

Place: Lurgan Baptist 1:11:2005

Readings: Deut 34:1-7 Acts 7:20-36

FROM EGYPT TO CANAAN

2. A MAN IN THE MAKING !

Dr. Kyle described Moses as “ *the greatest man among men in the whole history of the world.* ” But this great man did not become great overnight. His life of intimacy with the Lord was not the growth of a day, rather it was a long process of “ *going on to perfection.* ” Moses never finished in the school of sanctification, nor has anyone else but his progress was astonishing. His character developed under the shaping hand of God, and as God’s hand was on Moses so His hand is equally on us. Just as Moses was fashioned for a specific task so God in grace is moulding and shaping our lives. Now what we want to do this is stand back and see the hand of God developing and shaping this mans life. We read in in the Book of Deuteronomy that “ *Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died, his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.* ” (34:7) Now by comparing these words with Stephen’s defence in (Acts Ch 7) we discover that the life of Moses falls neatly into three periods of forty years.

Moses spent forty years in the Court of Pharaoh learning ***to be something.*** (Acts 7:23) He spent forty years in the desert of Midian learning to be learning to ***be nothing,*** then he spent forty years on the road to Canaan proving God ***to be everything.*** The first period of forty years produced self-confidence, the second period of forty years produced self-diffidence, and the third period produced self abandonment. Now we want to broadly examine each of these periods in the life of this man of God.

(1) THE 1ST 40 YEARS WE SEE MOSES AS A STUDENT

Isn’t it great to realise this that the God of salvation is also the God of providence ? *Providence is that work of God in which He preserves all His creatures is active in all that He happens in this world, and brings all things to their appointed end.* Men may think that the issues lied wholly in their power, and acts as if theirs was the last word in matters which concern the people of God, but there is one behind the scenes Who “ *doeth according to His own will in the army of Heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth and none can stay His hand or*

say unto Him what doest Thou ?”
(Dan 4:35)

***“ Behind the dim unknown.
Standeth God within the shadows
Keeping watch above His own.”***

Nowhere in history is this truth more strikingly illustrated than in the circumstances attending the birth and preservation of Moses. My there are divine fingerprints all over this story ! This child who was exceedingly beautiful (Acts 7:20) was under threat of death (1:22) but through the faith and ingenuity of his parents was wonderfully spared. (Heb 11:23) You know the story. *The cry of a helpless babe touched the heart of an Egyptian Princess.* (2:6) My God was at work in the birth of Moses. It was God who formed the child in his mother’s womb and safely delivered him into the world. God was at work in the baby’s basket. Think of it, at one moment in history, God’s entire plan for triumphing over evil was riding down the Nile River in a little papyrus basket. God was also at work in the life of Pharaoh’s daughter. In the providence of God she went down to the river at just the right time in just the right place to discover Moses. My there are no chance happenings in a world that is presided over by the living God.

It was God who put it into the heart of the Egyptian Princess to go down into the river to bathe. It was God who caused her to be moved with compassion. It was God who caused her to yield submissively to the suggestion of Miriam (15:20) God was in absolute control working out His sovereign purposes, and what was the result of it all ? Well, the very Pharaoh who wanted to execute Moses is compelled to give him board, lodging, education, and this to the very man who accomplished the very thing that Pharaoh was trying to prevent. ***What a God we have !*** A God is on the throne. A God who is in control, working out His sovereign purposes. (Dan 4:35) So here was Moses reared in a humble home, rescued by an Egyptian Princess, trained in a royal palace. So Moses spent his first forty years serving in the Egyptian bureaucracy. Some scholars think that he was being groomed to be the next Pharaoh. Egypt seems the least likely place for God to start training a leader, but God’s ways are not our ways. In equipping Moses for service, God took several approaches. You see, as a student Moses was well trained,

(a) SPIRITUALLY:

What godly parents Moses had. Parents who did not fear the Kings command. Now it takes a lot of Christian courage not to fear the commandments of Pharaoh (The Devil) and risk being called unconventional and uncooperative in suburbia where they might be only one dedicated Christian family in the block. So many Christian parents have lowered their standards and compromised their convictions to please their children thus while the children are growing up the parents are growing down. But not Amram and Jochebed (Exod 6:20) Do you recall the time when they made an important choice for Moses ? The stern edict of the King that all the male babies born to the Hebrews were to be thrown into the River Nile. The hiding of the infant Moses, the placing of him in the basket among the reeds, the finding of him by the Royal Princess and then the decision that though Moses was a Hebrew he would be brought up in the Egyptian Palace as the son of Royalty.

Do you know what the Book of Hebrews says about them ? “ *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 kings commandment.* ” (Heb 11:23) Their faith risked the wrath of the King, while their love devised an ingenious way of evading his ruthless edict. The result ? Moses had the benefit of a godly home and the Hebrew religion, which more than counteracted the later adverse elements in his Egyptian education. In that home Moses, learned two vitally important lessons. ***From his parents he learned Faith in God:*** I mean the holy environment and godly influences with which he was surrounded left an indelible impression on his developing character.

From them also ***he imbibed a Fearless Courage:*** for their faith transcended the Kings wrath. The courage of the parents produced moral bravery in the son. For “ *he forsook Egypt not fearing the wrath of the King.* ” (Heb 11:27) The early training of Moses could never be forgotten, and this should bring both comfort and challenge to our hearts. It should encourage those of us who have children that believe not. The Bible says, “ *Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it.* ” (Pro 22:6) Now Moses was brought up in an Egyptian palace which was not conducive to godliness yet he never forgot his early training. (20:11) But what a challenge this also brings to us. For unlike Amram and Jochebed we are not living in fear of persecution. (1:22) yet how negligent we are when it comes to the spiritual training of our children. Are you endeavouring to bring them up in the fear and admonition of the Lord ? (Eph 6:4) Are you seeking diligently to impart God’s laws to them ? Will your kids remember you, the way Moses remembered Amram and Jockeyed ? (a) ***God overrules our upbringing !***

(b) MORALLY:

Look if you will at (2:10) From a humble home to the palace of the Princess ! Moses now would be brought up as a young Egyptian Prince, delicately fed, scrupulously clean, continually waited upon ! The palace of Pharaoh was renowned for its loose morals and utterly devoid of helpful spiritual influences. It would have been the last place we would have sent Moses for training. Soft beds and rich food would not seem to be the ideal training for the arduous, nomadic life of the desert, but then God's ways are not our ways ! *When God trains a man He does not always keep him in isolation and seclusion.* Rather, He allows the searching winds of temptation and tribulation to beat in upon him in order to develop of strength of character. His method sometimes is insulation rather than isolation. But it was in the testing fires of court life that God tempered His instrument. Is the Lord allowing this sort of thing to happen to you ? Have the winds of trial and temptation been beating in upon you ? Has the Lord been putting you through the testing fires of college, university, business life that He might temper you ? (b) ***God overrules our environment.***

(c) ACADEMICALLY:

In his last address Stephen gave an insight into the education and training of Moses. He said “ *Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.* ” (7:22) Tradition says that Moses was sent to the great university of his day at Heliopolis, this university city was the seat of learning. Moses attended the Oxford or Harvard of Egypt. *As a student* he became versed in the wisdom and science of Egypt, *as a statesman*, he was endowed with unique oratorical powers, *as a soldier* Josephus affirms that he was mighty in his achievements. Tradition records great victories for the Egyptian armies gained under his leadership. Moses therefore emerged from his studies with a razor-keen mind. While it is true that the Lord has often been pleased to use men who have been denied such opportunities, He can however achieve through those whose great mental powers are placed at His disposal. My not many wise are called but the world owes an incalculable debt to its Moses and its Paul. Tell me, has God endowed you with a great intellect ? Have you placed it at His feet ? Have you cried, “ *Take my intellect and use every power as Thou shalt choose ?* ”

God overrules in our education. Moses was well trained

(a) (b) (c) During those 1st forty years he was learning to be something. Yet amidst it all the heart of Moses was ill at ease. His early training could not be forgotten and with the passing of time a consciousness deepened that his destiny lay elsewhere. (Acts 17:25 Rom 10:17) What would Moses do ? How would Moses

act ? Where would Moses go ? Well, the elements of his momentous decision are brought before us in (Heb 11:24-27) Moses turned his back on,

1. The World's PRESTIGE:

For " *Moses when he was come to years refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,*" (Heb 11:24) He elected to go back to his own folk. Now Moses did not make this decision quickly or rashly or rashly.

(11:26) uses the word " *Esteeming, or " Accounting "* Literally it means " *to judge,*" or " *To consider,*" You can almost see the mental process through which Moses was passing. The word means " *balancing things,*" in order to come to a decision of some sort, putting this by the side of that, weighing the evidence on both sides

" *Esteeming, Accounting,*" My can you see Moses ?

He would look at the Wealth of Egyptians and then the Poverty of the Hebrews. He would look at the Power of Egypt and then the Weakness of Israel. He would look at the Reality of Pharaoh and then the Prophecy of the Messiah. (Jn 8:56) And all the time he was judging,

balancing, esteeming, and then came the time when he choose consciously, personally, definitely. He came to the conclusion that its better to be reproached and to consider that reproach riches than to every treasure the world has to offer. Now what about you ?

A girl was sent to finishing school by her wealthy parents. There she learned science, art, dancing and other things. One night she went to a gospel meeting and at the close of the service she accepted Christ as her personal Saviour. She gave her life to Christ and decided to gave herself to missionary service. She wrote to her father and told him of her decision. He was raging and contacted her immediately saying, " *Get on the next train and come home.*" When she returned home the father met with her and said, " *I did not send you to school to get religion. That is alright for poor folks and half wits, but not for someone of your status. If by tomorrow morning you have not decided to give up this foolish notion of religion, you may pack your suitcase and leave home.*" That night she went to her room with a heavy heart. This would mean would the loss of culture, money, prestige. On her knees she fought it out. The next morning she packed her suitcase. Before leaving she stepped over to the piano and started to play and sing these words,

***" Jesus I my cross have taken
All to leave and follow Thee
Destitute, despised, forsaken***

Thou, from hence, my all must be

*Perish every fond ambition
All I've sought and hoped and known
Yet how rich is my condition
God and Heaven are still my own."*

She arose and with the tears streaming down her face, she turned toward the door. Before she could open it, her father stepped out from behind the curtain where he had been listening to her singing. With deep emotion he said,
" Wait, I did not know that Jesus Christ meant as much to you as that. I did not know you were willing to give up father, mother, wealth, prestige just for Jesus. Forgive me. If such great love can take hold of your heart, there must be something in it. Sit down here and tell me how I can become a Christian." My are you willing to turn your back on the world's prestige ?

2. The World's PLEASURES:

" Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season,"

(11:25) Moses could have lived in the palace, had all the goodies he wanted, had all the women he wanted, had all the money he wanted, had all the power he wanted and had all the authority he wanted. But God told him to go the Israelite slaves and assign himself to them. (Exod 3:10) That's the choice he had to make, to stay and sin or to go and obey. My what choice did he make ? To go. My what choice will you make ?
(Ps 73:12) 1,2,

3. The World's PROSPERITY:

" Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt," (

11:26) Now Egypt was an extremely wealthy nation. The discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamen has produced some of the greatest treasures ever discovered in ancient Egypt. Moses as a member of Pharaohs court had all of the Wealth this old world could offer. But he turned his back upon it because he had faith in God's greater eternal riches.

(Phil 4:19) I think of C.T. Studd who laboured for God on the Mission Field

giving away a personal fortune in the late 1800's of £30,000. I think of Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones vacating a lucrative position in Harley Street London to become the minister of an insignificant church in South Wales. Moses relinquished a present good and a prospective better because he yearned for heavens best. Is that your yearning and desire ?

Well, are you willing to count the cost, to pay the price and to follow the Lord ? (1)

(2) THE 2ND 40 YEARS WE SEE MOSES AS A SHEPHERD

Look at (3:1) Now had Moses been a member in one of our local churches he would have been appointed to leadership right away. Would he not ? But then God's ways are not ours. God is never in any hurry to prepare His servants to do His will, especially when He has some great work for them to accomplish. Moses spent four decades in the wilderness before beginning his public ministry. Thin of it ! Forty years ! My *Whenever you are tempted to grow impatient with God's timetable for your life, remember Moses who spent two years of preparation for every year of ministry.* Now the first part of Moses training was valuable, the second part was indispensable. In " *the schools of men,*" he passed from lower to higher, in " *the school of God,*" he passed from higher to lower ! It was during this time in the desert that Moses learned some vital lessons. Did you notice he learned the,

(a) **LESSON OF IMMATURITY:**

He was still too strong for the Lord to use. (2:11-12) If Moses was planning to free the Hebrews by killing the Egyptians one by one he was in for a shock. For the next day he discovered that the Egyptians were only part of the problem because the Jews couldn't even get along with each other. But here he was still too immature and so the Lord takes him aside for another forty years. You see, God spares no pains in preparing His instruments. His training method is meticulously thorough, for the Lord is no hurry. (Is 28:16) "***Time is no object with a God who demands quality at all costs.***" Almost twenty years elapsed between Christ's expression of His sense of call at the age of twelve and His public ministry.

(Lk 2:42) Paul spent three years of solitude in the Arabian deserts (Gal 1:18-19) where secret transactions took place between his soul and God.

Here is Moses spending one third of his life at the backside of the desert. Do you know something ? We're living in a day where it is common practice to pitch fork new converts into Christian activities without any serious inquiry as to their fitness for such tasks ! "*Gave them a wee class in the Sunday class,*" "*Get them to speak*

to the young people, ” do you ever talk like that ?

May I suggest to you that what a new convert needs is not public ministry but private meditation. (1 Tim 3:6)

(b) THE LESSON OF INTIMACY:

For in this place of retirement and seclusion Moses got to know His God. It was here that the “ *Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.*”

(33:11) Is this not a vital requirement for every servant of God and for every believer ? To be much alone with the Lord.

***“ Take time to be holy
Speak oft with Thy Lord.”***

Are you doing that ? How much time do you spend alone with God ? My so often our lives are dull, drab, and powerless. Do you know why ? Because we would rather watch our favourite soaps than spend time in the secret place. (a) (b)

(c) THE LESSON OF INADEQUACY:

For if the 1st forty years of his life produced self-confidence, his time in the desert produced self-diffidence ! Look at him at the burning bush which concludes the second phase of his life. (3:1-11) Though unlovely in itself this common acacia bush, became beautiful because aglow, transformed by the fire of God’s presence. You see, Moses had to learn that in spite of his privileged past he was only a common bush. Any greatness in Moses would be the result of the divine indwelling. It was not the character of the bush, but the fire in it which distinguished it from the thousands around. He had to discover that the essential qualifications for the service of God are unshod feet and a hidden face. Have you discovered that yet ? ***That being is even more important than doing ?*** You see, most of us find it easier to put on our shoes in busy activity, than to take them off in humble worship. We are more prone to turn our face to the public place than to hide it in the private place ! Do you know what we need to learn ? That deliverance can only come from God’s hand not ours ? Have you grasp the lesson ? Have you been emptied of self-confidence and self-sufficiency ?

(2:11-12 Acts 7:25) Do you realise that without the Lord you can do nothing ? (15:6) Have you been brought to the place where you feel your inadequacy and are compelled to cry, “ *Lord who is sufficient for these things ?*” (2 Cor 2:16)

*“ How ready is that man to go
Whom God hath never sent
How timorous, diffident and slow
God’s chosen instrument.”*

(3) THE 3RD FORTY YEARS WE SEE MOSES AS A SERVANT

His years of probation were over and Moses emerged as the servant of God and leader of His people.

(Deut 34:5) Now is it not interesting to notice that his greatest achievements for God took place after he was eighty years of age. (Acts 7:30) In a day when the spotlight is on the youth it is both comforting and challenging to older believers to be reminded from history that our years of greatest fruitfulness may still be in the future. Now obviously we can only look generally at this last phase in his life.

(a) WHAT A TASK HE FACED:

Let me ask you a question. *In all sphere’s of Christian work is there a more onerous task than that of caring for the people of God ?* I would think Moses would say, there is not ! Is this not one of the reasons why our churches are lacking pastors ? Oh, many believers want to be involved in Christian service, but not many in caring for the people of God. Do you remember what happened to Moses ? (18:13-18) Now stop most churches don’t believe that ! Some pastors and Christian workers assume responsibilities which are imposed by men rather than assigned by God. The result ? Body and nerve can never stand the pressure and breakdown is the consequence ! My do we not need to heed the wise counsel of Jethro and delegate ? (a)

(b) WHAT TESTS HE PASSED:

1. The Test of FAITH:

At the Red Sea ! (14:1) Before Israel there lay the sea, behind them the armies of Pharaoh, around them the mountains, from them the cry of anguish, “ *hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness.*” (14:11) Are you in a cul-de-sac this with no way out ? Will you listen to this man of faith, “ *fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord.*” (14:13)

2. The Test of AMBITION:

God's holy anger was kindled against Israel when they turned to idolatry while Moses was in the mount. Do you know what God said to Moses, "*Let me alone that my wrath wax hot against them, that I may consume them, and I will make of thee a great nation.*" (32:10) Here was God suggesting a way out and a wonderful opportunity for self-advancement ! But Moses was marked by selflessness, and his concern was for the glory of God and the welfare of God's people. (32:32) What are your aims and goals ? What is your main concern ? The advancement of Christ or self ?

3. The Test of JEALOUSY:

" *And there ran a young man and told Moses and said, Eldad and Mehad do prophesy in the camp. And Joshua said, my lord Moses forbid them.*" (Num 11:27) They felt that they were undermining and challenging Moses but jealousy found no place in his heart. He said,
" *Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets.*"
(Num 11:29) Is it possible to be jealous in God's service ? Yes ! Are you jealous because someone is more gifted, more blessed, more used than you ? (a) (b)

(c) WHAT A TRAGEDY HE SINNED:

But then the best of men are only men at the best. Great though Moses was he forfeited the privilege of entering the promised land when he disobeyed God and "*spake unadvisedly with his lips.*" (Num 20:7-12 Ps 106:33) His sin was forgiven but its consequences remained and though Moses sought the Lord for a reversal of the punishment, the answer came, "*speak no more unto Me of this matter.*" (Deut 3:20)

Can you picture the aged warrior with undimmed eye and unimpaired physical powers taking the path upward to the slopes of Nebo over against Jericho ? Can you see viewing all the land that the Lord had promised Israel ? Can you watch him as he bows his head to the righteous decree of God ? "*So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab and God buried him.*" (Deut 34:5-6) Do you know something ? That's not the end of the story. Look at the Saviour with two men on the Mount of Transfiguration. (Lk 9:30) Who are these two men ? Moses and Elijah ! The place ? None other than the promised land. The subject ? A greater deliverance than which Israel enjoyed in Egypt. Moses did enter the promised land and in company with none other than the Lord of Glory.

*“ With glory wrapped around
On the hills he never trod
And spoke of the strife that won our life
With the incarnate Son of God.”*

Is there not a sense in which the experience of Moses is the experience of us all ?
*Our highest hopes and aspirations are not always fulfilled on earth but beyond
lies the land of fulfilment.*