

Moses the Pilgrim-Saviour

Review

- by power of his promised blessing (gospel) God extracts Abraham from culture of Babylon (Babel, the worldly city) and makes him a pilgrim sojourner in a land not his own
- Abraham's status as sojourner pilgrim allows God to train him in the new way of life that belongs to the heavenly city yet to come (Hebrews 11)
- Abraham is not totally sanctified - he brings with him much of the confusion and inner chaos of the worldly city from which he was called - notably in marriage and family God has to instruct him slowly in the nature of these institutions as vehicles for the promise
- what Abraham has is not personal righteousness and holiness, but faith in God's promise, and this is counted to him as righteousness (Genesis 15:6)
- faith in God's promise is the condition of the new way, and God's gracious promise is the power that drives this history
- Abraham the prototype of the Christian pilgrim, stranger and exile

Fast Forward

- era of patriarchs - Abraham, Isaac, Jacob=Israel, and the children of Israel
- Abraham's family becoming sizable clan
- Joseph sold into slavery in Egypt becomes saviour of his people from famine - Israel goes down into Egypt, as favoured sojourners - and there they are fruitful, multiply and increase (blessing of Adam renewed in descendants of Abraham)

Context - oppression of Israel

- generational change: Joseph dies, the new Pharaoh does not know Joseph, and is paranoid about growth of Israelite population - fears them as potential fifth column and fears losing them as workforce - thus Israel's refuge becomes place of danger to Israel
- Plan A - Israelites conscripted for forced hard labour - yet population continues to grow
- Plan B - [Egyptian?] midwives enlisted to kill male infants - females less likely to challenge Egyptian domination - yet midwives fear God, refuse to practice infanticide
- Plan C - Egyptians commanded to drown Israelite male infants by drowning them in the Nile
- forced labour, infanticide, familiar policies of "population control" by Nazis, Maoists, etc.
- Israel's resilience and continued growth testifies to power of God's promise to Abraham

The Saviour Saved (1)

- Pharaoh's oppression focussed on men
- boy child saved by efforts of mother (love and resolution), sister (watchfulness), and Egyptian princess (compassion and power) - women's admirable capacity to step in when men are not available or ready to take initiative - nonetheless, not the norm

- father passive? absent? or just so afflicted by labour that he can't take initiative?
- God using weak to confound the strong - role of women in disciples of Jesus and early church
- Moses - in Egyptian, means "son" or "born of" - in Hebrew, pun on "drawn out"
- Moses saved in a floating basket called "ark" - same word as in Genesis 6-8 - like Noah Moses is going to bring Israel through water into new creation
- Moses saved through the water that was meant to destroy him - likewise, water that threatens to destroy Israel will save them and destroy Egyptians
- Moses set among "reeds" ("flags" KJV) and he will bring Israel through the "SEa of Reeds" (13:18 alt name for Red Sea)
- -murder of male infants - Egypt's oppression will turn back on them in judgment (death of firstborn males) and salvation for Israel
- what happens to Moses will happen to Israel - "head" and "body" -

Failed Saviour

- Moses saved by Egyptian princess and adopted as her son
- what is Moses? Egyptian or Israelite? - like Joseph not really either
- Moses starts out looking like Joseph - but in the end he is going to reverse that process in himself, just as he is going to lead Israel out of Egypt
- Moses intervenes on side of Israelite victimized by Egyptian - kills Egyptian and buries him
- compare "righteous Gentiles" who at risk to themselves intervened to protect and save Jews from Nazis
- but here Moses acknowledges solidarity with his own people
- yet when Moses intervenes to reconcile quarreling Israelites they turn on him
- pattern already established that will persist - of Moses willing to take on role of saviour and governor, but Israel's resistance to his leadership
- 2:14 "who made thee a prince and judge over us?" - a good question - Moses is without authority
- on his own, Moses cannot save and govern - and demoralized, fearful of Pharaoh's punishment, he flees
- new state of question – not headship of family (Abraham) but of an entire people -

Saviour Saved (2)

- Moses leaves Egypt for Midian (Sinai? Negeb?)
- at well (meeting and fighting place of desert) intervenes (saviour) against bullying shepherds for daughters of priest of Midian - same generous impulse
- this time his intervention met with positive response - hospitality, home, marriage, son follows
- Midianites are descendants of Abraham through Keturah, second wife after Sarah's death (Gen 25:2) - in later history, an enemy of Israel, but here a friendly kindred
- note: they regard him as "an Egyptian" (2:19) – question of identity not yet resolved

- name of his son shows he regards himself as "a stranger in a strange land" - sojourning/banished – from Egypt? Or in Egypt? Ambiguity reflects Moses' own mind – is he banished from Egypt? Or was he sojourning in Egypt?
- yet Moses has returned to the ways of patriarch - sojourning as shepherd in wilderness, as husband and father - in this sense Moses is becoming a true Israelite - it is as such that God will call him to provide leadership in the next phase of his redemptive purpose
- here that the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham is to move ahead
- once again, what happens to Moses is what will happen to Israel - forty years in Midian (Acts 7:23, Exodus 7:7) just as Israel will be forty years in wilderness, learning how to be Israel

God hears

- oppression continues
- at this point, for first time, God is mentioned (4x)
- as hearing oppression, remembering covenant, looking upon Israel, and knowing them - not only knowing everything about them, but recognizing them as his own

Call of Moses

- Moses shepherd - like patriarchs
- led to mount of God
- theophany - bush burns but not consumed - is this Israel under oppression? or Israel indwelt by holy presence of God?
- God speaks to him as God of patriarchs - acknowledgement of promise implicit
- good news (promise): he has seen affliction, he will come down to deliver them, he will bring them into another land - Canaan, milk and honey
- commission (command): - God sends Moses to Pharaoh to bring them forth
- it's God's initiative and accomplishment, it is also Moses' mission
- different situation/role from word to Abraham - here not an individual or family in relation to God, but an entire people whose relation to its God and to Pharaoh is going to be mediated by Moses
- Moses naturally responds with declaration of inadequacy (insufficiency) to go to Pharaoh and to bring Israel out of Egypt - his experience in ch 2
- God replies that he will be "with thee" - God's presence and power will supply Moses with sufficiency he does not have himself
- Promise central to the gospel – Matthew 1 “Emmanuel, which being interpreted, is God with us”; Matthew 28:20 “and I will be with you always, even unto the end of the world” - for “with God nothing shall be impossible” (Luke 1:37) – God’s presence in power is at the heart of the gospel = in his presence is our adequacy – this is explored in a number of different ways in Moses questions-

God's Name

- Moses not so much worried about Pharaoh as he is about Israel - will they believe him? what will he say to them? what if they don't accept him? –
- cf. 2:14 "who made thee a prince and judge over us?" - question still haunts Moses - a man with instinct to save and govern his people, but burnt by experience, found refuge in Midian - does he really want to go back?
- is it Israel that needs the assurance? or Moses himself?
- he is asking these questions because he does not know the answers himself
- not irrational objections – he is counting the cost of leadership, knows it is not in himself, needs to find it outside himself – hence God's patience in answering

- by what authority does he go to Pharaoh and Israel?
- demand for name of God - "I am that I am" - or "he who is" (LXX) - testimony to God's transcendence, his eternity, his power, his nature as Being itself
- echoes in Revelation 1:4: "Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come";
- 1:8 "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty"
- Hebrews 13:8 "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever"
- Moses to act in authority of the Name of the LORD- the revealed nature and power - of the one who sends him
- Moses given instructions about gathering and speaking to elders of Israel
- political organization and structure - Moses to be mediator between God and Israel's leadership
- publishing gospel and thus motivating and directing the people
- warning of Pharaoh's resistance, God's victory over Pharaoh, and the spoiling of the Egyptians
- fairly complete account, yet Moses not satisfied yet

Moses' anxiety - promise of signs

- Moses still anxious - sure *they will not believe him nor listen to him*
- not an irrational fear, as events will show time and time again -
- what will be the authority of Moses?
- God answers patiently - with three supernatural signs - as in NT signs serve to confirm and seal the word
- point to God's power over life and death
 - staff/rod - turning into serpent, turning back into rod
 - hand made leprous in his bosom and made clean
 - water turned to blood on dry land

Moses' anxiety - lack of eloquence

- fear of public speaking very common!
- inadequacy as speaker - God may be all he is, but Moses is still just Moses

- protest is not invalid but irrelevant
- God will give him adequacy to speak
- Moses tries to beg off - 4:13
- God's anger for first time - all rational objections will be met patiently, but not disobedience
- Moses will find himself between God's anger, and resistance of Pharaoh/Israel
- yet God also promises him help of Aaron, his brother, and future priest, to be his spokesman

From Midian to Egypt

- final part of ch 4 traces dpoearutre from Midian to Egypt
- leavetaking from Jethro - in peace
- assurance from God of safety in Egypt from vengeance
- God instructs Moses what to say to Pharaoh - God's demand for freedom of the first born of God to serve his Father - and the warning of judgment on Pharaoh's first born if he does not
- what is at stake - the importance of Israel to the Lord
- strange episode of 4:24-26 - point in part seems to be that Moses has to become completely Israelite - circumcision of his son
- meeting with Aaron as promised by God
- meeting with elders - and they respond with belief
- so far all goes very well, just as God promised

What has Moses learned?

- **Inadequacy and Adequacy** His own inadequacy has been exposed in Egypt – leads to sojourning in desert, resuming life of his forefathers –
- Desert is external correlative of Moses own awareness of his inadequacy
- Desert inside and out is the condition in which Moses can hear and receive the Word of God, and find in God and his Word the adequacy, the authority and wisdom to save and govern his people under God
- What happens to Moses must also happen to Israel – head and body
- Saved through water, saved by blood of first born
- Sojourning in wilderness, meeting God, hearing his Word
- Israel has to be uprooted form Egypt, Egyptian ways and identity, has to learn what it means to be God's people in pilgrimage -
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