

Bible Study #3 Exodus 2.1–10 02/10/2021

The focus of Chapter 1 had been the growth of the nation, The Children of Israel. Now in Chapter 2 we are introduced to the main human character of Exodus, Moses. He will lead until the time of Joshua who takes over following Moses.

The life of Moses is broken down into three forty year periods. He spends the first forty years living in the home of the Pharaoh and thus receives an excellent education as well as leadership training along with the sons of the Pharaoh. Next he has forty years of training in the wilderness after he has to flee because he murdered an Egyptian who was beating an Israelite. His last forty year are spent leading Israel to the promised land, which he will not be allowed to enter.

When I turned eighty years old, I said I hope my most meaningful service to God was just ahead of me, just as it was for Moses. I don't think God will keep me around till I'm 120, but my prayer is that God will use me up till my earthly end. The only retirement plan I find in the Bible is called a grave. I have requested Philippians 1:21 as text for my memorial service: "For me to live is Christ, but to die is gain."

One of the interesting facets of these 10 verses is the absence of names. Even the central figure Moses is not named until the last verse. Ultimately, the Bible will provide the answer to the names of the children of Israel in the story. The names of the Pharaoh and his daughter are not revealed in the Scriptures, but we have some educated guesses.

Moses is an example of a type of Christ in the Bible. Both the mother and father of this child are descendants of Levi, who become the tribe of the priests later in Exodus. (Remember that Jesus had the threefold office of prophet, priest, and king.) This threefold office helps us understand who Jesus really is.

The prophet speaks for God to us. The priest speaks to God for our benefit, offering sacrifice for sin. And now Jesus is exalted on the throne of heaven ruling over the universes and all things according to the Father's will and for good of the church (Eph. 1:15–23).

The translation of v. 2 disguises a connect to Genesis. When the mother of Moses saw the baby she saw he was good (same word God used to describe his creation).

A host of wordplays resound in the Hebrew words behind she got a papyrus basket (tebah) and coated it with tar (khemar) and pitch and put it among the reeds (sup). "Sup" is the name of the Sea of Reeds (or Papyrus Sea) that the people would cross in Exodus 14. Moses' deliverance is an example of the salvation of the people. Both were saved where the water and the papyrus reeds (sup) meet.

Her coating the "basket" (tebah) or "ark" with "pitch" fulfills the instruction given to Noah for the "ark" (tebah; Gen. 6:14; 7:7). In both cases the word means "a chest" or "container in which something precious is stored." The baby's basket was an ark of salvation for the boy. As with Noah, the salvation of humanity depended on this little ark.

It is ironic that the word sounds like the word for "coffin" in Egyptian. The "tar" (khemar) or "plaster" that sealed the basket ark also carries literary weight, as the "mortar" (1:14) with which the laborers toiled is the same word. The same substance Pharaoh used as a means of oppression, a mother's hands spread as an agent of salvation. Exodus 2:1

One aspect of this story often overlooked is that the baby was hid in the home for 3 months before being placed in the river. In my years in Sunday School I don't remember that ever being mentioned. It was only when I began to read the Bible myself that I became aware of this fact.

There are two great back stories here which I want you to see. The pharaoh wanted the mighty river to be an agent of death for all the boy babies. Yet it was a boy who found safety in pharaoh's own house who would be the downfall of a pharaoh in latter years.

Women, the midwives were also to be agents of death. But they disobeyed their king by sparing baby boys. Then it was his own daughter who rescued this baby who would be used by God to have a significant place in the history of Egypt. Notice how clearly God uses all that pharaoh wanted to be agents of death to save his servant. Even when Satan thinks he is winning, he is losing!

When you are trying to hide a baby, crying is the thing you fear the most. Yet, it is in crying that the daughter finds the child who doesn't charm her with his smile, but melts her heart with his tears. Then God arranges in his great wisdom for the very woman who birthed this baby to continue to care for him by her becoming his wet nurse. Only now she even gets paid for doing so!

We have no idea the exact age Moses was when his mother took him back to pharaoh's daughter. She now at least considered him as her adopted child. She is given credit for naming him. I think the best possible explanation of his name is found in the Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background study of Exodus.

"Moses" was frequently used in Egyptian names, such as Ahmose, Thutmose, and Ramesses. Its basic meaning is "to father" or "to be fathered (born)." For example, Thutmose probably means "the god Thoth is born," or perhaps "the god Thoth has fathered" or "born of the god Thoth." Moses' name, then, is really just a half-name: "born of..." One has to wonder if we are to understand this as his real name, as a truncated name with the half containing an Egyptian god's name eliminated so as not to offend Israelite sensibilities, or as a symbolic name meant to represent Moses as partially influenced by Egypt. In any event, the half-name fits the narrative and is left as it is, probably because it sounds like the Hebrew word for "to pull out, retrieve"—in this case, from the water.

John H Walton, Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Old Testament): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 171.

I like the idea of retrieved from the water. Doesn't that describe the people of Israel. They were rescued by the water of the Reed or Red Sea (This will be discussed later.)

Tomorrow we will study 2:11–25.