

Old Testament types of the Lord Moses as a man

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New King James Version of the Scriptures used unless otherwise stated.]*

A few weeks ago, my son remarked to me, as I struggled to get up from the floor, having entertained his children, "You remind me so much of Grandpa!" It was the creaky knees and the struggle against gravity that brought a smile to his face and caused the somewhat less than sympathetic remark. I mean with friends like those.....

In this talk we will conclude our series of Old Testament types, or pictures, of the Lord, by looking at Moses as an adult man. The Old Testament is a vital, and integral part of God's word, that was given for our instruction. Throughout its pages there are people or things that give us reminders of things that take full shape in the New Testament. Whilst we do not want to over press the details, these reminders are a valid way of understanding the Old Testament. The writer to the Hebrews says as much in chapter 9 vv.4–5:

"Which had the golden censer and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which were the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant; and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail."

The writer obviously saw valuable teaching in the tabernacle, for example, but did not have the time to develop these thoughts in his teaching there and then.

Sometimes, in the New Testament, the writer's themselves will make a clear and explicit link with events in the Old Testament, and we will look at two of these in this talk. Other times, there is just a similarity that allows us to make a connection between the Old Testament type and the New Testament reality. Such an approach is valid and helpful. However, we must avoid the danger of going too far. We must not base our behaviour, and Church teaching, solely on what we read in the Old Testament. The Church was a hidden mystery in those days, and it is to the New Testament epistles that we must look for our teaching now. In just the same way, seeing my struggles reminded my son of his Grandpa, but if he really wanted the true picture, then he would have to watch a video or look at a photo. There is a clear difference between reality and reminder, shadow and substance!

Let us begin our considerations then by looking at what Moses himself had to say, in Deuteronomy 18 v.15:

"The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear."

Moses had a clear expectation that someone would follow after him, but who, in some regards, would be like him. This was the shared expectation that led to the questions that John the Baptist was asked in John 1 v.21:

“And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.”
“Are you the Prophet?” And he answered, “No.””

John was not the One that Moses had promised, but he would be used by God to introduce the people to Him. Peter, in his Pentecost address, clearly takes up the promise of Moses and applied it to the Lord Jesus (Acts 3:22). We are therefore on solid ground as we look at how the Lord Jesus was like Moses, but we do need to remember how much greater He was, as we read in Hebrews 3 v.3:

“For this One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses,
inasmuch as He who built the house has more honour than the house.”

We will start then by looking at half a dozen points of similarity between the Lord Jesus and Moses and from these learn some valuable lessons. Both Moses and the LORD brought freedom. In Exodus 5 v.1 we read:

“Afterward Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh, “Thus says the LORD God of Israel: ‘Let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness.’””

Here was the dramatic start of the confrontation between Moses and Pharaoh that would eventually lead to the Israelites, who had been slaves in Egypt, being released. Following their desert journey, they would enter the Promised Land, given to them by God, to start a new life of obedience to God. The Lord Jesus recognised that to bring freedom was indeed an integral part of His ministry. So in Luke 4 vv.18-19 we read:

“The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.”

Clearly the Lord understood that His ministry would involve freedom for His people. Paul speaks about us being slaves to sin. Faith in Jesus Christ brings a wonderful freedom from the power and the penalty of sin. In a day to come it will bring freedom from even the presence of sin. No wonder John could write in chapter 8 v.36 of his Gospel that Jesus said:

“Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.”

The challenge for us today is to live in the enjoyment of this freedom. It would have been an odd sight indeed to see an Israelite in Moses' day walking around in chains, cowering from a phantom taskmaster, whilst all around him his friends and family enjoyed the bountiful provision of the Promised Land. So we need to enjoy the freedom from sin that faith in Christ brings and let go of the captivity that guilt for previous sins can bring. He is a faithful God and is just in forgiving our sins, having exacted due payment for them from the Lord Jesus at the cross.

Both Moses and the Lord performed miracles. In Exodus 16 v.35 we read:

“And the children of Israel ate manna forty years, until they came to an inhabited land; they ate manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan.”

This wonderful provision from God sustained His people during their wilderness wanderings. From the parting of the Red Sea, to the water from the rock, there were numerous occasions that the natural order was suspended and God miraculously provided for His people, through Moses.

In John’s Gospel we are introduced to seven miracles that John calls signs. So, for example in chapter 6 v.14 we read:

“Then those men, when they had seen the sign [of the feeding of the 5000] that Jesus did, said, “This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.””

It was these miracles that led the people to make a connection to Moses and the promise of a coming Prophet. These miracles, or signs, were not just a way of establishing Jesus’ credentials, though they did. Nor were they a way of improving the lives of those around Him, though again, they did. These miracles had a spiritual lesson for the people, and these miraculous acts were a very visible proof of the reality of these lessons. It would be worth, after this broadcast, looking through the seven miracles in John and asking yourself the question: “What is the spiritual lesson for me here?”

Both Moses and the Lord had their appearance changed. In Exodus chapter 34: 29 – 35 we read:

“Now it was so, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the Testimony were in Moses’ hand when he came down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him. So when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him. Then Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned to him; and Moses talked with them. Afterward all the children of Israel came near, and he gave them as commandments all that the LORD had spoken with him on Mount Sinai. And when Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face. But whenever Moses went in before the LORD to speak with Him, he would take the veil off until he came out; and he would come out and speak to the children of Israel whatever he had been commanded. And whenever the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses’ face shone, then Moses would put the veil on his face again, until he went in to speak with Him” (Exodus 34 vv. 29-35).

What a mountain-top experience it must have been for Moses. How dramatically he was changed by being in the presence of God. And yet, wonderful though this was – so much so that the rest of the people could not tolerate the change – it cannot match the change that occurred to the Lord Himself as He was on the mount of transfiguration.

“Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” While he was still

speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. But Jesus came and touched them and said, "Arise, and do not be afraid." When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only" (Matthew 17 vv.1-8).

The change in the Lord Jesus was so dramatic that it took the strength from His disciples' legs and they fell to the ground in mortal terror. There is a proper reverence due to His person. Though in grace He has drawn close to us, yet He remains very God, and that which touches Him was whiter than the light itself, brighter than the sun at noon. It would improve things no end if we had a real sense of this as we met together in church week by week, and as we lived our lives moment by moment.

Both Moses and the Lord interceded on behalf of the people. In Numbers chapter 11 vv.1-2 we read:

"Now when the people complained, it displeased the LORD; for the LORD heard it, and His anger was aroused. So the fire of the LORD burned among them, and consumed some in the outskirts of the camp. Then the people cried out to Moses, and when Moses prayed to the LORD, the fire was quenched."

There must have been times when leading the fractious, ungrateful people of Israel must have been almost too much for Moses. Yet in this incident, and it was not the only occasion, we read of Moses praying to God on behalf of the people so that they would be spared. It was in part at least because of the man that Moses was, that God listened and spared His people further judgement.

In Hebrews 7 v.25 we read concerning the Lord's ministry now:

"Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them."

On similar lines we read in 1 John 2 v.1:

"My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

What a comfort to know that no lesser Person than the Son of God Himself ever lives to intercede on our behalf. I know there are times when I get so frustrated with myself. I sin so easily and feel that I have let God down again and again. Sometimes it never seems to get any better. What a joy to know that the Lord Jesus is speaking up for me in Heaven – and His word is final. As God the Father views His Son through the prism of the cross there can be no doubt that Jesus will be heard and His request granted. I must not take this as an excuse to sin lightly but it should encourage me to intimate fellowship with Him in prayer. There is always a way back to God – no matter how far I think I have fallen or how badly I have sinned. There is also always a way back into fellowship with His people. Let us enjoy fully the wonderful intercession that He exercises on our behalf.

Both Moses and the Lord were prepared to die for the people.

"Now it came to pass on the next day that Moses said to the people, "You have committed a great sin. So now I will go up to the LORD; per-

haps I can make atonement for your sin.” Then Moses returned to the LORD and said, “Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold! Yet now, if You will forgive their sin—but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written” (Exodus 32 vv. 30-32).

These verses come at the end of the incident when the people had made a golden image of a calf and started to worship it whilst Moses was up the mountain receiving the ten commandments. How easily they slipped into idolatry. This sin of idolatry would be a recurring problem for the people throughout their history in the Old Testament. It is a solemn warning to us. Anyone, or anything, that is more important to us than God has become an idol. God will not accept second place. Yet Moses, faultless of this terrible act, intercedes on behalf of the people, willing to give his own life if only God would spare the people. Credit worthy though this attitude was, it could never work. Moses was responsible for his own sins and his life could never make atonement for the people. However, when we come to the Lord Jesus we read:

“By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us” (1 John 3:16).

What Moses could not do; Christ has done! Because He was faultless, He could make atonement for another. Because He is God, He can do so for the whole world. There should never a day go by when we do not pause in wonder at the fact that “the Son of God loved me and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2 v.20).

Both Moses and the Lord introduced a new covenant. A covenant is a promise and was to affect the behaviour of the people covered by that promise. Sometimes the promise was conditional - that is that for the benefits of the promise to come to pass, the people had to do something. Sometimes God’s promises are unconditional – they rely solely upon His word. The Mosaic covenant was very much conditional and was summed up in the ten commandments but included the rest of the law. In Exodus 19: 5 – 8, we read:

“Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.” So Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before them all these words which the LORD commanded him. Then all the people answered together and said, “All that the LORD has spoken we will do.” So Moses brought back the words of the people to the LORD.”

What a time this was in Israel’s history. They had been presented with the clearest of choices. If they did what God had commanded then they would have been blessed beyond their wildest dreams – healthy, wealthy and at peace. No wonder they said that they would do what God had asked of them. The problem was, they could not. I suspect that most of us have had the experience of starting a new year with a resolution or two. More often than not in my case, at least, I do not make it even till the end of January! Our natural, sinful nature is just incapable of living up to God’s standards. So, a new covenant was required, and the Lord Jesus has introduced this. Praise God, it is completely unconditional!

“In that He says, “A new covenant,” He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away” (Hebrews 8 v.13).

In the next chapter and verse 15, we read:

“He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.”

This new covenant has been sealed with His blood and in summary guarantees the eternal blessedness of those who have faith in God. Everything that we have spiritually comes to us because of His finished work upon the cross. We do not, we cannot earn His favour and blessing. Everything that I have, I have because I am in Christ. Much of the book of Hebrews demonstrates just how much better Christ is than Moses. It is not that Moses was some second rate nobody. No, he was Israel’s greatest servant. However, Christ is so much better and so is the blessing that comes to us through Him.

I want now to turn to two explicit types of the Lord Jesus associated with the life of Moses the man. The first of these we read about in Exodus 12 vv.3-11:

“Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: On the tenth of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of his father, a lamb for a household. And if the household is too small for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next to his house take it according to the number of the persons; according to each man’s need you shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats. Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight. And they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two door posts and on the lintel of the houses where they eat it. Then they shall eat the flesh on that night; roasted in fire, with unleavened bread and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Do not eat it raw, nor boiled at all with water, but roasted in fire—its head with its legs and its entrails. You shall let none of it remain until morning, and what remains of it until morning you shall burn with fire. And thus you shall eat it: with a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. So you shall eat it in haste. It is the LORD’s Passover.”

The Passover was to be one of the key religious feasts in the national life of Israel. The blood of the Passover lamb was to be taken and applied to the door posts and the lintel of every Israelite home. In doing this, those inside the house would be kept safe. No ordinary lamb would do – it had to be without blemish. When we come to the New Testament, Paul tells us in his first letter to the Corinthians 5 v.7:

“Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”

Here then, quite clearly, we are instructed to recognise that Christ is our Passover Lamb. It is His blood that covers us from the judgement but then, as we recognise this, we are to put away the leaven of sin and live pure and truthful lives. Typical teaching is very practical you know!

The second explicit picture we have is based upon the incident in Numbers 21 vv.8-9: (NIV):

“The LORD said to Moses, “Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live.” So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, they lived.”

The Israelites had been grumbling again, wondering why God had rescued them from Egypt, only to let them starve in the wilderness. So God sent poisonous snakes into the camp, and many died. When Moses came into the presence of God on behalf of the people he was told to make a bronze replica of a snake and put in high on a pole. All those who had the faith to look at this snake would live! Turning over to John 3 vv.14-15 we read:

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”

Faith in Christ, lifted up on the cross, was and remains vital as the sole means of salvation before God. Nothing could be clearer. God has said it. He has given an example of it and now He commands all men everywhere to repent and look to Jesus. As you listen to this, or as you read this, is this your experience. Eternal consequences rest upon this most momentous of decisions.

In Moses' day, those who were repelled by the notion of looking at a model snake, those who were influenced by peer pressure to try something more rational, died. Those who believed and obeyed lived. Today, many still think that salvation can come by many means. They think that believing in a man who lived and died 2000 years ago is not rational. They are more influenced by their peers than by the truth. A certain and fearful judgement and eternal death await them. For those who in simple faith look to Jesus' completed work on the cross, eternal life is the rich reward. Please look and live and do so now!

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