

# Moses—Deliverer, Lawgiver, Mediator, and Prophet

*“There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, In all the signs and the wonders, which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land.”*

—Deuteronomy  
34:10,11

in the land.—Exod. 1:7-22

Moses' mother, seeing that he was a "goodly child," hid him for three months. When he could no longer be hidden, his mother prepared a special basket which would float, and put the child in it

## **THE NAME "MOSES"**

means "drawn out." It was given to this outstanding servant of God by Pharaoh's daughter because he had been drawn out of the water. (Exod. 2:10) Moses was born at the time when his people, the Hebrews, were slaves in Egypt. The Egyptian king had decreed that all Hebrew male babies should be destroyed at birth in order to halt their rapidly increasing population

and left it near the edge of one of the small canals by the side of the river. She hoped that the basket would be discovered by an Egyptian, and that the child's life would be saved. God overruled in the matter, and Moses was discovered by Pharaoh's daughter. She took the infant into the royal residence and adopted him as her son, engaging his real mother as a nurse. (Exod. 2:1-10) As he grew into manhood, Moses' mother undoubtedly told him much about the promises of God to their people. In addition to this, he became "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians."—Acts 7:22

Aside from this we know little of the experiences of Moses until he was forty years old, at which time, seeing one of his Hebrew kinsmen being abused by an Egyptian, he intervened and slew the oppressor. The next day he learned that his act had been discovered, so he fled from Egypt to the land of Midian, dwelling there until he was eighty years old.—Exod. 2:11-15; Acts 7:23-30

## **THE BURNING BUSH**

In Midian Moses married one of the daughters of Reuel, also called Jethro, and for forty years attended the flocks of his father-in-law. (Exod. 2:18; 3:1) It was then that the Lord spoke to Moses at the burning bush, and assigned him the task of delivering the Hebrew people from their Egyptian bondage. (Exod. 3:2-10) In speaking to Moses, through an angel, Jehovah identified himself as "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Through his mother, Moses would know of the promises of God to Abraham, and therefore this identification would mean much to him.

Moses' forty years as a shepherd, tending the flocks of his father-in-law, had removed much of the self-confidence which earlier had caused him to slay the Egyptian who was beating one of his countrymen. He probably felt that now he was capable only of performing the simple duties of a shepherd. To appear before the mighty Pharaoh and demand the release of the Hebrew people from bondage, Moses no doubt felt was quite beyond him.—Exod. 3:11

However, the Lord reassured Moses, saying, "Certainly I will be with thee." Then, as though he had agreed to accept the assignment, Moses began to ask the details of procedure. First he wanted to know what he should say to Pharaoh as to who had sent him to demand the release of the Hebrew slaves. In reply to this Moses was instructed to say that "I AM" had sent him.—vss. 12-14

The Hebrew expression translated "I AM" means "to exist," according to *Strong's Hebrew Dictionary*. By extension the full thought of the word when used by the Creator as a name would be, "The Self-existing One." Moses evidently got this thought, for in his prayer recorded later in the Book of Psalms he spoke of the Creator as being "from everlasting to everlasting." (Ps. 90:1,2) It was especially appropriate that God should thus identify himself to Moses, for although the Hebrew people were slaves in Egypt, and Moses himself had been a shepherd-slave for forty years, their God, and the God of their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, still existed as the true and ever-living Creator who would fulfill all his promises.

## TEN PLAGUES

God promised Moses that he would use him to deliver the Hebrew people from Egypt, even though the king would refuse to let them go. (Exod. 3:17-22) The lesson which God impressed upon Moses was that miracle-working power would be needed to bring about the deliverance of the Hebrew people and that such power would be used. Indeed, nine plagues were visited upon the Egyptians, each of which was lifted when Pharaoh agreed to release the Israelites. However, each time the plague was lifted the king changed his mind, and the Israelites were not released.

Then came the tenth plague, which was the death of Egypt's firstborn. (Exod. 11:4-6) The firstborn sons of the Hebrew children could escape this plague if their families followed the Lord's instructions concerning the sacrifice of a lamb and the sprinkling of its blood upon the lintels and doorposts of their houses.—Exod. 12:1-27

As foretold, the Lord smote all the firstborn of Egypt on the night of the fourteenth day of their first month. (vss. 28-36) Not only did Pharaoh then consent to the Israelites' leaving Egypt, but their departure was urged upon them, so much so that the Egyptian people gave them many of their valuables, apparently to help encourage a speedy exodus.

## A GREATER DELIVERANCE

The importance to us of this episode in Moses' experience as a servant of the Lord is the scripturally established fact that God designed it to serve as an illustration of a much more important deliverance—a release from the bondage of sin and death,

under the great taskmaster Satan, the Devil, whom the Bible speaks of as having the power over death.—Heb. 2:14

When the Lord's time came to prepare for the deliverance of the Hebrews, those among them who were exposed to immediate danger were the firstborn. As a result of the tenth plague, they would have lost their lives that night had it not been for the protection afforded them by the blood of the Passover lamb. (Exod. 12:12,13,22,23) This was designed by God as an illustration of a very important feature of his plan of salvation and future deliverance of all mankind from death. In the New Testament the indication is given to us that the footstep followers of Jesus, the true church of Christ, are the real "firstborn" foreshadowed by the firstborn of Israel.—Heb. 12:23

The Apostle Paul identifies Jesus as the true "Passover Lamb" who has been "sacrificed for us." (I Cor. 5:7, *New Living Translation*) We know that it is only through Christ's blood that we, his followers, receive life. Apart from his shed blood we could not be assured of life during this nighttime of sin and death.—I Pet. 1:18,19

In the Passover picture the firstborn and their families ate the literal lamb during the night, and it was in the morning that the deliverance of all Israel took place. So, at the present time, when the darkness of sin still covers the earth, the true church feeds, symbolically speaking, upon Jesus, the Lamb of God. Thus they are being prepared to participate in the deliverance of the whole world of mankind in the morning of earth's new day, the Messianic kingdom.—John 1:29; 6:51,63

Bitter herbs were to be eaten along with the flesh of the Israelites' Passover lamb. (Exod. 12:8) This suggests the severe trials which come upon the followers of Jesus as they feed symbolically upon him and lay down their lives in sacrifice. (I Pet. 4:12,13) These symbolic bitter herbs give us a greater desire to look to the Lord for strength and courage as we endeavor to be pleasing to him. Thus we are made ready to share in the glory and work of Christ's kingdom, which is to bring deliverance for all mankind from their bondage to Satan and to sin, sickness, and death.

Moses was given the assurance that it was the God of Abraham who was sending him to deliver the Hebrew people from Egypt. It was this true and living God who had promised Abraham that through his seed all the families of the earth would be blessed. The Apostle Paul explains that it is Jesus and the church of the firstborn who together constitute the "seed" promised to Abraham. (Gen. 12:3; 22:18; Gal. 3:8,16,27-29) The church is a faith seed, and when redeemed from death through the blood of Jesus, the true Passover Lamb, and brought forth in the first resurrection to live and reign with him, they will share in the promised deliverance and blessing of all nations.—Rom. 11:26

## **LAWGIVER**

Three months after Moses had served God in delivering the Hebrew people from their bondage in Egypt he was assigned the major task of giving them the divine Law. (Exod. 19:1-3) The Law offered the Israelites the opportunity of gaining life upon the basis of full obedience to its requirements.

(Lev. 18:5; Rom. 10:5) Since the Israelites, even as the people of all other nations, were members of a sinful and dying race, born under condemnation to death, none of them was able to measure up to the full demands of God's perfect Law, so none gained life by this arrangement.—Rom. 3:20; 7:10

Nevertheless, the Law served a useful purpose in that it demonstrated that it is impossible for any member of the fallen Adamic race to keep God's perfect Law. Up to the time of the giving of the Law there had been no special demonstration of this, for all were dying because of Adam's transgression. However, when the Israelites agreed to keep God's Law, and failed to do so, they fell under an additional curse—the curse of the Law.—Gal. 3:10-12

Paul wrote that the Law served as a "schoolmaster" to bring the people to Christ. (Gal. 3:24) It did prepare some of the Israelites to receive Christ at his First Advent. Although they did not accept him as a nation, the experience of that people under the Law will always stand as a lesson of the fact that none can gain life except through Christ. "Wherefore then serveth the law?" Paul asked. "It was added because of transgressions, till the seed [Christ] should come to whom the promise was made."—vs. 19

While the Israelites for the most part did not make a serious effort to keep the Law, it served as a certain restraint upon them, and contributed to holding them together as a people until Messiah came and presented himself to them. Since the Israelites were the natural descendants of father Abraham, they were the first in line, when Jesus came, to be the inheritors of the promise made to him concerning a "seed" that was to bless all the

families of the earth. However, in this also, love for God and a sincere effort to do their best to obey his Law as a demonstration of faith in him and in his promises, were the conditions of becoming part of this seed, which God had described as a “kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.”—Exod. 19:5,6

Disobedience to God, climaxed by their rejection of the Messiah, Head of the seed class, caused the Israelites to lose this choice inheritance. Jesus explained that the “kingdom” would be taken from them, and given to another nation, one that would bring forth the proper fruits of righteousness. (Matt. 21:43) The Apostle Peter identified this new “holy nation” for us, calling it a “royal priesthood.”—I Pet. 2:9,10

## **MEDIATOR**

Moses received the Law from God while hidden in a cloud on Mount Sinai, where he remained in communion with Jehovah for forty days. Meanwhile the Israelites became weary of waiting for his return and set up a golden calf to worship instead of their God. (Exod. 32:1-6) The Lord was much displeased with this display of unfaithfulness. He told Moses that he would blot them out, and through him make a “great nation.”—vss. 7-10

Moses, serving as mediator between God and the people, interceded for them, and they were not destroyed. (vss. 11-14) When Moses came down out of the mount and saw the golden calf and noted the sinful revelry of the people in their worship of the false god, he became wroth and destroyed the tables of the Law which had just been given to him by the Lord.—vss. 19,20

Later Jehovah instructed Moses to hew other tables of stone like those he had broken and take them up into Mount Sinai. (Exod. 34:1-4) The Lord then stood with Moses in a cloud and proclaimed the virtues of his character, which now we see exemplified in God's plan of salvation. (vss. 5-7) It was while the Lord thus outlined the attributes of his character that the Law was written on the tables of stone. Then Moses, serving as a faithful mediator, petitioned God to pardon the iniquity of the Israelites and take them for his inheritance, which the Lord agreed to do.—vss. 9,10

Moses had again been on Mount Sinai for forty days and nights, and when he came down this second time, his face was aglow with the glory of the Lord. This glow remained on Moses as he started to speak to the people with respect to God and his Law, and he had to put a veil over his face when he spoke. (Exod. 34:28-35; II Cor. 3:13) In the New Testament the Apostle Paul refers to this scene as pointing to the glory to be associated with the future mediation of the New Covenant by Christ, the Head, and the church, his body members.—II Cor. 3:3-12; I Tim. 2:5,6; Heb. 12:22-24

## **FIRST OF THE HOLY PROPHETS**

As indicated in our opening verses, Moses was one of the outstanding Old Testament prophets and was used by God to foretell various important features in the divine arrangement for the rescue of mankind from sin and death. He was the compiler of the first five books of the Bible, and in this capacity he recorded that original prophecy concerning the seed of the woman bruising the serpent's head.—Gen. 3:14,15

Moses also recorded the prophecy of Jacob concerning the “Lion” which would come from the tribe of Judah. (Gen. 49:8-10; Rev. 5:5) This was a prophecy of the coming of Jesus, first to redeem mankind from sin and death, and then to rule over the people throughout his earthly kingdom. In this regard, Jehovah explained to Moses that a “Prophet” would be raised up to the people, similar to him. (Deut. 18:15-19) The Apostle Peter referred to this promise, and indicated that it would have its fulfillment through Christ during the “times of restitution of all things.”—Acts 3:19-23

When the resurrected Jesus talked with two of his disciples on the road to Emmaus, he began, the record states, with Moses and all the prophets, pointing out to them that according to his divine purpose it was necessary that the Messiah should first suffer, and afterward enter into his glory. (Luke 24:25-27) From this we know that Moses foretold the suffering and death of Jesus. One of the ways in which he did this was through the institution of the Passover, as discussed earlier in our lesson, in which the death of the Passover lamb foreshadowed the death of Jesus as “the lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”—John 1:29

In a prophetic prayer Moses calls attention to the sentence of death which came upon all mankind because of sin, and assures us that the time will come when the people will be summoned by divine power to return from destruction. (Ps. 90:3) This is one of the Old Testament prophecies which foretells the resurrection of the dead.

Jesus explained to the Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, that the

hope of the resurrection was set forth in connection with God's dealings with Moses. This is when he spoke to Moses at the burning bush, and referred to himself as "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Jesus explained that Jehovah is not a God of the dead but of the living, because he proposes to restore mankind to life by means of an awakening from the sleep of death.—Exod. 3:6; Luke 20:37,38

Moses was a faithful servant of God as a deliverer, lawgiver, mediator, and prophet. Appropriately, he is mentioned in the last book of the Bible along with Jesus in connection with the glorious "song of Moses" and the "song of the Lamb." (Rev. 15:2,3) One of the songs composed by Moses pertained to the deliverance of the Hebrew people from their bondage in Egypt. (Exod. 15:1,2) How beautifully this prefigures the even sweeter melody of the "song of the Lamb," who will deliver all mankind from the bondage of sin and death. Let us rejoice in this prospect, foretold so long ago by God's faithful servant Moses! ■