

Oppression: The Background and the Birth of Moses

Sabbath Afternoon, June 28

The Lord does not leave his wounded and bruised sheep to the power of Satan to be torn to pieces. He is ever strengthening his own in their weakness. He delivers those who are tried and tempted from the power of Satan. The Lord never forsakes the soul that puts his trust in him. Those who claim to be the sons and daughters of God must trust always in Jesus. To do otherwise is to disown the fact that he loves us. —“Doubt Not God’s Pardoning Love,” *Signs of the Times*, January 3, 1895, par. 3.

Those persons who refuse to move forward until they see every step plainly marked out before them, will never accomplish much; but every man who shows his faith and trust in God by willingly submitting himself to Him, enduring the divine discipline imposed, will become a successful workman for the Master of the vineyard. In their efforts to qualify themselves to be colaborers with God, men frequently place themselves in such positions as will completely disqualify them for the molding and fashioning which the Lord desires to give them. Thus they are not found bearing, as did Moses, the divine similitude. By submitting to God’s discipline, Moses became a sanctified channel through which the Lord could work. He did not hesitate to change his way for the Lord’s way, even though it did lead in strange paths, in untried ways. He did not permit himself to make use of his education by showing the unreasonableness of God’s commands, and the impossibility of obeying them. No; he placed a very low estimate upon his own qualifications to complete successfully the great work which the Lord had given him. When he started on his commission to deliver the people of God from their bondage, to all human appearances it was a most hopeless undertaking; but he confided in Him with whom all things are possible. —*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 344.

God desires His people to prepare for the soon-coming crisis. Prepared or unprepared, they must all meet it; and those only who have brought their lives into conformity to the divine standard, will stand firm at that time of test and trial. When secular rulers unite with ministers of religion to dictate in matters of conscience, then it will be seen who really fear and serve God. When the darkness is deepest, the light of a godlike character will shine the brightest. When every other trust fails, then it will be seen who have an abiding trust in Jehovah. And while the enemies of truth are on every side, watching the Lord’s servants for evil, God will watch over them for good. He will be to them as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 431.

Sunday, June 29

God's People in Egypt

The purpose which God seeks to accomplish through His people today is the same that He desired to accomplish through Israel when He brought them forth out of Egypt. By beholding the goodness, the mercy, the justice, and the love of God revealed in the church, the world is to have a representation of His character. And when the law of God is thus exemplified in the life, even the world will recognize the superiority of those who love and fear and serve God above every other people on the earth. The Lord has His eye upon every one of His people; He has His plans concerning each. It is His purpose that those who practice His holy precepts shall be a distinguished people. To the people of God today as well as to ancient Israel belong the words written by Moses through the Spirit of Inspiration: "Thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth." Deuteronomy 7:6. —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 12.

When he saw that his end was near, he summoned his kinsmen about him. Honored as he had been in the land of the Pharaohs, Egypt was to him but the place of his exile; his last act was to signify that his lot was cast with Israel. His last words were, "God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which He sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." And he took a solemn oath of the children of Israel that they would carry up his bones with them to the land of Canaan. "So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt." And through the centuries of toil which followed, the coffin, a reminder of the dying words of Joseph, testified to Israel that they were only sojourners in Egypt, and bade them keep their hopes fixed upon the Land of Promise, for the time of deliverance would surely come. —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 240.

The descendants of Abraham, Jacob and his posterity, were brought down to Egypt that in the midst of that great and wicked nation they might reveal the principles of God's kingdom. The integrity of Joseph and his wonderful work in preserving the lives of the whole Egyptian people were a representation of the life of Christ. Moses and many others were witnesses for God.

In bringing forth Israel from Egypt, the Lord again manifested His power and His mercy. His wonderful works in their deliverance from bondage and His dealings with them in their travels through the wilderness were not for their benefit alone. These were to be as an object lesson to the surrounding nations. The Lord revealed Himself as a God above all human authority and greatness. —*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 286.

The Historical Background

This new king of Egypt, learned that the children of Israel were of great service to the kingdom. Many of them were able and understanding workmen, and he was not willing to lose their labor. This new king ranked the children of Israel with that class of slaves who had sold their flocks, their herds, their lands and themselves to the kingdom. "Therefore they did set over them taskmasters, to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure-cities, Pithom and Rameses. But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel. And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigor. And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field. All their service wherein they made them serve was with rigor." They compelled their women to work in the fields, as though they were slaves. Yet their numbers did not decrease. As the king and his rulers saw that they continually increased, they consulted together to compel them to accomplish a certain amount every day. They thought to subdue them with hard labor, and were angry because they could not decrease their numbers, and crush out their independent spirit. —*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, p. 179.

The Israelites had already become very numerous; they "were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them." Under Joseph's fostering care, and the favor of the king who was then ruling, they had spread rapidly over the land. But they had kept themselves a distinct race, having nothing in common with the Egyptians in customs or religion; and their increasing numbers now excited the fears of the king and his people, lest in case of war they should join themselves with the enemies of Egypt. Yet policy forbade their banishment from the country. Many of them were able and understanding workmen, and they added greatly to the wealth of the nation; the king needed such laborers for the erection of his magnificent palaces and temples. Accordingly he ranked them with the Egyptians who had sold themselves with their possessions to the kingdom. Soon taskmasters were set over them, and their slavery became complete. —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 241.

[The Exodus] completed the history revealed to Abraham in prophetic vision centuries before: "Thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance." Genesis 15:13, 14. The four hundred years had been fulfilled. "And it came to pass the selfsame day, that the Lord did bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their armies." In their departure from Egypt the Israelites bore with them a precious legacy, in the bones of Joseph, which had so long awaited the fulfillment of God's promise, and which, during the dark years of bondage, had been a reminder of Israel's deliverance. —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 281.

Tuesday, July 1

The Hebrew Midwives

Because they failed to accomplish their purpose they hardened their hearts to go still further. The king commanded that the male children should be killed as soon as they were born. Satan was the mover in these matters. He knew that a deliver was to be raised up among the Hebrews to rescue them from oppression. He thought that if he could move the king to destroy the male children, the purpose of God would be defeated. The women feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the male children alive. The women dare not murder the Hebrew children, and because they obeyed not the command of the king, the Lord prospered them. As the king of Egypt was informed that his command had not been obeyed he was very angry. He then made his command more urgent and extensive. He charged all his people to keep a strict watch, saying, "Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive."—*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, p. 179.

Men, women, and youth, God requires you to possess moral courage, steadiness of purpose, fortitude and perseverance, minds that cannot take the assertions of another, but which will investigate for themselves before receiving or rejecting, that will study and weigh evidence, and take it to the Lord in prayer. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." Now the condition: "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." This petition for wisdom is not to be a meaningless prayer, out of mind as soon as finished. It is a prayer that expresses the strong, earnest desire of the heart, arising from a conscious lack of wisdom to determine the will of God. . . .

Every act of our lives affects others for good or evil. Our influence is tending upward or downward; it is felt, acted upon, and to a greater or less degree reproduced by others. If by our example we aid others in the development of good principles, we give them power to do good. In their turn they exert the same beneficial influence upon others, and thus hundreds and thousands are affected by our unconscious influence. If we by acts strengthen or force into activity the evil powers possessed by those around us, we share their sin, and will have to render an account for the good we might have done them and did not do, because we made not God our strength, our guide, our counselor. —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 130.

Wednesday, July 2

Moses Is Born

While this decree was in full force a son was born to Amram and Jochebed, devout Israelites of the tribe of Levi. The babe was “a goodly child;” and the parents, believing that the time of Israel’s release was drawing near, and that God would raise up a deliverer for His people, determined that their little one should not be sacrificed. Faith in God strengthened their hearts, “and they were not afraid of the king’s commandment.” Hebrews 11:23.

The mother succeeded in concealing the child for three months. Then, finding that she could no longer keep him safely, she prepared a little ark of rushes, making it watertight by means of slime and pitch; and laying the babe therein, she placed it among the flags at the river’s brink. She dared not remain to guard it, lest the child’s life and her own should be forfeited; but his sister, Miriam, lingered near, apparently indifferent, but anxiously watching to see what would become of her little brother. And there were other watchers. The mother’s earnest prayers had committed her child to the care of God; and angels, unseen, hovered above his lowly resting place. Angels directed Pharaoh’s daughter thither. Her curiosity was excited by the little basket, and as she looked upon the beautiful child within, she read the story at a glance. The tears of the babe awakened her compassion, and her sympathies went out to the unknown mother who had resorted to this means to preserve the life of her precious little one. She determined that he should be saved; she would adopt him as her own. —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 242, 243.

God had heard the mother’s prayers; her faith had been rewarded. It was with deep gratitude that she entered upon her now safe and happy task. She faithfully improved her opportunity to educate her child for God. She felt confident that he had been preserved for some great work, and she knew that he must soon be given up to his royal mother, to be surrounded with influences that would tend to lead him away from God. All this rendered her more diligent and careful in his instruction than in that of her other children. She endeavored to imbue his mind with the fear of God and the love of truth and justice, and earnestly prayed that he might be preserved from every corrupting influence. She showed him the folly and sin of idolatry, and early taught him to bow down and pray to the living God, who alone could hear him and help him in every emergency.

She kept the boy as long as she could, but was obliged to give him up when he was about twelve years old. From his humble cabin home he was taken to the royal palace, to the daughter of Pharaoh, “and he became her son.” Yet even here he did not lose the impressions received in childhood. The lessons learned at his mother’s side could not be forgotten. They were a shield from the pride, the infidelity, and the vice that flourished amid the splendor of the court. —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 243, 244.

A Change of Plans

Moses supposed that his education in the wisdom of Egypt had fully qualified him to lead Israel from bondage. Was he not learned in all the things necessary for a general of armies? Had he not had the greatest advantages of the best schools in the land?—Yes; he felt that he was able to deliver them. He first set about his work by trying to gain the favor of his own people by redressing their wrongs. He killed an Egyptian who was imposing upon one of his brethren. In this he manifested the spirit of him who was a murderer from the beginning, and proved himself unfit to represent the God of mercy, love, and tenderness. He made a miserable failure of his first attempt. Like many another, he then immediately lost his confidence in God, and turned his back upon his appointed work; he fled from the wrath of Pharaoh. He concluded that because of his mistake, his great sin in taking the life of the cruel Egyptian, God would not permit him to have any part in the work of delivering His people from their cruel bondage. But the Lord permitted these things that He might be able to teach him the gentleness, goodness, long-suffering, which it is necessary for every laborer for the Master to possess; for it is these characteristics that constitute the successful workman in the Lord's cause. —*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 342.

The lessons of Christlike meekness, lowliness of heart, reverence for sacred things, are taught nowhere effectively except in the school of Christ. Moses had been taught to expect flattery and praise because of his superior abilities; but now he was to learn a different lesson. As a shepherd of sheep, Moses was taught to care for the afflicted, to nurse the sick, to seek patiently after the straying, to bear long with the unruly, to supply with loving solicitude the wants of the young lambs and the necessities of the old and feeble. As these phases of his character were developed, he was drawn nearer to his Chief Shepherd. He became united to, submerged in, the Holy One of Israel. He believed in the great God. He held communion with the Father through humble prayer. He looked to the Highest for an education in spiritual things, and for a knowledge of his duty as a faithful shepherd. His life became so closely linked with heaven that God talked with him face to face. —*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 343.

The rashness of Moses in slaying the Egyptian was prompted by a presumptuous spirit. Faith moves in the strength and wisdom of God, and not in the ways of men. By simple faith Moses was enabled to press through difficulties, and overcome obstacles which seemed almost insurmountable. . . . God was able to manifest His great power through Moses because of his constant faith in the power and in the loving intentions of their Deliverer. It was this implicit faith in God that made Moses what he was. According to all that the Lord commanded him, so did he. —*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 344.

Friday, July 4

For Further Reading

"A Lesson From the Life of Moses," in *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 474–478.
"Influence of the Mother," in *The Adventist Home*, pp. 240–243.