

**A TIMELY BIRTH**

Moses - Part 1

Exodus 2:1-10

**Intro:** The first five books of the OT are called *The Pentateuch*. That is a title which comes from the Greek, and it means *five books*. And so it includes Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. It is generally agreed among Bible scholars that all five books were written by Moses. Therefore, they are also called *the books of Moses*.

However, as we read these five books, we learn that just the last four have to do with Moses. The book of Genesis begins with creation, rapidly moves to the life of Abraham at the end of chapter eleven, and then covers the next three generations to Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. After Joseph it was probably three hundred and fifty to four hundred years before Moses was born. So Moses did not live until many years after the book of Genesis was history. It is generally accepted that the first eleven chapters of Genesis covered two thousands years, putting the life of Abraham about 2000 B. C., that Moses lives about 1500 years before Christ, and that King David lived about 1000 years before Christ. And these three men, Abraham, Moses, and David are clearly the men who have the pivotal places in all of OT history, and the history of Israel.

It would have been little or no problem for Moses to write Genesis for two reasons. First, much of the history from Adam to Abraham was handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation. But second, because the Holy Spirit guided Moses in writing Genesis just as much as he did Exodus through Deuteronomy. Moses was one of those who wrote as he was moved to write by the Holy Spirit, as the Apostle Peter taught in 2 Peter 1:21.

So there was a period of silence between the history recorded in the book of Genesis and that which we have in the book of Exodus. As I think most of you know, the book of Genesis ends with Joseph bring his father, Jacob, and all of his brothers down into Egypt where he could provide for them during the famine that existed for seven years in that part of the world. They are still there as the book of Exodus begins, but they had multiplied so greatly that there were more Israelites in Egypt than there were Egyptians. And this worried the Egyptians a great deal. The Egyptians were concerned that in a time of war the Israelites might join with the enemy, which could bring about the defeat of Egypt, and enable the

Israelites to get away.

At the time that Moses was born, Joseph had been forgotten. Therefore, the generation at that time would not have known that Joseph had been responsible for the survival of Egypt in that terrible famine many years before any of them was born.

There is another point that we need to recognize. Egypt was the only home that that generation of Israelites had ever known. It was home to them, and it had been home to the fathers, and to their grandfathers, and to their relatives for many years past. So the Israelites really had no reason to want to leave *until the persecution began*. But it seems that not even then were they thinking about going back to Canaan. They just wanted the persecution to stop.

Pharaoh made their work harder to begin with, but they only multiplied even more under that hardship. But then Pharaoh took a more drastic step. He ordered that when the Hebrew midwives were delivering a baby, if it was a boy, they were to kill him. If the baby were a girl, they could let her live.

But verse 17 of chapter 1 tells us that the Hebrew midwives feared God more than they did the Pharaoh, and so boy babies increased as well as girl babies. But Pharaoh finally charged his people that the boy babies were to be cast into the Nile River, but the girls could be spared.

Now it was into this situation that Moses was born. The baby Moses should have been drowned in the Nile River as soon as he was born. Think about this. Pharaoh not only made the infanticide of Hebrew baby boys legal, but he made it obligatory. And the only evidence that the people had that God might be helping at all, was the action taken by the midwives, and now it seemed that even that was being put to a stop. Verse 22 of chapter 1 says Pharaoh made “all his people” responsible to see that the Hebrew boy babies were killed. Talk about a hopeless situation, this was it!

But there is another factor to which I want to call your attention. Please follow as I read the last three verses of chapter 2, verses 24-25. It was not a cry for deliverance from Egypt, nor was it even a cry to God. They were just sighing and crying. But verse 23 tells us that “their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage.” We have to remember that the years in

Egypt had taken their toll on the Israelites spiritually. Many of the Hebrew people had turned to idolatry. God had those who were His people even in those days, but it seems that those who really knew the Lord we in the minority. It was like it is in our own country. When I was a child the USA was called a Christian nation. In most homes you could find a Bible. There was no objection to having “in God we trust” on our money. Schools had baccalaureate services at graduation, and pastors were asked to speak and to pray. There may have been some people who objected to saluting the flag, but if so, they kept it to themselves. But especially in the years that followed World War II there have great and very sad changes. And you all know what kind of an atmosphere covers our country now. People have become more brazen in their sin (although they don’t call sin what it really is). Even in the South which used to be called “the Bible belt,” opponents to the ten commandments were successful in getting it out of a state building in Alabama. Our President is hated because he claims to be a Christian. It has been encouraging to see that with all of the opposition he had, he still was re-elected as our President. We may see a change in the tide, at least for a while.

Well, this kind of a declension had taken place in Egypt among the Hebrew people. There was no further revelation from God after Joseph’s day that we read about. Many people are worried about the way things have gone in our country, but they are not turning to the Lord in any great numbers, seeking His blessing. So the Hebrew people were miserable in Egypt, but they were not really seeking God. And it seemed that God Himself was not paying attention to the troubles His people were going through.

But the truth is that He was! He was deeply concerned about His people. He had not forgotten His promises to Abraham, which had been renewed to Isaac and to Jacob. What was He doing? He was beginning to loosen their roots in preparation for the greatest exodus of people that had ever taken place up to that time. God was preparing to do something that was really great! But, as is usually the case with God, He began what He was about to do in a very insignificant way as far as the Egyptians were concerned, and even as far as the Hebrews were concerned. Among the millions of Israelite babies who were being born, there was one which was to be of special importance. But it did not appear to be important at the time. However, it turned out to be the birth of one of the greatest men who ever lived. I have called it,

## A TIMELY BIRTH

What does the word *timely* mean? It means something that happens at the right time and for the right purpose. Children are always a gift from God, and the birth of every child is special, or it should be, especially to the parents. But in our generation we, too, have legalized infanticide. That is what abortion is; it is infanticide, the murder of babies. And the main reason for this is so people can sin and get rid of the evidence. That is the main reason.

But in the midst of this terrible situation in Egypt a Hebrew baby boy was born whom God was not going to let the Egyptians kill. A bystander could look at the situation and feel that, if there actually was a God, no one needed to be concerned about it because He wasn't doing anything about what was going on. *But He was!*

*However, as He usually works, He begins in a small way.* The birth of Abraham was like that. His parents were not celebrities which everyone knew. The birth of David who became the King of Israel, was insignificant. In fact, he was such an unlikely candidate in his own family, that it was only at the very last that he was called in to meet Samuel who had come to anoint him. And the birth of the Lord Jesus was certainly unobtrusive. It did not make any headlines in Bethlehem. In fact, there was no place for his parents in what we today would call the town hotel, and so our Lord Jesus Christ was born in a stable. That was the most timely birth that there ever has been. Someday He is going to be the King of kings, and the Lord of lords.

To help us understand how insignificant from a human point of view the birth of Moses was, we are not even told the names of his parents at the time of his birth. They were "nobodys." We are told in Exodus 6:20 that Moses' father's name was Amram, and his mother's name was Jochebed. We know that Moses had a brother named Aaron who was three years older than he was, but we don't learn about their ages until we get to Exodus 7:7. We learn from our text that Aaron and Moses had an older sister, but we are not given her name until Exodus 15:20 when she led the women in singing praise to the Lord after the children of Israel had successfully crossed the Red Sea, and then witnessed the drowning of the Pharaoh and the Egyptian army. So how could it be said in any clearer terms that Moses' father and his mother and his sister who went to see what would happen to him when they put him in a basket in the Nile

River, not to drown, but to be picked up by no one less than Pharaoh's daughter! That is the first indication we have that this might be something big! But in chapter 2 we are just told about a man and his wife, both of whom were Levites, who had a son, and they also had a daughter. But they weren't anybody, just some Hebrew slaves.

There is a verse in the prophecy of Zechariah which helps to explain what we are seeing in this second chapter of Exodus. Some of the Israelites had returned from captivity under Zerubbabel, and he was to lead in the rebuilding of the temple which had been destroyed. And he could be seen walking among the ruins holding a plummet in his hand. But this is what we read in Zechariah 4:10:

10 For who hath despised the day of small things ? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven; they are the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth.

Out of that which looked like an insignificant incident in connection with what appeared to be an impossible task, that small incident was to result in a glorious temple for the Lord.

God loves to start with small things so that when the job is done, He is the One Who gets the glory for it all. Would you ever have thought that Peter, a fisherman, would one day speak in Jerusalem and see 3,000 people turn to the Lord?

So here in Exodus 2, after two or three or four hundred years when the Israelites were in Egypt, and no word from God had come, suddenly an unnamed man and his unnamed wife have a baby, and his unnamed sister watched over him to see what would happen to him.

What had these three done up to this point? They had kept the little Hebrew baby alive for three months, but could conceal him no longer. So they made a little basket and daubed it with material to make it water-proof, and then put the basket in the river with the little baby in it. Then they waited to see what would happen.

What did happen? Pharaoh's daughter came down to the river with her maidens and spotted the little basket in the river with a baby in it. She sent her maid into the water to get it, and the princess knew immediately that the baby was a Hebrew child. Then it was that Miriam did a rather bold thing. She ran to the princess and asked her if she could get a

Hebrew woman to come to nurse the child for her. And the princess said, “Go.” So Miriam went and got Jochebed, the mother, and the princess told her to take the child, to nurse him for her, *and she even told Jochebed that she would pay her for taking care of her own child!* Can’t you see the sovereignty of God in all of this?

Years later when Stephen was defending himself before the high priest for preaching the Gospel, and being falsely accused speaking against the temple and the Law of Moses, he had this to say about Moses. And now I am reading from Acts 7, beginning with verse 17:

17 But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt,

18 Till another king arose, which knew not Joseph.

19 The same dealt subtilly with our kindred, and evil entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live.

20 In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months:

21 And when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own son.

22 And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds (Acts 7:17-22).

The Lord did a most amazing thing here, didn’t He? The way He preserved the life of this very important baby, was to order the circumstances so that he would be taken into the royal family of Egypt, and there he was given an education second to none in that day!

William Cowper had it right, didn’t he, when he penned the words of that hymn which begins, “God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform.” And then speaking of our Lord, Cowper wrote, “He plants His footsteps in the sea, And rides upon the storm.”

Let me read the rest of the hymn to you because it gives us the message of our text for this morning:

Deep in unfathomable mines of never-failing skill  
He treasures up His bright designs, and works His sovereign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take; the clouds you so much dread  
Are big with mercy, and shall break in blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, but trust Him for His grace;  
Behind a frowning providence He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast, unfolding ev'ry hour;  
The bud may have a bitter taste, but sweet will be the flow'r.

Blind unbelief is sure to err, and scan His work in vain;  
God is His own Interpreter, and He will make it plain.

I trust we will see the goodness of the Lord, and the power of the Lord, and the wisdom of the Lord, as it is illustrated in the birth and safety of the baby Moses in those dark days.

Let me give you one more verse, and I will close. It is Hebrews 11, verse 23:

23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.

It was not Moses' faith that is the subject of this verse, but his parents' faith. And they didn't put Moses out in that basket on the river out of fear, but "by faith." And it was "because they saw that he was a proper child." This means that Amram and Jochebed were true believers. In those days when I am sure true believers were rare, yet there were some. God always has His people. And somehow the Lord made Amram and Jochebed realize that God had a special purpose in giving them that particular baby. And trusting the Lord, they saw Him do "exceeding abundantly above all" that they could ever have hoped for.

As I am going to point out next week, this is really all we know about the first forty years of Moses' life. But what more could we want. May these verses encourage us to trust the Lord more fully.