

Exodus 2 • Moses' First Calling

Introduction

We already know the results of Moses' life and the famous account of being called by God at the burning bush; but that was actually Moses' **SECOND** calling. Those events are made even more pertinent by the display of God's grace to overlook Moses' initial failure to live up to his calling, to take things into his own hands, and find himself transplanted from the best place to fulfill God's plan to the seemingly worst place in exile. It's important to note the pattern of Moses' life not just as an example for our own, but as it relates to the foreshadowing of the events and ministry of the Messiah to come. In Moses' life is not only the example of heeding God's call, but the working of God's salvation first for Israel through the Word given through Moses, and later for all the world in the Word Himself—Jesus Christ—given by God.

¹Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a daughter of Levi.

²The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was beautiful, she hid him for three months. ³But when she could hide him no longer, she got him a wicker basket and covered it over with tar and pitch. Then she put the child into it and set it among the reeds by the bank of the Nile. ⁴His sister stood at a distance to find out what would happen to him.

⁵The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the Nile, with her maidens walking alongside the Nile; and she saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid, and she brought it to her. ⁶When she opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the boy was crying. And she had pity on him and said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children."

⁷Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call a nurse for you from the Hebrew women that she may nurse the child for you?"

⁸Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Go ahead." So the girl went and called the child's mother.

⁹Then Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child away and nurse him for me and I will give you your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed him.

¹⁰The child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. And she named him Moses, and said, "Because I drew him out of the water."

[Read Exodus 2:1-10]

Q: What has just been decreed by Pharaoh in chapter 1 concerning all Hebrew newborns?

A: "Every son who is born you are to cast into the Nile, and every daughter you are to keep alive." (Exodus 1:22) In other words, Moses is under a death sentence.

Q: What other great and future prophet of Israel will be born under a death sentence as an infant?

A: Christ. (See Matthew 2:16)

Q: This translation states that Moses was placed in a basket. What does the word for basket literally mean and what might it represent?

A: It's the word for "ark", used both for Noah's ark and for the Ark of the Covenant. It's the picture both of salvation (Noah's ark) and the giving of God's Word (the Ark of the Covenant).

Q: How does this foreshadow the work of the Messiah?

A: Christ is Himself the Word (John 1:1) and salvation (John 3:16).

Q: What does it mean in v.2 that Moses' mother "saw that he was beautiful"?

A: It's a way of stating that even at birth and as a baby, his parents knew he was something extraordinary, born for a higher purpose. [Just like someone else?]

Point: Moses is a "type" of Christ; that is, his life contains many parallels that teach about the life and ministry of the Messiah to come. Just as through Moses salvation from Egypt and God's Word will be given to lead God's people to the Promised Land, so through Christ comes salvation and God's Word completing what was begun through Moses, bringing us into the Promised Land of eternity.

¹⁷“But as the time of the promise was approaching which God had assured to Abraham, the people increased and multiplied in Egypt, ¹⁸until THERE AROSE ANOTHER KING OVER EGYPT WHO KNEW NOTHING ABOUT JOSEPH. ¹⁹It was he who took shrewd advantage of our race and mistreated our fathers so that they would expose their infants and they would not survive. ²⁰It was at this time that Moses was born; and he was lovely in the sight of God, and he was nurtured three months in his father’s home. ²¹And after he had been set outside, Pharaoh’s daughter took him away and nurtured him as her own son.

¹¹Now it came about in those days, when Moses had grown up, that he went out to his brethren and looked on their hard labors; and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren. ¹²So he looked this way and that, and when he saw there was no one around, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.

¹³He went out the next day, and behold, two Hebrews were fighting with each other; and he said to the offender, “Why are you striking your companion?”

¹⁴But he said, “Who made you a prince or a judge over us? Are you intending to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?”

Then Moses was afraid and said, “Surely the matter has become known.”

¹⁵When Pharaoh heard of this matter, he tried to kill Moses. But Moses fled from the presence of Pharaoh and settled in the land of Midian, and he sat down by a well.

²²“Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians, and he was a man of power in words and deeds. ²³But when he was approaching the age of forty, it entered his mind to visit his brethren, the sons of Israel. ²⁴And when he saw one of them being treated unjustly, he defended him and took vengeance for the oppressed by striking down the Egyptian. ²⁵And he supposed that his brethren understood that God was granting them deliverance through him, but they did not understand.

²⁶“On the following day he appeared to them as they were fighting together, and he tried to reconcile them in peace, saying, ‘Men, you are brethren, why do you injure one another?’

[Read Acts 7:17-21]

Q: Stephen is giving a dissertation to the authorities of his day as to why Jesus is the Messiah. What are the parallels to Moses?

1. Just as Moses was the fulfillment of God’s promise of salvation to a nation, so Christ is the fulfillment of God’s promise of salvation for all mankind.
2. Just as Moses came at a time the nation of Israel was under an oppressor—Pharaoh and Egypt—so Christ came at a time that Israel was under Caesar and Rome.
3. Just as Moses was born under the sentence of death, so was Christ.
4. Just as Moses was “set outside” and accepted by Gentiles, so is Christ by those He first came to: Israel.

[Read Exodus 2:11-15]

Q: What is the dead giveaway that Moses himself knew that what he was doing was wrong?

A: “So he looked this way and that, and when he saw there was no one around...” (v.12) He was undertaking to do something according to his own will and desire, not God’s.

Q: What is the irony of the man’s statement to Moses, “Who made you a prince or a judge over us”?

A: The irony is that **GOD** intended to make Moses a prince and judge over Israel, but that it hadn’t happened yet. When acting according to God’s calling and timing, Moses **WILL** be a prince and judge over them.

Q: What was the result of Moses’ taking matters into his own hands, according to his own timing?

A: Failure. Having to flee for his life, he was no longer in the position to either fulfill his life’s calling nor to help Israel.

[Read Acts 7:22-29]

Q: What do we learn from Stephen’s speech about Moses’ stature and standing?

A: He was educated, well-known, powerful.

Point: Moses would appear to have had all the attributes and abilities at the right place and time to carry out God’s promise to liberate His people from Egypt.

Q: Was Moses constantly occupied with the thought and goal of liberating Israel?

A: Apparently not. Verse 23 would indicate that he mainly lived apart from them the first 40 years of his life, only visiting them on occasion.

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²⁷“But the one who was injuring his neighbor pushed him away, saying, ‘WHO MADE YOU A RULER AND JUDGE OVER US?’
²⁸YOU DO NOT MEAN TO KILL ME AS YOU KILLED THE EGYPTIAN YESTERDAY, DO YOU?”

²⁹“At this remark, MOSES FLED AND BECAME AN ALIEN IN THE LAND OF MIDIAN, where he became the father of two sons.

¹⁶Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters; and they came to draw water and filled the troughs to water their father’s flock. ¹⁷Then the shepherds came and drove them away, but Moses stood up and helped them and watered their flock. ¹⁸When they came to Reuel their father, he said, “Why have you come back so soon today?”

¹⁹So they said, “An Egyptian delivered us from the hand of the shepherds, and what is more, he even drew the water for us and watered the flock.”

²⁰He said to his daughters, “Where is he then? Why is it that you have left the man behind? Invite him to have something to eat.”

²¹Moses was willing to dwell with the man, and he gave his daughter Zipporah to Moses. ²²Then she gave birth to a son, and he named him Gershom, for he said, “I have been a sojourner in a foreign land.”

Q: Why didn’t Moses have closer or more consistent contact with his people?

A: According to v.23, “he supposed that his brethren understood that God was granting them deliverance through him”. In other words, he was conscience of his calling and thought that it was apparent to everyone else the nature and authority of that calling. He assumed he was recognized.

Q: Why do you suppose that the people did not see Moses’ calling and authority as plainly as Moses saw them?

A: Probably because he lived the vast majority of his life apart from them. He was probably viewed as “one of them”, someone that lived a privileged, royal life that was no longer Hebrew as much as Egyptian. There really wasn’t any visible evidence that he was a ruler or judge over them.

Q: What became of Moses’ stature and standing after he had to flee Egypt for Midian?

A: He “became an alien”. He was completely estranged from his people physically and from his Egyptian status socially.

Application: *Moses’ parents weren’t the only ones that saw something special about Moses—Moses himself knew that he had a special calling from God. But the calling was not enough. What was lacking? Why did it not turn out the way he expected?*

[Read Exodus 2:16-22]

Q: Joseph—also considered a “type” of Christ—took what kind of bride?

A: A Gentile bride.

Q: Moses takes what kind of bride?

A: A Gentile bride.

Q: Jesus, after first going to and being rejected by His own people the Jews, takes what kind of bride?

A: The church is often referred to as Christ’s bride, so in a way He also took a Gentile bride.

Point: *The pattern established in Old Testament “types” such as Joseph and Moses is that the Messiah will not be recognized the first time he appears to His countrymen (just as Moses is initially rejected and Joseph’s brothers do not recognize him the first time they come into his presence), but accepted/recognized the second time. In the interim, He takes a Gentile bride in the form of those that DO recognize and accept Him until such time as both can be brought together.*

²³Now it came about in the course of those many days that the king of Egypt died. And the sons of Israel sighed because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry for help because of their bondage rose up to God. ²⁴So God heard their groaning; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. ²⁵God saw the sons of Israel, and God took notice of them.

³⁵“This Moses whom they disowned, saying, ‘WHO MADE YOU A RULER AND A JUDGE?’ is the one whom God sent to be both a ruler and a deliverer with the help of the angel who appeared to him in the thorn bush.

[Read Exodus 2:23-25]

Q: During the first 40 years of Moses’ life in Egypt, and even through these 40 years of his life in Midian, Israel has been in bondage and captivity. What has changed that God has chosen to act now?

A: Israel turned to God for help.

Q: What was God’s reaction? List the 4 things He did.

1. “God heard” (v.24)
2. “God remembered” (v.24)
3. “God saw” (v.25)
4. “God took notice” (v.25)

Q: How does God’s reaction speak of His timing to work on behalf of Israel? Did He act immediately and why?

A: God did not provide the final solution immediately, but He certainly had already begun to act even though they may not have understood it as such.

Point: Before the physical work of salvation could be undertaken, the spiritual work of salvation had to take place. Spiritual redemption precedes earthly redemption.

[Read Acts 7:35]

Q: So Moses WAS God’s ruler and judge over Israel. But what do we learn here as the difference between “Moses of Egypt” and “Moses of Midian”?

A: The former Moses tried to accomplish it on his own; the latter Moses “with the help of the angel who appeared to him”.

Overall Application

- How might this lesson apply to God’s calling in your own life? Have you assumed that the calling is enough to go ahead with God’s work or are you submitting to **HIS** preparation and timing?
- How do we know that we’re acting according to **OUR** will and desire and not according to His?
- Do you see in this example that God was not just preparing Moses as the messenger, but the people in Moses’ ministry to receive the message? How does this speak to you for preparing not just yourself but your own “mission field”?
- Why do you suppose that God never mentions to Moses the failure of his life in Egypt? What does this say of God’s grace and His desire to use you even though you may have stumbled to this point? Can God use you? On what does that depend?