israel, unwittingly providing the means by which the holy nation were to be brought out of Egypt. Though the babe’s infantile weakness, the mighty hand of God was seen to be operative, preparing the way for the deliverance of His People. Moses (we don’t know his original name), was thus brought up in Pharaoh’s own household, by his own daughter, with his mother as his nurse. He was “learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds” (Acts 7:22). There can be no doubt that Moses’ mother would have told him the truth about his own people, and their expectation for a leader to come and deliver them out of Pharaoh’s hand. When he was 40 years old, he determined to visit his people, and show them that he would be that deliverer:

“When he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel. And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian: For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not” (Acts 7:23-25).

The Exodus narrative describes how that Moses killed the Egyptian who was oppressing one of his fellow Israelites, supposing that by doing this, the people would understand that he was going to deliver the nation. But the time was not yet come, and instead, they said: “who made thee a prince and a judge over us?” (Exod. 2:14). “They understood not”, and so rejected him. When Pharaoh heard what had happened, “he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian” (Exod. 2:15). Humanly speaking, the situation seemed as dark as ever: Egypt was oppressing the people of Israel, their self-appointed deliverer was driven to be a refugee in a foreign land as he had been rejected by the ones who he came to save. There seemed to be no hope, and all was lost. The situation developed for another 40 years, and Moses seemed to be resigned to keeping sheep in the wilderness, where he married and begat 2 sons.

However, all was taking place according to the Divine Timetable. In the course of time, it pleased the Lord to call Moses back into Egypt to deliver his people. The first time, Moses had taken it upon himself, but now 40 years later, he was appointed by Yahweh: “when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sina an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush” (Acts 7:30). The voice of the Lord spoke to him thus:

“I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into Egypt. This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? The same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the Angel which appeared to him in the bush” (Acts 7:32-35).

Notice the difference: the first time Moses revealed himself to his people, he took it upon himself to be a deliverer. But the second time, it was by Divine Appointment: Yahweh was the One who “came down to deliver them.” The first time, Moses used his own strength to save his people: the second time, he would go and demonstrate the strength of Israel’s God as the basis upon which the holy nation would depart from Egypt. He was now the chosen one of God, having been humbled by a 40 year sojourn in the wilderness. Previously, he was “mighty in words and in deeds” (Acts 7:22), but now, he lacked the confidence to be the spokesperson for Yahweh:

“And Moses said unto Yahweh, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue” (Exod. 4:10).

So it was, that in his humbled state, Moses had become the ideal person to be the promised deliverer. Out of his weakness, the strength of Yahweh’s power would be made known, and declared to both the Egyptians, and Israel.

The Angel appeared to Moses through the medium of a burning bush. But what was the significance of such a thing: why use a burning, yet unconsumed bush? Isaiah the prophet recounts the promise of God towards His People:

“... Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee ...” (Isa. 43:1-2).

Moses himself had passed through the waters, and God was demonstrated to be with him. Israel were being tried in a furnace of affliction – yet they would not be destroyed, just like the unconsumed burning bush. In these symbols, we see the promise of Divine protection upon his people, enabling and empowering them to leave Egypt behind, with a high hand.

Hebrews chapter 11 continues the narrative, speaking of Moses “choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward” (Heb. 11:25-26). The Greek for “had respect” used here, signifies to *look away*. The sense being that Moses looked away from the glamour and pleasures of Egypt, to view eternal things instead. Accordingly, the record continues: “by faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured **as seeing**

him who is invisible” (Heb. 11:27). By contrast to the first time, when Moses fled from the wrath of Pharaoh in fear for his life, now he is strong in faith, looking to spiritual, eternal things. Not fearing the wrath of the king, and trusting in the power of his God, Moses was now mature and spiritually developed enough to be a ruler and a deliverer for his people.

There is a powerful example for ourselves in this aspect of Moses’ life. The world around us is filled with all sorts of pleasurable things that we can readily avail ourselves with. The “cares of this life” can so easily ensnare us – not just the worry about temporal problems, but the preoccupation of things that do not profit us. These concerns, to use the terms of Messiah’s parable, are the thorns that can so easily grow up and strangle the emerging seed of the Word. We must learn to “look away” from them, to the things of the spirit that can only be discerned by spiritual vision. Accordingly, the Apostle describes his own circumstance: “... we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Cor. 4:18).

Following the great declaration of Yahweh’s might through the infliction of various plagues, Pharaoh and his people drove Israel out, who thus emerged as “a nation from the midst of another nation, by temptations, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm, and by great terrors” according to all that Yahweh did before their eyes (Deut. 4:34). The prophecy of Isaiah has something to say by way of alluding to this:

“... then he remembered the days of old, Moses, and his people, saying, Where is he that brought them up out of the sea ***with the shepherd of his flock?*** Where is he that put his holy Spirit within him? That led them by the right hand of Moses with his glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make himself and everlasting Name” (Isa. 63:11-12)?

The work of Moses in relation to caring for the people then, was an extension of his work in the wilderness in the preceding 40 year period. It was the work of a shepherd, but now shepherding people, not animals. In this, he showed a pattern to be later repeated by Christ himself, the Great Shepherd. The Scriptures are clear, that when Israel passed through the waters of the Red Sea, they were undergoing a spiritual baptism: the things of Egypt were to be put to death, and they people would emerge from the other side as a new nation. Accordingly, Paul writes: “Moreover brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all ***baptised unto Moses*** in the cloud and in the sea ...” (1 Cor. 10:1-2). This foreshadowed the way in which men and women would be baptised into Christ, into his death, and subsequent resurrection. Accordingly, the writer to the Hebrews, in alluding back to Isaiah 63 spake thus: “Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great ***shepherd of the sheep***, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will ...” (Heb. 13:20-21). Israel of old were led through the waters by their “shepherd of the flock”, whereas we are led through the blood of the everlasting covenant by “that great shepherd of the sheep”, even Christ crucified and risen again.

Exodus chapter 14 describes how that after leaving Egypt, and being pursued by Pharaoh’s army the people were hemmed in on all sides. They had the Egyptians behind them, and before them an insurmountable barrier of water, known as the Red Sea. Humanly speaking, there was no way out: their destruction seemed a certainty. But we know what happened: Moses lifted up his rod under Divine direction, and the sea parted, allowing the people to pass through as on dry ground: “by faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land; which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned” (Heb. 11:29). The parted waters provided salvation to the Israel of God, and destruction to the Egyptians. Their redemption was clear and definite. When the waters returned, there was not going back: the enemy was destroyed, and the people were saved.

Again, these things are pregnant with meaning and exhortation for ourselves. We, having passed through the waters of baptism, have crucified the flesh, and have put to death the old man of sin. But that death should be as absolute as the destruction of Egypt, and the death of mightiest men of their army. There is no going back for those who desire to inherit the land of promise. Like Abraham of old, they were to forsake the things of the world, and press on to the promised land. As the Spirit describes for us again: “... if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly:

wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city” (Heb. 11:15-16).

We find, however, that life in such circumstances is not easy. It is through much tribulation that we shall enter into the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22). All too often we can find ourselves hemmed in on all sides by worldly concerns, worries, and distractions. But the Lord is with us, even in those dire straits, like as with Israel of old: “there hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also *make a way to escape*, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13). Israel were made a way to escape through a symbolic baptism, though the waters of death (to the Egyptians) to life on the other side. Even so, we have a way to escape the cares of this world – even if that way is through death itself. Ultimately, the true escape is to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light in the age to come. So, as we have seen, our main focus is to be on eternal things, seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Mat. 6:33). Through the waters of Baptism, our relationship with our Maker is changed: we become begotten again by the Word, and become His Sons and Daughters through faith in Christ Jesus. And it is through Baptism that we can escape the corruption of the world through lust, being delivered from the wrath to come, and recipients of the Grace of God bestowed upon the faithful.

There is another aspect to Moses that we need to consider in relation to our Lord Jesus Christ. Numbers 12 describes Moses: “Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth” (Num. 12:3). This meekness is demonstrated on two occasions where his authority was challenged: firstly by the murmuring of the people against him, and secondly, the company of Korah Dathan and Abiram. On both of those occasions his response was the same: “when Moses heard it, he fell upon his face” (Num. 14:5. 16:4). He made no attempt to defend himself, or justify his position. He made no railing accusation against the rebels, but he rather prostrated himself before his God. And our Master did the same, when faced with those who challenged his authority and teaching. So the record describes he “who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously” (1 Pet. 2:23). Our Master likewise made no attempt to defend himself, or revile his accusers, but committed himself to his God. And of course, we should do likewise.

Finally, we come to Matthew chapter 11, where the Prophet like unto Moses describes himself in terms which appear to be alluding to the record concerning Moses:

“come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest for your souls” (Mat. 11:28-29).

By contrast to Pharaoh, who increased the burden upon the people, Messiah is able to lift the burdens from us. We seek to lay aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and cast our burdens of vexation and worry upon the Lord. Whereas Pharaoh increased the workload, Messiah will give us rest. And just as Moses was the meekest man in all the earth in his day, Messiah is “meek and lowly in heart”. He is able to redeem and save those who would come to him in faith for forgiveness and mercy, who trust in his power to save, and lead them out of spiritual Egypt. He leads us out from the ways of the world, and we must follow him on that narrow way which leads to life. Like Moses, he is a great leader and shepherd, and like sheep, we must know his voice and go wherever it pleases him to take us. Then, again like Moses, he will bring us through the wilderness of life, to the glorious inheritance of the saints in light. Let us then, take heed to the example of Moses – and that of our Lord, to the end that we might be found faithful in that glorious day to come.

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