

MOSES and the PROPHETS

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MOSES

4-1-1 Moses Our Example

It cannot be too often or too highly stressed that Moses was and is seen in the Jewish world as a larger than life figure. Theologically, Judaism has placed Moses greater even than Messiah. We have shown that it was the purpose of John's Gospel to correct this ⁽¹⁾. The idea that ordinary believers can in any sense be equal to or even greater than Moses was (and is) absolute anathema to the Jewish mind. And yet through allusion and almost explicit statement, the Lord Jesus and the New Testament writers invite us to see ourselves as equal to or greater than Moses, on account of the spiritual riches made available to us in Christ. How radical this was to the first century mind is extremely hard for us to enter into. The point is, God intellectually stretches us to an extent which may be almost unacceptable to us; as with our first century brethren, we too are challenged to radically turn against many of the concepts and attitudes which are fundamental to our upbringing. If we can really grasp the reality of the fact that we are called to behold the *glory of God*. Moses seems to have struggled to believe that he really had been invited to such an experience (Ex. 33:16; 34:9,34).

Moses: Our Example

In this light, consider the following invitations to be like Moses:

- The very name 'Moses' meaning 'drawn out' suggests he is the prototype for every saint- a called out one.

- We'll sing Moses' song; as if his victory was ours (Rev. 15:3)
- We'll all be like Moses was at the end, in essence; we'll share his finest hours. Our names will not be blotted out of the book of life (Rev. 3:5), as Moses' wasn't (Ex. 32:32).
- At the day of judgment, we will all go through the Moses experience; hiding in the rock in the presence of God's glory (Is. 2:10 cp. Ex. 33:22). And our vision of that glory in the face of the Lord Jesus *even now* should have the same humbling effect.
- “Have ye not read that which was spoken unto *you* by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham...” (Mt. 22:31) quotes the words God spoke to *Moses* as having been spoken personally to *us*.
- When we read that God will not place too great a burden upon us, but will provide a way of escape so that we are able to bear the burden (1 Cor. 10:13), the allusion is clearly to Num. 11:17 LXX, where Moses is provided with helpers so that he will be able to bear the burden of the people.
- In the same way as Moses spoke to the Angel without a veil on his face, and thereby came to reflect the glory which shone from the Angel's face (Ex. 34:33-35), so we are bidden look at the glory of God in the face of Jesus, to consider his character, and be changed into that same glory by reflecting his character in our lives. By simply beholding the glory of Christ's righteousness, truly appreciating it, we will be changed (2 Cor. 3:15-18 RV). Paul seems to be arguing that whenever a Jew turns to the Lord Jesus and fellowships with Him, then he is living out the pattern of Moses. And further, 2 Cor. 4:3 speaks of our Gospel being 'veiled' to those who are lost- as if *we* are as Moses, the Gospel we preach being as the glory of God which shone from Moses' face. Let's keep remembering how huge and radical was the challenge of this to a first century Jewish readership for whom Moses was an almost untouchable hero.
- We must not cast away our confidence, which has great recompense of reward- and the writer uses these words about Moses, bidding us follow his example (Heb. 10:35; 11:26).
- John's Gospel contains several references to the fact that Christ 'shows' the Father to those who believe in him, and that it is possible to " see the Father" and his glory through seeing or accurately believing in him as the Son of the Father (Jn. 11:40; 12:45; 14:9; 16:25). Moses earnestly wished to see the Father fully, but was unable to do so. The height which Moses reached as he cowered in that rock cleft and heard God's Name declared is hard to plumb. But we have been enabled to *see* the Father, through our appreciation of the Lord Jesus. But does an appropriate sense of *wonder* fill us? Do we really make time to *know* the Son of God? Or do we see words like " glory" as just cold theology?
- The Lord Jesus in John's Gospel describes Himself in terms of the “I am...” formula. Each time, He was referring back to the burning bush revelation of Yahweh as the “I am”; and by implication, the Lord's audience are thereby placed in the position of Moses, intended to rise up in response as he did.
- Our eyes shall “behold the land that is very far off” (Is. 33:17) just as Moses had been given the vision of the promised land far off.
- The man Moses was *made* very meek, until he was the meekest man alive on earth (Num. 12:3 Heb.). “A stuttering shepherd, shy of leadership and haunted by his crime of passion” in slaying the

Egyptian...these things developed this in him. Remember that Moses himself wrote this. It's an autobiographical comment, reflecting of course the Spirit of Him who knows every heart, and could make such a statement. And yet he writes it in recording how God had rebuked Aaron and Miriam for criticizing him, and how He had told them that He spoke with Moses alone face to face. We can imagine Moses blushing, with hung head. And then he makes the comment, that he was made the most humble man... Appreciating the honour of seeing so much of God, when he himself was a sinner, was part of that humbling process. All Israel will ultimately go through this when they face up to the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ: " Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of man shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day" (Is. 2:10,11). This certainly reads like an allusion to Moses' cowering in the rock, humbling himself in the dust, before the glory of Yahweh. Our glimpses of the wonder of the Father's character should have the same effect upon us, just beholding the glory of God, i.e. the manifestation of His perfect character is Christ, should change us into the same image (2 Cor. 3:18- another invitation to see ourselves as Moses). And yet I see little evidence of this in my own life, or those of my brethren and sisters. We have perhaps become all too familiar with the knowledge of the glory of God. The awesomeness of His holiness as manifest in Christ seems far, far from our appreciation. Despite God's evident pleasure with Moses, manifest in the revelation He gave him, Moses still fumbled around in his recognition of his own humanity: " If now I have found grace in thy sight...pardon *our* iniquity and *our* sin" (Ex. 34:9). This is surely homework for us; to grow in our appreciation and marvel at God's holiness, at the moral beauty of His character. For this is how we too will be changed into the same image, and how we will come to truly love God. For we cannot love what we do not appreciate or understand. But note that God's comment on Moses was also: "the man Moses was very great" (Ex. 11:3). Yet it is also written that "the man Moses was very meek" (Num. 12:3). Putting the two passages together we have the clear lesson that he who humbles himself is made great; and in this, Moses was not only a type of Christ but also a pattern for all who would go through the pattern which the Lord Jesus set before us: of humbling ourselves now that we might be made great in due time. Moses our example is really a challenge in this.

- Moses desired that God's glory would "appear... upon / unto" the children of God's servants (Ps. 90:16). He wanted all God's children to have the same experience of glory appearing to them as he had had. And according to 2 Cor. 3:18, this desire is fulfilled every time a man turns to the Lord Jesus, and like Moses, with unveiled face, beholds that same glory.

- The prayerfulness of Moses and his changing of God's mind about His people clearly inspired many in later Biblical history, who saw in Moses a real pattern for themselves. Asaph speaks of how in his nightly prayers "My hand was stretched out... and slacked not" (Ps. 77:2 RV). This is clearly the language of Moses praying with upheld hands for victory over Amalek.

- God spoke to Moses " mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of Yahweh shall he behold" (Num. 12:8) is the basis of 1 Cor. 13:12: " Now (in the period of the Spirit gifts) we see through a glass darkly; but then (in the dispensation of the completed word) face to face: now I know in part (from the ministry of the gifts); but then shall I know, even as also I am known" . The point of this connection is simply this: The close relationship between God and Moses is now available to us through the word. But do we feel God speaking to us face to face, as a man speaks to his friend (Ex. 33:11)? For this is how close God and Moses came through the word. Yet it is possible. An *urgent* devotion to the word is needed by us as a community. This is what we really need exhortation about.

- In the same way as Moses was called up into the mount to receive his Divine commission, so the Lord Jesus called up to the mount His disciples- implying that they, who represent all of us, were now a new Moses (Mk. 3:13). Moses was thus an example that challenged those from a Jewish background especially.
- Wherever an ordinary Israelite offered sacrifice, "I will come unto thee ['you' singular] and bless thee" (Ex. 20:23). This is the very language of God coming unto Moses on the top of Sinai (Ex. 19:20 RV)- as if to imply that the very pinnacle of Moses' relationship with God, meeting Him on the top of the mount, is just as attainable for each of God's people who truly sacrifices to Him.
- When Eliphaz says that the righteous "Will die at the height of your powers, and be *gathered* like ripened grain" (Job 5:26, Stephen Mitchell's translation), there is an evident connection with the account of Moses being *gathered* at his death, and dying with his natural faculties undiminished. Moses is presented as the epitome of the righteous believer.
- The way Moses pleaded with God to change His mind and not destroy Israel for the sake of what the surrounding nations would say is indeed inspirational to us all. It surely inspired David to pray likewise- for "wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now there God?" (Ps. 115:2).
- "I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say" (Ex. 4:12) is almost quoted in Mt. 10:19,20 and Mk. 13:11 concerning how we too will be taught what to say when we come before the rulers of our world. In such moments of crisis, Moses, even in weakness as he was at this time, really is our living example.
- Joshua was encouraged that "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee" (Josh. 1:5). But these very words are quoted in Heb. 13:5 as the grounds of our matchless confidence that the Lord God will be with us too! As He was with Moses- not just in power, but in wondrous patience and gentleness- so He will be with us too. Not only did God encourage Joshua to see himself as in Moses' shoes; He inspired Jeremiah likewise (Jer. 21:8 = Dt. 30:15,19), and Ezekiel (Ez. 2:3 = Dt. 31:27; Neh. 9:17; Num. 17:10); and He wishes us to also see Moses' God as our God. But if Moses' God is to be ours in truth in the daily round of life, we must rise up to the dedication of Moses; as he was a faithful steward, thoroughly dedicated to God's ecclesia (Heb. 3:5), so we are invited follow his example (1 Cor. 4:2; Mt. 24:45). Note that the promise of Moses that God would not fail nor forsake Joshua, but would be with him (Dt. 31:8) was similar to the very promise given to Moses which he had earlier doubted (Ex. 3:12; 4:12,15). Such exhortation is so much the stronger from someone who has themselves doubted and then come to believe.

In addition to all this, Moses is set up as example and representative of his people Israel. Israel is likened in Ez. 16:5 to a child rejected at birth, but miraculously found and cared for, and brought up with every pampered blessing. Just as Moses was. Stephen described the 'putting out' of Moses with the same word used in the LXX for what happened to Israel in Ezekiel 16 (Acts 7:21; Ex. 2:3 LXX).

Moses, Gideon And Us

Gideon was bidden rise up to the example of Moses- for there were many similarities between his call by the Angel, and the Angelic calling which Moses received at the burning bush. Thus Gideon was called to follow the Angel in faith, "because Ehyeh is with you" (Jud. 6:16)- a direct quotation from the Angelic manifestation to Moses in Ex. 3:12. And yet he responds: "Alas! For I have seen

Yahweh's envoy face to face!" (Jud. 6:22). Gideon knew full well that Moses had seen the Angel "face to face" (Dt. 34:10). Gideon's fear is therefore rooted in a sense that "No! I'm simply *not* Moses!". And it's the same with us. We can read of all these reasons to believe that Moses is really our pattern, and respond that "No! This ain't me...". But there, in the record of Gideon and his success, lies our challenge to rise up to the spirit of Moses.

4-1-2 Moses And " The reproach of Christ"

At age 40, Moses came to a crisis. He had a choice between the riches of Egypt, the pleasures of sin for a season, and choosing rather to suffer affliction with God's people and thereby fellowship the reproach of Christ (Heb. 11:24-26). He probably had the chance to become the next Pharaoh, as the son of Pharaoh's daughter; but he consciously refused this, as a pure act of the will, as an expression of faith in the future recompense of the Kingdom. There are a number of passages which invite us to follow Moses' example in this. We will see below that Paul was motivated in his rejection of worldly advantage by Moses' inspiration. And as in all things, he is our example, that we might follow Christ, who also turned down the very real possibility of temporal rulership of the world- for the sake of living the life of the cross, and thereby securing our redemption.

Even within Hebrews, the description of Moses' rejection of Egypt for the sake of Christ is shown to be our example: " Esteeming the *reproach of Christ* greater riches than the treasures (i.e. Pharaoh's treasures, which he could have had if he succeeded as Pharaoh) in Egypt...let us go forth therefore unto (Jesus) without the camp, *bearing his reproach*" (Heb. 11:26; 13:13). We should be even eager to bear 'reproach for the name of Christ' as Moses did (1 Pet. 4:14), knowing it is a surety of our sharing his resurrection.

For Moses, " the reproach of Christ" was his having " respect unto the recompense of the reward" . He therefore must have understood in some detail that there would be a future Saviour, who would enable the eternal Kingdom promised to Abraham through his bearing the reproach of this world. Such was Moses' appreciation of this that it motivated him to reject Egypt. His motivation, therefore, was based upon a fine reflection upon the promises to Abraham and other oblique prophecies of the suffering Messiah contained in the book of Genesis. Moses knew he could have a share in the sufferings of the future saviour and thereby share his reward, because he saw the implication that Messiah would be our representative. Yet those promises are the very things which Christians now say they are bored of hearing every few weeks on a Sunday evening. No wonder we lack Moses' desire to share Christ's reproach, and thereby reject the attractions of this world. The way Moses had " respect unto the recompense of the reward" is our example; for again, even within Hebrews, we are exhorted: " Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great *recompense of reward*" (Heb. 11:26; 10:35). The Greek for " respect" means to look away from all else; indicating how single-mindedly and intensely did Moses look ahead to the Kingdom; the knowledge of which was, in terms of number of words, scant indeed. All he had was the covenants of promise.

It is worth trying to visualize the scene when Moses was "full forty years old" (Acts 7:23). It would make a fine movie. The Greek phrase could refer to Moses' birthday, and one is tempted to speculate that it had been arranged that when Moses was 40, he would become Pharaoh. Heb. 11:24 says that he refused and chose- the Greek tense implying a one off choice- to suffer affliction with God's people. It is tempting to imagine Moses at the ceremony when he should have been declared as Pharaoh, the most powerful man in his world...standing up and saying, to a suddenly hushed audience, voice cracking with shame and stress and yet some sort of proud relief that he was doing

the right thing: "I, whom you know in Egyptian as Meses, am Moshe, yes, Moshe the Jew; and I decline to be Pharaoh". Imagine his foster mother's pain and anger. And then in the end, the wonderful honour would have been given to another man, who became Pharaoh. Perhaps he or his son was the one to whom Moses was to come, 40 years later. After a nervous breakdown, stuttering, speaking with a thick accent, clearly having forgotten Egyptian... walking through the mansions of glory, along the corridors of power, to meet that man, to whom he had given the throne 40 years earlier.

" The reproach of Christ"

Paul " counted" the things of this life as loss " for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ" and his sufferings (Phil. 3:8), so that he would gain the resurrection. Moses likewise rejected the world for the same two reasons: the excellency of sharing the reproach of Christ, and secondly from respect unto the recompense of the reward, at the resurrection. He uses the same word translated " esteemed" when we read of how Moses " esteemed" the reproach of Christ as greater riches than the treasures in Egypt (Heb. 11:26). The " reproach" of Christ is the same word used concerning Christ being " reviled" on the cross. Paul felt that the intellectual heights of knowing the mind of our crucified Lord, of being able to enter into the riches than are even now in the mind of Christ (Col. 2:3) more than compensated for his sacrifice of all material things in this life. And Moses was the same; he esteemed the " reproach of Christ" , the knowledge that he was sharing the sufferings of his future saviour and would thereby enter the Kingdom which he would make possible, as far far greater than the possibility of being King of Egypt. He knew that he was sharing the sufferings of Christ, and that therefore he would be rewarded. It was this knowledge which motivated him in rejecting the riches of Egypt.

And Moses really is our example- as is Paul. It is tempting to think that intellectual appreciation cannot affect our practical lives. But once we start to sense that we really are touching minds with the Lord Jesus, that our sufferings are really making us one with the mind / spirit of Christ in Heaven, then this alone will make our material position in this life utterly meaningless. We will easily reject demanding jobs, larger houses, the security of savings- because of the sheer wonder of our knowledge of Christ and our fellowship with him. For many, this idea will be pushed off as altogether too theoretical, too abstract. And yet for a minority of brethren and sisters, the truth of all this has been realised in practice, year after year. The teaching of these passages, the examples of Paul and Moses, really are there to be copied. They are not just sweet stories to be admired, as pictures, for their beauty in themselves. There is a dynamism within them, an ability to enter and change our lives- if we are willing. *Moses really is our example*; he went through the pain of rejecting his mother, the shame of the poor intellectual falling in love with the shepherd girl, the agony of divorce from her later, the bitter loneliness of the wilderness years and apparent rejection by God for the sake of those he loved... We tend to ask for the pain to be taken away as soon as we have it, and I suppose it's natural that we should ask the Father for such things. But through much tribulation we enter the Kingdom.

Moses forsook the possibilities of Egypt not just for " the reproach of Christ" ; he was also motivated by the fact that " he endured (Gk. was vigorous), as seeing him who is invisible" (Heb. 11:27). It was *as if* he had seen the invisible God, as he later asked to. When the disciples asked to see God, Christ said that the manifestation of His character which they had seen in him was the same thing (Jn. 14:8). Our experience of seeing the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, with unveiled face like Moses, ought to be a *wondrous* experience. When Moses asked to physically see God, the Angel proclaimed the characteristics of God before him. So when we read of Moses *as it*

were seeing God at the time he decided to forsake Egypt, this must mean that he so appreciated God's Name and character, he so had faith in the future Kingdom which this great Name and character promise, that he left Egypt. The Lord Jesus fed for strength on the *majesty* of the Name of Yahweh (Mic. 5:4). Therefore an appreciation of the Name of Yahweh is what will motivate us to forsake the attractions of this temporal world. This does not mean, of course, that simply pronouncing that Name in our prayers and readings is enough. We must develop an appreciation of God's righteousness, so that we read of His demonstration of grace, of mercy, of truth, of judgement for sin, and love it, revel in it, respect it. As Paul says, if we behold the glory of the Lord as Moses did, we will by that very fact be changed into the same image of that glory (2 Cor. 3:18). Yet such an appreciation needs constant feeding and development. It is tragic, absolutely tragic, that over the next 40 years Moses lost this height of appreciation, until at the burning bush he seems to have almost completely lost his appreciation of the Name. Whatever spiritual heights we may reach is no guarantee that we must inevitably stay there. The history of our community is littered with many fine brethren who fell from such heights of spirituality.

" (Moses) refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; *having chosen rather* (Gk.) to suffer affliction with the people of God" (Heb. 11:24,25) suggests that there was a struggle within the mind of Moses, between the reproach of Christ and the approbation of this world, and he then decisively came down on the right side. If we are truly saints, called out ones after the pattern of Moses, this struggle between present worldly advantage and the hope of the Kingdom must surely be seen in our minds. For this reason Moses is held up so highly as our example and pattern. He " forsook" Egypt uses the same word translated " leaving" when we read of a man leaving his parents to be joined to a wife, or of the shepherd leaving the 99 sheep to find the lost one.

APPENDIX: Bithiah The Great

One important method in Bible study is to keep asking questions as we read a text, and to imagine how the story developed further. The account of Moses being found by Pharaoh's daughter is a classic Bible story- but it begs many questions. Why did this young woman risk disobeying her father? Given Moses' age, how did she manage to survive in Pharaoh's court with an adopted child who looked like a Hebrew and ought to have been killed in babyhood? What kind of relationship did she have with her father? Did he tolerate her sympathy and "compassion" for the Hebrews?

Where else do we read about Pharaoh's daughter? Searching through the Bible, perhaps with the help of a concordance, we come to the references to Solomon marrying Pharaoh's daughter. No great answers there to our questions. Sometimes in Bible study we do draw a blank. And that's a blank. And there's only one other reference to Pharaoh's daughter, hidden away in the obscure genealogies of Chronicles, which we likely skip reading in our daily Bible readings. But there... is the answer. "The sons of Ezrah: Jether, Mered, Ephraim, and Jalon. These are the sons of Bithiah, the daughter of Pharaoh, whom Mered married; and she conceived and bore Miriam, Shammai, and Ishbah, the father of Eshtemoa" (1 Chron. 4:17 ESV). Who was Mered? A prince of the tribe of Judah. And yes, he lived around the time of Moses. So... a daughter of Pharaoh married a Hebrew. A slave. And she was the daughter of Pharaoh. Now we're onto something.

We eagerly look up the meaning of "Bithiah". And we find that Bithiah means 'daughter of Yah'- there is an intended tension therefore in the way in which she is called 'Bithiah the daughter of Pharaoh', especially considering that Pharaoh was thought to be God in Egyptian culture. It cannot be an undersigned coincidence that Bithiah is recorded as having a daughter, whom she

called Miriam. It's not very common for the names of daughters to be recorded in the genealogies, so it seems a point is being made. Miriam was of course the name of Moses' sister, who had first introduced Bithiah to Moses' family. Her name in Hebrew is almost the feminine form of her father's name, Mered. Mered had another wife who was from the tribe of Judah: "And his Judahite wife bore Jered ... Heber... and Jekuthiel" (1 Chron. 4:18 ESV).

And then we wonder: Am I the first guy to have come to this discovery? This is where the internet is useful. A bit of research shows that no, others have figured some of this out. Not that getting support from others ultimately matters, for we should be ready to stand with our backs to the world if necessary in believing what we have discovered in the Bible. And no jewel shines so brightly as the one you find yourself, as Harry Tennant once put it in talking about Bible study. But all the same, it's some level of human comfort to find we're not completely alone, and in this case, to find that indeed Jewish tradition upholds this connection between Bithiah and the adoptive mother of Moses. And Egyptologists have various theories as to who the Pharaoh of the Exodus was. One of them is that it was Amunhotep II. His coffin decorations appear to show that he had a skin condition- perhaps the boils from the plagues? One stele that was discovered shows that two of Amunhotep II's sons have been "erased". Perhaps one of them was Moses?

It seems likely that many Egyptians became proselytes, because many of them left Egypt with Israel. So Bithiah became attracted to God's people, and decided to forego all she could've had in order to save just one Hebrew life. If nothing else we learn that to sacrifice all for the sake of the salvation of 'just' one person is perhaps what we are called to. The woman who could've been one of the most powerful women in the world sacrificed it all, to marry a Hebrew slave- who already had a wife. And presumably she changed her name. She was Yah's daughter now, and not that of 'god' Pharaoh. What motivated her? Surely her experience with raising Moses. From the mouth of a child, who may well have been with his Godly parents for up to five years, she learnt more of Yahweh's ways. And she must've got to know the family of origin and been impressed by Moses' big sister Miriam... for she named her own daughter after her.

But the chain of influence didn't end there. For when Moses was 40, he did the same as what his adoptive mother did. At age 40, Moses came to a crisis. He had a choice between the riches of Egypt, the pleasures of sin for a season, and choosing rather to suffer affliction with God's people and thereby fellowship the reproach of Christ (Heb. 11:24-26). He probably had the chance to become the next Pharaoh, as the son of Pharaoh's daughter; but he consciously refused this, as an expression of faith in the future recompense of the Kingdom. Bithiah's example would've been ever before him.

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And the path of influence continued to Paul. Paul "counted" the things of this life as loss "for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ" and his sufferings (Phil. 3:8), so that he would gain the resurrection. Moses likewise rejected the world for the same two reasons: the excellency of sharing the reproach of Christ, and secondly from respect unto the recompense of the reward, at the resurrection. He uses the same word translated

"esteemed" when we read of how Moses "esteemed" the reproach of Christ as greater riches than the treasures in Egypt (Heb. 11:26).

There are a number of passages which invite us to follow Moses' example in this, so that the path of influence goes yet further. Even within Hebrews, the description of Moses' rejection of Egypt for the sake of Christ is shown to be our example: "Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures (i.e. Pharaoh's treasures, which he could have had if he succeeded as Pharaoh) in Egypt... let us go forth therefore unto (Jesus) without the camp, bearing his reproach" (Heb. 11:26; 13:13). We should be even eager to bear 'reproach for the name of Christ' as Moses did (1 Pet. 4:14), knowing it is a surety of our sharing his resurrection. The way Moses had "respect unto the recompense of the reward" is our example; for again, even within Hebrews, we are exhorted: "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward" (Heb. 11:26; 10:35). The Greek for "respect" means to look away from all else; indicating how single-mindedly and intensely did Moses look ahead to the Kingdom; the knowledge of which was, in terms of number of words, scant indeed. All he had was the covenants of promise.

"(Moses) refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; having chosen rather (Gk.) to suffer affliction with the people of God" (Heb. 11:24,25) suggests that there was a struggle within the mind of Moses, between the reproach of Christ and the approbation of this world, and he then decisively came down on the right side. If we are truly saints, called out ones after the pattern of Moses, this struggle between present worldly advantage and the hope of the Kingdom must surely be seen in our minds. For this reason Moses is held up so highly as our example and pattern.

We too face choices. To take a second job, rise early and stay up late... to advance in our careers. To get more income, to dispose of upon expensive coffees, the latest gadgets. Or in the spirit of Bithiah and Moses to realize, and realize finally and once for all, that nothing else matters now. The hope of the Kingdom and fellowship of the rejected Son of God is worth so infinitely more than any of Egypt's temporary glory. Moses rejected it for the sake of his service of God's people- who for the most part never appreciated him, and turned their backs on "this Moses". Bithiah likewise, gave it all up... just to be identified with God's people. Being the second woman in Mered's life, a Gentile compared to the other wife being a true blue blooded Judahite, couldn't have been much fun. For all we know, Bithiah died alone and feeling rejected in the corner of a Hebrew slave camp, lamenting how Moses was apparently caught up in the good life of Pharaoh's court which she had given up, buried in the hot sand without a grave, a far cry from the glory girl of her teens. But she did it all so as to be connected with God's people, just as Moses chose to suffer affliction with a people of God who didn't want him. There are brethren who set us a great example in these things. They lost their families because they married a believer and not the one expected for them. Married someone of another race or colour because of their spiritual connection with that person, thus losing the status they might have had within their own culture. They declined promotion in their career because... they wanted to get home each day in time to read Bible stories to their kids. Didn't take out a court case but suffered the loss of so much, didn't answer slander, left God to judge... Spent their spare time and cash going to the Post Office and mailing Bibles to people rather than... tropical beach holidays. Spent their evenings emailing or visiting old, sick, suffering, depressed, difficult or plain awkward brethren... instead of watching telly.

The chain of influence ran from little Moses and Miriam to Bithiah and then back to Moses, through Paul to us today. Our examples have far more power than we ever imagine. Over some issues and at some times, we like Bithiah and Moses must stand with our backs to the world. Despised by the world and even by the brotherhood, but so be it. We shall spend eternity day and night serving God... and it would be strange indeed if our lives now were not likewise totally dedicated to the things of the Kingdom into which and for which we were baptized.

4-1-3 Moses And Paul

If Moses is the central, inspirational figure of the Old Testament scriptures and the Old Covenant, Christ is of the New Testament and New Covenant. And yet Christ was especially manifested in his matchless servant Paul. Paul seems to have consciously modelled his life upon that of Moses; he evidently saw Moses as his hero. The evidence for this is quite compelling:

Paul

" His letters, say they (Paul's detractors in the new Israel) are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible...though I be rude in speech...Christ sent me...to preach the Gospel: not with wisdom of words (mg. speech)" (2 Cor. 10:10; 11:6; 1 Cor. 1:17).

Paul says he was "*taught* according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers" by Gamaliel, receiving the highest wisdom possible in the Jewish world; but he uses the same word as Stephen in Acts 7:22, describing how Moses was "*learned*" in all the wisdom of Egypt.

Paul earnestly asked three times for his " thorn in the flesh" to be removed (2 Cor. 12:9).

" Therefore let us keep the feast (the breaking of bread, the new Passover), not with old leaven...of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor.5:8).

Paul's selfless relationship with Corinth

Moses

" I am not eloquent (mg. a man of words)...I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue" (Ex. 4:10); this is how Moses felt he would be perceived, although actually he was formally quite fluent when in the court of Pharaoh (Acts 7:22). Paul would have remembered Stephen saying how Moses was formerly full of worldly *wisdom* and " mighty in words" . Paul felt that he too had been through Moses' experience- once mighty in words as the rising star of the Jewish world, but now like Moses he had left all that behind in order to try to save a new Israel from Judaism and paganism. As Moses *consciously* rejected the opportunity for leading the 'world' of Egypt, so Paul probably turned down the chance to be High Priest. God maybe confirmed both him and Moses in their desire for humility by giving them a speech impediment (the " thorn in the flesh" which Paul was " given" , 2 Cor. 12:7).

Moses asked at least twice (maybe three times?) for him to be allowed to enter the land (Dt. 3:25; Ps. 90); but the answer was basically the same as to Paul: " My grace is sufficient for thee" . The fact Moses had been forgiven and was at one with his God was so great that his physical entering the land was irrelevant. And for Paul likewise, temporal blessings in this life are nothing compared to the grace of forgiveness which we have received (Ex. 34:9).

This is echoing Moses' command to keep the Passover feast without leaven (Ex. 12:15; Dt. 16:3). Paul saw himself as Moses in trying to save a generally unresponsive and ungrateful Israel.

He is quoting the LXX of Num. 25:3

was inspired by that of Moses with Israel. Thus Paul warns Corinth not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14), or else he would come to them and not spare.

In similar style, Paul warns the Hebrews to "serve God acceptably with reverence" because "our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29).

Paul saw visions of God which were impossible for him to explain (2 Cor. 12:1-5).

Paul several times calls himself "a servant of God" (e.g. Tit. 1:1).

The Lord Jesus seems to have encouraged Paul to see Moses as his hero. Thus he asked him to go and live in Arabia before beginning his ministry, just as Moses did (Gal. 1:17). When he appeared to Paul on the Damascus road, he spoke in terms reminiscent of the Angel's commission to Moses at the burning bush: "I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of those things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the (Jewish) people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to...turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance...Whereupon...I (Paul) was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision" (Acts 26:16-19).

Paul "*counted*" (Phil. 3:8) the riches of this world as dung, that he might have the honour of sharing the sufferings of Christ. He was motivated in this by the example of

concerning how Israel joined themselves to Baal-peor, resulting in Moses commanding the murder of all those guilty- just as Paul later did to Corinth.

He is quoting the very words of Moses in Dt. 4:24.

Moses saw the greatest visions of God of any man in the Old Testament; visions which he could not repeat; he only repeated the words of command which he was given. He did not tell Israel what he saw in Ex. 34.

Paul is surely alluding to the frequent descriptions of Moses as God's servant.

Moses was promised that he would be protected from Pharaoh so that he could bring out God's people from the darkness of Egyptian slavery ("the power of Satan"); going from darkness to light is used by Peter as an idiom to describe Israel's deliverance from Egypt, which the new Israel should emulate (1 Pet. 2:9). Moses led Israel out of Egypt so that they might be reconciled to God, and be led by him to the promised inheritance of Canaan. As Moses was eventually obedient to that heavenly vision, so was Paul- although perhaps he too went through (unrecorded) struggles to be obedient to it, after the pattern of Moses being so reluctant.

The same word is used in Heb. 11:26 concerning how Moses "*esteemed*" the reproach of Christ greater riches than those of Egypt. Paul looked at Moses'

Moses in rejecting the rulership and riches of Egypt in order to share " the reproach of Christ" .

He describes Epaphroditus as one of those " that ministered to my wants" (Phil. 2:25).

Paul warned the new Israel that after his death (" after my departing" , Acts 20:29) there would be serious apostasy. This is the spirit of his very last words, in 2 Tim. 4.

" Take heed therefore unto yourselves" (Acts 20:28)

To help them combat this apostasy, and to set them an example in faithfulness to the word, Paul pointed out that " I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27).

" I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly" (Acts 20:20).

" Of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things" (Acts 20:30).

" Now, brethren I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance" (Acts 20:32).

" I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel" (Acts 20:33)

example and was truly inspired to utterly despise worldly advantage, and to appreciate the sheer *honour* of sharing the sufferings of Christ. The height of this calling should make our wealth or poverty in this world utterly irrelevant. And we too should be inspired by Moses as Paul was. For Moses is specifically intended as our example.

The Greek for " ministered" is used in the LXX concerning the priests (and Joshua) ministering to Moses in practical things.

This is exactly the spirit of Moses' farewell speech throughout the book of Deuteronomy, and throughout his final song (Dt. 32). " After my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves" (Dt. 31:29).

" Take heed unto yourselves" is repeated so many times in Deuteronomy (e.g . Dt. 2:4; 4:9,15,23; 11:16; 12:13,19,30; 24:8; 27:9).

Exactly as Moses completely revealed all God's counsel to Israel (Acts 7:33; Dt. 33:3).

As Moses shewed God to Israel and publicly taught them.

As Moses likewise warned in his farewell speech that false prophets would *arise* - and should be shunned and dealt with (Dt. 13:1).

This is the spirit of the whole of Deuteronomy, Moses' farewell warning: love the word, be obedient to it, because this will lead you to inherit the promised land for ever. He pleaded with them to " take heed to thyself" that they kept God's word and taught it to their children, so that they would enter the land (Dt. 4:1,9). These words are alluded to by Paul in 1 Tim.4:16, where he says that attention to

the doctrine of the new covenant will likewise save us and those who hear us.

This is the spirit of Moses in Num. 16:15: " I have not taken one ass from them" . Paul maybe had these words in mind again in 2 Cor. 7:2: " We have wronged no man...we have defrauded no man" .

" Neither count I my life dear unto myself" (Acts 20:24). " I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom. 9:3). Paul is here rising up to imitate Moses at perhaps his finest hour- willing, at least in principle, to give up his eternal life for the sake of Israel's salvation. The extent of Paul's love for natural Israel does not come out that strongly in the Acts and epistles; but this allusion to Moses says it all. The RVmg. renders Rom. 9:3: "I could pray..." , more clearly alluding to Moses' prayer that the people might enter and he be rejected. Yet Paul perceived that God would not accept a substitute offering like that; and hence he says he *could* pray like this. In essence, he had risen to the same level. Likewise he wrote in 1 Thess. 2:8 RV that he was "well pleased [i.e. theoretically willing] to impart unto, you not the gospel of God only, but our own souls, because ye were dear unto us". He perceived the difference between mere imparting of the Gospel in preaching, and being willing to give ones' soul, ones salvation, because of a heart that bleeds for others. No wonder Paul was such a convincing preacher, with such love behind his words.

" My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (Rom. 10:1).

Throughout 2 Cor. 3:15-4:6, Paul comments on how Moses' face shone with God's glory, and yet he spoke to Israel through a veil, with the result that Israel did

This was the spirit of Moses, in being willing to give his own physical and eternal life for the salvation of Israel (Ex. 32:30-32).

Who else prayed like this for Israel's salvation? Only Moses. He tried to match the intensity of Moses' prayers for Israel on Sinai.

Paul uses this to explain why Israel did not respond to his preaching; " if *our* preaching be hid, it is hid to them that are lost" (2 Cor. 4:3). Paul therefore saw

not appreciate God's glory.

He speaks of him and all preachers of the true Christian Gospel as "able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" (2 Cor. 3:6)- clear allusion to Moses as the minister of the old, inferior covenant.

himself and his fellow preachers as like Moses, radiating forth the glory of God in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to an Israel which had the veil upon their heart. This allusion must have so angered the Jews- to suggest that Christian preachers were like Moses!

These copious similarities raise an interesting point: if we love the word, if we enter into the spirit of the characters we read of there, should we not model ourselves upon some of them? If the word is a living word, surely we should be able to sense the spirit of these characters in our own experience of life, they should drive us onwards. Paul's conscious emulation of Moses is not the only example of this. He himself invites us to see him as a similar role model. We have shown elsewhere how Jonathan and Saul both seem to have had Gideon as a hero ⁽¹⁾. It is also possible to show that Jeremiah saw Job in the same role (just glance down the marginal references to Job in Jeremiah). There are times when Jeremiah quotes the very words of Job as being relevant to his own experiences. The point of such conscious emulation is that we are copying the spirit of Christ as it was displayed in these men. Thus Paul asks us to copy him *so that* we might more accurately reflect the pattern of the Lord Jesus; he was "a Christ-appointed model" to this end.

Notes

(1) See *David and Jonathan*.

4.2 Moses: The Path Of Growth

4-2-1 Events In The Life Of Moses

A read through the records will indicate that Moses was somewhat temperamental in his faith. For the first forty years of his life, he scarcely let his light show. Yet all the time his conscience was active, enabling him to build up towards heights of spiritual achievement few of us can achieve. At the age of 40, he had a flash of spiritual devotion; he rejected the opportunity for greatness in Egypt, possibly the opportunity to become king of Egypt (as Christ had the opportunity to become king of the world in his wilderness temptations). Yet after that, he went into 40 years of decline. In the eyes of men, he was a finished man. He had gone away from God's people, he was living in a family of idolaters, and had married one of them. His marriage went wrong, he divorced his wife, and picked up some other woman. He didn't circumcise his children, and thus he despised his covenant relationship with God. Eighty years is a long time. They were eighty years of at best mediocre commitment to the God of Israel, with only the occasional flash of spiritual brilliance. Yet this man Moses went on to become one of the greatest spiritual men there has ever been, a man who came closer to God than all others except the Lord Jesus. "There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face" (Dt. 34:10). The Lord Jesus was "like unto" Moses (Dt. 18:18)- a high enough commendation for Moses. The following notes show that Moses achieved this through an appreciation of God manifestation in himself and in Israel.

Because of his weakness, we are able to relate to Moses, and see him as our example. It is possible that Moses was not circumcised (Ex. 6:12,30); which would make him even closer to us. The Lord Jesus encouraged us to see ourselves as Moses: " If thou wouldest believe (in Christ), thou shouldest see the glory of God" (Jn. 11:40) is without doubt an allusion to Moses' experience of seeing God's glory- an experience which in Jewish eyes marked Moses out as the greatest man who had ever lived. The veneration in which Moses was and is held in the Jewish world is hard for Gentiles to enter into. A glance through rabbinical commentaries on the Pentateuch will illustrate this well. And here was the Lord Jesus saying that through faith in him, we can share the experience of Moses, we can rise to the spiritual heights of the man who spoke to God face to face as a man speaks to his friend.

Main events in the life of Moses

<i>EVENT</i>	<i>REFERENCE</i>	<i>SPIRITUALITY</i>
		(Score out of 10)
1. 40 years in Egypt, hiding the fact he was an Israelite, not preaching the Gospel to anyone, appearing as an Egyptian. He learnt all the philosophy of Egypt, and was a prominent public speaker, with the possibility of becoming the next Pharaoh. According to non-Biblical tradition, he was the leader of the Egyptian army.	Ex. 2:19; Acts 7:22	2 (over say 25 years, from the age of 15 - 40)
2. Crisis at age 40. He refused the riches of Egypt , and consciously chose to suffer affliction with the Israelites.He really wanted to save Israel and free them from their enemies, and make them live at peace among themselves.	Heb. 11:24Heb. 11:26Acts 7:23-28	8
3. However, he didn't want Egypt to know that he was doing this; he thought he could do it secretly. Once he realised that people knew what he was trying to do, he was afraid. His fearfulness has similarities with that of spiritually weak Jacob, who fled from the face of Laban into the unknown, as Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh. Thus God encouraged him after forty years that he need no longer fear: " Return into Egypt: for all the men are dead which sought thy life" .	Ex. 2:14Ex. 2:15 cp. Gen.31:22; 35:7Ex. 4:19	2

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| <p>4. But then he rallied his faith and left Egypt, without (at the point of leaving) fearing the anger of Pharaoh. He so strongly believed, it was as if he physically saw God- as he asked.</p> | <p>Heb. 11:27</p> | <p>8</p> |
| <p>5. Moses flees to Midian, where he helps some unknown shepherd women from being abused by some rough men; he did this without at first receiving any reward, and without the women wanting him to go with them; although they thought he was an Egyptian, showing that he still concealed his relationship with God.</p> | <p>Ex. 2:17Ex.2:19</p> | <p>6</p> |
| <p>5a. Moses " supposed his brethren would have understood how that God <i>by his hand</i> would deliver them" ; but God told Moses at the bush: " I will stretch out <i>my hand</i>, and smite Egypt...." . Moses had yet to learn the meaning of God manifestation through men.</p> | <p>Acts 7:25 cp. Ex. 3:20</p> | |
| <p>6. Moses " was content to dwell" with the father of the women. The Hebrew for " content" comes from a root which means weakness of mind; the implication is that he easily yielded to this man.</p> | <p>Ex.2: 21</p> | <p>2</p> |
| <p>7. " And he gave Moses Zipporah his daughter" . She was not one of the covenant people; she was the daughter of a pagan priest (Ex. 18:11 implies Jethro thought Yahweh was only one of many gods); she did not circumcise their children. Should Moses have married her? The fact Moses did not bother circumcising his son shows he was not really serious about his relationship with God; God tried to kill him because of this. God tried to kill Moses because of this; this shows how serious this was in God's eyes. Zipporah was a Midianite, a descendant of Abraham through Keturah (Gen. 25:1-6). Circumcision was a sign of the covenant through Isaac, hence the resentment and bitterness of Zipporah over the circumcision issue; and it seems Moses</p> | <p>Ex. 2:21; 3:1; 4:25</p> | <p>3</p> |

capitulated to her on this. Their marriage is sure proof that fundamental spiritual differences at the start can only lead to anger and break up later on.

The way the Lord "tried to kill" Moses (Ex. 4:24) indicates how God's intentions can be changed by human actions; and it also reflects the limitation of power experienced by the Angel, who presumably was the one who 'tried' to do this but was thwarted by a woman. However in our context of Moses' weakness we need to reflect how this incident echoes how Pharaoh sought to kill Moses in Ex. 2:15. Even through his weakness, Moses was being taught that his personal salvation and continuation in life was by grace. Moses was saved on this occasion by a Gentile woman, Zipporah- just as he had been saved as a baby by another Gentile woman- as well as by the quick-wittedness of his own mother and sister. As Zipporah mediated with the Angel and saved Moses by touching his son with blood, so Moses would save Israel through his mediation with God and through the Passover ritual (Ex. 12:13,22,23), as well as later throwing blood upon the people (Ex. 24:8). What are we to make of all these echoes and connections of thought? Perhaps that Moses was indeed weak at this time, was saved by grace alone, and yet on that basis he was called to in his turn also save the weak through appealing to God's grace.

8. However, Moses' children had names which showed some faith, and a recognition he was a stranger in the land where he was living; he lived as a stranger in Midian. Few people live in a country for 40 years without feeling they belong to it. But his mind was in the past, in how God had been good to his father, and how God had saved

Ex. 18:3,4; Acts 7:29

him from Pharaoh's death threat.

9. Moses' marriage was weak. 40 years later, Zipporah's frustration boiled over: " Surely a bloody husband art thou to me...then she said (again), A bloody husband thou art, because of the circumcision" . As a descendant of Ishmael she was angry at Isaac's choice and circumcision. This is probably the closest the Bible gets to recording the real life use of taboo language. " Because of the circumcision" suggests she despised Moses' religion. Moses divorced her. It also seems from Ex. 4:23,25 that God tried to kill Moses' son because Moses was not fully believing that God would kill Pharaoh's firstborn. The whole account in Ex. 4:24-26 of meeting with an Angel who sought to slay him evidently connects with the account of Balaam. Like Balaam, although Moses was going on a journey with God's permission, it could be inferred that his attitude to God's word was likewise wrong.

Ex. 4:25,26 (see N.I.V.);
18:2

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10. He " took" (not married) another woman, an Ethiopian- probably a slave woman, or possibly a cheap woman. Moses' brother and sister were ashamed that their brother was involved with a woman like this. Whoever she was, Moses was under the one man: one woman standard of the garden of Eden. And further, he "put away" this woman- Ex. 18:2 LXX is the same "put away" as in 1 Cor. 7:11-13. Moses allowed divorce for the hardness of Israel's hearts (Mt. 19:8) and yet he himself appears to have divorced her- for the hardness of his heart?

Num. 12:1 AVmg.

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11. God appeared to Moses in the flame of fire in the bush, but Moses had to be told to take off his shoes as a sign of respect- even though taking off shoes was understood as a token of respect and recognition of sin (see 2 Sam. 15:30). " Draw not nigh hither...for the place whereon thou standest is holy" sounds as if Moses did not appreciate the

Ex. 3:5Ex. 3:6 cp. Gen. 3:8;
Is. 6:5Ex. 3:7Acts 7:31 cp.
Mt. 15:31; Mk. 6:51; Lk.
8:25; 24:41; Acts 13:41

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holiness of God. It even seems that Moses had forgotten the significance of God's Name, even though it had been revealed to Abraham (Ex. 3:13). Moses' fear to look upon God suggests a bad conscience. The double repetition "Moses, Moses" may be some kind of rebuke. "I *have*" seen the affliction of Israel could suggest that Moses felt God was not sensitive to the pain of His children; he had been living for 40 years feeling forgotten by God. Moses "wondered" at what he saw and heard at the burning bush- a Greek word which is often used in a negative sense concerning people lacking faith and insight when they should have had it.

12. "I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people...And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go?...And God said...they shall hearken to thy voice...And Moses answered...They will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice (he didn't seem to believe God's promise to inspire him)...I am not eloquent, neither heretofore (i.e. in the past)...I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue (although this was untrue-earlier Moses had been an eloquent speaker in Egypt; actually he was just the right man to do what God wanted)...and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses". Remember that God is *very* slow to this kind of anger (Ex. 34:6). Forty years earlier, Moses had understood, presumably from a direct revelation from God, that God would deliver Israel through him. But he had lost faith in that promise, and was arguing back against God. This was the outcome of many years of spiritual slipping. "Send...by the hand of him whom *thou wilt* send" (alluding to God's Name, I will be) can be seen as indifference; perhaps Moses was saying 'As you do what you will, your name is I will be, then if you send by me, send by men, I can't resist'.

Ex. 3:10,11,18;
4:1,10,13,14; Acts 7:22, 25

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12. Moses does actually leave Midian and

Ex. 4:29 - 5:5 Ex. 4:18,19

6

begins to ask Pharaoh to let Israel go

3

12a. He seems to make the excuse to Jethro that he is homesick for his family who are still in Egypt. And yet straight after this, the Lord confirms him in his desire to return. Moses asks Jethro for permission to return to Egypt to see whether his Hebrew brethren are "still alive" (Ex. 4:18)- yet God had just told Moses that there were indeed Hebrews still alive there who he will lead out of Egypt. Of course Moses *may* have been referring to his literal family; but it's possible that his words to Jethro imply a lack of faith in God's word. At the very least, he was shy to share God's word to him with Jethro. In this context it may be significant that the words God tells Moses to say to Pharaoh at this time in Ex. 4:23 are in fact never said by Moses throughout the dialogue with Pharaoh recorded in Ex. 11 and 12.

12b. God had explained to Moses what He wished him to tell Pharaoh: "Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, hath met with us: and now let us go, we pray thee, three days journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to Yahweh our God" (Ex. 3:18). But Moses actually doesn't say those exact words. Instead he says: "Thus saith Yahweh, the God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness...The God of the Hebrews hath met with us: let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice unto Yahweh our God, lest he fall upon us with pestilence, or with the sword" (Ex. 5:1,3). This seems perilously similar to the way in which Eve added to Yahweh's words when telling the serpent that actually, God had told Adam not to *even touch* the fruit. Moses appears to be painting Yahweh as somewhat draconian and threatening of

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him personally as well as Israel- as if to say 'Well sir, please do us this favour, or else our God is gonna get mad with us'. Perhaps this was actually how Moses misperceived Yahweh; or perhaps he added to Yahweh's words in order to make his appeal sound more plausible.

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|---|-------------|----|
| 13. Moses is easily discouraged by the fact that Israel reject him: " Moses returned unto Yahweh, and said, Lord...why is it that thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh...thou hast not delivered thy people at all" . The Yahweh / Lord difference may suggest that he got over familiar with the Angel, forgetting the degree to which that Angel carried God's Name. | Ex. 5:22,23 | 2 |
| 14. God replied by telling him to declare the covenant Name to Israel, and remind them that therefore God would surely save them. But they again failed to respond. " And Moses spake before the Lord, saying, Behold, the children of Israel have not hearkened unto me; how then shall Pharaoh hear me, who am of uncircumcised lips?" . Yet God had promised Moses earlier that Israel <i>would</i> hear him (3:18). God solemnly told him to go and speak to Pharaoh, because God had told him to do so. But Moses has the cheek to say exactly the same words to God a second time. In a chapter which speaks much of Moses' reluctance, the record encourages us: " These are that Aaron and Moses...these are they which spake to Pharaoh...these are that Moses and Aaron" (Ex. 6:26,27). | Ex. 6:12,30 | 2 |
| 15. Moses and Aaron agreed to continue speaking to Pharaoh and Israel; they " did as the Lord commanded them, so did they" . This is saying the same thing twice- stressing their obedience. | Ex. 7:6 | 6 |
| 16. The record of the miracles is framed to show God commanding Moses to do certain things to | Ex. 7,8,9 | 73 |

bring and end the plagues, and him obedient to this. But Ex. 8:9 RV contains a strange sentence: "Have thou this glory over me: when shall I intreat for thee...to destroy the frogs?". It could be that, in the words of Bro. Mark Vincent, "Moses with an excessive and sarcastic politeness, is asking, 'And (pray tell me!) when exactly would you like the frogs to be gone?', as though Pharaoh might miss them and fondly wish them to stay around for a couple more days". This to me doesn't score very highly in spiritual terms.

17. " By faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them (Israel). By faith *they* (Israel) passed through the Red Sea" . Yet at this time Israel were weak in faith, they passed through the Red Sea cuddling the idols of Egypt, from the day God knew them they were rebellious against Him; so runs the refrain of the prophets. It seems that due to Moses' faith Israel were saved by the Passover lamb, through his faith they passed through the Red Sea; his faith was so great, his desire for their salvation so strong, that God counted it to the rest of Israel. Thus " he (Moses, in the context) brought them (Israel) out" of Egypt (Acts 7:36,38). This points forward to Christ's redemption of us, and also indicates how quickly Moses' faith rallied. And yet just prior to crossing the Sea, God rebuked Moses: " Wherefore criest thou unto me?" - even though Moses calmly exhorted the people to have faith (Ex. 14:15 cp. 13). Yet by faith he brought them through the Red Sea. Therefore as with his first exit from Egypt (he feared the wrath of the King, and then he didn't), his faith wavered, but came down on the right side.

Heb. 11:28,29

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18. Moses' song of triumph after the Red Sea deliverance shows a fine spirituality. However, note his possible misunderstanding in Ex. 15:13,17- that Siani was to be "the place" where God would dwell with Israel.

Ex. 15

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|---|---------------------------------------|-----------|
| <p>19. Israel's murmurings about the lack of food did not discourage Moses; " the Lord heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against him: for what are we? your murmurings are not against us, but against the Lord" . Here we see the beginnings of some real humility in Moses, due to his appreciation of God manifestation in him.</p> | <p>Ex. 16:8</p> | <p>8</p> |
| <p>20. Moses' victory against Amalek due to his faith, in which he typified our Lord's crucifixion.</p> | <p>Ex. 17:8-16</p> | <p>8</p> |
| <p>21. Moses becomes reconciled to his ex-wife Zipporah whom he had divorced, and has the humility to accept the advice of his ex-father in law Jethro. This all indicates an increasing humility. 21a. Moses accepts Jethro's advice on the basis that he will " surely wear away" (Ex. 18:18); even though his natural strength never abated (Dt. 34:7), and God surely would not have asked him to do the impossible. Jethro at this time seems to have seen Yahweh as only one of many gods; he was a pagan priest. He prophesied that if Moses followed his advice, " all this people shall go to their place in peace" - which they didn't. Num. 10:31 suggests Moses saw Jethro's knowledge of the desert as better than the Angelic " eyes" of Yahweh (2 Chron. 16:9; Prov. 15:3) who were going ahead of the camp to find a resting place (Num. 10:33 cp. Ex. 33:14 cp. Is. 63:9). It seems Moses recognized his error in this on the last day of his life, when he admits Yahweh, not Jethro's wisdom, had led them (Dt. 1:33). Likewise Paul in his final communication comments on the way that Mark with whom he had once quarelled was profitable to him (2 Tim. 4:11).</p> | <p>Ex. 18:2-27Ex. 18:1,18,23</p> | <p>8</p> |
| <p>22. Moses is called up into Sinai and speaks with God. While there, Israel turn away from God, and God wants to make Moses' family His people and reject Israel. But Moses argues with God against this, again showing his humility and his appreciation of God manifestation in Israel, and his</p> | <p>Ex.32:10-14, 30-32; Ps. 105:23</p> | <p>10</p> |

earnest desire that God would save Israel. " He said that he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath" . This was only months after his weak faith and reluctance to lead Israel out of Egypt. He says that he will " go up (and) make an atonement" (Ex. 32:30). And yet he knew the principle that atonement was impossible without shedding blood. Yet he goes further than that: " Blot me, I *pray thee* (he really wanted to do this) out of thy book" (Ex. 32:32)- i.e. the book of salvation (Ez. 13:9; Dan. 12:2; Lk. 10:20; Rev. 20:12). Moses is willing to give his physical life and also his eternal salvation so that Israel can enter the land. Surely he reached matchless heights of selflessness. Note how God's anger "waxed hot" and so did that of Moses. But Moses asks God not to wax hot in anger (Ex. 32:10,11,19). What are we to make of this? Surely, positively, Moses was totally in tune with the feelings of God. And yet he does himself what he asks God not to do. What score would we give Moses for this?

23. God spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. God knew Moses by name (Ex. 33:12,17) and so He shews Moses *His* Name (Ex. 33:17,19)- there developed a mutuality between the two. Yet God told Moses that because Israel were stiffnecked, therefore He could not go up with them (Ex. 33:5). Moses agrees the people are stiffnecked, but he knows God well enough to ask Him to still go up in the midst of them (Ex. 34:9). And God did! He acted according to how broad was Moses' conception of God's grace. If Abraham's conception of grace had been even broader, perhaps Sodom would've been saved... Moses' achievement is all the more remarkable because he himself struggled with grace. God assures Moses that he has found grace in His eyes [i.e. before the Angel with whom Moses met?]. And yet Moses says: "If I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way that I may know thee, to the end that I may find grace in thy sight" (Ex. 33:12,13 RV).

Ex. 33:11

Despite having been told that he had found grace, Moses still wanted confirmation... as if the voice of God wasn't enough! And maybe there is even the implication that he mistakenly thought that he needed more *knowledge* of God before he could find that grace... as if it depended upon his own mental faculties. And yet God patiently assures Moses yet again: Thou *hast* found grace in my sight", and goes on to proclaim His Name to Moses. "I *will be gracious* to whom I will be gracious" (Ex. 33:19) was surely said specifically to Moses, given the context of Moses' doubts about his receipt of God's grace. The coming down of Yahweh to pronounce His Name was, in the context, to show how far God would go to assure Moses that yes, His grace towards Moses was real. We too struggle with grace, and are given, also by grace, this undeserved assurance upon assurance.

24. Moses has the spiritual ambition to ask to see the face of God Himself. He is given the greatest God manifestation any man has seen except the Lord Jesus. It's a delightful essay in the possibilities of spiritual growth that the man who once forgot God's Name later came to so finely appreciate it that he was given the finest revelation of it. Despite this, Moses still has the humility to question whether in fact he has found grace (overlooking of his sins) in God's eyes. However, there is maybe a connection between Moses hiding in the " cleft of the rock" (Ex. 33:22) and Elijah hiding in a similar place to witness a theophany whose aim was to *humble* him. Is. 2:10-12 makes a similar connection.

Ex. 33:13-23; 34:9

9

25. Ex. 39 and 40 each contain a marked repetition of the fact that the whole Tabernacle was built and arranged by Moses exactly as God commanded him. It was in this sense that Moses was faithful in all his house- as the writer to the Hebrews twice stresses

Ex.
39:1,5,7,21,26,29,31,32,42;
40:16,19,21,23,25,27,29,32;
Heb.3:2,5

8

26. Num. 10 and 11 seem to portray Moses in weakness. He pleads with his brother in law not to leave them, because without him they would not know where to camp in the wilderness; " thou mayest be to us instead of eyes" . Yet the Angels are God's eyes, they were seeking out resting places for Israel in the wilderness; the record reminds us of this straight afterwards (Num. 10:33). Jethro elsewhere suggested that Moses needed more help in leading the people because otherwise fading thou wilt fade away' (Ex. 18:18 A.V.mg.); at the end of his days, the record seems to highlight the untruth of this by commenting that his natural strength was not faded (Dt. 34:7). So Jethro's advice wasn't always spiritual. Moses is depressed by Israel complaining at how boring the manna was. He doubts God's earlier promises to him: " Moses said unto the Lord, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight (God said he had, in Ex.33:17)...have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto them, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child unto the land which thou swearest unto *their* fathers (not " our" - notice the uncharacteristic separation between Moses and Israel). Whence should *I* give flesh unto all this people...if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, *if* I have found favour in the sight (as God had earlier promised him that he had)" . God was the father and conceiver of Israel, the one who would carry them to the land (Ex. 19:4; 33:15; Dt. 32:11,12; Hos. 11:1); it is as if Moses is saying: They're your children, you look after them, don't dump them on me. Although compare this with his earlier love for them, willing to sacrifice himself for them. God then says that He will provide more food for Israel. But Moses almost mocks God: " Shall the flocks and herds be slain for them, to suffice them?" . And the Angel angrily replied: " Is the Lord's hand waxed short? thou shalt see whether my word shall come to pass unto

Num. 10: 29-32; 11:11-15, 21-23

thee or not" . If he had faith, Moses surely would have realised that if God could provide manna, he could provide any food. Moses seems to have suffered from fits of depression and also high spirituality.

Moses states that "I have *not* found grace in Your eyes" (Num. 11:11) when God had specifically said that Moses had (Ex. 33:12). At that time too, Moses had questioned this Divine assurance (Ex. 33:13); he had the same struggle to believe God's grace as we have. God had repeatedly assured Moses that "you *have* found grace in My eyes" (Ex. 33:17; 34:9); but still Moses doubts it. "Kill me, I pray, if I have [indeed] found grace in Your eyes" (Num. 11:15) would therefore appear to be a very inappropriate sarcasm by Moses- against the God of all grace. At the time when Moses doubts whether he really has found grace, the God who speaks to Moses face to face then turns and shows Moses only His back parts (Ex. 33:11,20,22). This is alluded to in Jer. 18:17 and there interpreted as being a sign of God's anger- to turn away His face and show His back parts. God was so angry with Moses' disbelief in His grace.

Num. 11:28

8

Moses argues that because God had laid the burden of His people on his shoulders, this was such a curse as to disprove God's claim to have lavished grace upon Moses (Num. 11:11). But the language of God's people being laid upon a man's shoulders as a burden is in fact the language of the cross. Moses was therefore rejecting the cross. He bitterly complains that the people are God's, not his, and therefore it is unreasonable for God to expect Moses to carry them and feed them (:11-13). He didn't want to manifest God, nor do the work of Messiah (Is. 40:11), even though he was intended to be the prophet like unto Messiah (Dt. 18:18).

Joshua urged Moses to "forbid" or [Heb.] 'imprison' Eldad and Medad for

prophesying (Num. 11:28). He fell into the mistake so many have done; shut up or silence a genuine man of God, for fear that the institution, the existing administration, would be undermined. Perhaps they were prophesying of Moses' death? Whatever, Moses' refusal to shut them up seems to indicate an openness to God's Spirit and way of working, even if it threatened to undermine his authority. He shows such a genuine spirit when he replies that he wished that all God's people were the spiritual leaders.

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| 27. Miriam and Aaron try to humiliate Moses because of the Ethiopian woman he had palled up with in earlier days. But his response was humility itself; so much so that the record comments: " The man Moses was very meek (some suggest the Hebrew implies 'made very meek', as a process), above all the men which were upon the face of the earth" . What a compliment! The most humble man that was then alive; and humility is of great value to God, according to the Proverbs and 1 Pet. 3:4. That the leader of 3 million people for forty years could be the meekest man is a sure wonder. Perhaps this comment is made at this point because Moses weakness in the previous chapter had perhaps further developed his humility. He truly cries unto God to heal Miriam of the punishment she was given for criticising him. | Num. 12:1, 13 | 9 |
| 28. Israel want to return to Egypt. God again wants to destroy them and make Moses' family His people. But Moses successfully asks God to forgive Israel for this rather than take the personal honour God offered him. | Num. 14:11-20 | 9 |
| 29. God openly declares His acceptance of Moses to all Israel. | Num. 16 | 9 |
| 30. God again wants to destroy Israel and make of Moses' family a new people. Again, for the third | Num. 16:44-50 | 9 |

time, Moses knows God well enough, he has enough faith, enough humility and enough true love for Israel to ask God- successfully- to relent from this. That God wanted to do this three times shows His great love for Moses.

31. God again openly declares His acceptance of Moses in front of all Israel in the incident of the rods.

Num. 17

9

32. Moses' faith slips for a moment; his spirit is provoked by Israel, so that he speaks unadvisedly with his lips and is therefore barred from entering the land (although maybe such an apparently temporary slip was the reflection of deeper problems?). Yet it does seem uncharacteristic, a tragic slip down the graph of ever rising spirituality. There must have almost been tears in Heaven. Being easily provoked was one of Moses' characteristics; consider how he *turned himself* and stormed out from Pharaoh (Ex. 10:6; 11:8); how his anger waxed hot when he returned from the mount, how he went out from Pharaoh in great anger, how he first of all feared the wrath of Pharaoh and then stopped fearing it; how Moses was "very wroth" at Israel's suggestion that he was appropriating the sacrifices for himself; how he was "angry" with Eleazer (Ex.32:19; 11:8; Num. 16:15; Lev. 10:16,17). This temperament explains his swings of faith. Was the Lord Jesus likewise afflicted? Note carefully the process of failure here. Moses and Aaron were told to *both* speak to the rock, and this would result in Moses personally bringing forth water: "Gather thou [singular] the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye [plural- both of them] unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou [Moses personally] shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink" (Num. 20:8). But Moses seems to have dismissed Aaron's intended involvement and assumed that he alone

Num. 20:12; Ps. 106:32,33

1

could bring the water out with his rod. Yet Aaron was also condemned for this incident- presumably because he didn't speak to the rock but just let Moses smite the rock with his silence meaning consent.

33. The people again complain, and God punishes them with serpents; Moses' prayer for them is accepted. These prayers for others' salvation must have required intense faith and acceptability to be heard.

Num. 21:7

8

34. Moses did not get bitter at his rejection, nor disinterested in Israel's future because he would not be with them in the land. He asked God to provide a replacement for him.

Num. 27:16,17

8

34a. Moses seems to express his own weakness in his final speeches to Israel in Deuteronomy. He recalls how even towards the end of the wilderness journey, God told him to contend with Sihon in battle (Dt. 2:24); and yet Moses admits: "I sent messengers out of the wilderness of Kedemoth unto Sihon king of Heshbon with words of peace, saying, Let me pass through thy land: I will go along by the highway, I will turn neither unto the right hand nor to the left. Thou shalt sell me food for money, that I may eat; and give me water for money, that I may drink: only let me pass through on my feet" (Dt. 2:26-28). And yet God by grace to Moses hardened Sihon's heart so that there was a battle in which, again by grace, he gave Israel victory.

Dt. 2:24-28

2

35. The love of Moses for Israel as reflected in his final address to them in Deuteronomy, his knowledge of them, his sensitivity to their weakness, his constant desire for them to be spiritually strong and to enter the land; God's

Deuteronomy

10

respect of him at the end of his life, shown in his burial and in subsequent comments about him. Although Moses is at a spiritual peak in Deuteronomy, he does repeatedly comment- almost under his breath as it were- that he was not going to enter the land "for your sakes", and that he was thereby bearing the anger of God against Israel (e.g. Dt. 4:21 etc.). Whilst in a sense this was true, God's anger was against Moses personally regarding the sin of striking the rock. Given that "that rock was Christ", his inappropriate striking of it was some kind of symbolic crucifixion of Christ. He was in the wrong- the record of the event makes that clear. And yet at the end of his life, Moses is blaming Israel for his sin and his exclusion from the land. Perhaps he was indicating his understanding of how his prayer to not enter the land for their sakes was being answered. On the other hand, one could argue that even on the last day of his life, Moses never came to terms with that sin, sought to justify himself in the eyes of Israel, to shift the blame... and yet even then, God's grace was big enough to accept him. Quite how to score Moses on this point will always be debatable, but the exercise certainly provokes a lot of introspection about our own attitudes to public confession of sin, both in ourselves and in others, and its relationship to God's ultimate acceptance of a person.

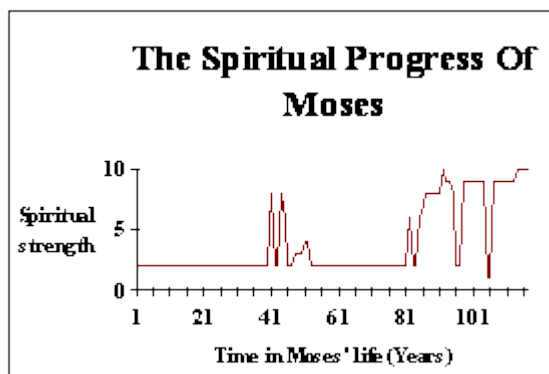
4-2-2 The Spiritual Growth Of Moses

It may be that some may feel that the above analysis is hard on Moses in his early years. But consider these two points:

1. Moses was encouraged that God really would work through him by his arm becoming leprous and then being cured, and by being given the power to grab hold of a snake. Snakes and leprosy were evident symbols of sin. Surely God was encouraging Moses that with His help, he really could overcome his sinfulness and achieve the work he had been given to do.
2. In Psalm 90 Moses pleads for his rejection and that of his people to be reversed. He says that the reason for their rejection was God setting their " secret sins" in the light of His countenance (Ps. 90:8). He felt his rejection was due to his secret sins- not the one painfully public failure. The Hebrew for " secret" means 'that behind the veil'; it is from the same root as the Hebrew for 'young

girl', i.e. a veiled one. He felt the sins he had committed behind the veil had been exposed in the light of the Angel's face. Remember that Moses *always* appeared to Israel with a veil (Ex. 34:33-35; 2 Cor. 3:16-18 RV), only removing it when he spoke face to face with the Angel, radiating the light of God's glory to him. It seems Moses is alluding to this in Ps. 90:8; he felt that he had many secret sins, hidden to Israel, but completely open to the Angel when he met with him. Likewise Israel were rejected because of the sins of their *heart* rather than their grosser failures (Acts 7:39; and see the reason for their condemnation given in many other passages). "Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance" (Ps. 90:8) is not Moses reproaching God; rather is it him soberly recognising why they were barred from the land. Notice "our iniquities...our sins" - Moses was completely at one with condemned Israel, he knew exactly how they felt- just as the Lord Jesus with us.

It makes a good exercise to copy the above table with the scores in the last column blanked out, and then ask a group of Bible readers to argue out what they think the right scores are. And then draw a graph and join the dots:



The spiritual growth of Moses was jagged. A consideration of this graph and our own likely graph reveals that we ought to be more careful how we judge the weaknesses and strengths of brethren. Their and our present situation must be seen in the context of the graph of life. In the bigger picture of Moses' life, it's clear that God was working with him according to a pattern. His 120 years of life fall into three distinct periods of 40 years. His 40 years as a shepherd in the wilderness were to prepare him for 40 years of shepherding God's people in the same wilderness. The burning bush was to prepare him for the awesome meeting with God in the burning mountain- note how the unusual Hebrew word used for "bush", *seneh*, echoes the name of the mountain, Sinai. Everything was used by God in His personal development plan for Moses.

And so the Moses who could plead "Kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, and let me not see my own wretchedness" was the same Moses who rose to the heights of offering his place in the Kingdom for Israel. For many of us, our whole lives are characterised by Moses pattern of spiritual growth until age 80. Yet the progressive humbling of him by God really did have an effect. He went on to rise up to the very heights of appreciating God's righteousness, until finally he gathers all Israel before him at the age of 120, perhaps helped up on to a tall rock from where he could address the whole nation. Perhaps they cheered as he first stood up. And then there would have been enthralled silence as he spoke, his eyes fixing on a few random faces. He had gathered them together to say farewell, from the man who had loved them more than any other man. It would have been an awesome sight. Remember Balaam's words, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign aloes which the

Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters" (Num. 24:5,6). And there was Moses, " an hundred and twenty years old...his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated" (Dt. 34:7). Perhaps there were 'shouters' who relayed his words to the whole assembly, so that they all heard him. Which means he would have spoken sentence by sentence, very slowly, occasionally drinking from a water bottle.

The word of his God was in his heart, as he stood there before Israel, that people whom he loved, those for whom he wished to make atonement with his own life, even his eternal life. " Yea, he loved the people" is the Spirit's comment (Dt. 33:3- the "he" in the context seems to be Moses). It could only be the Spirit which would write so concisely. "Yea, he loved the people... they sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words" . And then he pours out his heart to them, he reels off what we have as the book of Deuteronomy, written at the end point of the spiritual growth of Moses. But in reality that was the outpouring of his heart, pleading with Israel to be faithful to the covenant, encouraging them to be aware of their weakness, encouraging them to go forward and inherit the Kingdom. In those hours as he stood there saying those words, and then he sung that song to them of Dt. 32, I think we see Moses at his finest. And then he blesses those assembled tribes, the *love* of that man for Israel flowing out, and then, no doubt with a lump in his throat, swallowing back the tears, he turned and walked away, up that mountain, higher and higher, with the blue mountains of Moab shimmering in the distance. Even before that, surely his voice had faltered, even broken down, when he spoke to them of the tragedy of their future apostasy, of how the gentle and sensitive woman among them would eat her own children. And how the days would come when they would awake in the morning and say 'Would God it were evening'. As he foresaw in essence the horrors of the Nazi camps, and of so much else...he could only have said those words with tears and passion. For "he loved the people". If ever there was an understatement...

The pathos of the scene is wondrous. Yet in the sadness of it all, we see a type, more than a type, a superb image, of the death of Christ for us. It was for their sakes that Moses didn't enter the land, remember. That is the emphasis the Spirit gives. As he climbed, for it would have taken a while, perhaps he thought back to those years in Egypt, the struggle of his soul in those years. You may think I'm being over emotional, but it seems to me as he climbed he would have thought back to his dear mum to whom he owed his relationship with God, the mother he'd doubtless disowned for forty years, claiming that he was the son of Pharaoh's daughter; until at age 40 he was honest with himself, he told the world who his real mother was, he refused to be called any longer the son of Pharaoh's daughter. I mean, if we had say 24 hours to live, and we were told to go for a walk before we died, I guess we'd think back to our childhood for at least a moment, wouldn't we. And he was a man, just like any of us.

And perhaps he thought back to those weak years in Midian, to Zipporah, to the long lonely days with the animals. And then to the wonder of the Red Sea, to the nervousness of meeting the Angel, to the joy of that communion in another mountain. He knew that Angel well, they spoke face to face as men who are friends speak to each other (Ex. 33:11). How fitting that at the top, he met that Angel again. The same love, the same open-faced friendship would have been there. The Angel showed him the Kingdom, opening his eyes to see to the very boundaries of the land. And then he buried him, laying him in the grave in hope of better days, when Christ would come and raise his people, when God's people would at last be obedient. What an end. Out of weakness, such weakness, he was made strong. His temperamental faith, with its flashes of devotion, turned into a solid rock, a real ongoing relationship with a loving Father. *Every one* of his human relationships had failed: with his brother and sister, with his wife, with his people. But finally that lonely man

found his rest in Yahweh, Israel's God, he came to know Him as his friend and saviour . No wonder he is held up, by way of allusion throughout the New Testament, as our example.

4-3-1 Themes Of Moses In Deuteronomy

We have seen how Moses truly was made spiritually strong out of weakness. We have seen how his faith fluctuated, until at last he came to a spiritual height at the end of his life. We have seen something of the intensity and passion of his love for Israel, to the point where he was willing to give his physical and eternal life for Israel's salvation. In a sense, his desire was heard. Because of the sin of a moment, caused by the provocation of the people he loved, God decreed that he could not enter the land of promise. *For their sakes* he was barred from the land; this is the emphasis of the Spirit (Dt. 1:37; 3:26; 4:21); and Ps. 106:32,33 says that Moses was provoked to sin because Israel angered God, and that *therefore* " it went ill with Moses for their sakes" . Truly, God works through sinful man to achieve His glory ⁽¹⁾. Thus Moses says that he must die "Because ye [plural] trespassed against me" (dt. 32:51). This all helps explain why Christ had to die, apart from the fact that he was mortal. He died the death of a sinner for our salvation, he felt all the emotions of the rejected, the full weight of God's curse; for " cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" in crucifixion (Gal. 3:13). We have seen that Moses is a superb and accurate type of the Lord Jesus ⁽²⁾. Therefore Moses in his time of dying must grant us insight into the death of our Lord, the prophet like him (Dt. 18:18). As Christ declared God's Name just before his death (Jn. 17:26), so did Moses (Dt. 32:3 LXX). Personally I find the last hours of Moses so moving. As we read through the Law, you sense that tragic moment must come; rather like as we read through the Gospels. Moses saw at the end that there was no third way: it was either complete dedication and salvation, or rebellion and condemnation. He pleaded with them to see that " this day...this day...this day" he set before them life and death, forgiveness or salvation (Dt. 30:15-19). The Lord Jesus had His mind on this when He told the thief with the same emphasis that " this day" He could tell them that he would be saved, not condemned (Lk. 23:46). He felt like Moses, but greater than Moses, in that He not only set before men the choice, but could grant them the salvation they sought. Personally I find the last hours of Moses so moving. As we read through the Law, you sense that tragic moment must come; rather like as we read through the Gospels.

So finally Moses gathers Israel before him at the age of 120. It would have been an awesome sight. Remember Balaam's words, " How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters" (Num. 24:5,6). And there was Moses, " an hundred and twenty years old...his eye was not dim, nor his *natural force abated*" (Dt. 34:7). Strong defines those Hebrew words as meaning that his newness, his youth, had not been chased away (AV " abated") by the years, as happens to most men. He had all the energy, intellectually and physically, of a 21 year old, yet with all the sadness and knowledge of God of his 120 years. All the times we read he " rose up early" to commune with God demonstrate his energy, his enthusiasm for the word of the God of Israel (Ex. 8:20; 9:13; 24:4; 34:4).

The word of his God was in his heart, as he stood there before Israel, that people whom he loved, those for whom he wished to make atonement with his own life, even his eternal life. " Yea, he loved the people" is the Spirit's comment (Dt. 33:3- the " he" in the context seems to be Moses). It could only be the Spirit which would write so concisely. " Yea, he loved the people....they sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words" . This is God's comment on that last meeting between Moses and Israel. And then he pours out his heart to them, he reels off what we have as the

book of Deuteronomy (it takes about four hours to read it through loud), writes a copy of the Law (31:9; notice how Dt. 24 was *written* by Moses, Mk. 10:5), sings a Song to that silent multitude (surely with a lump in his throat, especially at points like 32:15), and then he turns and climbs the mountain to see the land and meet his death. The fact it all happened on his birthday just adds to the pathos of it all (Dt. 31:2). The huge amount of work which he did on that last day of his life looks forward to the Lord's huge achievement in the day of his death. No wonder Yahweh describes that day of Moses' death with an intensive plural: "The days (i.e. the one great time / day) approach (s.w. "at hand", "made ready") that thou must die" (Dt. 31:14). It seems that he said much of the book in one day; hence his repeated mention of the phrase "this day" throughout the book. The people were often reminded that they were about to "go over [Jordan] to possess" the land (Dt. 11:8,11 RV), as if they were on the banks of Jordan almost. In reality that speech of Deuteronomy was the outpouring of his heart, pleading with Israel to be faithful to the covenant, encouraging them to be aware of their weakness, encouraging them to go forward and inherit the Kingdom. Not only do we have a powerful type of the Lord Jesus in all this; Israel assembled before him really do represent us. Dt.32:36 ("the Lord shall judge his people") is quoted in Heb. 10:20 as relevant to all of us.

The Love Of Moses In Deuteronomy

Some time, read through the book of Deuteronomy in one or two goes. You'll see many themes of Moses in Deuteronomy. It really shows how Moses felt towards Israel, and how the Lord Jesus feels towards us, and especially how he felt towards us just before his death. For this is what the whole book prefigures. . "Love" and the idea of love occurs far more in Deuteronomy than in the other books of the Law. "Fear the Lord thy God" of Exodus becomes "love the Lord thy God" in Deuteronomy. There are 23 references to not hating in Deuteronomy, compared to only 5 in Ex. - Num.; Moses saw the danger of bitterness and lack of love. He saw these things as the spiritual cancer they are, in his time of maturity he warned his beloved people against them. His mind was full of them. The LXX uses the word *ekklesia* eight times in Deuteronomy, but not once in Moses' other words (Dt. 4:10; 9:10; 18:16; 23:1,2,3,8; 32:1). Responsibility for the whole family God had redeemed was a mark of his maturity. It is observable that both as a community and as individuals, this will be a sign of our maturity too. The following are just some aspects of his relationship with Israel.

The way Moses sees Israel as far more righteous than they were reflects the way the Lord imputes righteousness to us. He says that Israel didn't go near the mountain because they were afraid of the fire (Dt. 5:5), whereas Ex. 19:21-24 teaches that Israel at that time were not so afraid of the fire, and were quite inclined to break through the dividing fence and gaze in unspiritual fascination at a theophany which was beyond them. He speaks as if he assumed that surely Israel would love their neighbour as themselves: "Thy brother...or thy friend, which is as thine own soul" almost unconsciously reveals the depth of Moses' positive faith in their obedience, even though on the other hand he clearly understood their future apostasy (Dt. 13:6). He even assumed that Israel would not possibly try to break through the barriers around Sinai to "gaze"- "for thou chargedst us, saying, Set bounds about the mount and sanctify it" (Ex. 19:23). He over-estimated their obedience, so much did he love them.

Moses does not repeat every single commandment in the Law. Rather are there several themes of Moses in Deuteronomy presented. His choice of which ones he does repeat indicates his feelings towards Israel. His sensitivity towards the weakest and poorest of Israel comes out in this. He was reaching the spirit of the Lord Jesus, who said that the weakest of his brethren represented him (Mt.

25:40 Gk.). Thus Moses stresses how they were not to go into the house of a poor man to take back his pledge (Dt. 24:10); Moses could enter into the sense of shame and embarrassment of the poor man when a richer man enters his home. The Law in Exodus 22:26 did not stipulate that the house of the poor man should not be entered; by making this point in his farewell speech, Moses was showing his sensitivity, his ability now to enter into the feelings of the poorest of God's people. Indeed, the whole passage in Deuteronomy (24:6-17) about pledges is quite an expansion upon what the Law actually said in Ex. 22. And this from a man who could have been the king of Egypt, who could have had the world. What marvellous similarity with our Lord! Moses' sensitivity is shown by the introduction of other expansions upon existing commandments; e.g. "thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn" (Dt. 25:4). This is quoted by Paul as being actually part of the Law (1 Cor. 9:9; 1 Tim. 5:18), showing that Moses was so attune with the mind of God that these practical extensions which his sensitivity led him to command Israel were indeed the inspired commandments of God.

Moses' spiritual pinnacle was characterized by arriving at a profound depth of love. Love is likewise seen by Paul as "the bond of perfectness" (Col. 3:14), the sign of ultimate maturity.

Knowledge Of Their Weakness

In this time of final spiritual maturity, Moses was keenly aware of his own spiritual failings (as Paul and Jacob were in their last days). This is one of the great themes of Moses in Deuteronomy. He begins his Deuteronomy address by pointing out how grievously they had failed thirty eight years previously, when they refused to enter the good land. He reminds them how that although God had gone before them in Angelic power (Dt. 1:30,33), they had asked for their spies to go before them. And Moses admits that this fatal desire for human strength to lead them to the Kingdom "pleased me well" (Dt. 1:23). It seems to me that here Moses is recognizing his own failure. Perhaps he is even alluding to his weakness in wanting Jethro to go before them "instead of eyes", in place of the Angel-eyes of Yahweh (Num. 10:31-36). Moses at the end was aware of his failures. And yet he also shows his thorough appreciation of the weakness of his people. Moses admits at the end that Israel's faithless idea to send out spies "pleased me well"- when it shouldn't have done (Dt. 1:23,32,33). He realized more and more his own failure as he got older.

Moses often reminds them that he knows that they will turn away from the Covenant he had given them (e.g. Dt. 30:1; 31:29). He knew that one day they would want a king, even though God was their king (Dt. 17:14). He knew that there would always be poor people in the land, even though if the Law was properly kept this would not be the case (Dt. 15:4mg, 11). He knew they would accidentally commit murder and would need a way of escape; therefore he twice repeats and explains the law concerning the cities of refuge (Dt. 4:42; 19:5). These being a symbol of the future Messiah (Heb. 6:18), this emphasis would suggest that like Paul and Jacob, the mind of Moses in his time of spiritual maturity was firmly fixed on the Lord Jesus Christ. He foresaw how they would see horses and chariots and get frightened (Dt. 20:1-4). When he commented about the commandments that God "added no more" (Dt. 5:22), he foresaw his people's tendency to add the Halacahs of their extra commandments... He could foresee the spiritual problems they would have in their hour by hour life, he appreciated how both their nature and their disobedience would be such a problem for them, and Moses foresaw that they would not cope well with it (ditto for our Lord Jesus). And he was fully aware, more so than they were, of the judgement this would bring. He not only repeats all the curses of Lev. 26 to them, but he adds even more, under inspiration (Dt. 28:50-57). Presumably the Angel had explained in one of their conversations how Israel would suffer even greater punishment than what He had outlined in Lev. 26. Notice in passing that Lev. 26 and Dt. 28 are not

strictly parallel. And in some ways, Moses became more demanding, whilst at the same time emphasizing grace and love. Thus under the Law, Israel were not to lend to their poor brother upon usury (Ex. 22:25; Lev. 25:37); but now Moses forbids them to do this to *any* Israelite (Dt. 23:19).

Having reminded them that if they were obedient, “there shall be no poor among you; for the Lord shall greatly bless thee”, Moses goes on to comment that “the poor shall never cease out of the land”- and he gives the legislation cognisant of this (Dt. 15:4,11). Moses realized by the time of Deuteronomy that they wouldn’t make it to the blessings which were potentially possible. Finely aware of the seriousness of our relationship with God, Moses pleads with Israel to "choose life", not with the passivity which may appear from our armchair reading of passages like Dt. 30:19. Yet he knew that the majority of Israel would not choose life. When he appeals to them to choose obedience he is therefore thinking of the minority who would respond. Our Lord Jesus, with his knowledge of human nature, must have sensed that so many of those called into his new covenant would also turn away; He must have known that only a minority of Israel would choose the life which He offered. Yet like Moses He doubtless concentrated his thoughts on the minority who would respond. Moses spoke Deuteronomy without notes. It was no set piece address. All these things were in his heart; their proneness to failure, the coming of judgment for sin, his knowledge of their future apostasy. Enter into the *passion* of it all. The man who was willing to give his eternal life for them, about to die for the sake of their provocation- singing a final song to them, giving a final speech, which showed that he knew perfectly well that they would turn away from what he was trying to do for them, and therefore the majority of them would not be saved.

Despite such great love for Israel, Moses knew them so well that he fully appreciated that they were extremely prone to weakness. This is one of the major themes of Moses in Deuteronomy. He did not turn a blind eye to their sins; Deuteronomy is punctuated with reminders of how grievously they had sinned during their journey. Time and again he comments on how easily they will be tempted to disobey commandments. "Take heed" runs like a refrain throughout Moses' speech. He warns them, e.g., not to "take pity" on false teachers, but to purge them from the community (Dt. 7:16; 13:8; 19:13,21; 25:12). Not once in the Law does this warning occur. Moses had come to know Israel so well that he could see how they were tempted to fail, and so he warned them forcibly against it. The way the Lord Jesus knows our thought processes, the mechanism of our temptations, is wondrously prefigured here. There are so many other examples of Moses showing his recognition of exactly *how* Israel were likely to be tempted (Dt. 6:11-13; 8:11-20; 9:4; 11:16; 12:13,19,23,30; 13:1-4; 14:27; 15:9,18; 17:11,12 ("will"),14,16,17; 21:18; 22:1-4,18; 23:21; 25:8).

Moses adds a whole series of apparently 'minor' commands which were designed to make obedience easier to the others already given. Thus he tells them in Deuteronomy not to plant a grove of trees near the altar of God - because he knew this would provoke the possibility of mixing Yahweh worship with that of the surrounding world (Dt. 16:21). Likewise he commands any future king not to send God's people to Egypt to buy horses because he could see that this would tempt them to go back to Egypt permanently (Dt. 17:16). There are many other example of this kind of thing (Dt. 14:24; 15:18; 17:17-19; 18:9; 20:7,8). The point is that Moses had thought long and hard about the ways in which Israel would be tempted to sin, and his words and innermost desire were devoted to helping them overcome. Glorious ditto for the Lord Jesus.

Another theme of Deuteronomy is the way in which Moses visualizes commonplace daily incidents which he could foresee occurring in Israel's daily life: the man cutting down the tree and the axe head flying off and hitting someone; finding a dead body in a lonely field; coming across a stray animal on the way home from work; a man with two wives treating one as his favourite; seeing your

neighbour struggling to lift up his sick animal; coming across a bird's nest and being tempted to take the mature bird as well as the chicks home for supper; being tempted not to bother building a battlement around the flat roof of your new house; the temptation to take a bag with you and fill it up with your neighbour's grapes; the need to have weapons which could be used for covering excrement (Dt. 19:5; 21:1,15; 22:1,2,4,6,8; 23:13,24,25; 24:5,6,10,15,19; 25:11,13). The sensitivity of Moses was just fantastic! His eager imagination of His people in daily life, his understanding of their everyday temptations so superbly typifies that of our Lord!

Because Moses knew all this, he was pleading with Israel to "choose life", not with the passivity which may appear from our armchair reading of passages like Dt. 30:19. I wonder if he wasn't screaming this to them, breaking down in the climax of logic and passion which resulted in that appeal. Yet he knew that the majority of Israel would not choose life. When he appeals to them to choose obedience he is therefore thinking of the minority who would respond. Our Lord Jesus, with his knowledge of human nature, must have sensed that so many of those called into his new covenant would also turn away; he must have known that only a minority of Israel would choose the life which he offered. Yet like Moses he doubtless concentrated his thoughts on the minority who would respond. Moses spoke Deuteronomy without notes. It was no reading of a carefully prepared paper. All these things were in his heart; their proneness to failure, the coming of judgement for sin, his knowledge of their future apostasy. Enter into the *passion* of it all. The man who was willing to give his eternal life for them, about to die for the sake of their provocation- singing a final song to them, giving a final speech, which showed that he knew perfectly well that they would turn away from what he was trying to do for them, and therefore the majority of them would not be saved. As he came to the end of his speech, he seems to have sensed they didn't grasp the reality of it all: "It is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life" (Dt. 32:47); and thus his speech rises to a crescendo of intensity of pleading with them, after the pattern of the Lord.

Moses' Appeal To Israel

One of the most repeated themes of Moses in Deuteronomy is the way he keeps on telling them to "remember" all the great things which God had done for them on their wilderness journey (e.g. Dt. 10:21; 11:3-6), and especially the wonder of how he had redeemed them as children (his audience had been under twenty years old when they went through the Red Sea). Just look up all the times "remember" occurs in Deuteronomy. He really wanted them to overcome the human tendency to forget the greatness of God as manifested earlier in our lives and spiritual experience. Our tendency as the new Israel is just the same- to forget the wonder of baptism, of how God reached out His arm to save us.

Time and again, Moses speaks of the state of their *heart*. He warns them against allowing a bad state of heart to develop, he speaks often of how apostasy starts in the heart. Moses makes a total of 49 references to the heart / mind of Israel in Deuteronomy, compared to only 13 in the whole of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. This indicates the paramount importance which our Lord attaches to the state of our *mind*. This was perhaps his greatest wish as He faced death; that we should develop a spiritual *mind* and thereby manifest the Father and come to salvation. Moses likewise saw the state of our mind as the key to spiritual success. But do we share this perspective? Do we guard our minds against the media and influence of a mind-corrupting world? It's been observed that the phrase "The God of [somebody]", or similar, occurs 614 times in the Old Testament, of which 306 are in Deuteronomy [thanks to Trevor Nicholls for that one]. Our very personal relationship with God was therefore something else which Moses came to grasp in his spiritual maturity. Statistical analysis of the word "love" in the Pentateuch likewise reveals that "love" was a great theme of

Moses at the end of his life (Moses uses it 16 times in Deuteronomy, and only four times in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers). The word "commandments" occurs 43 times in Deuteronomy, and only 19 times in the other three records; "remember" occurs 16 times compared to 8 times in the other three. And yet Moses commanded Israel specifically to engrave the law on tables of plaster, not stone, knowing that they would soon be washed away; thus he wished to teach Israel [or try to] the temporary nature of the Law (Dt. 27:4-8). Like Paul in his time of dying, Moses saw the importance of obedience, the harder side of God; yet he also saw in real depth the surpassing *love* of God, and the grace that was to come, beyond Law. This appreciation reflected Moses' mature grasp of the Name / characteristics of God. He uses the name "Yahweh" over 530 times, often with some possessive adjective, e.g. "Yahweh *thy God*" or "Yahweh *our God*". He saw the personal relationship between a man and his God. Jacob reached a like realization at his peak. The idea of 'cleaving' to God is also a big theme of Moses in Deuteronomy (4:4; 10:20; 11:22; 13:4,17; 28:21,60; 30:20); the only other time Moses uses the word in his writings is in Gen. 2:24, concerning a man cleaving to his wife. Moses seems to have been suggesting to Israel that their covenant relationship with God meant they were *marrying God*. This was a real paradigm breaker. We may be used to such things. But against the theological background of the time, not to say the generally low level of spirituality among Israel, this was a shocking idea. It reflected the heights to which Moses had risen.

Moses really wanted Israel's well-being, he saw so clearly how obedience would result in blessing (e.g. Dt. 6:3; 12:28). This is a major theme of Moses in Deuteronomy. There was therefore a real sense of pleading behind his frequent appeal for Israel to "hear" God's words. "*Hear, O Israel*" must have had a real passion behind it in his voice, uncorrupted as it was by old age. He didn't rattle it off as some kind of Sunday School proof. At least four times Moses interrupts the flow of his speech with this appeal: "*Hear, O Israel*" (Dt. 5:1; 6:3,4; 9:1; 20:3). And again, a glance through a concordance shows how often in Deuteronomy Moses pleads with them to hear God's voice. So he was back to his favourite theme: Hear the word, love the word, make it your life. For in this is your salvation. And the Lord Jesus (e.g. in passages like Jn. 6) makes just the same urgent appeal.

Despite omitting some of the Law's commands in his speech, there are other commands which Moses really emphasises and repeats within his speech; e.g. the need to destroy idols and false teachers, and to provide cities of refuge to cater for the sins they would commit without intending to (Dt. 7:5; 12:3, 23-25; 13:6-14 = 17:2-7). This surely reflects our Lord's attitude to us; it is his desire that we recognise our sinfulness, our likelihood of failure, our need to separate from things which will lead us away from Him. And yet the Christian community is increasingly blind to this. Moses' frequent references to the way in which the Exodus had separated Israel from Egypt show the same spirit (Dt. 13:5; 15:15; 16:12); as our Lord in his time of dying was so strongly aware of the way in which he was redeeming us from this present evil world.

The Enthusiasm Of Moses For Israel

Having stated that the Canaanite tribes would only be cast out if Israel were obedient, Moses goes on to enthuse that those tribes would indeed be cast out- so positive was he about Israel's obedience (Dt. 6:18,19; 7:1). And yet on the other hand he realistically was aware of their future failures. He said those positive words genuinely, because he simply loved Israel, and had the hope for them which love carries with it. Throughout his speech, Moses is *constantly* thinking of Israel in the land; he keeps on telling them how to behave when they are there, encouraging them to be strong so that they will go into the land. I estimate

that about 25% of the verses in Moses' speech speak about this. Israel's future inheritance of the Kingdom absolutely filled Moses' mind as he faced up to his own death. And remember that his speech was the outpouring of 40 years meditation. Their salvation, them in the Kingdom, totally filled his heart. And likewise with the Lord Jesus. Psalms 22 and 69 shows how his thoughts on the cross, especially as he approached the point of death, were centred around our salvation. And Moses was so positive about them. "The Lord thy God *shall* bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the works of thine hands", even though these blessings were conditional upon their obedience. Moses was this confident of them (Dt. 16:15 cp. 28:1,4,12).

Despite knowing their weakness and his own righteousness, Moses showed a marvellous softness and humility in that speech. When he reminds them how God wanted to reject them because of their idolatry with the golden calf, he does not mention how fervently he prayed for them, so fervently that God changed His expressed intention (Dt. 9:14); and note deeply, Moses *does not mention how he offered his physical and eternal life for their salvation*. That fine, fine act and desire by Moses went unknown to Israel until the book of Exodus came into circulation. And likewise, the depth of Christ's love for us was unrecognised by us at the time. Moses had such humility in not telling in Israel in so many words how fervently he had loved them. The spiritual culture of the Lord is even greater.

The softness of Moses, the earnestness of his desire for their obedience, his eagerness to work with them in their humanity, is shown by the concessions to human weakness which he makes in Deuteronomy (with God's confirmation, of course). When they attacked a foreign city, OK, Moses says, you can take the women for yourselves- even though this is contrary to the spirit of earlier commands (Dt. 20:14; 21:11). Likewise with the provisions for having a human king (Dt. 17:17) and divorce (24:1-4). He knew the hardness of Israel's hearts, their likelihood to give way to temptation, and so he made concessions contrary to the principles behind other parts of the Law (Mt. 19:8). And Dt. 16:2 seems to imply that now, the Passover sacrifice didn't necessarily have to be a lamb, and it could be boiled not just roasted (:7).

Despite being fully aware of how weak Israel were, Moses often speaks of the " blessing" which God would give them for obedience; he even speaks of the future blessing of obedience in the prophetic perfect, so confident was he that they would receive it: " Every man shall give as he is able (once he is settled in the land), according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which he *hath* given thee" (Dt. 16:17). Moses speaks with confidence of how God would grant them the blessing of the land and victory over their enemies, even though these things were conditional upon their obedience (Dt. 19:1; 20:13), and even though Moses clearly knew that most of them would disobey. The conclusion from this is that Moses thought so much of that minority who would obey his covenant, who would grasp the spirit of his life and the speech he was now making. And our Lord likewise- in his feelings for us, we trust.

And yet for all Moses' desire for Israel's obedience, there are some subtle differences in his attitude to law and obedience between Deuteronomy, and the law earlier given. Thus in Leviticus 26 it was stressed that obedience would bring blessing; whilst Dt. 28:58 says that obedience results in fearing the fearful Name of Yahweh and His glory. Fear shouldn't lead to obedience; but obedience leads a man to *know and fear his God and His Name*. This is blessing enough. Like Jacob and Job, Moses came to a fine appreciation of Yahweh's Name at his latter end.

Notes

(1) Ez. 20:38 says that the rebels in the wilderness "shall not enter into the land", with reference to how when Moses called the people "rebels" and beat the rock, he was disallowed entry into the land. Because he called them rebels, i.e. unworthy of entry to the Kingdom, he also was treated as a rebel. If we condemn others, we likewise will be condemned. On another level, he was simply barred for disobedience; and on yet another, his prayer to the effect that he didn't want to be in the land if his people weren't going to be there was being answered; and on yet another and higher level, his offer to be blotted out of the book of inheritance for Israel's sake was also being heard. Thus God works within the same incident in so many ways!

(2) See *Moses and Jesus and Moses in the Gospel of John*.

4-3-2 The Song Of Moses

In those hours as Moses stood there saying those words of Deuteronomy, and then as he sung that song of Moses to them of Dt. 32, I think we see Moses at his finest. His voice would have been that of a young man, and yet with all the passion of meaning of his 120 years. And then he blesses those assembled tribes, the *love* of that man for Israel flowing out, with that same wondrous voice. " Yea, he *loved* the people" . And then, no doubt with a lump in his throat, swallowing back the tears, he turned and walked away, up that mountain, higher and higher, with the blue mountains of Moab shimmering in the distance. " That selfsame day" Moses spoke Deuteronomy, God commanded him: " Get thee up into this mountain...and behold the land...and die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people" (Dt. 32:50). Like the Lord Jesus, he received a commandment to die (Jn. 10:18; 14:31), and yet he presumably did not know how to consciously fulfil it according to his own actions. He climbed the mountain alone, that same day he spoke Deuteronomy. Presumably he spoke Deuteronomy in the morning, sung the song of Moses, and then " that selfsame day" died. It would have taken him time to climb the mountain, to be met at the top by the Angel, who then showed him the land, kissed him (see later) and buried him. Presumably he died late in the day, watching the sun setting over the promised land- perhaps at the same hour Jesus died.

The pathos of the scene is wondrous, the Song of Moses as it were can be heard still echoing. Yet in the sadness of it all, we see prefigured the death of Christ for us. It was for their sakes that Moses didn't enter the land, remember. That is the emphasis the Spirit gives. As he climbed, for it would have taken a while, perhaps he thought back to those years in Egypt, the struggle of his soul in those years. You may think I'm being over emotional, but it seems to me as he climbed he would have thought back to his dear mum to whom he owed his relationship with God, the mother he'd doubtless disowned for forty years, admitting that he was the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He would have reflected how at age 40 he was honest with himself, how he told the world who his real mother was (probably, tragically enough, after her death, sad that her son seemed to have rejected her for the pleasures of Egypt), how he had refused to be called any longer the son of Pharaoh's daughter. I mean, if we had say 24 hours to live, and we were told to go for a walk before we died, I guess we'd think back to our childhood for at least a moment, wouldn't we. And he was a man, just like you and me, with all a man's feelings, all a man's memories, all a man's humanity. I believe, although I can't prove it, that he wept all the way to the top, climbing farther and farther away from the people he loved, knowing that the majority simply didn't understand him and what he had suffered for them. And perhaps as he sung the song of Moses, he thought back to those weak years in Midian, to Zipporah, to the arguments with her, to the pain of the divorce, to the Ethiopian woman, to the long lonely days with the animals. And then to the wonder of the Red Sea, to the nervousness of meeting the Angel, to the joy of that communion in another mountain. He knew that Angel well, they spoke face to face as men who are friends speak to each other (Ex. 33:11).

The echoes of Deuteronomy in the Lord's goodbye speeches shouldn't be missed; for Moses at this time truly was a superb type of the Lord Jesus. Deuteronomy concludes with two songs of Moses,

one addressed to the Father (Dt. 32), and the other to his people (Dt. 33). It is apparent that the Lord's final prayer in Jn. 17 is divisible into the same two divisions- prayer to the Father, and concern for His people. It has been observed that the prayer of Jn. 17 is also almost like a hymn- divided into seven strophes of eight lines each. It would appear to be John's equivalent to the record in Mk. 14:26 of a hymn being sung at the end of the Last Supper.

4-3-3 The Death Of Moses

How fitting that at the top of the mountain, he met that Angel again, who had loving prepared for the death of Moses. The same love, the same open-faced friendship would have been there. The Angel showed him the Kingdom, opening his eyes to see to the very boundaries of the land. It seems to me that in some sense the Lord Jesus had a vision of us in the Kingdom just before his death (Is. 53:10; Heb. 12:2; Ps. 22:17,20 cp. Eph. 5:30). Moses died "by the mouth of the Lord. And he buried him in a valley... but no man knoweth of his sepulchre" (Dt. 34:5,6 Heb.). "By the mouth of the Lord" can imply a kiss; as if the Angel kissed Moses, and this resulted in his death. Remember, the Angel was Moses *friend* (Ex. 33:11). It was a reversal of how the Angel created Adam and breathed into his nose the Spirit; now the Angel kisses Moses and takes it away. And then he buried him, laying him in the grave in hope of better days, when Christ would come and raise his people, when God's people would at last be obedient. What an end. Moses seems to have foreseen this when he said that "We bring our years to an end with a sigh", a final outbreathing (Ps. 90:9 RVmg.). And then the Angel built a sepulchre. Just picture that Angel perhaps digging, yes *digging* the grave, building the sepulchre of the rocks laying around in that cleft in the mountain [\(1\)](#). In the context of Moses leading Israel, we are told: "As a beast goeth down into the valley (tired at the end of a day, led there to drink by a loving owner? Or the reference is perhaps to one of those noble animals which leave the herd to walk away and perish alone), the Spirit (Angel) of the Lord caused him to rest" (Is. 63:14). Remember how Moses was buried by the Angel in a valley in the mountain (Dt. 34:6). The Hebrew translated "rest" means both to physically lay down and to comfort. So we have the picture of the Angel comforting Moses with the hope of resurrection, kissing him goodnight as it were, and then laying him down in the grave. The softness of God at the death of Moses, the gentleness, prefigured above all the gentleness, in a sense, of the Father with His Son at the cross; and His gentleness with each of us in our time of dying. Let's remember this idea. For short of the second coming, we're all mortal. There's something wondrous about the death of Moses. It's as if God took Moses' funeral- and said in truth 'This is the best man I've yet known', as a man might say at the funeral of his best friend.

Through it all we sense the great love of Yahweh, manifest in that Angel, for His servant. And this all typifies the tenderness of God for Jesus in his time of dying. As we think of the Angel lowering the body of Moses, with his arms around and underneath him, it seems no accident that the last words of Moses spoke of this very thing: " There is none like the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency in the sky. *The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms:* and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee....Israel then shall dwell in safety alone (language of the future Kingdom, Ez. 29:26; 34:25): the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew. Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by Yahweh...thine enemies shall be subdued unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places" , i.e. their idols (Dt. 33:26-29). Surely these Moses' last words could not have been said without his voice cracking with emotion.

A few hours before the death of Moses, he had been telling Israel: " While I am yet alive with you this day (for a few more hours), ye have been rebellious against Yahweh; and how much more after my death?" (Dt. 31:27). Earlier that same day the Angel had told him: " Thou shalt *lie down* (mg.) with thy fathers (cp. the Angel lying him down in the grave)...and this people will *rise up* (i.e. immediately after his death), and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land" (Dt. 31:16). No wonder this was ringing in Moses' ears as he came to his death. Yet he triumphed in the fact that a minority would not give way. *His very last words* were a confident exaltation that ultimately Israel would overcome their temptations, the influence and idols of the surrounding world. But he knew that the majority of them would spiritually fall because of these things. Therefore he was looking forward to the minority in Israel who would gloriously overcome, who would come to the Kingdom, the land of corn and wine, when the heavens would drop dew. This is clearly the language of Ps. 72 and Isaiah about the future Kingdom. Moses met death with the vision of the faithful minority in the Kingdom, in the promised land, having overcome all their besetting temptations. And the Lord Jesus died with exactly that same vision (Ps. 22:22-31; 69: 30-36).

What an end. Out of weakness, such weakness, he was made strong. His temperamental faith, with its flashes of devotion, turned into a solid rock, a real ongoing relationship with a loving Father. *Every one* of his human relationships had failed: with his natural brother and sister, with his wife, with his mother, with his adopted mother, with his people. But finally that lonely man found his rest in Yahweh, Israel's God, he came to know Him as his friend and saviour. No wonder he is held up, by way of allusion throughout the New Testament, as both our example and a superb type of our Lord Jesus. Israel mourned for Moses, but it is emphasized that their weeping came to an end (Dt. 34:8). This is one of the most tragic things about the whole record of the death of Moses. They rose up, and forgot his love (Dt. 31:16,27). And what of us?

Notes

(1) An alternative reconstruction of the death of Moses is possible. Rabbinical tradition says that " he buried him" (Dt. 34:6) is reflexive; it means that Moses buried himself. For confirmation of this, see S.R.Hirsch, *The Pentateuch*, Vol. 5 p.685 (New York: Judaica Press, 1971). It is the same Hebrew construction as in Lev. 22:16 and Num. 6:13. In this case, the description of Christ as 'making his own grave' (Is. 53:9) could be read as an allusion to the death of Moses. Therefore the pattern of events was perhaps something like this: The Angel showed Moses the land; Moses, in the presence of the Angel, dug his own grave and lowered himself into it, as a conscious act of the will, in obedience to God's command (as the prototype of the Lord Jesus). The prophecy that Moses would *lie down* in death takes on a literal sense in this case (Dt. 31:16). Then the Angel kissed him, and he died. The Angel then built up the sepulchre over his body. Personally I feel this was what happened, but I am cautious to strongly push ideas which rely on a fine point of Hebrew grammar.

4.4 Moses As A Type Of Christ

By the time he uttered Deuteronomy, Moses would probably have been the oldest person any of the congregation had ever known. Many of the earlier generation had been cut down in the wilderness. He was nearly twice the age of Joshua. He had dominated their lives from birth, had stuck with them, with their fathers and even grandparents. Just as the Lord Jesus is to be the central figure in the new Israel. Moses was also a representative of his people, just as the Lord Jesus is in a sense 'Israel' - the suffering servant refers to both Israel and their Messiah. Moses was "adopted by an imperial parent, punished for his rashness, sentenced to wander forty years in the wilderness, forgiven, restored, hand-selected for an impossible task, accompanied by the overwhelming presence of God at every step..." just as his beloved people. In the same way as Moses was the mediator of the old covenant, so Christ was of the new. Christ was the prophet like unto Moses (Dt. 18:18). Moses was the shepherd of the flock of Israel, leading them on God's behalf through the wilderness towards the promised land (Is. 63:12), as Christ leads us after baptism to the Kingdom. It

was only through Moses' leadership that they reached Canaan: " The Lord said unto (Moses), Arise (cp. Christ's resurrection), take thy journey before the people (as Christ, the good shepherd, goes *before* the flock, Jn. 10:3), *that* they may go in and possess the land" (Dt. 10:11). As Moses very intensely manifested God to the people, so he foreshadowed the supreme manifestation of the Father in the Son. The commands of Moses were those of God (Dt. 7:11; 11:13,18; and 12:32 concerning Moses' words is quoted in Rev. 22:18,19 concerning God's words); his voice was God's voice (Dt. 13:18; 15:5; 28:1), as with Christ. Israel were to show their love of God by keeping Moses' commands (Dt. 11:13); as the new Israel do in their response to the word of Christ. Indeed, the well known prophecy that God would raise up a prophet " like unto" Moses to whom Israel would *listen* (Dt. 18:18) is in the context of Israel saying they did not want to hear God's voice directly. Therefore God said that he would raise up Christ, who would be another Moses in the sense that *he too* would speak forth God's word.

It is possible that Moses appreciated that he was a type of Christ the future Messiah; he considered " the reproach of Christ" enough to motivate him to reject the attractions of Egypt (Heb. 11:26); he knew he was sharing the sufferings of the future, ultimate saviour, and the wonder of that alone was enough to motivate him to leave the attractions of this world- even the possibility of being the next Pharaoh, the most powerful man on earth. The similarities between Jesus and Moses are too many to sensibly tabulate. There is ample opportunity to enter deeply into the attitude of Moses towards Israel, and it is this which perhaps most valuably deepens our appreciation of the love of Christ for us, and of our own liability to failure after the pattern of Israel.

The Rejection Of Moses

Stephen in Acts 7 stresses the way in which Moses was rejected by Israel as a type of Christ. At age 40, Moses was " thrust away" by one of the Hebrews; and on the wilderness journey the Jews " thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt" (Acts 7:27,35,39). This suggests that there was far more antagonism between Moses and Israel than we gather from the Old Testament record- after the pattern of Israel's treatment of Jesus. It would seem from Acts 7:39 that after the golden calf incident, the majority of Israel cold shouldered Moses. Once the point sank in that they were not going to enter the land, this feelings must have turned into bitter resentment. They were probably unaware of how Moses had been willing to offer his eternal destiny for their salvation; they would not have entered into the intensity of Moses' prayers for their salvation. The record seems to place Moses and " the people" in juxtaposition around 100 times (e.g. Ex. 15:24; 17:2,3; 32:1 NIV; Num. 16:41 NIV; 20:2,3; 21:5). They accused Moses of being a cruel cult leader, bent on leading them out into the desert to kill them and steal their wealth from them (Num. 16:13,14)- when in fact Moses was delivering them from the house of bondage, and was willing to lay down his own salvation for theirs. The way Moses submerged his own pain is superb; both of their rejection of him and of God's rejection of him from entering the Kingdom. The style of Moses' writing in Num. 20:12-14 reveals this submerging of his own pain. He speaks of himself in the third person, omitting any personal reflection on his own feelings: " The Lord spake unto Moses...Because ye believed me not...ye shall not bring the congregation into the land...and Moses sent messengers from Kadesh unto the King of Edom..." . Likewise all the references to "the Lord spake unto Moses" (Lev. 1:1). Moses submerged his own personality in writing his books.

It is simply fantastic that Moses could love those people so intensely, despite their aggression and indifference towards him. He was prepared to give his place in the Kingdom so that they might enter; he *prayed* God to accept his offer. He knew that atonement could only be by sacrifice of blood

(Lev. 17:11); and yet he climbed the Mount with the intent of making atonement himself for Israel's sin (Ex. 32:30); he intended to give his life for them. And he didn't make such a promise in hot blood, as some men might. He made the statement, and then made the long climb to the top of the mount. And during that climb, it seems he came to an even higher spiritual level; he was prepared not only to offer his physical life, but also his place in the Kingdom (Ex. 32:32 cp. Ez. 13:9; Dan. 12:2; Lk. 10:20; Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:5; 20:12). Now although hopefully we are not rejecting Christ as they did, the fact still stands that the love of Moses for Israel typifies the love of Christ towards us. The degree, the extent of Moses' love, is but a dim foretaste of the *degree* of the love of Christ for us. Now in this is something wonderful, something we really need to go away and meditate about. And the wonder of it all is that Israel did not realize the extent of Moses' love at the time. At the end of his life he recounts how God has threatened to destroy the people, and then "I turned and came down from the mount" (Dt. 9:15). He doesn't record his 40 days of pleading with the Father, and how he turned down the offer of having himself made into a great nation. In this we see tremendous spiritual culture, pointing forward to the Lord's own self-perception of His sacrifice.

The loneliness of Moses as a type of Christ in showing this kind of love must surely represent that of our Lord. They went to a height which was generally beyond the appreciation of the men among whom they lived. The Spirit seems to highlight the loneliness of Moses by saying that at the same time as Moses *refused* to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, Israel *refused* him (the same Greek word is used; Heb. 11:24; Acts 7:35). He was rejected by both the world and God's people: for 40 long years. As Israel envied Moses for spiritual reasons (Ps. 106:16; Acts 7:9), so they did Christ (Mt. 27:18), after the pattern of the brothers' spiritual envy of Joseph (Gen. 37:11). Spiritual envy leading to persecution is quite a common feature in Biblical history (Job, Jeremiah, Paul...). And it isn't absent from the Christian experience either.

The tragedy is that Israel's rejection of Moses is typical of the rejection of Christ by those in the new Israel who turn away. The same word used about Israel *refusing* Moses as their deliverer (Acts 7:35) is used about those who *deny* (same word) the Lord (Jesus) that bought them (2 Pet. 2:1). This latter verse is prefaced by the information that as there were those who lost their faith in the ecclesia in the wilderness, so there will be among the new Israel (2 Pet. 2:1). Therefore "the Lord that bought them" is an allusion back to Moses as a type of Christ. The illogicality of Israel's rejection of Moses when he first appeared to them is so apparent. They were slaves in Egypt, and then one of the most senior of Pharaoh's officials reveals that he is their brother, and has been sent by God to deliver them. Yet they preferred the life of slavery in Egypt. This same illogicality is seen in us if we refuse baptism, preferring to stay in the world of slavery, or later when we chose the world as opposed to Christ. We deny, we refuse, we reject, the Lord who bought us by going back to the world from which he redeemed us. The illogicality of going back to the world is brought out by the illogicality of Israel's rejection of Moses. Israel rejected Moses because it was easier to stay where they were. Such is the strength of conservatism in human nature; such is our innate weakness of will and resolve. They rejected the idea of leaving Egypt because they thought it was better than it was, they failed to face up to how much they were suffering (Num. 11:5). And our apathy in responding to Christ's redemptive plan for us is rooted in the same problem; we fail to appreciate the seriousness of sin, the extent to which we are in slavery to sin- even though the evidence for this is all around us.

" The same did God send..."

Stephen in Acts 7 brings out the sheer grace of God in redeeming Israel. Although Israel rejected Moses as their ruler and deliverer, " the same did God send *to be* a ruler and a deliverer" (Acts 7:35). They didn't want to be saved from Egypt through Moses, and yet God did save them from Egypt through Moses. Israel at that time were exactly like us; while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us, we were redeemed in prospect from a world we didn't want to leave. We were saved- and are saved- almost in spite of ourselves. That we were predestined to such great salvation is one of redemption's finest mysteries.

And so God sent Moses to be their saviour, pointing forward to His sending of the Lord Jesus to redeem us. Moses came to Israel and " shewed (Greek '*optomai*') himself" to them (Acts 7:26). Yet '*optomai*' really means to gaze at, to watch a spectacle. He came to his people, and gazed at them as they fought among themselves, spiritually and emotionally destroyed by the oppression of Egypt. He invited them to likewise gaze upon him as their saviour. This surely prefigures our Lord's consideration of our sinful state. As he grew up in Nazareth he would have thought on this a lot. As Moses " looked on their burdens" at age 40 (Ex. 2:11), so at the start of his ministry, our Lord assessed the weight of ours. His concern for our burdens in Mt. 11:30; 23:4 is perhaps a conscious allusion back to Moses' awareness of Israel's burdens, and his desire to deliver them, even though it cost him all that he had in this world.

Moses fought with the temptation to just observe from a distance, but then he came out into the open, declaring that he was a Hebrew, rejecting his kind Egyptian foster mother, openly declaring that he was not really her son, as both she and he had claimed for 40 years. He would have borne the shame of all this, " the reproach of Christ" (Heb. 11:26). But he was not ashamed to call Israel his brethren, as Christ is not ashamed of us (Heb. 2:11- one of many allusions to Moses in Hebrews). All this suggests that like Moses, our Lord came to a point where he " came down" from obscurity to begin his work of deliverance. The references to 'coming down' in John's Gospel allude to this [\(1\)](#) . " When Moses *was grown*, he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens...when he was *full forty years old* it came into his heart to visit his brethren...by faith Moses, *when he was come to years*, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter" (Ex. 2:11; Acts 7:23; Heb. 11:24). The implication seems to be that Moses reached a certain point of maturity, of readiness, and then he went to his brethren. God looked on the sorrows of His people through the sensitivity of Moses, He *saw and knew* their struggles, their sense of being trapped, their desire to revive spiritually but their being tied down by the painful business of life and living; and He sent Moses to deliver them from this. But these very words are quoted about our deliverance through the 'coming down' of the Lord Jesus (Ex. 3:7; 4:31 = Lk. 1:68).

And so Moses as a type of Christ came to his brethren, and saw one of them being beaten by an Egyptian. Moses " looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian" (Ex. 2:11,12). This little incident is typical of how Christ was to destroy the devil, the power of sin, on the cross. The common translation of this passage can give them impression that Moses was very nervous. Yet it does not say that when he saw no man *was looking* he slew the Egyptian. There was at least one man looking- the suffering Israelite. And there must have been others looking for news to get round that Moses had killed the Egyptian. So I would suggest that Moses saw the Israelite suffering, and looked round in wonder to see if any other Israelite was going to go to his rescue. Because he saw there was no man, he himself got involved. This is an eloquent essay in the humility of Moses and the Lord he typified.

This is exactly the same picture which we find in Is. 59:16 concerning Christ's decision to achieve our redemption: " He saw that there was no man (quoting the words of Ex. 2:11), and wondered that

there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation" (God saved Israel from Egypt by the *arm* of Moses, manifesting His arm: Ex. 6:6; 15:16; Dt. 4:34; Is. 63:12). Is. 63:4-6 also contain allusions to Moses and the exodus (the rest of the chapter speaks explicitly about this): " The day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year (time) of my redeemed (the one I will redeem) is come. And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation" . The implication of these passages is that he was surprised, he " wondered" , that there was no one else to save Israel. He looked round for someone else to do it, but he found none- exactly after the pattern of Moses. This is not only an eloquent essay in our Lord's humanity, and the monstrosity of the 'trinity'; it indicates the true humility which he manifested in his work of redemption.

Yet Israel rejected Moses as their deliverer, they failed to see in that dead Egyptian the ability of Moses to save them completely from the life of slavery. And so Moses fled away from them, he came to Gentile, pagan Midian, and rescued a Gentile woman from the persecution of men, married her, and started a new life in the wilderness- to return many years later in the power of the Holy Spirit and redeem Israel when they were in truly desperate straits. All this naturally points ahead to the work of Jesus after Israel failed to respond to his work on the cross. The word used to describe Moses rescuing his future wife from the shepherds is the same used concerning God rescuing Israel from Egypt (Ex. 2:19; 18:10). Thus Moses was manifesting the redemptive work of God when he saved his wife. In full view of Israel (as Moses killed the Egyptian, according to our reconstruction above), Christ openly shewed his ability to destroy the power of sin, on account of which we lived in fear of death, " all (our) lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:15)- clear reference back to Israel in Egypt. The passage in Hebrews 2 says that Christ can deliver us from such bondage because he is our representative, our brother, of our nature, not ashamed of his connection with us (2:11). Reasoning back from this, we can see that Moses' ability to redeem Israel from Egypt, his appropriacy for the task, was because he had openly declared that he was one of them. Yet the wonder of that was lost on them. And if we are not careful, the wonder of the fact that Christ had our nature, that he was our representative and is *therefore* mighty to save, can be lost on us too. The thrill of these first principles should ever remain with us.

Moses As Mediator

Israel were certainly representative of us. The *degree* of love shown by Moses to Israel is only a shadow of the degree, the kind of love shown by Christ to us, who hopefully are not rejecting him as Israel did. The power of this point just has to be reflected upon. That Moses could love Israel, to the extent of being willing to give his life and salvation for them, is a fine, fine type of the devotion of Christ. There is another oft emphasised aspect of Moses' love for Israel: the power of his mediation for them. We are told that God " hearkened" to Moses' prayers for them (Dt. 9:19; 10:10). He prayed for them with an intensity they didn't appreciate, he prayed for *and gained* their forgiveness before they had even repented, he pleaded *successfully* for God to relent from His plans to punish them, even before they knew that God had conceived such plans (Ex. 32:10,14; 33:17 etc.). The fact we will, at the end, be forgiven of some sins without specifically repenting of them (as David was in Ps. 19:12) ought to instil a true humility in us. This kind of thing is in some ways a contradiction of God's principles that personal repentance is required for forgiveness, and that our own effort is required if we are to find acceptability with Him. Of course ultimately these things are still true, and were true with respect to Israel. But the fact is that God was willing to hearken to Moses as he prayed so, so earnestly, He was willing to change His expressed purpose in respect to destroying Israel (perhaps Ps. 90 is the transcript of this prayer- v.3 in Hebrew asks God not to destroy the children of men, and to repent concerning His servants in vv. 13-17. In Dt. 16:15 Moses sounds as if

Ps. 90:17 has been answered). It should also be noted that Moses as a type of Christ was not the High Priest. He mediated for Israel on a voluntary basis; not because he was under any duty to offer up their prayers. Indeed, they didn't make any prayers for him to offer up. He pleaded with God for them on his own initiative, rather than being asked by them to do so. And this is the basis of Christ's mediation for us; he pleads for us even when we know not what to pray for, even when we don't realize the need to beseech the Father. Moses' mediation, not so much Aaron's offerings, are the prototype which the New Testament uses to explain the Lord's present work. In the Apocryphal Assumption of Moses (1:14), Moses is made to say of God: " He designed and devised me and he prepared me before the foundation of the world, that I should be the mediator" . These words are alluded to in a number of NT passages. Clearly we are intended to see Moses' mediation as typical of the Lord's. His freewill mediation was the basis of Israel's salvation: " By a prophet (Moses: Dt. 18:18), the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved" (Hos. 12:13). This last clause may be a hint that Moses prayed for the gift of life-preserving manna, and thus sustained Israel, all unbeknown to them. Likewise the intensity of his prayers and the supremacy of his willingness to sacrifice himself for them was tragically unknown to them at the time. It's almost sad that these things have to be typical of the Lord's preservation and redemption of us his thick-skinned and unknowing people.

When we sin, the sentence of death is passed again and again upon us. Tragically, we sense that our forgiveness through Christ is almost effortlessly achieved by Him, benignly rubber stamped by a God who is eager to overlook sin. This is not the case. The intensity of Moses' pleadings for Israel, the grievousness of their sins, points forward to the work of the Lord Jesus for us on our wilderness journey to the Kingdom. Rom. 8::26,27 allows us to enter a little into our Lord's heavenly agony for us: " the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us (the language of Moses interceding for Israel) with groanings which cannot be uttered" . And even more wondrously, we are probably unaware of all Christ's prayers for us, as Israel were far from completely aware of the passionate dialogues between Moses and God on their behalf. They just got on with their lives at the foot of the mountain, occasionally jerked into a repentant frame of mind, assuming Moses would sort it all out up there in the mountain, full of their petty murmurings and wistful thoughts of Egypt. What tragic similarity with much of our lives. Can't we learn from them? Surely we must.

Moses As An Agent Of Grace

Moses, like the Lord, was an agent of grace. Israel no longer knew the Name of the God of their fathers- and the same passage in Exodus states that Pharaoh likewise didn't know the Name of Yahweh. Ezekiel 20 makes it clear that the Israelites worshipped the gods of Egypt and even took them with them through the Red Sea. Therefore God's saving of His people out of Egypt was an act of pure grace. It wasn't because they were righteous, they had forgotten Him. And likewise, our calling out of the world, our exodus from it through baptism, is a result of the calling / election of grace.

The Farewell Discourse

The lives of both Moses and the Lord ended with a farewell discourse and prayer. Not only do the words of the Lord consciously allude to Moses' words in Deuteronomy, but John's comments do likewise. John's comment that "Jesus knowing that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world..." (Jn. 13:1) is without any doubt referring to the well known [at the time he was writing] Jerusalem Targum on Dt. 32:

“And when the last end of Moses the prophet was at hand, that he should be gathered from the world...”. Consider the following obvious allusions of the Lord Jesus to Moses’ final words:

- “If ye love me ye will keep my commandments” (Jn. 14:15,21,23; 15:10) reflects a major identical theme in Dt. 5:10; 7:9; 11:1,22; 13:3,4; 19:9; 30:16.
- “Let not your heart be troubled... neither let it be afraid” (Jn. 14:1,27) repeats Moses’ final encouragement to Israel “fear not, neither be dismayed” (Dt. 31:8; 1:21,29; 7:18).
- “I go to prepare a place for you” = the idea of Moses and the Angel bringing Israel “into the place which I have prepared” (Ex. 23:30).
- “Ye did not choose me, but I chose you... out of the world” (Jn. 15:16,19) corresponds to the oft repeated theme of Moses that God has chosen Israel “out of all peoples” (Dt. 7:6 RVmg.), by grace (Dt. 4:37; 10:15; 14:2).
- The Lord’s common Upper Room theme of ‘abiding’ in Him uses the same word as Moses used when exhorting his people to ‘cleave unto’ God (Dt. 10:20; 11:22). This abiding involved loving God and keeping His commandments- all ideas which occur together in Dt. 13:4; 30:20.
- The Lord told the Father that He had given the disciples His words, “and they have received them” (Jn. 17:8). This is evident allusion to the editorial comment in Dt. 33:3 about how all Israel received God’s words through Moses. Likewise “I manifested thy name... they have kept thy word” (Jn. 17:6,26) = “I will proclaim the name of the Lord... they have observed thy word” (Dt. 32:3; 33:9). One marvels at the way the Lord’s mind linked together so much Scripture in the artless, seamless way in which He did.
- “Holy Father... righteous Father” (Jn. 17:11,25) was a form of address which the Lord had in a sense lifted from Moses when he addresses God as “righteous and holy” (Dt. 32:4 LXX).

There are many other references in the Upper Room discourse to Moses- without doubt, Moses was very much in the Lord’s mind as He faced His end. Consider at your leisure how Jn. 14:1 = Ex. 14:31; Jn. 14:11 = Ex. 14:8. When the Lord speaks in the Upper Room of manifesting the Father and Himself unto the disciples (Jn. 14:21,22), he is alluding to the way that Moses asked God to “manifest thyself unto me” (Ex. 33:18 LXX). The Lord’s allusion makes Himself out to be God’s representatives, and all those who believe in Him to be as Moses, receiving the vision of God’s glory. Note that it was that very experience above all others which marks off Moses in Rabbinic writings as supreme and beyond all human equal. And yet the Lord is teaching that that very experience of Moses is to be shared *to an even higher degree* by all His followers. It would’ve taken real faith and spiritual ambition for those immature men who listened to the Lord that evening to really believe it... And the same difficult call comes to us too.

Moses: Representative And Saviour

It is a fundamental, if neglected, doctrine that Christ was our representative. This really ought to be a source of comfort to us, as we sense the involvement of the Son of God in our lives, one who can

truly empathise (rather than just sympathise) with our spiritual struggle. This is so clearly taught by the typology of Moses as a type of Christ. Although he spoke to God as a friend, with an open-faced relationship, he still took upon himself the sin of Israel, he felt as condemned as they felt (Ex. 34:9 cp. 33:11); when he pleaded for God's sentence on him to be lifted, he pleaded for the same sentence on Israel to be lifted too (Ps. 90:8). When Yahweh met Moses, it was as if He met with Israel (Ex. 3:18). God promised to go with Moses, but Moses re-quotes this as God going with "us" (Ex. 33:14-16). This is how inextricably linked were Moses and his people, even in their condemnation. And so it is, thankfully, with us and the Lord. Moses manifested / represented both God and Israel, superbly prefiguring the nature of the Lord's work and mission far later. As God "saw" the oppression of Israel (Ex. 2:25; 3:7,9; 4:31; 5:19), so did Moses (Ex.2:11). He looked on God's people with the eyes / perspective of God- just as we should. Moses 'struck' the Egyptian who was persecuting the Hebrew just as God would strike Egypt (Ex. 2:11 cp. Ex. 12:12,13,29 etc.). And Moses helps and delivers (Ex. 2:17,19) the daughters of Jethro, just as God would help and deliver Israel (Ex. 12:27; 14:13,30; 15:2). Note that at that time when Moses first met Jethro's daughters at the well, Moses was in depression. His plans and vision rejected by his own people, fallen from riches to rags, homeless and alone... and yet in that low moment he was chosen to be a manifestation of God! And this is the wonder of how God rejoices to work with the broken. However, Moses' desire to save others, his concern for the oppressed and helpless, shines through- he seeks to save the slave beaten by his Egyptian master; the neighbour wronged by his Hebrew brother; the unknown women deprived at the well by male nomads (Ex. 2:11,13,17). In all this Moses was manifesting the concern and saving help of God. And when we do likewise, we show God's face to this world.

In line with this, we find Moses as a type of Christ also presented as representative of Israel, and therefore able to completely sympathise with them in their physical afflictions and spiritual weaknesses. Thus the Spirit says (in the context of presenting Moses as a type of Christ) that Moses was " *in* (not " *with* ") the ecclesia in the wilderness" (Acts 7:38), stressing the way in which he was in their midst rather than distanced from them. The commands which constituted the covenant were given to Moses personally (Neh. 1:7,8), insofar as he represented Israel. Thus there is a parallel drawn in Ps. 103:7: He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel" . " After the tenor of these words have I made a covenant with thee and with Israel" (Ex. 34:27). In the context of describing Israel's deliverance from Egypt, they are said to have been delivered from "the basket" (Ps. 81:6 RV)- clearly associating them with Moses' deliverance. Is. 63:11 (Heb.) is even more explicit: " He remembered...*Moses his people*" . Moses seems to have appreciated fully his representative role on that last glorious day of life when he addressed Israel: " The Lord said unto *me*...I will deliver [Og} into *thy* hand...so the Lord our God delivered into *our* hands Og" (Dt. 3:2,3). David recognized this unity between Moses and Israel; David describes both Israel and Moses as God's chosen (Ps. 16:5,23). Moses is described as encamping in the wilderness, when the reference clearly is to all Israel (Ex. 18:5). Moses recalled how "the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have delivered up Sihon and his land before thee [you singular- i.e. Moses]; begin to possess it, that thou [you singular again!] mayest inherit his land". Yet Moses then comments that therefore God "delivered" Sihon "before *us*" (Dt. 31,33 RV). The land and victory that Moses personally could have had- for it was God's wish to destroy Israel and make of him a new nation- he shared with Israel. Ex. 7:16 brings out the unity between them by a play on words: "The LORD God of the Hebrews hath *sent me* [lit. 'let me go'] unto thee, saying, *Let* my people *go*". "Let go" translates the same Hebrew word as "sent me". Just as Moses had been let go by Yahweh, so Israel were to be. Likewise, both the Lord Jesus and Israel are called " the elect" (Is. 42:1; 45:4); both are fulfilments of the servant songs in Isaiah. The days will be shortened for the elect's sake (Mk. 13:20); for the sake of *Christ's* intercession, as well as ours.

Israel are called " the body of Moses" in the same way as the church is the body of Christ (Jude 9; 1 Cor. 10:2). His very name, 'Moses', can mean both one who draws out, and also one who is drawn out ⁽²⁾. As Moses was drawn out of the Nile and saved, so he later drew Israel out of Egypt. He could exactly enter into their feelings when they emerged from the Red Sea, as Christ exactly knows ours after baptism- better than we appreciate ourselves. Moses was saved by being surrounded by water in an " ark" (Ex. 2:3)- the only other time this word is used is concerning Noah's ark, which is a type of our salvation through baptism. God even worked through Moses' weakness to make him even more representative of his people; as he drew back from the theophany of the burning bush through a bad conscience, so did Israel at the foot of Sinai; as they were excluded from the land for inattention to Yahweh's word, so was Moses. He was touched with the very feeling of their sinfulness. In a marvellous way, the Lord Jesus achieved the same, yet without sin; he really felt like a sinner in his death. As the firstborn, Moses should have been slain on Passover night (Ex. 13:15); but he made the Passover sacrifice for his own redemption, although Heb. 11:28 says that he did it for the sake of Israel's redemption. Likewise the Lord's almost incomprehensible victory over human nature was not motivated by a selfish desire for his redemption; he did it for himself, that it might be for us. And this is what strengthened him. And on a far lower level, our own salvation is surely worked out through the sacrifices we make for the sake of others' spirituality. The fact that Christ, as Moses, has gone along the same path to salvation really should be a comfort to us, it should lessen the distance which we feel between us and our Lord. Thus a study of typology and of the atonement is not barren; it really will bring us closer to the Lord Jesus if we do it in the right spirit.

Moses' persecution by Pharaoh enabled him to enter into the feelings of Israel in the slave camps; and as they fled from Pharaoh towards the Red Sea, Moses would have recalled his own flight from Pharaoh to Midian. The whole epistle to the Hebrews is shot through with allusions to Moses. " In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren" (Heb. 2:17) is alluding to Dt. 18:18: " I will raise them up a Prophet *from among their brethren* like unto *thee* (Moses)" . The brethren of Christ are here paralleled with Moses; as if Moses really is representative of not only natural Israel, but spiritual too- as well as Moses being a type of Christ. For this reason he is such a clear pattern for us, and we are invited so often to identify ourselves with him by copying his example ⁽³⁾. Moses was *made like* his brethren through his similar experiences, as Christ was progressively *made like* us by his life of temptation.

It can be shown that much of Moses life, especially his Midian years, were lived in a spirit of semi-spirituality, aware of his responsibility to God, but being slack to rise up to what it really meant, being content, year after year, to live the life of a spiritual minimalist, ever making excuses for himself ⁽⁴⁾. Yet somehow God overruled this, as He did the fact that Moses sinned and was excluded from entering the land. The result was that Moses was able to enter exactly into the feelings of rejected, spiritually apathetic Israel in their 40 years wilderness wanderings. For 40 years he too had wandered in the same desert as a shepherd, with the same apathy. This points forward to how the Lord Jesus can enter into the feelings of active sinners, whilst himself being sinless. This phenomenon is discussed more fully elsewhere ⁽⁵⁾.

So there is no doubt that Moses as a type of Christ was also representative of Israel to a very high degree. And yet we have also seen ⁽⁶⁾ that in no other Old Testament character was God so intensely manifest as in Moses. So the concepts of being God manifest and also being representative of a sinful Israel come together in Moses in a wonderful way. Ex. 3:18 is an example of this. The elders of Israel were to tell Pharaoh that " the Lord God of the Hebrews hath met with us" . Yet Yahweh God of Israel had only met with Moses. Yet because he was representative of Israel and also because he himself manifested Yahweh God of Israel, the elders had met Yahweh when they met

Moses. In this we see a superb prefigurement of the Lord Jesus. He was the supreme, faultless manifestation of God, and yet also the total, empathetic representative of sinful man.

Moses himself realised the extent to which God saw him as representative of Israel; thus he told Israel: " The Lord talked with you face to face in the mount out of the midst of the fire, I stood between the Lord and you at that time, to shew you the word of the Lord" (Dt. 5:4,5). This is similar to Christ saying that because he had spoken God's words to us, we have seen God (Jn. 14:8). It was Moses who saw God face to face (Ex. 33:11), yet he knew he was so representative of Israel that in reality *they* had seen God face to face. All the honours and glory given to Moses were thereby given to Israel *if they identified themselves with him*. And ditto for us and the Lord Jesus.

Notes

(1) See *The 'Coming Down' Of Christ*.

(2) See Trevor Dennis, *Sarah Laughed* p.102 (London: S.P.C.K., 1994).

(3) See *Moses And Us*.

(4) See *Moses In Weakness*.

(5) See " *My God, Why hast thou forsaken me?*" .

(6) See *God Manifestation In Moses*.

4.5 Moses Not Entering The Land

Israel hated him, they thrust him from them (Acts 7:39); due to their provocation he failed to enter the land. He had done so much for them, yet they bitterly rejected him- " this Moses" , as they called him (Ex. 32:1,23 cp. Acts 7:35). But when God wanted to destroy them and make of Moses a great nation, he pleaded for them with such intensity that he achieved what few prayerful men have: a change (not just a delay in outworking) in God's categorically stated intention. And especially, consider that time when Israel had sinned with the golden calf. Moses said that he would climb that mighty mountain yet again, and " I will make an atonement for your sin" (Ex. 32:30). He knew well enough that no atonement was possible without the shedding of blood (Lev. 17:11; Heb. 9:22; and see the similarity with Phinehas making an atonement for Israel's forgiveness through the slaying of Zimri and Cozbi in Num. 25:8,13). And yet he hoped (" peradventure") that God would accept *him* as an atonement: " *I will make an atonement*" . He intended to offer his own life as an atonement for them- for that people who hated him, who pushed him from them and in their hearts returned to Egypt. He climbed that mountain (nearly a day's work), and at the top he made an even finer and altogether higher offer to the Angel: " If thou wilt forgive their sin...blot me, *I pray thee* (notice the earnestness of his desire) out of thy book" (Ex. 32:32) ⁽¹⁾. And he begged Yahweh to accept this for 40 days and nights, fasting without food or water (Dt. 9:17; 10:10). It wasn't just a once off, emotional outburst of a moment. Omission of the name from God's book is a clear reference to a believer losing his part in God's Kingdom (Ex. 32:33; Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:5; 17:8; 21:27; 22:19). This was not an offer made in hot blood; after the hours of climbing the mountain, Moses had decided what he sorely wished to do: to offer his place in God's Kingdom, so that Israel might be forgiven one awful sin. This is just superb. To offer one's physical life is one thing; to offer one's eternal life is quite another, and this is what Moses' not entering the land amounted to. And he pleaded with

God to accept his offer, just for the forgiveness of one sin, of a people who hated him and were evidently bent on fulfilling the lust of the flesh. If this is how much Moses loved sinful Israel, think how much more Christ loved them. And if that's the level of Christ's love for sinful Israel, consider (or try to) the level of Christ's love for us who at least *try* not to thrust Him from us, who wish, in our weakness, to follow Him to the end.

To be blotted out of the book God had written may have been understood by Moses as asking for him to be excluded from an inheritance in the promised land; for later, a 'book' was written describing the various portions (Josh. 18:9). The connection is made explicit in Ez. 13:9: "...neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel". To be blotted out of the book meant to not enter the land (surely Ezekiel is alluding to Moses' experience). If Israel were to be blotted out there and then in the wilderness, then Moses wanted to share this experience. God had just spoken of 'blotting out' Israel from before Him (Dt. 9:14), and making a nation of Moses; but now Moses is asking to share in their condemnation rather than experience salvation without them. This was the extent of his devotion. On the last day of his life, Moses reeled off the great speech of Deuteronomy, knowing full well that he was to die without entering the land. In Dt. 9:18 he says that his prayer of Ex. 32:32 *was heard*- in that he was not going to enter the land, but they would. Hence his urging of them to go ahead and enter the land- to experience what his self-sacrifice had enabled. In this we see the economy of God, and how He works even through sin. On account of Moses' temporary rashness of speech, he was excluded; Moses didn't enter the land. And yet by this, his prayer was heard. He was temporarily blotted out of the book, so that they might enter the land. Moses' fleeting requests to enter the land must be read as a flagging from the height of devotion he reached, rather like the Lord's request to escape the cross in Gethsemane. But ultimately he did what he intended- he gave his place in the Kingdom / land so that they might enter [although of course he will be in the future Kingdom]. This is why Moses stresses on the last day of his life that he wouldn't enter the land *for Israel's sake* (Dt. 1:37; 3:26; 4:21). He saw that his sin had been worked through, and the essential reason for him not entering was because of the offer he had made. It "went ill with him *for their sakes*" (Ps. 106:32).

In all this, Moses was typifying the death of the Lord. Is. 53:8 describes His cross as being "cut off [Strong: 'excluded'] from the land of the living" (s.w. 'the congregation'- of Israel), for the transgression of His people. This is undoubtedly reference to the self-sacrificial exclusion of Moses from the land, that Israel might enter. The Lord died the death of a sinner, He chose like Moses to suffer affliction with us, that we might be saved. The intense prayer of Moses for Israel's salvation inspired David in prayer (Ps. 25:11 = Ex. 32:30,31). And Paul makes a series of allusions to Moses, which climax in an invitation to pray like Moses for the salvation of others:

2 Tim. 2:24,25	Moses
"the servant of the Lord	A very common title of Moses
must not strive	As Israel did with him (Num. 26:9)
but be gentle unto all	The spirit of Moses
apt to teach	As was Moses (Ex. 18:20; 24:12; Dt. 4:1,5,14; 6:1; 31:22)

patient	As was Moses
in meekness	Moses was the meekest man (Num. 12:3)
instructing those that oppose themselves	at the time of Aaron and Miriam's self-opposing rebellion
if God <i>peradventure</i> will give them repentance [i.e. forgiveness]"	" <i>Peradventure</i> I shall make an atonement for your sin" (Ex. 32:30)- and he prayed 40 days and nights for it.

And note too:

2:19 = Num. 16:5,26

2:20 = Num. 12:7

2:21 = Num. 16:37

2:22 = Num. 12:2; 16:3

2:26 = Num. 16:33

This is quite something. The height of Moses' devotion for His people, the passion of his praying, shadowing as it did the matchless intercession and self-giving of the Lord, really is our example. It isn't just a height to be admired. It means that we will not half heartedly ask our God to 'be with' brother x and sister y and the brethren in country z, as we lie half asleep in bed. This is a call to sustained, on our knees prayer and devotion to the salvation of others.

Notes

(1) It is difficult to interpret the Hebraism here. Moses *may* have meant: 'If you bar them from the Kingdom, then take my part out of it too; I don't want to be there without them'. Considering how they had treated him, this likewise shows his great love for them. A lesser man would have reasoned that being without that rabble of apostate renegades was what he looked forward to in the Kingdom.

4.6 Moses In The Gospel Of John

The point has been made that internal evidence suggests that John's Gospel was written some time after the other three Gospels, and is written with the assumption that readers are familiar with them. The big problem in the first century was that people were unwilling to see the supremacy of the place of the Lord Jesus Christ compared to Moses. Of course, many Jews just could not accept that Jesus of Nazareth was anything to do with the promised Messiah. Others, including some of the early converts, evidently held the view that Jesus was the Messiah, but they failed to see that he was any more important than Moses or David. One of the themes of John's Gospel is the supremacy of Christ over Moses. The Spirit through John does this by both direct statement and indirect allusion,

e.g. through framing the records of Christ's miracles in language and style which highlights their supremacy over the ministry of Moses. Once we appreciate this, we can gain more insight into the way in which Moses was a type of Christ, both by contrast and similarity; and thereby we can enter closer into the mind of both Moses and the Lord Jesus. The Jews were drawing a contrast between themselves as "Moses' disciples", and the disciples of Jesus (Jn. 9:28; 18:17,25); John's Gospel demonstrates that such a distinction is invalid. Those who followed Moses would follow Jesus, because the whole of the Law of Moses taught understanding about Jesus (Jn. 5:46).

John's Gospel

"The darkness comprehended it (the light of Christ) not... the (Jewish) world knew him not" (John 1:5,10)

"He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (John 1:11). Moses in John's Gospel is an opening theme.

"The word was made flesh...we beheld his (Christ's) glory...full of grace and truth" (1:14). "if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see (like Moses) the glory of God" (John 11:40).

Philip asks Jesus to "show us the Father" (John 14:8), and Jesus replies that He is the manifestation of the Father.

Moses : Jesus contrast

Israel "understood not" the work of Moses (Acts 7:25)

"When he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren...he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them" (Acts 7:23,25). Therefore Moses in the court of Pharaoh = Jesus working in Nazareth until age 30. Was Moses's "surprise" at Israel's lack of response reflected in Christ (cp. Is. 50:2-7; 59:16)? Despite his own righteousness, did Christ think too highly of the potential spirituality of Israel (Lk. 13:9; 20:13 cp. his high regard of others' spirituality: Mt. 8:10; 11:11; 15:28)? If the Lord *respected* others so much- shouldn't we have deep *respect* for each other? The pain of Moses' rejection = Christ's; although he was rich, Moses had become poor for their sakes.

Israel had asked that "the word" be not spoken to them any more; only Moses saw God's glory. But we are being invited to be equal to Moses, seeing from the cleft in the rock the awesome majesty of the perfection of Christ's character; the full glory of God. But do we appreciate his righteousness? Paul likewise invites us to behold with unveiled face, as Moses did (2 Cor. 3:18 RV), and thereby, just from appreciating the glory of Christ's character, be changed into the same glory. Note too how in Rom. 11 we are each bidden "behold the goodness and severity of God"- a reference to Moses

beholding all the goodness of Yahweh. We are in essence in his position right now (Ex. 33:19).

This is the language of Ex. 33:18 LXX, where Moses likewise asks God "show yourself to me". The answer was in the theophany on Sinai, with the Name of Yahweh declared, as full of grace and truth. This, according to Philip's allusion to it, is what we see in Jesus. And this is why Jn. 1 speaks of Jesus in terms of the theophany of Exodus, that in His personality the full glory of the Father dwelt.

" The *Law* was given by Moses, but *grace* and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17).

Blessing from obedience to commands was replaced by salvation by pure grace in Christ.

" No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which *is* in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (1:18). John here makes clear allusion to Moses.

This alludes to Moses being unable to see God, whereas Christ now is cuddled in the bosom of the Father- such closeness, such a soft image, even now in his heavenly glory! Christ declared God's character (alluding to the Angel declaring God's Name at the same time as Moses was unable to see God) in his perfect life and above all on the cross (Jn. 17:26).

" The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the (Jewish) world" (John 1:29)

Contrast with how Moses tried harder than any other man to gain forgiveness for Israel, even to the extent of offering his own salvation for them- only to be told that this was not possible; all he achieved was a deferment of their punishment.

" We have found him (Jesus) of whom Moses in the law...did write" (John 1:45)

They recognised that Moses foresaw *throughout* the Law that *all* its ordinances pointed forward to one man, Messiah.

" Jesus...manifested forth his glory" (John 2:11) through his miracles. His miracles therefore were a demonstration of the character (" glory") of God, not just to relieve human grief as he came across it. Therefore they are all capable of allegorical interpretation.

Contrast how the glory of God was manifested to Moses, who peeped at it from the rock. Yet Jesus was the glory of God, higher than the Angel who actually manifested the glory.

" What sign shewest thou unto us?" (John

Cynical Israel asked exactly the same of

2:18)

In John 3:3,5, the Lord speaks of how a man must be born again in order to *see* and *enter* the Kingdom. He parallels *seeing* the Kingdom with entering it.

" No man hath ascended up to heaven" except Jesus (John 3:13)

" Where I am, thither ye cannot come" (John 7:34) sounds like Moses ascending the Mount, leaving Israel behind him. Yet " Where I am" refers to Christ's unity with God; the heights of his relationship with God connect with the physical ascension of Moses into the mount to hear God's words.

" As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up" (John 3:14)

Moses, in effect; superficially, " the people believed" (Ex. 4:31) after they saw the signs. The hollowness of Israel's 'belief' in Moses was matched by the experience of Christ. And yet they still both loved Israel.

Moses *saw* the land of the Kingdom of God, but couldn't *enter* it. This is surely behind the Lord's words here. Given the many allusions to Moses in John's Gospel, I submit that the Lord was surely saying something about Moses' seeing of the land before he died (Num. 27:12). It's as if He felt that Moses' seeing the land meant that he would ultimately enter it. To be enabled to see the land, with 'born again' special eyesight, was therefore a guarantee that Moses would enter the Kingdom. And Is. 33:17 speaks of beholding the King in his beauty and seeing "the land that is very far off" [an obvious allusion to Moses seeing the land] as a picture of ultimate salvation.

Moses' ascents of the mountain were seen as representing an ascension to Heaven; but he had not ascended up to the " heavenly things" of which Christ spoke. Consider the spiritual loneliness of rising to heights no other man has reached, as far as Heaven is above earth. John the Baptist recognised this (Jn. 3:31).

" I will that they also...be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me" (17:24) alludes to the 70 elders sharing Moses' experience in the Mount (Ex.24:70); it is as if Christ is saying that his disciples really can enter into his relationship with God, we can be where he was spiritually in his mortal life (see comments on 3:34 below).

It was the serpent which gave salvation to sin-stricken Israel, not Moses; and the *serpent* represented Christ in this case.

Moses "lifted up" the serpent in the same way as the Jews "lifted up" Christ in crucifying him (Jn. 8:28). Moses drew attention to serpent and its power to save, in the same way as his Law drew attention to how sin would be condemned in Christ as the means of our salvation. The connection between Moses "lifting up" Christ and Israel doing likewise is another indicator of how Moses was representative of Israel (cp. Christ).

"For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him" (John 3:34)

"My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me" (John 7:16) alludes to Moses above all, whose words were those of God.

This is Moses language- he was sent by God, and his words were God's words ⁽¹⁾. But Christ spoke *all* God's words (Jn. 15:15; 17:7,8,14 cp. 5:20), he had God's Spirit without limit, he completely revealed God, compared to the partial revelation through Moses. Christ had "all things" revealed to him, and those "all things" are now revealed unto us by the Spirit (Jn. 16:14,15; 1 Cor. 2:9-15; Eph. 1:3,8; Col. 2:2). Because of this, it is possible for us to reach the same level of knowledge of God which Christ had in his mortality. This alone should inspire us to more than do our daily readings. That God gave Christ "all things" was a sign of His love for him (Jn. 5:20); and so God granting us progressive understanding of those "all things" is a reflection of His love for us. Growing in knowledge is not just for the Bible study enthusiast!

Christ at a well met the Samaritan woman, and had a highly spiritual conversation with her; he gave her "living water", i.e. spring water, in return for her well water (John 4:7-10)

Surely this contrasts with Moses meeting his Gentile wife by a well; a relationship in which he gave her very little, and which was an indicator of a spiritual weak cycle in his life ⁽²⁾. The Samaritan woman immediately recognised Jesus as Jewish (Jn.4:9). Zipporah thought that Moses was an Egyptian (Ex.2:19)- which is another comforting type of Christ's humanity.

The paralysed man had waited by the pool 38 years, waiting for someone to cure him. There was no cure in those 38 years- only in the word of Christ (John

Israel were actually in the wilderness for 38 years; the similarity implies Moses' leadership could not bring salvation, only the word of Christ ⁽³⁾.

5:5)

“The works...The Son can do nothing of himself” (Jn. 5:19)

In Jn. 5:19,20 we read that the Son does (*poieo*) what He sees the Father doing, and the Father shows Him (*deiknumi*) all (*panta*) that He does.

" The Father himself which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape (Gk. form, view). And ye have not his word abiding in you...I am come in my Father's Name, and ye receive me not...there is one that accuseth you, even Moses...for had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me" (John 5:37-46)

The miracle of the loaves and fishes made men see the similarity between Christ and Moses, whom they perceived to have provided the manna (John 6:32). Therefore they thought that Jesus must be the prophet like Moses, of whom Moses wrote (John 6:14).

“All these works...I have not done them of mine own mind” (Num. 16:28).

This is referring to Ex. 25:9 LXX, where Moses makes (*poieo*) the Tabernacle according all (*panta*) that God shows him (*deiknuo*). The reference of Jn. 5:19,20 is therefore to the Lord working with His Father in the building up of us the tabernacle... and *all* things God planned for us were revealed to the Son even in His mortality. What great wealth of understanding was there within His mind, within those brain cells... and how tragic that the head and body that bore them was betrayed and ignored and spat upon and tortured by men...

Nearly all these statements were true of Moses, but untrue of the Jews. Yet there was one glaring contrast: Moses earnestly desired to see God's shape, to view Him, to completely understand Him. This was denied him- but not Jesus. The similarity and yet difference between Moses and Jesus is really brought out here. And again, Moses is shown to be representative of sinful Israel; as he lifted up the serpent, so they would lift up Christ; as he failed to see the Father's " shape" , so they did too.

But Jesus said that he was greater than Moses, because Moses' bread only gave them temporal life, whereas if a man ate of him, he would live for ever; his words would give spiritual life which was part of that " eternal life" of the Father (6:49,50). The Jews thought that the prophet like Moses of Dt.18:18 was a prophet equal or inferior to Moses. John's Gospel records how Christ was showing that the prophet would be greater than Moses. Martha understood that when she said that " the Christ...which should come into the world" (i.e. the prophet of

Dt.18:18) was " the Son of God" , and therefore Jesus of Nazareth (11:27).

In this context, " the Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven" (John 6:41)

Israel continually " murmured" against Moses (Ex. 15:24; 16:2,7,8; 17:3; Num. 14:2,27,29 cp. Dt. 1:27; Ps. 106:25; 1 Cor. 10:10). Nearly all these murmurings were related to Israel's disbelief that Moses really could bring them into the land. Likewise Israel disbelieved that eating Christ's words (Jn. 6:63) really could lead them to salvation; and their temptation to murmur in this way is ours too, especially in the last days (1 Cor. 10:10-12).

"The prophet" (Jn. 7:40,52 RV) is clearly a reference to "the prophet" like Moses, i.e. Messiah. There are many other allusions by John's record to the Dt. 18:18 passage: "I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I command him". References to the Son only speaking what the Father commanded Him are to be found in Jn. 4:25; 8:28; 12:49⁽¹⁾.

(1) This theme especially is developed well in T.F. Glasson, *Moses In The Fourth Gospel* (London: SCM, 1963) p. 30.

"If thou doest these things, manifest thyself to the world" (Jn. 7:4) connects with the other references in John to the Lord 'hiding himself' (Jn. 8:59; 12:36).

The Jews thought that as Moses hid himself and then re-emerged from obscurity, so Messiah would. Rabbi Berekiah said: "As the first deliverer [Moses] was revealed, then hidden and afterwards appeared again, so will it also be with the last deliverer [Messiah]"⁽¹⁾. John's record is clearly presenting the Lord as Moses in this sense.

(1) Quoted in J. Klausner, *The Messianic Idea In Israel* (London: Macmillan, 1956) p. 17.

" Jesus went unto the mount of

This is framed to recall Moses coming

Olives...he came again into the temple, and all the people (i.e. the leaders and the crowd, see context) came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them" (John 8:1,2)

down from Sinai: " The Lord came (down) from Sinai (manifest in Moses)...yea, he (God) loved the people (in the fact that) all his saints (Israel) are in thy (Moses') hand (as we are in the hand of Christ, Jn. 10:28-30): and they sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words...the heads of the people and the tribes of Israel (i.e. both leaders and ordinary people) were gathered together (to Moses)" (Dt. 33:2-5).

"I do nothing of myself, but as the Father taught me" (Jn. 8:28).

"The Lord hath sent me to do all these works, for I have not done them of myself" (Num. 16:28 LXX)

The good shepherd of John 10 enables the sheep to go out and come in.

Moses sought for a prophet / successor like unto him, who would lead out and bring in the sheep of Israel (Num. 27:17,21). The descriptions of the good shepherd not losing any sheep (Jn. 10:28; 17:12) perhaps allude to the well known Jewish stories about Moses being such a good shepherd that he never lost a sheep⁽¹⁾.

(1) L. Ginzberg, *Legends Of The Jews* has a section on 'Moses as faithful shepherd' (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1910) Vol. 2 pp. 300-316.

" I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" (John 10:11)

Moses was a shepherd for 40 years, and then for 40 years he put this into practice by leading Israel as God's shepherd for 40 years in the same wilderness (Num. 27:17; Ps. 80:1; Is. 63:11). As Moses was willing to sacrifice his eternal life for the salvation of the sheep of Israel (Ex. 32:30-32), so Christ gave his life for us. John's Gospel normally shows the supremacy of Christ over Moses. In this connection of them both being shepherds willing to die for the flock, Moses is not

" The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the (Jewish) world" (John 6:51). " The world" in John's Gospel is normally the Jewish world.

" Jesus should die for that nation" (John

11:51)

Many other passages teach that *primarily* Christ died for the salvation of Israel (e.g. Gal. 4:5); some Gentiles have been saved only insofar as we become spiritual Israel ⁽⁴⁾.

" Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews...(he) did hid himself from them...he that seeth me seeth him that sent me" (John 11:54; 12:36,45).

" The time cometh when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father" (John 16:25).

"Though he had done so many signs before them, yet they believed not on him" (Jn. 12:37)

framed as being inferior to Christ- in that in his desire to die for Israel, he truly reached the fullness of the spirit of Christ. " The good shepherd" may well have been a Rabbinical title for Moses; Christ was saying " I am Moses, in his love for your salvation; not better than him, but exactly like him in this" . In a sense, Moses' prayer was heard, in that he was excluded from the land *for their sakes* (Dt. 1:37; 3:26; 4:21; Ps. 106:33); they entered after his death. This was to symbolise how the spirit of his love for Israel was typical of Christ's for us. The Lord Jesus likewise died the death of a sinner; he was " forsaken" in the sense that God forsakes sinners, whilst as God's Son he was never forsaken by the Father.

The increasing distancing of Christ from Israel seems to mimic that of Moses. He spoke to them through a veil at all times, so that they did not appreciate the glory of God which shone from his face; they thereby failed to appreciate the closeness of his relationship with the Angel, whose glory was transferred to the face of Moses when they spoke face to face (2 Cor. 3:18-21; Ex. 33:20). If the Jews had spoken to Moses without the veil, it would have been as if they were talking directly to the Angel. But if we see or understand *Christ*, we see God- not just an Angel. We therefore simply *must* give time to understanding the character of Christ. Otherwise we can never know God. The time when Christ would shew his disciples plainly of the Father was when they received the Comforter. Through the ministry of the word ⁽⁵⁾, we too can see " plainly of the Father" , with unveiled face.

This was the identical experience of Moses, described in just the same language (Num. 14:11).

" If I go..I will come again...A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to my father" (John 14:3; 16:16)

"Let not your heart be troubled...I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:1,2).

Jn. 14:16 promised the disciples another 'Paraclete' or comforter / intercessor, implying Jesus was the first Paraclete [as confirmed in 1 Jn. 2:1].

" Ye shall weep and lament, but the (Jewish) world shall rejoice" (John 16:20)

" The men which thou gavest me out of the (Jewish) world...they have kept thy word" (John 17:6)

This may refer to Moses going up and down the mountain, disappearing from Israel's sight, and then returning with the covenant- to find Israel worshipping the golden calf.

"Then I said unto you, Dread not, neither be afraid of them" (Dt. 1:41). Yet the contrast is with Moses, who fain would have gone ahead into the promised land to prepare the place, but was unable. Yet Moses was the foremost intercessor for Israel, and is actually called 'the Paraclete' in the Midrash on Ex. 12:29⁽¹⁾.

(1) Quoted in D. Daube, *The New Testament And Rabbinic Judaism* (London: Athlone Press, 1956) p. 11.

Cp. Israel rejoicing in the works of their own hands (Acts 7:41), the golden calf, while Moses was absent- cp. Christ's absence in the grave, with the Jews rejoicing and the disciples lamenting. In another sense, the return of Moses from the mountain may look ahead to Christ's return from Heaven- to find the majority of the new Israel apostate, although thinking they are being especially obedient to Yahweh (Ex. 32:5). The peak of selfless love for Israel which Moses showed at this time therefore points forward to the zeal of Christ for our forgiveness and salvation at his return (Ex. 32:32). Moses at his finest hour thus typifies Christ at his return. And after the golden calf incident, Israel are encouraged to enter the Kingdom (Ex. 33:1)- as at the second coming.

Cp. the Levites being " given" to Aaron / the priesthood out of Israel (Num. 3:9; 8:19; 18:6); at the time of the golden calf they " observed thy word, and kept thy covenant" (Dt. 33:9), as did the disciples. The relationship between Moses and the Levites was therefore that between Christ and the disciples- a sense of thankfulness

that at least a minority were faithful.

" I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me...I have declared unto them thy name" (John 17:8, 26)

As Moses gave all God's words to Israel on his return from the Mount; " every one shall receive of thy words" (Dt. 33:3). Moses " received the lively oracles to give unto us" (Acts 7:38).

" I have proclaimed the name of the Lord" (Dt.32:3 LXX) was surely in Christ's mind; and those words are in the context of Moses' song, which roundly exposed Israel's future apostacy. The character, the fundamental personality of God, is declared through appreciating human weakness and apostacy. Christ's words of Jn.17:26 were likewise in the context of revealing apostacy and future weakness. Thus through recognition of sin we come to know God; this is the fundamental message of Ezekiel and other prophets. Through knowing our own sinfulness we know the righteousness of God, and vice versa. Thus properly beholding the righteousness of God as displayed on the cross ought to convict us of our sinfulness, as it did the people who saw it in real life (they " smote upon their breasts" in repentance, cp. Lk. 18:13).

" I pray not for the (Jewish) world, but for them (the disciples, cp. the Levites) which thou hast given me; for they are thine" (John 17:9)

As the Levites were God's (Num. 3:12,13,45; 8:14). The Levites represent us (John 17:6 = Dt. 33:9); the relationship between Moses and the Levites represents that between Christ and us. Moses' thankfulness that they remained faithful during the golden calf crisis, that sense of being able to rely on them, will be reflected in the Lord's feelings toward the faithful.

" Sanctify them through (i.e. through obedience to) thy word" (John 17:17)

As the Levites were sanctified (1 Chron. 23:13 Heb.). The Levites were consecrated in God's eyes by their zeal (motivated by the word) to rid Israel of apostacy; this is what constituted them Yahweh's " holy (sanctified) one" (Dt. 33:8,9). Through his allusions to this,

Christ was telling the disciples not to be frightened to stand alone from the community they knew and respected ⁽⁶⁾. Resisting apostacy is therefore *part* of our sanctification. It cannot be ignored, or left to others.

“Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world” (Jn. 17:24)

This a reference to the description of Moses as having been prepared in God’s plan from the beginning: “He prepared me [Moses] before the foundation of the world, that I should be the mediator of His covenant” (*Assumption of Moses* 1.14). Once we appreciate this and other such allusions to popular Jewish belief about Moses, then the passages which appear to speak of personal pre-existence are easier to understand. The Jews didn’t believe that Moses personally pre-existed, but rather that he was there in the plan / purpose of God, and with the major role in that purpose, from before creation. The Lord was applying those beliefs and that language to Himself, showing that He was greater than Moses. But by doing so, He wasn’t implying that He personally pre-existed.

Consider Num. 16:28 LXX: “Moses said, Hereby ye shall *know* that the Lord hath *sent me* to *do all these works*; for I have not done them *of myself*”. The ideas of *know*, *sent me*, *do these works*, *not of myself* are so frequent in John: Jn. 13:35; 8:28,42; 7:3,28; 5:30,36; 10:25,37; 14:10; 15:24; 17:4.

It has also been demonstrated by Pauline Clementson that there is “a remarkable correlation between the signs recorded in John, and the plagues Moses brought upon Egypt. There cannot be a complete match as the numbers are unequal, but the differing types of miraculous signs all find their counterpart in the plagues”. The purpose of all these allusions to the time of Moses' return from Sinai was surely to make the following point: As Moses disappeared into Sinai to attain the old covenant, so Christ died for three days to attain the new covenant. The majority of Israel, egged on by their high priest, turned to apostacy. On Moses' return, only the Levites were faithful; they sacrificed all their natural relationships in order to defend the Faith (Dt. 33:9). Likewise, the majority of Israel turned to apostacy in the first century, mixing the desires of the flesh with their keeping of the Law of Moses, just as they did with the golden calf. The 'little of both' syndrome is one of our most common enemies. Moses' return was like Christ's resurrection. The Levites represent the disciples who went on to become the teachers of Israel, a new priesthood. Those

Levites represent us (1 Pet. 2:5), a minority who stand alone, both in the world and perhaps also among the covenant people, motivated by the word, yet like the disciples at the time of Christ's resurrection- rather unsure, struggling within their own faith, yet going on to be the teachers of the world.

Notes

(1) See *God Manifestation In Moses*.

(2) See *Moses In Weakness*.

(3) The symbolism of this incident is worked out further in H.A.Whittaker, *Studies in the Gospels*.

(4) This point is developed in "*Why hast thou forsaken me?*" .

(5) Proof that the ministry of the word in our times is parallel with the promised Comforter is provided in *Bible Basics* Digression 7.

(6) It seems the disciples respected the Jewish religious system far too much. Throughout the Gospels we see the Lord Jesus trying to educate them as to the extent of the apostasy which was there.

4.7 Moses And Amalek

I'd suggest that close study will lead to the conclusion that the events of Ex. 17 are the basis for Ps. 95. This is largely a Psalm of praise for what God did for Israel in the wilderness, whilst also commenting on the way they tragically put God to the test, and complained about His care for them. Now the words of Ps. 95:7- 11 are directly quoted in Heb.3:7- 11 concerning the experience of the new Israel. The simple conclusion from this is that we are really intended to see the events of Ex.17 as directly relevant for us.

Hard Road

So here were Israel, finding the way tough in Ex. 17, stumbling through the wilderness, like we are coughing and hacking our way through our 70 years or whatever. Verse 8: " And then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim" . Dt. 25:18 fills us in with some more details: " (Amalek) smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary" . So Israel were " faint and weary" , some of them had fallen by the wayside, others were being picked off almost daily by the bands of aggressive Amalekites. There are sure similarities with the weak state of our own community at the moment. As we read at the beginning of Ex. 17, Israel were living through the aftermath of their rebellion against Moses; they had been chronically thirsty, and perhaps their spiritual tiredness was matched by the mental and physical faintness of clinical dehydration. The effects of this can last quite some time after liquid is received. So they were at low ebb. In spiritual (if not physical) terms, this, I sense, is the position of many of us here this morning. Any brother or sister who is truly striving to imitate the spirit of Christ will go through this sense of exhaustion and spiritual depression at times, this sense that we must keep on going, but feeling ineffably tired, weary of the two steps backward and three forward which characterizes our spiritual growth.

Well, here were Israel, desperately summoning what physical and spiritual strength they had left to fight this battle with Amalek. It may be that this is the spirit of some here this morning. Surely each

of us have an element of it in us. But there was a source of dynamism which led to their victory, a glorious victory, in the end. Moses began to pray, standing up, with his hands above his head. Let's look at the scene from a macro perspective. There were weary Israel, weary both spiritually and physically, fighting the strong, powerful Amalekites. The battle swayed to and fro, sometimes Amalek had the upper hand, sometimes Israel. This was no walk over for either side (v.11). There was Moses, with his hands lifted above his head, praying intensely, "until the going down of the sun" (v.12). On account of the intensity of his prayers, Israel prevailed. Now I sense that you are all starting to see the point. You can guess where our thoughts will go. A righteous man, Moses the superb and detailed type of Christ, with his hands above his head, fellowshiping Israel's sufferings, battling with intense spiritual, mental and physical weariness, praying intensely, until sundown. Of course this is pointing forward to our Lord's crucifixion- on account of which our weariness can really be overcome, we really can find the victory over sin which we vainly would have.

So now, in more positive spirit, let's eagerly get down to analyzing this incident from this viewpoint. Let's believe our prayer at the beginning of this meeting, that God will truly open our eyes to the spirit of Christ as it is in these Old Testament records. Because this is how we can more deeply enter into the mind of our Lord as he hung upon the cross.

Uplifted Hands

Uplifted hands are something consistently- and frequently associated with intense prayer, often for the forgiveness of God's people Israel (Lam. 2:19; 2 Chron. 6:12,13; Ezra 9:5; Ps. 28:2; 141:2; 1 Tim. 2:8). The only time we read of Moses lifting up his hands elsewhere is in Ex. 9:2#8,29, where his spreading out of his hands is made parallel with his intreating of God to lift the plagues on Egypt. In passing, let's not read those records as implying that Moses simply uttered a few words to God, and then each of the plagues was lifted. There was an element of real fervency in Moses' prayers- which may well be lacking in ours. This is surely an example of genuinely praying for our enemies (perhaps it is the Old Testament source of Christ's words in Mt.5:44?). It must be significant that uplifted hands is also related to a confirmation of God's covenant (see especially Ez. 20:5,6,15,23,28,42; 36:7; 47:14); for this is exactly what Christ did on the cross. And in a sense, this is what was happening in Ex.17; Israel had sinned, God had forgiven them, and was reconfirming the covenant through Moses (notice that one of the terms of the covenant was that God would save Israel from their enemies, e.g. Amalek).

John's Gospel has many references to Moses, as catalogued elsewhere. When John records the death of the Lord with two men either side of Him, he seems to do so with his mind on the record of Moses praying with Aaron and Hur on each side of him (Ex. 17:12). John's account in English reads: "They crucified him, and with him two others, on either side one" (Jn. 19:18). Karl Delitzsch translated the Greek New Testament into Hebrew, and the Hebrew phrase he chose to use here is identical with that in Ex. 17:12. Perhaps this explains why John alone of the Gospel writers doesn't mention that the two men on either side of the Lord were in fact criminals- he calls them "two others" (Jn. 19:18) and "...the legs of the first and of the other" (Jn. 19:32). Thus John may've chosen to highlight simply how there were two men on either side of the Lord, in order to bring out the connection with the Moses scene.

Genesis 49

I'd like us to think through Gen.49:22- 24. This speaks (v.22) of the descendant of Joseph as a fruitful vine (N.I.V.), with branches. The Lord Jesus seems to have quarried his description of himself as a vine with branches from this very passage (Jn.15:5). Verse 23 continues: " The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: but his bow abode in strength, and (note this bit) the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; from thence is the shepherd, the stone (more Messianic allusions here) of Israel" . The upholding of Moses' arms is being unmistakably prophesied here; in a Messianic prophecy. The " God of Jacob" in Gen.48:15,16 refers to God manifest in Angels; Jacob there defines his God as " the Angel that redeemed me" . There are plenty of other reasons for thinking that " the God of Jacob" is Angelic language; but that's another story.⁽¹⁾ So Messiah's arms were to be upheld with Angelic strength. But we have seen that Christ's uplifted hands on the cross refer to the way in which he was intensely praying at the time. The hymnwriter put two and two together and came to the right conclusion: '...and Angels there / sustained the Son of God in prayer'. This was one of the ways in which " God was in Christ" in his sufferings; He gave him special Angelic encouragement to keep on praying, to keep on asking for help, without forcing Christ in any way to be righteous.

Surely in this we get some light on the mystery of the atonement; the mystery of the degree to which the Father helped the Son to overcome without in any way affecting Christ's freewill. It is perhaps significant that there were two men (Aaron and Hur) upholding Moses' arms, in enacted prophecy of how the Angels would strengthen Christ in prayer. Does this point forward to the two Angels especially associated with Christ, Gabriel and Michael? Physically, of course, it was the nails which kept Christ's hands uplifted above his head; yet are we to infer that the Angels even overruled that for a purpose?

Moses began to pray standing up, with his hands above his head, with the blazing midday sun beating down upon him (so is implied by the fact that he kept his hands steady until the sun went down. The battle would surely have lasted a few hours; perhaps eight, which was the length of time Christ hung on the cross?) But he just couldn't maintain this intensity of mental and spiritual concentration; he let down his hands. But from his high viewpoint, he could see (and hear?) the panic of Israel as they started to flee before their enemies. So he returned to his mental battle. No doubt when he let down his hands, he continued praying, but not so intensely. Yet he came to realize, perhaps after a few cycles of Israel starting to flee before Amalek, that his prayer was absolutely essential for Israel's survival and victory. But he knew that he just couldn't physically go on. His knees were weak, he was going to have to abandon his favourite prayer posture of standing (cp. the earlier records of his prayers in Exodus). His mind must have desperately raced as to how he could go on. At the back of his mind, he would have thrown his predicament upon the Lord. And a way was made. " They took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands" (v.12). Note how Moses did not waste his energy in getting the stone for himself; we get the picture of total mental devotion to Israel's cause, a man all consumed with his prayer, being humanly helped by lesser men. Israel's salvation depended on his totally voluntary intercession. The type is powerful. Peter reasons that Christ's attitude in prayer should be ours (1 Pet. 4:1). His prayers then, and ours now, were a struggle, after the pattern of Jacob.

Prophesied Prayers

The importance of Christ's prayers for us on the cross does not come out directly from the Gospel records. The fact Moses prayed until the sun went down perhaps indicates how Christ prayed constantly right up to his death. The way in which he constantly quotes the Psalms has led some to suggest that he actually recited Psalms, e.g. 22, as he hung there. This suggestion appeals to me as being quite likely. But we must realize that those Psalms were fundamentally prayers of Messiah to God. This helps us build up a likely picture of Christ's mental state on the cross: merging prayer with Scripture quotation, desperately battling to maintain the necessary intensity, rather than taking any kind of mental break (cp. Moses realizing that he mustn't drop his hands for a break). Yet the prayers of Christ on the cross, as prophesied in the Psalms, were repeatedly for his own personal salvation and resurrection. There is some mention of the salvation of "the great congregation", but fundamentally those prayers are for himself. But it was only through his own salvation that ours was possible. This is in itself an indication of the peerless selflessness which Christ achieved as he hung there; to pray for his own salvation, 100% motivated by a desire for our salvation. Whenever we pray for ourselves rather than others, what is our motive? Are we praying (e.g.) for our own deliverance from danger or illness so that we can live and help others, to the glory of God? Or are we just exercising our own selfish, animal self-preservation instinct under a spiritual guise? Now that really is something to ponder. That is one of the many challenges of the cross.

It can be Biblically demonstrated that as Christ prayed on the cross, so we should arm ourselves with the same attitude of mind in prayer (cp. 1 Pet.4:1). Now I want to underline that. We have been entering into the intensity of Christ's praying for us on the cross, patterned on the intensity of Moses in Ex.17. And now we are going to see that this intensity really is an example for us. Let's have a look over at the Messianic Ps.69:13. In the context, these are the thoughts of Christ on the cross: "My prayer is unto thee, O Lord, in an acceptable time...in the truth of Thy salvation". These words are alluded to in 2 Cor.6:2, where we are told to draw near to God (and encourage others to do so), because now is the accepted time and the day of salvation. Let's make the point even clearer. Please flick on to Heb.12:12: "Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees". Now if Scripture interprets Scripture at all, this just has to be an allusion back to feeble-kneed Moses, with his hanging-down hands being held up. And the apostle says: 'You are the one with feeble knees and hands, represented by Moses in Ex.17!' - when we have figured out that Moses is representing Christ praying for us on the cross. So the Spirit is teaching us that with the intensity that Moses prayed for Israel's (and therefore his own) salvation on that hill in Ex.17, with the intensity that Christ prayed on the hill of Golgotha - so we should be praying for each other's salvation, and our own. We must sustain each other in prayer, perhaps we can see it in terms of allowing the Angels to work through us to strengthen others in the ecclesia in their prayer life.

How often do we even speak to each other about prayer? Prayer ought to be a major feature of our spiritual life. Our spiritual life ought to be the main feature of our conversation the one with the other. But is it? I mean, what are we going to be talking about after the meeting this morning? Please, see the urgency of what I'm saying. Time is so short. And now is the accepted time, now is the day of God's grace. If we really believe this, we ought to at least be talking to one another about it! To spur us down this road, just consider the effort which Christ puts into his mediation for us. We've begun to enter into the intensity of his praying for us on the cross. Heb.5:7 comments on this that Christ prayed "with strong crying and tears". These words are certainly to be connected with Rom.8:26, which speaks of Christ making intercession for us now with "groanings which cannot be uttered". One might think from Heb.5:7 that the Lord Jesus made quite a noise whilst hanging on the cross. But Rom.8:26 says that his groaning is so intense that it cannot be audibly uttered; the

physicality of sound would not do justice to the intensity of mental striving. No doubt the Lord Jesus was praying silently, or at best quietly, as he hung there. The point is that the same agonizing depth of prayer which the Lord achieved on the cross for us is what he now goes through as he intercedes for us with the Father. Brethren and sisters, what is our response? To fall asleep as we pray, all too late at night. To rush through our prayers before food, resume our worldly conversations the moment we say (or hear) the 'Amen'.... ? Am I really exaggerating? I trust I am. But I'm exaggerating to make a point.

A Memorial

The battle which swayed to and fro between Israel and Amalek clearly points forward to our battle with the flesh. Moses/Jesus is away above us, earnestly praying for our victory. Yet in the same way as Israel had Joshua actually with them in the field (v.10), so Joshua- Jesus is not only some remote Heavenly helper. He is with us, leading us in the practical business of fighting this war. The personal effort which the Israelites had to make to follow Joshua is surely implied by the fact the victory was no walk-over. The weak among Israel were killed by the Amalekites (Dt.25:17,18); despite the incredible level of Christ's mediation for us, such is the power of sin and the apathy of human nature that we can still lose the battle. Thanks to Moses' hard mental work (cp. Christ's work on the cross), God issued a statement of intent after the battle: " I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek" (v.14). This points forward to God's purpose to obliterate the memory of the " former things" - i.e. Amalek, the things of our moral weakness (Rev.21:4); note how the " former things" in several Old Testament passages refer to the things of Israel's sad spiritual past). The forgetting of the former things therefore refers to the lack of awareness of the things with which we battled in this life. In the same way as God can 'forget' our sins, so one of the Kingdom joys will be the lack of memory of anything sinful. Such fullness of righteousness is hard for us to imagine in our present weakness. Yet the typology we have been studying lifts our minds into the possibility of at least considering these things.

The work of Moses led to the declaration that God will be perpetually at war with Amalek; in prospect, Amalek was destroyed when the sun went down. The same happened with our sinfulness on the cross. In a sense Amalek was destroyed for good, in another sense a long warfare was started; " the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation" . Within our natures, as well as in our dealings with the world, we are experiencing this warfare. There is no respite from it. Yet we have this marvellous assurance: God is at war with sin, He is truly on our side in these struggles, these wrestlings with our very natures, which we all go through. This is the comfort, the massive, huge encouragement as we strive onwards. The spiritual aspect of the warfare is the only really important problem we have to face. Yet God is with us, He has openly declared His aggression against the very things which we struggle against, our selfishness, our impatience, our bitterness, our frustration...And so much did God want Israel to be aware of this attitude of His towards Amalek that He told them to write all this down " for a memorial " of the fact that the memorial of Amalek ultimately was going to be destroyed. There is a slight play on words here, which makes a powerful point. Israel were to ever remember that ultimately Amalek would no more be remembered. And this brings us to the way in which Christ's victory against the Amalek of sin has been memorialized in bread and wine, as a reminder that the day is coming when there will be no more remembrance even of the things against which we now spiritually struggle.⁽²⁾ So let's be motivated to keep up the struggle, to drive home and make good the victory which Christ achieved. You may recall that later, Saul failed to defeat the Amalekites completely; he failed to fully realize the extent of God's help in fighting Amalek/sin (1 Sam.15:3); whilst by contrast, David did completely destroy the Amalekites (1 Sam.30:1,17). So then, let's not let our hands down, let's fix our minds on the intensity which

Moses and above all our Lord Jesus achieved and maintained in prayer, let's hold up each others' hands as we live out this life under the sun- until the sun goes down, as it were, and the very concept and possibility of our personal sinfulness is finally forgotten, and death shall be swallowed up in Christ's victory.

Notes

(1) A story told in *Angels*, Chapter 1.

(2) That memorial was physically symbolized by the building of the altar called Jehovah- Nissi (v.15). This literally means 'Jehovah is my pole'; this is a word used indirectly in prophecies about the cross of Christ.

4-8-1 God Manifestation In Moses

Moses is one of greatest types of the Lord Jesus, in whom the Father was supremely manifested. Because of this, it is fitting that we should see a very high level of God manifestation in Moses. Indeed it seems that God was manifest in Moses to a greater degree than in any other Old Testament character. The following points are proof enough of this:

- Yahweh said that He would give Joshua a charge; but Moses gave Joshua the charge (Dt. 31:14,23).

- Yahweh anointed the priests (Lev. 7:36) - but in practice Moses did.

- Israel were led by God's hand (Heb. 8:9; Is. 63:13); but in practice by Moses' hand (Ps. 77:20; Is. 63:12).

- Israel "chode with Moses...they strove with the Lord" (Num. 20:3,13) uses the same Hebrew word for both "chode" and "strove". To strive with Moses was to strive with the Lord- i.e. with the guardian Angel that was so closely associated with Moses? Num. 20:4 continues rather strangely with the Israelites addressing Moses in the plural: "The people chode with Moses, saying...Why have ye [you plural] brought up...". Could it be that even they recognized his partnership with God? Likewise Num. 21:5: "And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye [plural] brought us up out of Egypt to die?"

- The pronouns often change (in Deuteronomy especially), showing a confusion between the voice of God and that of Moses. Dt. 7:4 is an example: "They will turn away thy son from following me (this is Moses speaking for God)...so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you". Thus Moses' comments on God's words are mixed up with the words of God Himself. There are other examples of this in Dt. 7:11; 29:1,10,14,15 ("I" cp. "us"). Consider especially Dt. 11:13,14: "If ye shall diligently hearken unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the Lord...that I will give you the rain of your land...I will send grass in thy fields". The "I" here switches at ease between God and Moses. The Moses/God pronouns are also mixed in Rom. 10:19.

- God is His word (Jn. 1:2). Moses is likewise spoken of as if he is his word (Acts 15:21; 21:21; 26:22; 2 Cor. 3:18), so close was his association with it. The words and commands of Moses were those of God. "In the bush God spoke unto (Moses), saying, I am the God of Abraham...Isaac and Jacob" (Mk. 12:26; Mt. 22:31; Ex. 3:6). Yet Lk. 20:37 says that "that the dead are raised, even

Moses shewed at the bush, when *he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham*” etc. Yet this was what God said of Himself.

- Likewise the Law was “a law...which I (Yahweh) have written” (Ex. 24:12). Yet the Lord Jesus speaks of *Moses* writing the precepts of the Law (Mk. 10:5). “The book of the law of Moses” is parallel with “the book of the law of Yahweh” (Neh. 8:1; 2 Chron. 17:9); it was “the book of the law of Yahweh given by Moses” (2 Chron. 34:14). His personal blessing of the people was that of God (Dt. 33); and when he looked with pleasure upon the completed tabernacle and blessed Israel, he was imitating God’s inspection and blessing of the completed natural creation (Ex. 39:43). Yet Israel tragically failed to appreciate the degree to which God was manifest in the words of Moses, as they did with Christ. This is shown by them asking for Moses to speak with them, not God; they failed to realise that actually his voice was God’s voice. They failed to see that commandments given ‘second hand’ really are the voice of God (Ex. 20:19). Perhaps our appreciation of inspiration is similar; we know the theory, but do we really see the wonder of the fact that what we read is the awesome voice of God Himself? And there are many other ‘first principles’ we need to appreciate in practice.

- All the commands of Moses’ law were in order to teach Israel to appreciate and respect the character and name of Yahweh (Dt. 28:58) - therefore all these commands were a manifestation of the fundamental personality of the Father. Ditto for the words of Jesus, who was the prophet who would speak God’s word as Moses spoke it (Dt. 18:15-18). Because Jesus would speak God’s word as Moses did, the words of Moses should be studied as much as the words of Jesus - as Jesus himself said (Jn. 5:47). Yet do we *love* the Law of Moses as David did? Or do we not incline to be spiritually lazy, to be influenced by the (so called) New Testament Christianity of the apostate religious world around us? It is only by truly entering into the spirit of Moses’ words that we can really understand our Lord - he said this himself. And yet we would rather read Jesus’ words than those of Moses, because we can’t be bothered to make *the effort to understand the spirit of our Lord as it is revealed there*. And therefore we complain (if we are honest) of a lack of sense that we are having a real relationship with the Lord Jesus.

- Israel’s rejection of Moses was a rejection of the God who was working through Moses to redeem them. Thus Korah and his followers “strove against Moses... when they strove against Yahweh” (Num. 26:9 cp. 16:11). Moses understood that when Israel murmured against him, they murmured against Yahweh (Ex. 16:2,7; Num. 17:5; 21:5). They *thrust* Moses *away* from them (Acts 7:27,39) - yet the same word is used in Rom. 11:2 concerning how God still has not *cast away* Israel; He has not treated them as they treated Him through their rejection of Moses and Jesus, who manifested Him.

- Because of the high degree of God manifestation in Moses, he was so severely punished for not sanctifying Yahweh in the eyes of Israel in his sin of smiting the rock. Israel provoking his spirit to sin at this time is spoken of in the context of the way in which they provoked *God’s* spirit (Ps. 106:7,29,33,43) - such was God’s manifestation in Moses even while he was sinning. And so God is manifest in sinful men like us too. Moses knew this, he knew his closeness to God through manifestation, and yet he yearned to see God physically, he struggled with his distance from God (Ex. 33:18,20). The spirit of Christ in the Psalms is similar. And for us too (although surely it is difficult to share this enthusiasm if we refuse to accept God’s existence in a physical, bodily form).

- Aaron asks: “Would it have been well pleasing in the sight of Yahweh?”, and then we read “And when Moses heard that, it was well-pleasing in *his* sight” (Lev. 10:19,20 RV).

- We have seen that the time of Num. 10 and 11 was a spiritually low period for Moses(1). Consider Num. 10:30; 11:11-13,22,23. Yet in these very chapters there seems almost an emphasis on the fact that God was manifest in Moses: "Moses heard the people weep"; but they wept in the ears of Yahweh (Num. 11:10,18); "it displeased the Lord; and the anger of the Lord was kindled greatly; Moses also was displeased" (11:1,10) shows the connection between them; God has asked Moses to carry Israel "as a nursing father... unto the land" (11:12), although Yahweh was their father who would carry them to the land (Dt. 32:6; Hos. 11:1). That Yahweh is manifest in His servants *even in their times of weakness* is both comforting and sobering. It is because of this principle that an apostate Israel caused Yahweh's Name *which they carried* to be mocked in the Gentile world (Ez. 20:39; 36:20; 39:7; 43:8). Yahweh did not take that Name away from them the moment they sinned. Having been baptized into the Name, our behaviour in the world, whether they appreciate it or not, is therefore a constant exhibition of the Name.

This manifestation of God in a person leads to a mutuality between them. There's a nice example of the mutuality between God and Moses in Ex. 33:1, where God says that *Moses* brought up Israel out of Egypt; but in Ex. 32:11, Moses says [as frequently] that *God* brought Israel out of Egypt. And we too can experience this mutuality in relationship with the Father. Through Moses allowing himself to become part of God manifestation, he found a confidence to achieve that which felt impossible to him. He asks God: "Who am I...?" to do the great things God required... and the answer was "I will be who I will be" (Ex. 3:11-13). Moses' sense of inadequacy was met by the principle of God's manifestation in him; and so will ours be, if we participate in it.

4-8-2 The Hand Of God Is Our Hand

In Ex. 4:4 Moses is told to "put forth" his hand. It is the same word repeatedly translated "let go" in the context of God telling Pharaoh to let Israel go [e.g. Ex. 4:23]. "Caught" is the same Hebrew word frequently translated "harden" in the context of God hardening Pharaoh's heart [e.g. Ex. 4:21]. As the snake hardened in Moses' hand into a rod, so this was how God would deal with Pharaoh through Moses. Thus God is showing Moses that what Moses will do with *his* hand to the snake- a symbol of Egypt- so the hand of God will do, working through Moses' hand. Thus Moses' rod [s.w. Ex. 4:2, about his shepherd's crook] was a symbol of Egypt and Pharaoh. But the throwing down of the shepherd's rod surely also indicated that Moses was to cast down the shepherd's life he had been living, and let God's hand take hold of him, so that his hand became the hand of God. Moses would thus have perceived some sort of parallel between himself and Pharaoh; God was working in both their lives, and it would take as much courage to grab hold of his own serpent-like life, as it would to do battle with Egypt. Ex. 4:23,24 brings out the parallel between how God told Moses that He would slay the firstborn of Pharaoh; and then seeks to slay Moses and *his* firstborn. And we can see lessons for ourselves here, surely. We throw down our worldly lives, take hold of them in faith, and they are transformed into the rod of God through which He will work wonders. Moses had to perceive the serpent-like aspects of his life and grip them; just as the parallel second sign involved his hand becoming leprous, with all its associations with sin, and then being healed and made strong to be used as the hand of God. What all this shows is that God manifestation, our hand becoming the hand of God, God working through us to deliver His people, is predicated upon our own realization of sinfulness, and grasping it firmly. Ultimately, the hand of Yahweh was revealed through the hand of Moses. Moses was "sent forth" by God to do the work (Ex. 3:12 and frequently); yet the same Hebrew word is used to describe how God 'sent out' ["stretched forth"] the hand of God to do it (Ex. 3:20). And Moses was taught this by being told to 'stretch out' [same Hebrew word] *his* hand (Ex. 4:4).

But Moses, for some moments at least, just didn't want to do this. Hence God's anger when Moses comments: "Send [the same word translated "let go" or "put forth" used about Moses being asked to "put forth" his hand in Ex. 4:4] by the hand of him whom thou wilt send" (Ex. 4:13). It was Moses' hand that God had asked to be 'put forth' or 'sent'. But Moses refuses to play a part in God manifestation. He wanted God to send forth another hand, the hand of God personally perhaps; although God had asked him to put forth *his* hand. We too tend to assume that God cannot manifest Himself through *us*; but we all tend to assume someone else will do the job, when it is *we* who are called to it. The rabbis hold that Moses is not being weak here, rather he is referring to the Messiah—the hand whom Moses knew God would one day send forth to save His people. He would then be saying: 'No, I don't want to do this, let the Christ do it'. The same thought is maybe found in Ex. 5:22, when Moses asks Yahweh: "Why is it that thou hast sent [s.w. "put forth" and "let go"] *me*?"—i.e., why don't You use Messiah, the man of Your right hand? And this, subconsciously and unexpressed, is so often our view; He must do it, not me. I'm just a shepherd, God ought to leave me alone in the comfortable monotony of my working life. But He has called us to greater things, to realize as Moses finally did that *we*, you and me, are the ones through whom God truly will work in this world. The rod of Moses ("*thy* rod") became the rod of God (Ex. 4:20); the shepherd's crook, the symbol of an obscure workaday life, became transformed to the rod and arm of God Almighty.

Conclusion

There can be no doubt from all this that God was intensely manifest in Moses. The hand of God was manifested through the hand of Moses. Moses had many deep seated spiritual weakness, and also many traits which were not appropriate to leadership, and yet because of his willingness to participate in God's desire to be manifest through him, he was able to be changed and used by God. We have elsewhere commented on these weaknesses and how they were slowly changed through the power of God manifestation in a willing man ⁽¹⁾.

Notes

(1) See *Moses In Weakness*.

Joshua: The Jagged Graph

4-9-1 Events In The Life Of Joshua

Moses was a hard act to follow. Joshua is someone I can identify with in that he had great potential which he never totally lived up to; although he was himself sound enough in his basic faith and, we can assume, will be in the Kingdom. Indeed, it seems he could have been a Messiah figure, leading Israel into the true Kingdom of God. This is developed at more length in the section 'Joshua: Potential Messiah?'. And yet Joshua did not give them "the rest" which it seems he could have. The following key events in the life of Joshua can be given a spirituality score out of, say, 10. They reveal a jagged graph, similar to that of all God's children.

Event in the life of Joshua

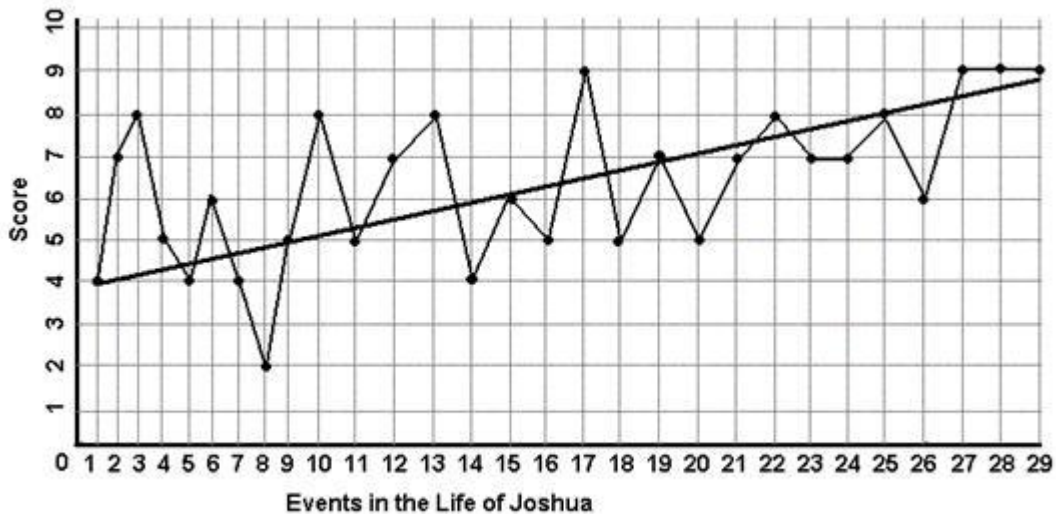
*Spirituality
score out
of 10*

The repeated encouragement to be strong and of a good courage and not be fearful (Dt. 31:23; Josh. 1:6,7,8,18). What does this imply about Joshua?	4
4:3-8- strict obedience to Divine commands?	7
4:21 Quoting / alluding to Moses- as Joshua often does	8
5:13,14 Is this a rebuke of Joshua, wanting to boil everything down to black and white, wanting to see God as either personally for him or against him; when the essence is to seek to discern and do God's will.	5
5:15 the command to remove his shoe from holy ground. This is evidently reminiscent of the command to Moses in a similar situation. Shouldn't Joshua have perceived this, seeing his life was so clearly framed after that of Moses?	4
6:26 Was this unnecessarily extreme?	6
7:3-5 Shouldn't Joshua have led them into battle in person (1:5); he did the second time they attacked Ai (8:15)	4
7:7,8- he lost faith in the promise of 1:5-7,9	2
7:10,11,13 He is being reminded not to just see himself as part of a community, but to remember his personal relationship with God, and not to have such a low self image	5
7:19 He correctly perceives that repentance is a giving of glory to God's Name	8
8:1 dismayed- he lost faith in 1:3,9	5

8:5,6 Fleeing before their enemies was perhaps a recognition of the truth of Dt. 28:25	7
8:26 Given the similarities with the battle against Amalek, were his arms held up in fervent prayer? This is a common association with upholden arms. Moses held his hand up, and Joshua led the army into battle, succeeding because Moses had his hands held up in prayer (Ex. 17:10). Now, Joshua is the one holding his hands up in prayer, whilst Israel are in battle. Lesson: We go through experiences which later repeat; and we are in the position of those who had before prayed for us, and are expected to replicate their examples.8:31,35- exact obedience	8
9:14-18 Too influenced by his 'committee'?	4
9:26 Integrity?	6
10:8 Lack of faith in 1:5?	5
10:12 Amazing faith in prayer; he commanded things to happen, so sure of the prayer being heard.	9
11:6,14- lack of faith in 1:9?	5
11:15,23 Strict obedience to commands	7
13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4 Much land was still not possessed; does 11:23 therefore imply that the land had been possessed only in the perceptions of Israel? How responsible was Joshua for this?	5
17:16-18 He saw their potential?	7
19:50 Spiritual ambition	8
21:43,44 The Lord gave them the land, i.e. potentially, but they failed to possess it. Is this therefore an implied criticism of Joshua, or of Israel?	7

22:2-4 This seems an over positive view of Israel, an exaggeration of their true spiritual position- cp. 23:4; 24:14,23. Or is this rooted in his love for them, not seeing iniquity in Jacob? Moses had told the Reubenites and Gadites that they could return to their possessions when "the Lord have given rest unto your brethren, and they also possess the land" (Dt. 3:20). But Joshua tells them to go to their possessions simply because their brethren were now at "rest" (Josh. 22:4). He significantly omits the proviso that their brethren must also possess the land- because much of the land wasn't possessed. Was this Joshua getting slack, thinking that the main thing was that people were living in peace, even though they weren't possessing the Kingdom? Or is it a loving concession to human weakness? Indeed, the conditions of Dt. 3:20 were in their turn an easier form, a concession to, the terms of the initial agreement in Num. 32:20-32.	7
23:7 Don't even make mention of their gods- alluded to in Eph. 5:3	8
23:9,14 Too positive? Saw things as achieved that hadn't been- Jud. 1:1. He seems to have tried to perceive the promises, which were conditional upon obedience, as having been fulfilled fully when they hadn't been. Solomon made the same mistake.	6
24:14 Compare his earlier over positive statements. Now it seems he came to a final sense of realism about sin, obedience and Israel's failure	9
24:15 As for me...we will serve. He realized that Israel, whom he had seen as so obedient, actually weren't serving God at all	9
24:19,23 A final realism as to the real nature of sin, and the ultimate demands which God makes upon human life in practice.	9

And plotting these as a graph gives the following:



A few things come out of these considerations:

4-9-2 Legalistic Obedience?

Joshua was very good at obedience to clear commandments (Josh. 4:10,17; 8:27; 10:40). But when he had to articulate his faith in God in unexpected situations, e.g. when the ambassadors from Gibeon arrived, or when the first attack on Ai failed, he seems to have performed poorly. Legalistic obedience is no use in those cases when principles need to be applied. Josh. 5:13,14 can be read as a rebuke of Joshua, wanting to boil everything down to black and white, wanting to see God as either personally for him or against him; when the essence is to seek to discern and do God's will. He very strictly adhered to God's commandments with legalistic obedience, e.g., about how to approach and deal with Jericho, or how to cross the flooded Jordan and build an altar; and time and again, we read in Joshua of how he strictly relayed and obeyed the Divine commandments given by Moses (Josh. 8:31,33,35; 11:12,15,20; 14:2,5; 17:4; 21:2,8). Yet as with any literalistic or legally minded person, it was hard for Joshua to apply the principles behind the laws to situations which weren't specifically addressed by Divine revelation, where legalistic obedience wasn't what was required.

4-9-3 Peer Pressure

Joshua like many modern Christians was very prone to being influenced by peer pressure and the views and expectations of others, especially in these situations. He told Israel they'd done a good job and driven out all the tribes- when they were still worshipping idols, and hadn't driven out all the tribes. Only in his deathbed speech did he face up to the reality of their sinfulness. Ex. 32:17,18 is another example of Joshua's genuine naievity- thinking that Israel were far stronger than they were. He mistook the sound of their idolatrous partying for the sound of a battle; and Moses almost rebukes him for his naievity. He allowed the leaders of Israel to lead him into wrong decisions about the initial attack on Ai, and also into being deceived by the Gibeonites. And yet as a younger man, he had boldly stood up to the peer pressure of the princes of Israel in faithfully declaring that Israel

could and should go up into Canaan; when the other princes must have put huge pressure upon him to agree with them. He is described as maintaining “another spirit” to theirs (Num. 14:24). The resolution of youth seems to have been somewhat lost as he grew older.

In Ps. 1:1-3, David makes several allusions to Joshua. He speaks of how the man who meditates in God’s word day and night will prosper in his ways; and he uses the very same Hebrew words as found in Josh. 1:8 in recounting God’s charge to Joshua. But David’s point is that the man who does these things will not “walk in the counsel of the ungodly”- he won’t give in to peer pressure. The fact that Joshua was wrongly influenced by his peers in later life would indicate that he didn’t keep the charge given to him.

Forgetting The Commission

Joshua had been charged to be strong, of good courage, not fearful nor be dismayed. Yet he had a tendency to forget those charges, the implications of his having been called by God for a purpose; and needed to be reminded of them as he forgot or lost faith in them. Perhaps this is why he is an otherwise surprising omission from the list of faithful men and women in Hebrews 11. And here of course is the challenge to us. We too have been given commissions and callings. Whether it be to raise a Godly family, to establish an ecclesia in a certain place, to overcome a specific vice...the obstacles will flee before us, every place where the soles of our feet rest, will be blessed...if we truly believe in God’s purpose with us. Yet like Joshua, we usually fail to have a full faith in this. We get distracted by the views of others, peer pressure, worried by lack of resources, discouraged by setbacks; when it is belief in God’s most basic initial promises to us that will overcome them. Joshua’s fear is all the more reprehensible when we consider the testimony of Ps. 91. Here Moses speaks about Joshua, the one who dwelt in the secret place or tabernacle of God (Ps. 91:1 = Ex. 33:11), and who therefore was miraculously preserved throughout the wilderness wanderings. Thousands of Joshua’s generation died at his side from the various plagues which wasted out his generation during those wanderings; but they never came near him (Ps. 91:5-8). As a result of this, he was commanded by Moses to “not be afraid” (Ps. 91:5), perhaps Moses was thinking specifically about peer pressure, with the assurance that truly God would hear Joshua’s prayers (Ps. 91:14,15). His amazing preservation during the wilderness years ought to have instilled a faith and lack of fearfulness within him; and yet the implication is that he did very often fall prey to fearfulness in later life. Just as with us, the circumstances of earlier life are controlled by the Father to give us faith with which to cope with later crises; but we don’t always learn the lessons we are intended to.

4-9-4 Joshua Our Example

Joshua is consciously set up as our example:

- When Paul says that we *each* with unveiled face have beheld the glory that shines from the face of the Lord Jesus, just as the glory to a lesser extent shone from the face of Moses (2 Cor. 3:18 RV). Yet the only person to behold Moses’ unveiled glory was Joshua, who alone lived in the tabernacle where Moses received the glory (Ex. 33:11). And it was he who alone accompanied Moses up the mount to meet with God (Ex. 24:13). When Moses left Joshua and went out to the people, he veiled his face. But Joshua would have seen the glory shining off Moses’ unveiled face.

- *We* may boldly say that we will *not* be fearful, as Joshua was, because God has addressed to *us* the very words which He did to Joshua: “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee” (Heb. 13:5,6). In this

especially, Joshua is our example. When Heb. 13:13 speaks of *us* going forth outside the camp, perhaps there is a reference to Joshua who dwelt with Moses outside the camp- thus making Joshua symbolic of us all.

Num. 27:20 LXX says that Moses put or gave of his glory upon Joshua- and this passage is alluded to by the Lord in Jn. 17:22: “The glory which thou hast given me I have given unto them”. Note that the Lord’s prayer of John 17 is full of allusion to Moses, as detailed in http://www.carelinks.net/books/dh/bl/4-4Moses_As_A_Type_Of_Christ.htm. So the disciples, indeed all those for whom the Lord prayed in His prayer, are to see themselves as Joshua. Further, in the same context, the Lord washed the disciples’ feet. This would’ve been understood by the disciples as an allusion to a well known Jewish legend that in Num. 27:15-23, Moses acted as a servant to Joshua by preparing a basin of water and washing Joshua’s feet⁽¹⁾. And the LXX of Moses’ final charge to Joshua in Dt. 31:7,8 [“fear not, neither be dismayed”] is quoted by the Lord to His disciples in Jn. 14:1,27.

Notes

(1) T.F. Glasson, *Moses In The Fourth Gospel* (London: SCM, 1963) p. 82.

4-10 Joshua: Potential Messiah?

Joshua’s Potential

Joshua didn’t give the people rest (Heb. 4:8); but he said he had (Josh. 22:4). He failed to fulfil the potential of Josh. 1:13-15- that *he* would lead the people to “rest”. The Messianic Kingdom could, perhaps, have come through Joshua-Jesus; but both Joshua and Israel would not. Dt. 1:38 states clearly that “Joshua...he shall cause Israel to inherit [s.w. possess]” the land. Yet by the end of Joshua’s life, Israel were not inheriting the land in totality. He didn’t live up to his potential. Note, in passing, that God’s prophecy here was conditional, although no condition is actually stated at the time. God’s opening commission to Joshua was that the people were to possess the whole land promised to Abraham, right up to the Euphrates (Josh. 1:4). But Joshua ended up drawing up the borders of the land far smaller than these; he didn’t even seek to subdue the territory up to the Euphrates, even though God had promised him potential success and even commanded him to do so. Joshua was to divide up the whole land promised to Abraham, amongst the tribes of Israel (Josh. 1:6). And yet in the extensive descriptions of Joshua dividing up the land, we don’t find him dividing up that whole territory up to the Euphrates. He seems to have lacked that vision, and fallen into the mire of minimalism, just content with a utilitarian, small scale conquest, rather than seeing the bigger picture of the potential Kingdom which God wanted to give His people.

Joshua and Caleb were earlier characterized by the comment that they “wholly followed the Lord” when they went to spy out Canaan (Num. 14:24; 32:11,12; Dt. 1:36; Josh. 14:8,9,14), and urged Israel to go up and inherit it. This refers to the way that the Angel had gone ahead of them, and they faithfully followed where the Angel had gone, and believed that Israel could follow that Angel wherever it led. When Israel finally did go into the land, they were told that Joshua would ‘go before’ them, and they were to follow him and thereby inherit the land (Dt. 31:3). From this we see

that circumstances repeat in our lives. As Joshua had been told to be strong good courage in order to take the land, so he had to tell others (Josh. 10:25). As God charged him to be courageous and obedient to the book of the Law, so Joshua on his deathbed charged his people (Josh. 1:7,8 cp. 23:6). Joshua had faithfully followed, and now he became the leader who was to be faithfully followed. Likewise, he led the Israelites in battle whilst Moses stood on the hill with arms uplifted in prayer for his success. And in capturing Ai, it was Joshua's turn to stand on a hill with arms uplifted [also in prayer?] whilst Israel fought. However, Joshua seems to have somehow gotten out of synch with the Angel when he meets Him in Josh. 5:14 and asks Him whether He is for or against Israel. We must walk in step with the Spirit / Angel in our lives; and yet no matter how much we've walked in step with Him, we can always allow pressure of circumstances to let us fall out of step with Him.

Joshua is repeatedly made parallel with Israel; his victories were theirs; what he achieved is counted to them. In the same way, the people of the Lord Jesus are counted as Him. Joshua was to be strong and possess the land (Josh. 1:6), just as they had been told to do, using the same Hebrew words (Dt. 11:8). Indeed, Israel and Joshua are given parallel charges, to be strong and of good courage to take the land (Dt. 31:6,7). Both Israel and Joshua are given the same charge to keep the words of the covenant, that they might "prosper" (Dt. 29:9; Josh. 1:7).

This connection between Joshua and Israel is developed in Is. 59:21, which describes the new covenant which God will make with Israel in the Messianic Kingdom in terms evidently reminiscent of Joshua- as if the new covenant was made with him, thereby enabling him potentially to be part of a Messianic Kingdom even in his day:

"And as for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord: my Spirit that is upon thee ["Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him" Dt. 34:9; Num. 27:18-23], and my words which I have put in thy mouth [Dt. 18:18- God's words were put in Joshua's mouth], shall not depart out of thy mouth ["this book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth", Josh. 1:8, s.w.], nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever".

Indeed, the Messianic prophecy of Dt. 18:18 had a potential Messianic and primary fulfillment in Joshua: "I will raise them up [God 'rose up' Joshua- s.w. Josh. 1:2; 7:10,13; 8:1,3] a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee [Joshua's life was framed to be like that of Moses- e.g. he too was told to remove his shoe when on holy ground, also held his hands up whilst Israel fought their enemies]; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him [Joshua is constantly presented as telling Israel what God commanded him- Josh. 4:8,10,17; 6:10; 8:8: "according to the commandment of the Lord shall ye do. See, I have commanded you"; 8:27]. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him".

The 'likeness' between Moses and the prophet like unto him was in that the prophet would also speak God's words in a similar way. Josh. 11:15 therefore significantly comments: "As the Lord commanded Moses his servant, so did Moses command Joshua: and so did Joshua; he left nothing undone of all that the Lord commanded Moses". Joshua was a potential Messiah.

We have shown earlier that Ps. 91 is Moses' commentary upon Joshua, the young man who dwelt in the tabernacle (Ps. 91:1 = Ex. 33:11), Joshua the potential Messiah. The Psalm describes how Joshua was miraculously preserved from the punishments which befell his generation in the wilderness; thousands fell at his side from the various plagues sent to waste away his peer group. But he was

preserved. In this context we read that the Angels would be given charge over him, lest he dash his foot against a stone during that wilderness journey (Ps. 91:11,12). Yet these words were understood by the Lord Jesus as relevant to Him personally, when *He* was in the wilderness (Mt. 4:6). The Lord Jesus clearly saw Joshua as a type of Himself. The double application of Psalm 91 to both Joshua and Jesus makes Joshua a potential Messiah.

It would therefore appear that Joshua potentially could have been the Jesus-Messiah figure, leading Israel into what could have become the Kingdom of God. He could have given the people rest; but he didn't. Yet the possibilities and prophecies relating to Joshua were then reinterpreted and fulfilled in another 'Jesus', the Son of God. Solomon was another case of this. God's servant Joshua was intended to "prosper" (Josh. 1:7); but in the end it was the Lord Jesus through His death who was the servant who would "deal prudently" [s.w. 'prosper', Is. 52:13]. And so, in His foreknowledge, God spoke of "another day" when His begotten Son would fulfil what all those men could potentially have achieved, and so much more (Heb. 4:8). The lesson for us is that so much has been potentially prepared for us to achieve. Our salvation may not necessarily depend upon achieving all those things, but all the same, so much potentially is possible which we refuse to reach up to, because we are petty minimalists, like Israel, satisfied with their little farm in the valley, rather than seeking to possess the fullness of the Kingdom prepared for them.

4-11 Joshua And The Name of God

Here is a chronological list of all the references in the spoken words of Joshua to God:

Jehovah your God

Jehovah

Jehovah your God

Jehovah

Jehovah your God

Jehovah

Jehovah

Jehovah your God

the living God

the Lord of all the earth

Jehovah, the Lord of all the earth

Jehovah your God

Jehovah

Jehovah your God

Jehovah your God

hand of Jehovah

Jehovah your God

my lord

Jehovah.

Jehovah

Jehovah

Jehovah

Jehovah

O Lord Jehovah

Lord

Jehovah, the God of Israel

Jehovah

Jehovah your God

Jehovah

my God

Jehovah your God

Jehovah

Jehovah, the God of your fathers

Jehovah our God

Jehovah

Jehovah

Jehovah

Jehovah your God

Last words:

Jehovah

Jehovah your God

Jehovah your God

Jehovah your God

Jehovah your God

Jehovah your God

Jehovah your God

Jehovah

Jehovah your God

Jehovah your God

Jehovah your God

Jehovah your God

Jehovah your God

Jehovah your God

Jehovah your God

Jehovah your God

Jehovah

Jehovah your God

Jehovah your God

Jehovah

Jehovah, the God of Israel

Jehovah

Jehovah

Jehovah ... a holy God ... a jealous God

Jehovah

Jehovah

Jehovah, the God of Israel

Jehovah

your God

Only at the end of his days does Joshua make a specific reference to the declaration of the Name of God, when he speaks of "Jehovah ... a holy God ... a jealous God". Yet Moses' comment upon Joshua: "I will set him on high, because he hath known my name" (Ps. 91:14) implies that the Father foresaw Joshua's future spiritual attainment and treated him accordingly. We likewise need to remember this in coping with the spiritual immaturity of our brethren. Moses considered that Joshua would "say of Jehovah, He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in whom I trust" (Ps. 91:2). And yet only twice does Joshua use the phrase "my God" or "my Lord". Again, it seems that Moses is imputing to Joshua a higher level of intimacy with God than he actually achieved.

4-12 Rahab And The Fall Of Jericho

The spies were sent out "secretly" (Josh. 2:1). I'd argue that the sending out of the 12 spies about 40 years earlier was essentially a lack of faith- in the fact that God's Angel had gone ahead of them anyway to spy out the land, and Yahweh Himself had told Israel how good the land was. Perhaps the secrecy involved a sense that this was in fact not really a very spiritual decision and Joshua was somehow furtive about it. Israel had never known urban life nor perhaps even seen walled cities like Jericho. The spies entered the city at evening time, and the gate was shut. Strangers always attract attention in such places- let alone when the city was in the direct line of attack of the Hebrews. The language / accent of the two spies would've given them away. According to the record in Joshua 2, it seems they entered the city gates at dusk, the gates were shut, and they'd have perceived that they were being watched and had been noticed as suspicious strangers. And so they used some desperate initiative, and dived into a whorehouse nearby to the gate. This was the sort of place strangers would go to, as it would be today. We imagine them entering the house, and meeting the madame of the house. "What do you want?" was as dumb a question as the doctor asking the patient "How are you feeling today?". Rahab was a smart woman, accustomed to strangers, and knew what was going on. Within the first couple of sentences, she'd have figured who they were. And it seems they spoke for a short time, maybe an hour or so, realized they were busted, understood they were in a death trap within that walled city, and threw themselves on her mercy.

And there, providence kicked in. James 2:25 calls those men "messengers", with a message Rahab believed. They hardly had an hour to tell her the message, before men were knocking on the door enquiring what Rahab knew about the spies. In that brief time, she believed a very sketchy and incomplete Gospel of the Kingdom. And her works reflected that faith, in telling the men [whom

local culture would've barred from entering the house of a single woman] that the spies had come and gone. "That was *quick!*", we can imagine the King's men joking.

There was weakness and dysfunction all around this story. The men "lodged" with Rahab (Josh. 2:1)- but the Hebrew term is often translated "slept with..." in a sexual context. In fact, whenever the term is used in relation to a woman, let alone a prostitute, it implies intercourse. As a word it does mean simply to sleep... but it is strange that no other term for 'lodging the night' is used, and that the term in the context of a female or prostitute does usually carry a sexual meaning. Whilst I don't believe the spies did sleep with Rahab, it's strange that no other word for 'lodging' is used. The ambiguity is, I suggest, purposeful. But they and their message were 'welcomed in peace' by Rahab (Heb. 11:31), she 'received' their message and justified herself by works by protecting them (James 2:25).

This would contribute to an overall theme in the book of Joshua of Israel's weakness- the land wasn't fully possessed, Joshua appears himself as weak in many ways, he didn't fully follow the admittedly hard-to-follow act of Moses, Rahab believed the very words of promise which Israel didn't believe, the spies were sent out secretly by Joshua with no command from God to do this, when God had promised to go before Israel and give them victory... and yet God worked through all this. Even to the extent of using the weakness of the spies in going in to a brothel and "sleeping" with the madame... in order to save that woman and her family, and the lives of the spies, all in a manner which through human weakness glorified the God of Israel. We'll comment later on how Rahab had an extensive knowledge of parts of Moses' words and law, and this was the basis for her faith. Yet where did she, a whore in Jericho, get that knowledge from? Presumably from her clients, who would've been travellers who had heard these things and passed them on to her. All this is wonderful encouragement for all sinners- that God has a way of working through sin to His glory, and He doesn't give up so easily with human weakness.

Heb. 11:31 comments that "By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace". Rahab's faith was faith in God's grace. For Rahab was an Amorite and according to the law of Moses there was to be no pity or covenant with them- only death (cp. Dt. 7:2). Rahab had the spiritual ambition to ask that they make a covenant with her- she requests *hesed*, the common term for covenant relationship ("deal kindly with me", Josh. 2:12 cp. 1 Sam. 20:8). And the spies made a covenant with her. Grace, like love, finds a way. Remember that she was also aware of what Israel had done to their enemies on their way to Jericho- and she appears to allude to Moses' commands to destroy utterly and *not* make covenant with the peoples of the land (Dt. 2:32-37; 7:1-5; 20:16-18). When she says that she was aware that God had "given you the land" (Josh. 2:9), she uses the same two Hebrew words used repeatedly in Deuteronomy regarding God's promise to give Israel the land of the Canaanites. "Your terror is fallen upon us" is likewise an allusion to Ex. 15:16; 23:27 [the same Hebrew word for "terror" is used by Rahab]. Rahab speaks of how her people are "fainting" in fear- quoting Ex. 15:15 about how the inhabitants of Canaan would "faint" (AV "melt away") because of Israel. Knowing all this, she has the ambition to request the impossible- that *she* would be the exception, that with *her* a covenant would be made. When she says that "we *have* heard" about the Exodus (Josh. 2:10), she may be referring to the prophecy of Ex. 15:14: "The people *shall* hear and be afraid". In this case, her emphasis would have been upon the word "have"- 'yes, we *have* heard indeed, as Moses sung, and yes, we *are* afraid'. Seeking God's face is actually to strive for the unachievable in this life; but it's what we are to do. Spiritual ambition of the type Rahab had lifts us far above the mire of mediocrity which there is in all human life under the sun.

Rahab's Witness

Rahab was told to bind the scarlet cord in her window "when we come into the land" (Josh. 2:18). But Rahab bound it there immediately when they left- as if she recognized that her land was already in Israel's hands (Josh. 2:21). Considering the whole town was wondering how the spies had escaped, and she was under suspicion, to leave the escape rope dangling there, indeed to take it up and then place it there again immediately (so 2:21 implies), was really stupid. She didn't need to do that at that stage. But the joy of the Gospel should make us fools for Christ's sake. But does it, in our postmodern age? When was the last time the joy of the good news we know, lead you to do something humanly foolish? It could be gathered from Heb. 11:31 that Rahab preached to others the message she had received from the spies- for the inspired commentary there notes that Rahab did not perish with those "that believed not"- *apeitheo* suggesting disbelief, a wilful refusal to believe. What message did Jericho not believe? There was no particular message for them from the words of Moses or Joshua. The message was presumably an appeal from Rahab, to repent and accept the God of Israel as she had done- to cast themselves upon His mercy. And in any case, as a prostitute estranged from her family, either due to her profession or because estrangement from them had led her to it, she must have gone to her estranged family and preached to them, bringing them within her despised house.

The question, of course, is: 'Why then was not Rahab killed by the people of Jericho if she openly preached to them about the God of Israel?'. The ancient law code of Hammurabi contains the following statute: "If felons are banded together in an ale-wife's [prostitute's or innkeeper's] house and she has not haled [them] to the palace, that ale-wife shall be put to death" (S.R. Driver and J.C. Miles, *The Babylonian Laws* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1956], 2:45). Perhaps she was so despised that she was untouchable, or treated as mad. Perhaps former clients of hers in the city's leadership decided it would be better to let her 'get religion' rather than spill any beans about them. But it could be said that it was a miracle she wasn't murdered for her witness. She certainly ran the risk of it. If men and women with a far less complete understanding of the Gospel could risk their lives for it... what does our understanding and faith convict *us* to do for the sake of witnessing to it? Give money towards it? Risk our lives, health, convenience in travelling for it? Risk our embarrassment and loss of standing in the workplace or family by preaching it...?

Our knowledge of the Gospel of the Kingdom is far more detailed than that of Rahab, who picked up snatches of it from her clients, and had at most an hour's pressured conversation with the spies before she had to show whether or not she believed it. If it motivated her to do all she did- what about us?

Following The Angel

As Israel were called to follow the Angel after their Red Sea baptism, so we too follow where the Angel leads. The conquest of Jericho is a classic example of following the Angel. Josh. 5:13 speaks of the Angel who was the commander of *Yahweh's* army appearing to Joshua, the commander of God's human army on earth, and standing "over against him", i.e. dead opposite him. Clearly enough, Joshua was being shown that he had an opposite number in Heaven, a representative there before the throne of God- just as each of us do. Note in passing how the Angel answers Joshua's question- 'Are you for me, or against me?'. God has no interest in taking sides in human arguments, demonizing the one side and glorifying the other. The response was simply that the Angel stood for God and was His representative (Josh. 5:14). Religious people so easily fall into this trap of demonizing their enemies, on the basis that "God is with me, and therefore, not with you my

opponent, in fact, He hates you because I hate you". The true God and His Angelic servants are far above this kind of primitive, binary dichotomy.

Following the Angel is the theme that lies behind God's statement that because He had already given Jericho to Israel, therefore they should arise and take it. So many victories have been prepared for us in prospect- against addictions, engrained weaknesses of character, habits, impossible situations. Israel had to follow the ark, where the Angelic presence of God was (Josh. 6:2 cp. 6:8). The people were to go up into Jericho "straight before them" (Josh. 6:5,20), just as the Cherubim-Angels have "straight feet" (Ez. 1:7,9,12). They were to follow in the Angel's steps.

The command to "shout" was a reflection of the belief Israel were to have in the fact that God *had already* given them the city- for the Hebrew for "shout" usually refers to a shout of victory. The word is translated "... will I triumph" in Ps. 60:8; 108:9. The same idea of shouting in victory over a city which has been given to God's people recurs in Jer. 50:15- "Shout against her round about [cp. compassing the walls of Jericho]... her foundations *are* [present tense] fallen, her walls [cp. Jericho's] *are* thrown down". And this speaks of our latter day victory against Babylon- thus making the whole account of earnest relevance to us who live in the last days, and who will see Babylon fall by faith. Notice how literal Babylon fell by the water of the river being dried up, and the walls being opened- just the same sequence of events that occurred at Jericho. Likewise 1 Cor. 3:12-15 likens all the faithful to material which can pass through the fire of judgment- and this surely is a reference to the way that Jericho was burnt with fire, and only the metals along with Rahab and her family came through that fire to salvation. Thus according to the allusion, Rahab and her family represent all the faithful.

God's Battle Plan

Everything about the battle plan was somehow humanly foolish- to yet again attempt to teach Israel, old and new, that victory comes from following God's way, and His way is humanly foolish. The warriors were circumcised before the battle (Josh. 5:2)- and we know from the Biblical record of Shechem how this would've weakened the men- for this was only a week or so before the battle. The manna wasn't phased out- it stopped abruptly just before the battle of Jericho (Josh. 5:12). The people would likely have been short of food, and would've been dealing with the problems associated with a new diet- after 40 years! Walking around the city seven times, starting at dawn, would've made the people tired. There was no advantage of shock or surprise by doing this. Planning the final assault for late afternoon was hardly smart either- humanly speaking! But all this was- and is- to teach God's people that victory *His* way involves shedding our human strength, just as Gideon was likewise taught so dramatically.

Josh. 6:10, "You shall not shout nor let your voice be heard, nor let a word proceed out of your mouth, *until* the day I tell you, 'Shout!'", implies that the people maybe didn't know the battle plan- each day they would've walked around the city in silence, and nothing happened. The command to "Shout!" didn't come- for six days. The whole exercise was surely to develop their faith. Again, this was the most crazy of battle plans, in human terms. Heb. 11:30 associates the circling of the walls with faith: "by faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they had been circled seven days".

2 Cor. 10:3-4 is perhaps an allusion to the way that Jericho was taken with such a humanly weak battle plan: "for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ". The point of

the allusion is for us to see ourselves as those nervous Israelites desperately clinging on to their faith in God's victory rather than human strength. And we each have our Jerichos- habits, life-dominating patterns of thinking, that seem so impossible to shift.

Of course, the deliverance at the Red Sea had been intended to teach Israel these very lessons. And the account of the fall of Jericho is recorded in similar language, in order to teach the same lesson. Rahab's house had to be identified by a scarlet cord- like the blood of the Passover lamb sprinkled on the two doorposts and lintel of the Israelites' homes in Egypt. The silence demanded of the people was surely to recall Ex. 14:14, there the people standing before the Red Sea were assured: "The Lord will fight for you while you keep silent". Compare the command to keep silent whilst *Yahweh* fought, with the common practice of yelling war cries as an ancient army approached their enemy. All human convention, wisdom and strength, was placed in purposeful opposition to what seemed quite counter-instinctive- to be utterly silent whilst *God* did the fighting.

Undeserved Blessing

There's a distinct theme in the record that actually, God's people didn't do according to His ideal plan, and yet still He gave them the victory. One wonders whether the comment that "So the ark of the Lord compassed the city" (Josh. 6:11) could imply that the entire fighting force of Israel didn't bother doing as commanded on the first circuit of the city- possibly they just sent the ark around it. The people were to shout when the trumpets sounded (Josh. 6:10). But in reality, like a Sunday School play gone wrong, the people shouted, the trumpets sounded, and then the people again shouted (Josh. 6:20).

Likewise, compare the above evidence for Rahab's preaching the message of the spies, with the terms of the covenant thrashed out with her- if she were to "utter" (Heb. to preach, advertise openly] the "business" of the spies, then the covenant would be null and void (Josh. 2:20). She did indeed do this, and yet the covenant still stood. Perhaps the agreement insisted upon by the spies was somewhat self-protective, without the ambition which Rahab had to bring others to throw themselves upon God's grace. This would only make her spiritual perception and ambition stand out the more. All this fits in with the overall theme of the book of Joshua- that Israel were given the land, Ephraim and Manasseh were allowed to return to their lot East of Jordan, despite the fact that they were disobedient and didn't drive out all the Canaanites as required by God. Taking the crossing of the Red Sea as a type of baptism, the wilderness walk as symbolic of our probationary lives now (1 Cor. 10:1-3), the entrance of the promised land speaks of our entrance to God's Kingdom- and this will likewise be by grace, in the face of all the mess ups, disobedience, failure to obey... which we're all so guilty of.

Yet according to Heb. 11:30, "by faith the walls of Jericho fell down ...". Whose faith? What faith? Was Joshua-Jesus' faith counted to the people? Or was their very weak, hope-for-the-best faith all the same accepted as faith by God's grace?

Chapter 8-3 The Ministry And Personal Life of Isaiah

Isaiah's ministry began in the reign of Uzziah (Is. 1:1); Uzziah died with Judah prosperous and stable. However, the prophecies of Isaiah 1-5 speak of a time when Judah was breaking up and under threat of imminent invasion; they must therefore have been given at some time after Uzziah's reign. Yet 6:1 speaks of Isaiah having a vision in the year Uzziah died. As is common with the major prophets, Isaiah isn't a chronological prophecy; it's a compilation of various prophetic events given at various times and that compilation isn't necessarily in chronological order. I'd therefore suggest that chapter 6 is the initial commissioning of Isaiah. He realized his call to be a prophet, but he needed to be convicted first of his own sin and inadequacy, and of the greatness of the Lord. He was then commissioned to go out and preach: "Hear!" (Is. 6:9)- which is exactly how he begins his preaching in Is. 1:2. So I suggest that all his prophecies were preceded by the vision of chapter 6. He saw "the Lord high and lifted up", enthroned in the temple, with an earthquake, the temple filled with smoke, the doorposts that held up the veil being shaken (with the implication that the veil falls; 6:4). Note how Rev. 15:5-8, building on this passage, has the veil being removed, the Most Holy opened, and the temple filled with smoke. This sends the mind straight to the rending of the temple veil at the crucifixion and the earthquake (Mt. 27:51). The Lord "high and lifted up" (6:1) is a phrase that occurs later in Isaiah (52:13), concerning the crucified Lord, lifted up and exalted "very high" by the cross. John 12:37-41 tells us that Isaiah 6 is a vision of the Lord Jesus in glory; and in this passage John quotes both Isaiah 6 and 53 together, reflecting their connection and application to the same event, namely the Lord's crucifixion. So it is established that Is. 6 is a vision of the crucified Lord Jesus, high and lifted up in glory in God's sight, whilst covered in blood and spittle, with no beauty that man should desire Him. The point is, when Isaiah saw this vision he was convicted of his sinfulness: "Woe is me, for I am undone...". And yet the same vision comforted him with the reality of forgiveness, and inspired him to offer to go forth and witness to Israel of God's grace.

Isaiah's Cleansing

The holiness and power of Isaiah's cleansing is perhaps indicated by the fact that even a holy Seraphim Angel had to take the burning coal with tongs from the altar. The altar having coals which could be removed by tongs suggests that it was the incense altar. The incident clearly points forward to the cleansing power of the sacrifice of Christ. The burning coal from the incense altar therefore represented Him; yet the incense is a symbol of our prayers in Rev. 8:3,4. It's the fire beneath them, the work of Christ, which gives power to them. The idea of an Angel taking the fire from an altar is found in Ez. 10:7,8, again in the context of the Cherubim. But the burning coal that was taken there was a symbol of judgment against Israel's sin. Thus we see the two aspects of Him with whom we have to do. The fire is either of cleansing and forgiveness, or of judgment to condemnation; as a cup of wine from the Lord is a double symbol, of either condemnation or eternal blessing. The Divine touching of lips can be seen as speaking of being given a commission to preach- for this is what was done to inaugurate Jeremiah's ministry (Jer. 1:9). But here in Isaiah, it speaks of forgiveness of personal sin. The dual symbolism surely suggests that it is the very real, concrete experience of forgiveness which is in itself the commission to go out and speak God's word to other sinners. Note how immediately Isaiah believed in the receipt of forgiveness; it often takes our weaker faith quite some time to believe in forgiveness, because in our experience of human relationships, it is often time which heals and the dimming of memory which leads to an appearance of forgiveness. Divine forgiveness isn't like this; it is granted and exists for real at a distinct point in time, and if believed in, can be fully felt at that instant. It's therefore a deep insight into the depth of Isaiah's faith in his forgiveness that he could immediately offer to go forth and take God's word to others. For it seems

that he as it were overheard God's discussion with the Angel Seraphim in the council of Heaven: "Whom shall I send, and who shall go for us?" And Isaiah interjects from earth, as it were: "Here am I, send me" (Is. 6:8). There was initiative taken by Isaiah; he wasn't passive. He wanted to share in God's mission, and even pushed himself forward before the council of Heaven; when moments before he had been stricken with a sense of sin and total unworthiness, feeling so unworthy to speak on God's behalf- for he had protested on realization of his sinfulness: "I am dumb [AV "undone"] (Is. 6:5). The specific failure of which he felt convicted was that he was "a man of unclean lips"- again hinting at his own sense of unworthiness to *speak* on God's behalf as a prophet was supposed to.

It was on the basis of Isaiah's own sense of sinfulness and certain experience of forgiveness that he was able to witness to others and empathize with them. The only other time the Hebrew word translated "undone" or "dumb" occurs in Isaiah is in Isaiah's prophecy against Moab- Moab was "brought to silence" (Is. 15:1) by Divine judgment; and having uttered this prophecy, Isaiah says that his heart "cried out" for Moab just as they would "cry out" in the agony of condemnation (Is. 15:4,5). He- and we- found the possibility of true empathy with others, even with a condemned Gentile nation who hated Judah, on the basis of realizing how he too had stood condemned before the holiness of Yahweh. In a similar way, having uttered a prophecy against Elam, Isaiah appears to have some kind of seizure as he realizes the tragedy of condemnation which is to come upon those Gentiles: "A grievous vision is declared unto me; the treacherous dealer dealeth treacherously, and the spoiler spoileth. Go up, O Elam: besiege, O Media; all the sighing thereof have I made to cease. Therefore are my loins filled with pain: pangs have taken hold upon me, as the pangs of a woman that travaileth: I was bowed down at the hearing of it; I was dismayed at the seeing of it. My heart panted, fearfulness affrighted me: the night of my pleasure hath he turned into fear unto me" (Is. 21:2-4).

And the same ideas occur in the condemnation of Judah in Is. 33:14: "The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" As Isaiah beheld the fire and the Seraphim, the 'burning ones', he had felt just the same. And on this basis he was able to appeal to and empathize with the hypocrites within the ecclesia as well as the sinners of the Gentile world. Indeed the whole people of Judah are condemned by Isaiah for being a people of unclean lips; and yet he goes straight on to say that "*our* transgressions are with us, and as for *our* iniquities, *we* know them" (Is. 59:3,12). So through being convicted of his own uncleanness, Isaiah was able to witness with true empathy to others; he was able to connect, to intersect with others' hearts, because of his own conviction of both sin and forgiveness. The Angelic assurance that Isaiah's sin was "purged" (Is. 6:7) became the pattern of forgiveness for Isaiah's later audience- for they could be told by Isaiah with all integrity that if they repented, then their sin also would be purged and their iniquity taken away (Is. 27:9). But this ability to empathize is only brought about by a Divine conviction of our own inadequacy. As we come before the cross of Christ, as in vision Isaiah did, we should feel this; and yet be empowered from that same vision to go forward with a quiet boldness in sharing God's grace with other sinners, both in the world and within the community of God's people. We should have no indifference to the future which others might miss. Is. 22:4 is perhaps the most poignant example. Having uttered judgment upon Judah, Isaiah explains: "Therefore said I, Look away from me; I will weep bitterly, labour not to comfort me, because of the spoiling of the daughter of my people". The opposite of love isn't so much hatred as indifference; and if we truly feel the wonder of our own forgiveness and salvation, we can never be indifferent to others' spiritual position but will instead do all we can to testify to them, being truly grieved in our hearts for their position before God.

How Isaiah Preached

Isaiah's Attitude To His Own Message

Reading through Isaiah, we find there are passages where Isaiah is simply stating "Thus says the Lord:"; others where he relays to us, perhaps in his own words, what the Lord has revealed to him; and others where we have Isaiah's interjections into the prophecy, his commentary, his laments, his appeals to those around him to repent. All these passages are inspired, but the mechanism of inspiration is working in different ways. Isaiah's conviction of his sinfulness and grasp of the reality of forgiveness led him to not be insensitive to the message which he preached; he wasn't, as it were, lamely standing on a street corner holding out religious pamphlets for anyone to take who may be interested, making a website and lamenting nobody looks at it; rather here was a man who wasn't passive to the message of which he was the medium. I love his interjections. Re-read his classic prediction of the coming Kingdom of God on earth in Is. 2:1-4, a direct "Thus says the Lord" statement- and then in Is. 2:5 he adds his comment: "O house of Israel, come and let us walk in the light of the Lord!"- 'Let's live that Kingdom life now, if *then* we will be walking in His ways, let's do so now; and so, therefore, repent!'. And reflecting upon that, Is. 2:6-9 records Isaiah's prayer for God to have mercy upon Israel, and Is. 2:10 is another appeal to Judah to repent. The good news of the Kingdom which we likewise preach ought to be eliciting a similar burning desire for others to repent and accept it; and fervent prayer that they will do so. There's another example of this in Is. 10:20-24. In the midst of prophesying on God's behalf about the remnant, Isaiah interjects a prayer of exclamation to God in Is. 10:22: "Though Your people [note the change of personal pronouns] be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall return!". Again in Is. 31:4-8, Isaiah prophecies of how God will preserve Jerusalem from her invaders, yet in the midst of the prophecy he interjects: "Turn ye unto him from whom ye have deeply revolted, O children of Israel!" (Is. 31:6). Likewise in the midst of a prophecy pronouncing "Woe!" upon Israel for their sins, Isaiah interjects: "O LORD, be gracious unto us; we have waited for thee: be thou their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble" (Is. 33:2). He had come close enough to God to know that even the prophetic words which he was uttering on God's behalf could be changed by repentance and prayer; for surely he had learnt the lesson provided by Moses and by Abraham as he pleaded for Sodom. Indeed in Is. 1:9,10 Isaiah states that Judah can expect Sodom's judgment, but he goes on to say that for the sake of a faithful remnant God would not treat Judah as Sodom- and yet that remnant was also left spiritually strong by grace. Isaiah felt he knew God well enough to interject after uttering a prophecy about the blessedness of God's people. Having stated from God that "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light", Isaiah interjects: "Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy!" (Is. 9:2,3).

Personal Testimony

The message which we preach is ultimately God's and not ours; just as Isaiah's words were Divine and not human. Yet this doesn't preclude our witness to His word having a personal element to it. Indeed, without this, our appeal to men will somehow lack powerful entreaty and credibility. For we aren't mere pieces of computer hardware reproducing God's message to others; that word must be made flesh in us, as it was in the Lord Jesus. We noted above that at times, Isaiah hears God's word and then relays it to his hearers; hence he says things like "For so the Lord said unto me" (Is. 18:4). He speaks of how God revealed things in his ears, and he now speaks those things to others (e.g. Is. 5:9; 21:10). One moment God speaks to Isaiah directly, and then addresses His people generally: "For though *thy* people [you singular- Isaiah's people] be as the sand of the sea... O *My* people that dwell in Zion, be no afraid..." (Is. 10:22,24). It was incumbent upon a prophet in this situation to

share that word faithfully and accurately (Jer. 23:28). At times Isaiah spoke a "Thus says the Lord" by as it were direct propulsion; in other passages, he shares what God had revealed to him, in his own way: "That which I have heard of the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, have I declared unto you" (Is. 21:10). This is the situation we find ourselves in too as we share God's word with others. For what we hear in the ear we are to teach upon the housetops (Mt. 10:27)- language which surely alludes to how Isaiah and the prophets heard God's word in their ear and then taught it to others (Is. 5:9; 50:4). But it's the human stamp which we leave upon it which, like a hallmark, will give it integrity and appeal to our hearers. This is why the commissioning vision of Isaiah 6 is alluded to throughout Isaiah- his personal conviction of sin and experience of forgiveness left a stamp upon his appeal on God's behalf to others to repent. Thus Isaiah sought that his audience should share in his experience of salvation, and thus the pronouns reflect how he as it were merges with them: "Behold, God is my [Isaiah's] salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord JEHOVAH is *my* strength and *my* song; he also is become *my* salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye [you plural- Judah] draw water out of the wells of salvation" (Is. 12:2,3). Their experience was to be as his; Isaiah aimed to become their representative.

Merging With God

Yet Isaiah not only merged with his audience; he was representative also of God. We like Isaiah are in that sense to be a bridge between God and man, identifying both with Him and with humanity, doing the work of the Lord Jesus in our own lives insofar as we manifest Him and are "in Him". As you read through Isaiah, try to work out who's speaking. At times it's God, other times it's Isaiah personally; and so often the personal pronouns become confused. Take Is. 55:6-9. Verses 6 and 7 are clearly Isaiah's appeal to Israel, speaking of God in the third person: "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon Him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon". But the passage goes straight on in verses 8 and 9: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways... so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts". Somehow the appeal of Isaiah personally becomes that of God personally- because God's spirit was within Isaiah. Isaiah sings a song about God and His vineyard, and how He did everything for it to bring forth good grapes; but then the pronouns change and this song becomes God Himself speaking to His people, remonstrating with them that they have no excuse for their lack of spiritual fruit considering all He has done for them (Is. 5:1-4). In the same way, musicians today may sing a song which God as it were takes over in order to speak to the heart of a person. If we are truly "walking in step with the Spirit", this same merger between God and man will occur in us too. Whilst not inspired in the sense Isaiah was, it will be natural and easy for God to work through us to appeal to others. As His word abides in us and we in Him, so His Spirit becomes ours and ours becomes His; we are His Son to this world.

Isaiah's Weakness

Like every truly motivated preacher, Isaiah's sense of inadequacy remained throughout his ministry. He had initially felt alienated from God by two factors- his own "unclean lips" and the fact he lived amongst a people of unclean lips (Is. 6:5-7). The Seraph touched his lips and assured him of purging from his own "unclean lips"; but no comment is made about his sense of guilt for living amongst an unclean people. This was simply because God doesn't operate the principle of guilt by association- he wasn't guilty on that count. And yet he took upon himself this false guilt. We have pointed out that he was able to appeal to Israel to repent and receive God's forgiveness on the basis that he himself had been purged from uncleanness; and yet the intensity of that conviction appears to have

wavered at times. In the midst of one prophecy of the coming Kingdom, Isaiah as it were breaks down with a sense of his own unworthiness: "From the uttermost part of the earth have we heard songs, even glory to the righteous. But I said, My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me!" (Is. 24:16). He had earlier said the same words: "Woe is me!" (Is. 6:5), and yet been assured of God's forgiveness. Although it doesn't justify our weakness, there's surely some human comfort in the fact that Isaiah had those moments of doubt in God's acceptance of him, despite all assurances; that lost intensity of certainty in salvation. Perhaps this was why God interjected into a prophecy He was dictating to Isaiah and warned him not to just go the way of the faithless people around him: "For the Lord spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people" (Is. 8:11). The fact God had to place "a strong hand" upon Isaiah may suggest that Isaiah wished to turn away from his ministry. In Is. 20:2, God has to tell Isaiah: "Go and loose the sackcloth from off thy loins, and put off thy shoe from thy foot" and then He sends him off to witness to Judah. There's no immediate explanation of why Isaiah was dressing in sackcloth- it could be that his self-obsession had led him into depression, or vice versa; and God was telling him to pull out of this and get out there and witness to people.

Indeed Is. 8:16-18 could be taken as Isaiah saying that he had decided not to teach his school of prophets any longer, but rather to just personally focus upon his own relationship with God: "Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples. And I will wait upon the LORD, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him". The next verse is however quoted in Heb. 2:13 about the Lord Jesus and His brethren being of the same nature: "Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts". The Hebrew writer therefore understood this statement to reflect an intense unity between Isaiah and his "children", be they his literal children [Immanuel and Mahershalalhashbaz] or his spiritual children. It seems to me that Immanuel could've been some kind of Messiah figure- but for whatever reason, he didn't live up to it and the prophecy was therefore given a greater application to the Lord Jesus. Likewise, the "children" Isaiah refers to in Is. 8:18 became the faithful children in Christ under the new covenant, according to how Heb. 2:13 quotes it.

Isaiah's Family

This leads on to the reflection that perhaps Isaiah's literal children didn't turn out as he had hoped nor as God had potentially enabled them to. As God's Spirit was so merged with that of Isaiah, it wouldn't be surprising if God's family experience with Israel was to an extent replicated in Isaiah's life. A major theme of Isaiah is that God's children were rebellious and didn't live up to His hopes of them (Is. 1:2; 30:1). Is. 8:2,3 records how Isaiah's child was to be a child of sign- Mahershalalhashbaz. However, Is. 8:18 states that Isaiah had children of sign, in the plural. It therefore seems reasonable to assume that Immanuel, the other child of sign predicted in the same section (Is. 7:14-16) was also Isaiah's. Although this prophesied child is interpreted in the New Testament as being the Lord Jesus, conceived of "the virgin" Mary, the prophesy must've had an immediate fulfillment in Isaiah's time- "For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings" (Is. 7:16). Isaiah and his wife, the virgin or "young woman" of Is. 7:14, are the ones who state: "Unto us a child is born, a son is given" (Is. 9:6,7). This was the standard birth announcement from proud parents. The child was destined to be some Messiah figure- and yet Isaiah's son didn't turn out like this and the prophecy came to have its true fulfillment in the Lord Jesus. Isaiah 53, the well known prophecy of Christ's death, resurrection and glorification in a faithful "seed" (Is. 53:12), was spoken in the first instance by Isaiah. He laments that none have believed his report, his preaching (Is. 53:1); but that Messiah too, the ultimate prophetic "servant of the Lord", would also be rejected; yet through this

Israel's sin would be purged and iniquity carried away, just as had happened to Isaiah at the commencement of his ministry in Isaiah 6. Isaiah thus becomes a significant paradigm for those who feel that their life's mission hasn't come to anything, their preaching hasn't been much responded to, and their kids haven't 'worked out'. Isaiah's aim and base motivation in these things was the glory of God. He was taught that in fact the desire of his heart would be worked out- but through Messiah. The way that the New Testament quotes his personal hopes for his son Immanuel and his comment about "I and the children whom God has given me" (Is. 8:18) and applies them all to the Lord Jesus is confirmation of this. And so what, therefore, if we ourselves achieve a merger of spirit with the Father as Isaiah did, feel and know His forgiveness and ultimate salvation, even if at times the intensity of our faith and feeling for these things wavers as Isaiah's did- and yet our preaching of these things to others, our attempts to raise our sons in this faith, hope and love doesn't work out? If our focus is truly in the Lord, as Isaiah's was, then ultimately we have not failed. For the desires of our heart, for His glory and not our own, and for the final redemption of God's Israel, will all ultimately be fulfilled in their essence. This is why Isaiah at times breaks out into such joy as he spoke forth the good news of God's coming Kingdom- for to him, as for God, the words of the Gospel were as good as already fulfilled. Even though before his eyes there was no evidence of the fulfillment of the prophecies, yet he could exclaim: " O LORD, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth" (Is. 25:1). The future prophecies were as good as done, and he rejoiced in that.

Chapter 9: Elijah

9.1 Elijah's Strength: Elijah And Prayer

Elijah bursts upon the scene in 1 Kings 17:1, describing the Lord as the One "Before whom I stand". 'Standing before the Lord' refers to prayer- Ps. 106:23; Ezra 9:15; Jer. 15:1; 18:20. To live a life standing before the Lord is to live a life of prayer. Hence David and Paul say that prayer can be continual- in that life becomes a lived out prayer, with the practice of living in the presence of God. And straight away we ask ourselves, in lives just as busy as those of David and Paul, whether our self-talk, our minute by minute inner consciousness, is "before the Lord"...or merely the sheer and utter vapidness of the 21st century mind.

Elijah really is the great example of believing that what we have prayed for, we have already received. He tells Ahab that he hears "the sound of a abundance of rain", well before the prayer for rain had even begun to be answered (1 Kings 18:41). Elijah announced that there was not to be dew nor rain but "according to my word" (1 Kings 17:1). Here is an example of being sure of God's will in what we pray for. If the Lord's words abide in us, then we will ask what *we* will and it will be done; yet John also records that if we ask according to *God's* will, it will be done for us. Our will and that of the Father come to co-incide as His word takes an ever deeper lodgment in our consciousness. And this is how close Elijah must have been to knowing the will of God. Elijah alludes to Dt. 28 in saying there would be no rain (and 1 Kings 19:14 forsaken thy covenant= Dt. 32)- therefore he could be so sure of being heard. His request that there be "no dew" was inspired by the prayers of Gideon and David, who had prayed just the same things (Jud. 6:37; 2 Sam.1:21; and 1 Kings 18:33 = Jud. 6:20). Likewise the two witnesses of the last days will be inspired in their turn by Elijah's example to pray that Heaven will be stopped. When it comes to prayer, there clearly is a

positive pattern of influence and example both amongst us and from our absorbing the spirit of countless Biblical examples. The righteous man ‘decrees a thing in his heart and it is done’ through his prayers (Job 22:28). The same Hebrew words for ‘according’ and ‘word’ occur in both 1 Kings 17:1 and 24: “There shall not be dew nor rain but according to my word...The word of the Lord in [according to] thy mouth”. Elijah’s word and will had become parallel with those of the Father. This was taken to the ultimate extent by the Lord, in whom the Father’s word was made flesh. But that same word slowly becomes flesh in us too. No longer do we request things that are not the Father’s will as through His word we become more attune to Him. Our experience of answered prayer becomes increasingly positive, reinforcing our faith in Him and our attention to prayerfulness. And this dovetails with our increasingly sensitive reading of His word daily. The Lord intended that we should all pray the prayer of command as Elijah did; for He taught that with faith, we should be able to tell a sycamore tree to be rooted up and planted in the sea (Lk. 17:6). He doesn’t advise that we pray to the Father that the tree, according to His will, be rooted up and transplanted. He wants us to come to so know the will of the Father that we can pray the prayer of direct command. And this is quite some challenge.

Elijah could be so sure his prayer would be heard because he knew that he was genuinely motivated. His reason for withholding the rain and dew was so that Israel would come to repentance (James 5:16-18)- perhaps through them perceiving that lack of rain was a sign that they had broken the covenant. In this case, Elijah was somewhat harsher than God Himself, who had not yet withdrawn rain from His people. Elijah “shut the heavens”, even though Israel rejected him at that time (Lk. 4:25,26). Their rejection of him is unrecorded in the Kings record, but we are left to reflect upon the wonder of the fact that Elijah’s response to rejection was not to merely hurt back, but to earnestly seek their restoration to God. He “prayed in his prayer” (James 5:17 Gk.)- there was a deep prayer going on within his prayer, words and feelings within words- the prayer of the very inner soul. This was how much he sought their repentance. The James passage sets Elijah up as a pattern for our prayer for our wayward brethren. He really is our pattern here. He clearly saw prayer as requiring much effort; and the way he prays at the time of the evening sacrifice on Horeb suggests that he saw prayer as a sacrifice (1 Kings 18:36).

This kind of faith in prayer enables a believer to truly follow the Lord’s exhortation to ask for things and believe and feel that we have already received them. Elijah chose the terms of the contest on Carmel to be an answer by fire- for Baal was originally the fire god. Yet Elijah appears utterly certain that God will answer by a bolt of fire, without having asked Him first. He asks God to “answer me” (1 Kings 18:37 NIV) without specifically requesting for fire to be sent down; he brings the situation before God and asks Him to ‘answer’ that situation. And this is why so many of David’s prayers are more a bringing of the situation before God, than a specific request for answers. In 1 Kings 18:41, Elijah tells Ahab that there is a “*sound*” of rain coming. The same word has just been used earlier, translated as “voice” (1 Kings 18:29) in the context of there being a voice / answer to prayer. So Elijah is saying that there is an answer speaking of much rain to come. There was no sign of rain coming at the time when he started praying, until the little cloud arose. But he calmly tells Ahab that there is a sound / answer of rain coming. Elijah believed in the answer coming before he prayed; he had a *very* firm faith. And thus ahead of time he told Ahab to eat and drink because of it [had Ahab been fasting? If so, to Yahweh or Baal?]. But all this required quite some passion in prayer. 1 Kings 18:42 says that he *cast himself* down in prayer. The word occurs only in 2 Kings 4:34,35, as if it was Elijah’s example which inspired Elisha likewise to cast himself down [AV “stretch”] upon the child. The implication is that Elisha did so in prayer; and in passing, we wonder whether this implies that Elijah’s stretching himself upon another child, although a different Hebrew word, was also in prayer. Again we see that Elijah’s prayerful example inspired another. Our

attitude to prayer is so easily influential upon others, and we ourselves are likewise easily influenced. It should be no shame nor embarrassment to us to instantly break into prayer, nor to kneel down to further our intensity in prayer, regardless of the social embarrassment this may involve in some cultures. But I have to ask: Do we *cast ourselves down* in prayer as Elijah?

Elijah was evidently in touch with God and knew His will. At the end, he is described as the charioteer of the cherubim; for his prayers had controlled their direction. This really is how much God is willing to be influenced by our prayers. Elijah had a very developed sense of how God works with us. Thus he asks God to make Israel know how that He “didst turn back their heart” (1 Kings 18:37 RVmg.), he wanted them to know how that potentially, God had made their return to Him possible; Elijah perceived that God may prepare something in prospect that never gets realized in practice because of human weakness [and this should be an endless inspiration to us too]. Yet despite this union with the Father, this didn’t preclude him questioning God. Thus in 1 Kings 17:20, in the midst of another tremendously powerful prayer, Elijah remonstrates with God: ‘Have You brought evil...?’. The Hebrew for ‘evil’ usually means evil in the sense of sin- ‘have You brought the result of sin...on her as well as upon this people?’. This is all part of a passionate, living relationship with a living God. And perhaps the way that the first six prayers of Elijah for rain went unanswered, his need to pray three times for the child to resurrect, were all part of God teaching Elijah that no matter how close we are to Him, we have no right to expect automatic answers to prayer, even if they are according to God’s will.

For all Elijah’s weaknesses which we may dwell on in later sections, his basic faith and prayerfulness must never be lost sight of. His ascension to Heaven has remarkable similarities with that of the Lord- a group of men sent to take him; Elisha cp. Peter saying ‘I will not deny thee’ (2 Kings 2:2 Heb.); a cloud of Angels receive him; men stand watching on earth; the Holy Spirit given on his ascension...

Further Implications

As an aside, it’s worth reflecting how the drought brought about by Elijah’s prayer likely affected people other than Israel, in the same way as the famine which brought Joseph’s brothers to Egypt affected many other people. The whole of God’s purpose with this earth is centred around His people; we are *so* important to Him. I have no doubt that Communism fell in Eastern Europe in the inexplicably quick way that it did, simply because a few of us wanted to preach there; and thousands heard the Gospel and were baptized as a result of it. This is how important we are to God!

“When Jesus saw the faith of *the friends* , He said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, *thy* sins be forgiven *thee*” (Mk. 2:5). That man was healed for the sake of the faith of others. The widow woman’s son was resurrected because God heard Elijah’s faithful prayer (1 Kings 17:22); and thus Heb. 11:35 alludes to this incident by saying that through faith- in this case, the faith of Elijah, a third party- women received their dead raised to life. The Centurion’s servant was healed for the sake of *his* faith; Jairus’ daughter was healed because of *his* faith (Mk. 5:36).

9.2 Elijah In Weakness

Despite Elijah’s absolutely undoubted faith, spiritual perception and prayerfulness, there is a painfully apparent weaker side to him as we analyze the records. His weakness was in despising others, in being spiritually self-centred in terms of considering he alone was in relationship with

God, and in justifying his native anger and disagreement with others as all part of a spirituality which God expects of the righteous. And this sense that we get is Biblically supported.

9.2.1 Fire From Heaven

We become suspicious of Elijah's motives when we read of him asking God to show all Israel "*That I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things*" (1 Kings 18:36). "That I...that I..." sounds like there was a large element of self-justification in his spirituality, just as there can be in our, e.g., desiring to prove someone else wrong and ourselves right, to win a debate, to abuse our superior Bible knowledge... The incident in 2 Kings 1:10 of calling fire down from Heaven is specifically rebuked by the Lord Jesus as not being of *His Spirit* (Lk. 9:54,55). And He rebukes His followers for assuming that their natural prejudice against others can be justified by an appeal to Elijah's example. When Elijah was asked to "come down" from the hill, he responds by saying that *fire* would come down (2 Kings 1:9,10); he saw himself as the fire / judgment of God. Yet behind that bold façade was a very insecure man; for the Angel had to assure him not to fear, and to go down with the third captain (2 Kings 1:15). Beneath his apparent zeal for Yahweh, Elijah was basically fearful, of himself, of others, even perhaps of God. So often, fear is the basic reason for our failures and misperceptions and harsh judgments. His motives were mixed; he clearly saw the similarity with how he had called fire down to consume the sacrifice on Carmel, in order to convert Israel back to God. But he clearly failed to see the value of those 100 lives he had now taken by doing the same thing in consuming people. The value and meaning of persons was lost on him. All he could think of was fighting apostasy and judging it. Elijah called the fire down in evident allusion to how fire came down from the Lord to destroy Nadab and Abihu and also Sodom (Lev. 10:2; Gen. 19:24). He did the wrong thing from wrong motives and yet he Biblically justified it- for the prophets themselves saw an apostate Israel as being like Sodom (Is. 1:10). Now this is probably how most Christians sin. We rarely harden ourselves and sin in willful defiance. In the heat of the moment the 'devil' of our own self-talk persuades us to find a pseudo-spiritual justification for actions which only later we reflect were wrong. The Lord's wilderness temptations were all about doing justifiable things for wrong motives, based on a self-justifying recollection of Bible passages. And this in essence is how it is with most of our failures. The Lord's victory and Elijah's failure should serve to stop us in our tracks in careful and sustained self-examination.

The Lord's comment that He had "not come to *destroy men's lives* but to *save them*" (Lk. 9:56) must surely be connected with what He has just said: "Whosoever will *save his life* shall *lose* [s.w. "*destroy*"] it" and vice versa (Lk. 9:24,25). The three words *save, life, lose / destroy* are all the same. There is surely a connection of thought here. But what is the Lord saying through it? The disciples like Elijah would have had their prayers heard- the fire of destruction could have come. But the Lord says that they don't know the type of spirit they are of. His Spirit is one of saving and not destruction. Men destroy *themselves* by seeking to save themselves without Him. This is why the Lord could say that He Himself judged / condemned no man- each rejected man will have condemned himself. The same point is actually made within the Elijah story too. In 1 Kings 18:28 the prophets of Baal worshipped "*after their manner*"- a Hebrew word normally translated 296 times "judgment"; they judged / condemned themselves, rather than needing Elijah to do so. And the word translated "cut" essentially means 'to gather'. They gathered themselves together to condemnation and poured out their own blood. "Knives and lancets" is a phrase normally translated "swords and spears". They lived out judgment upon themselves rather than Elijah needing to condemn them.

Elijah like the disciples thought that he was the judge on God's behalf, and that he was justified in calling down fire, evocative as that was of the way God Himself judges sinners. But Jesus puts it all another way- our focus, if we have His spirit, should be on saving people by getting them to destroy / lose their own fleshly lives through following Him. Jn. 12:25,26 makes the same point- he who loves his life *loses* / *destroys* it, but he who picks up the cross and follows Jesus will *save* it. Our absolute focus must be on the salvation of others through helping them condemn / destroy / lose themselves for the Lord's sake; and we achieve this by following Jesus in the life of the cross, not by destroying others ourselves. The Lord came to save not destroy; to save the lost / destroyed (Lk. 6:9; 19:10- the same words are used; note how this theme is developed specifically by Luke). But He did this through getting people to destroy their lives. And He begged- and begs- His followers to have His spirit / attitude in all this. And His point was that Elijah didn't have His Spirit. Note that God worked with Elijah- He heard his prayers. Elijah like the disciples had the "Spirit", the power that God was willing to let them have; and yet the Spirit of Jesus is more than raw power. And so it could be said of us, that we so often know not what manner of spirit we are of. We may be correctly reflecting the judgment of God, we may have Biblical justification for the hard line we adopt; but this doesn't mean that we fully have the spirit of Christ. Yet as with Elijah, the fact our prayers are heard, that Scripture appears to back us, can make us blind to such major insufficiencies in our spirituality. We have a choice in how we respond to others' weakness; there are different levels of response. "If thy brother sin against thee", the Lord said- we can ultimately take others with us and then treat him as a Gentile or tax collector. But He continues- if our brother sin against us, we should forgive to an unlimited extent. This is the higher level of response to your brother's weakness. Elijah and the disciples took the first of those options, as many of us do; but in doing so we so easily forget what manner of spirit we are of; for we are to be of the spirit of Christ, not Elijah. And His attitude / spirit was most definitely to save rather than to destroy, to share table fellowship rather than disassociate... The Lord Jesus purposefully inverted the common assumption that the duty of a righteous man was to condemn the sinners. When He said that there is much joy in Heaven over one sinner that repents (Lk. 15:10), the Lord was purposefully inverting the common contemporary Jewish saying that there was much joy in Heaven whenever one sinner is destroyed in judgment ⁽¹⁾. His desire is to seek to save rather than to destroy. And Elijah had not attained to this spirit of Christ when he called fire down from Heaven.

The repeated "What doest thou here, Elijah?" (1 Kings 19:13) implies that it was wrong for Elijah to have been living in the cave on Horeb / Sinai. It seems from 1 Kings 19:8 that he himself chose to go there; dwelling in a clift / cave of the rock is reminiscent of Moses in Sinai in Ex. 34. But Moses was praying for Israel, whereas Elijah was interceding against them, Paul tells us. Could it even be that Elijah went down there to Sinai with the idea of somehow asking that a new Israel be formed out of him, as God had offered Moses? Whether this be so or not, the clear implication is that God was not pleased with what Elijah was doing there. When asked what he was doing, he just repeats verbatim his prayer of intercession against Israel. So on one hand, he shouldn't have been praying that prayer. On the other, he was heard- for God's response is to tell him to annoint Jehu, Hazael and Elisha to destroy apostate Israel, even though He would preserve the 7,000 remnant. So again we see the same theme with Elijah- his undoubted faith in prayer is recognized; he prays for judgment on Israel in a way that is not altogether wrong, and yet sadly differs from the higher spirit of grace which there is in Christ. It is interesting to compare Elijah's attitude with how Elisha weeps tears over Hazael, knowing how much damage he is going to do to Israel in response to Elijah's prayer (2 Kings 8:12). Yet significantly, Elijah doesn't actually do what he is told; he doesn't annoint Jehu nor Hazael to destroy Israel (2 Kings 9:3). It's hard to decide whether this was disobedience or rather an awkward realization that he had been praying with too harsh a spirit for something that would have been best left to God. It's such a warning.

The idea of fire from Heaven is of course found in the Lord's teaching in Lk. 12:49-54, where He associates it with division in the brotherhood. And the Lord went on to say that the Pharisees could interpret a cloud arising in the West as a sign that rain was coming, but they could not forgive their brethren, which was what was essential (Lk. 12:54). This just has to be a reference to Elijah, who saw a cloud arising from the West as a sign of rain. The Lord is, it seems, sadly associating Elijah with the Pharisees. And yet... despite all this, Jesus likens Himself to Elijah. Jesus sent fire on earth as Elijah did (Lk. 12:49). And the context of the Lk. 9:54 reference to Elijah is that the Lord's time had come that he should be "received up", and "he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem" (Lk. 9:51). This is all very much the language of Elijah (2 Kings 2:1). And elsewhere Jesus quotes Elijah's words "Thy son liveth" (1 Kings 17:23 = Jn. 4:50-53). What this shows is that the Lord saw what was good in Elijah, and He didn't separate Himself from someone who didn't have His Spirit. He simply wanted His followers to learn better from him.

Elijah prayed to God against Israel when he told Him that he alone was left faithful- i.e. he was asking God to destroy the nation now (Rom. 11:2,3). Note in passing that our essential feelings are read by the Father as prayers. Elijah's description of himself in this prayer as being very jealous / zealous for God (1 Kings 19:10,14) is an allusion of his to Phinehas, whose zeal in destroying the apostate in Israel saved the nation (Num. 25:11,13). But Elijah is praying against Israel, for their total destruction, and making only a surface level allusion back to Phinehas. And likewise, much of the unbrotherly behaviour that has divided our own community has been justified by half-baked allusions to Biblical examples of 'defending the faith'. God had sought to gently teach Elijah his need for others when He told Elijah to go to the widow woman in Zarephath who would "sustain thee" (1 Kings 17:9); it worked out that Elijah sustained *her*. And he must have reflected upon this. But perhaps, therefore, God's intention was that *spiritually*, his experience with that woman would sustain *him*.

God's response was that He had "left" 7,000 others in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal. The Hebrew for "left" can imply that God had preserved potentially the 7,000- or, that there simply were 7,000 faithful right then in Israel. Yet Elijah clearly discounted them. The more God sought to teach Elijah that he really was not alone, that his view of others was far too dismissive, the more Elijah became almost bitter with God. The conversion of Israel on Carmel turned out, I suggest, a surprise for Elijah. He wasn't expecting them to start chanting "El is Yah", "The Lord, He is the God". They were chanting his name- Elijah. But he turns and runs to Jezreel, and then goes out into the desert and becomes suicidal. Effectively he preferred the life of the lonely spiritual hero, with the people in apostasy; and there are many such examples of brethren who prefer a life of self-imposed exile because of the supposed errors of God's people- no matter what good there is amongst their brethren. And actually, deny it as we may, we all have an element of this deep within us. He announces that "it is enough...take away my life" (1 Kings 19:4). "Enough" is the same Hebrew word picked up and used by the Angel- "the way is *too great* ['enough'] for thee" (1 Kings 19:7), and he does eventually eat and not die, living life now only thanks to the provision of food by Angels, going on a 40 day wilderness journey towards Sinai. All this of course is replete with reference to Israel's wilderness journey, during which they only survived by eating "Angel's food", the food provided by Angels (Ps. 78:25). And as Elijah well knew, that generation were sinful and worshipped the idols they had smuggled out of Egypt with them. To stay alive, he had to eat that food and go in that miraculously provided strength. And so he was *forced* to see the similarity between himself and rebellious Israel in the wilderness. Likewise earlier God had fed him through the medium of the unclean raven, and the unclean Gentile woman. But Elijah had had enough of these pointed digs, and he asks God to take his life away- alluding to how Jezebel wanted to do this, as if trying to pressurize God into taking away his life rather than Jezebel (1 Kings 19:4, 10).

But God wanted to teach Elijah still. He showed him that it wasn't the big noise of the earthquake, wind and fire that was how He worked. In 1 Kings 19:20 God Almighty spoke to the man Elijah in a still [Heb. whispering] small [s.w. thin Lev. 13:30; beaten small Lev. 16:12; dwarf Lev. 21:20] voice. The awesome God of Sinai spoke in the whispering voice of a dwarf, which compared to Elijah's loud voice. This is not only an essay in the humility of God. It is an essay in how God so earnestly seeks to persuade His children that He works in the small, humble way. And this is contrasted with the loud, booming voice and personality of Elijah. And it isn't what God wants. Here there is a lesson for any loud mouthed, self-confident, razzamatazz way of presenting the Gospel; it just isn't to be done. For this is not how God works. And thus in 1 Kings 19:13 the question comes: "*What does thou here Elijah*" - literally the text reads: "Elijah, Elijah, Elijah". The three repeats of his name in the Hebrew text connect with the earthquake, wind and fire, and Elijah's triple repeating of the same prepared statement. In his bitterness, Elijah sought to cut himself off from all consideration of his possibility of being wrong, or sensibly dialoguing with the Father. He just repeats the same words three times, as meaninglessly as the earthquake, wind and fire. Elijah hid his face in his mantle rather than face up to the true glory of God, the true fire from Heaven. The only other time Elijah sees the glory of God he threw away his mantle- as if he finally recognized he had been shielding himself from the real reality of it so that he could seek his own glory? The glory of God is His Name and character. To face up to this, believing it rather than merely knowing it, will bring us to repentance and a real facing up to the reality that we are truly not better than anyone else, in the light of the surpassing excellence of His glory. And Elijah just didn't want to face up to it, just as we can not want to face up to the realities of what we know.

And Elijah continues his miserable self-justification. He laments in 1 Kings 19:14 that Israel had "thrown down" Yahweh's altars, perhaps pointing the contrast with the way he threw himself down in prayer to Yahweh. The same word is used in Ex. 23:24 about throwing down pagan altars. Elijah was saying that they treated Yahweh's altars as if they were pagan. But is there any evidence they ever rejected Yahweh like this? Is not Elijah imputing motives to them? Derelict altars of Yahweh- the "high places" which they were repeatedly criticized for- Elijah interpreted as thrown down. To throw them down was a good thing if done from the right motives. But Elijah was in a mindset of seeing and imagining the very worst of his brethren. 1 Kings 19:19 then goes straight on to explain Elijah's rejection as a prophet in the long term. Perhaps this comes where it does in the record to show that reason for God's rejection of Elijah as prophet was that he didn't recognize his brethren. And straight after this 1 Kings 19:20 records how Elijah responded to one who wanted to follow him but had to return home: "go back". Jesus makes an allusion here when He says that if anyone wants to follow Him but firstly must go home, then such a person is unworthy of Him. He shows by this that He expects more of us than Elijah did; He is a more demanding Lord than Elijah, precisely because He is the more gracious.

Notes

(1) Cited in William Barclay, *God's Young Church* (Edinburgh: St. Andrew's Press, 1990 ed.), p. 41.

9.2.2 Playing God

Elijah said that there would be no rain " but according to *my word*" (1 Kings 17:1). His faith was undoubtedly based upon being attune to the will of God and His ways of working with His people, to the extent that he knew that because the word abided in him, he could ask what he wanted and it

would be heard, because he asked according to God's will. But when the time comes for rain, we read that " the word of the Lord [not Elijah's word] came to Elijah...saying...I will send rain upon the earth" (1 Kings 18:1).

When Elijah is ordered by the captain of 50 to "come down", Elijah responds by saying "let fire come down" (2 Kings 1:9,10). Elijah sees himself as the fire sent from God; he associates himself directly with God and His judgments. He hadn't learnt the lesson that God wasn't in the fire but in the small voice. The captain wanted Elijah to come down from the high hill (cp. Heaven), so Elijah calls fire to come down from Heaven. He sees himself as the fire, as God coming down. He had the wrong attitude and yet God still heard his prayers; God worked with Elijah as Elijah wanted. And so we perceive the subtleties of a man's relationship with God. Prayer may be answered, and the extent of Elijah's faith in 'commanding' the fire to come down is indeed awesome, but we may even then still be 'playing God' in a wrong way. This playing of God, this over certainty that God was behind him, led Elijah into some arrogance. We read in 1 Kings 17:13 how he asked the widow woman to *first* feed him, and *after* feed herself and her son. The Hebrew word translated "after" is that translated "last"- 'put me first and yourself last', Elijah is saying. Wasn't this arrogant? He was so sure he was manifesting God that he could demand that she put him first and herself last. But God *is* demanding, and yes He worked through Elijah. But one does get the sense that Elijah felt *he* should be put first. God can be demanding, but we don't have the same right to be upon others. 1 Kings 17:11 in Hebrew has Elijah asking the woman: 'Bring me a *handful* of bread'- and she replies that she has only a *handful* of flour (1 Kings 17:12). Yet even this is demanded of her. In passing note that her "meal in a *barrel*" (1 Kings 17:12) uses a Hebrew term which really means a pitcher. The idea is of a handful of meal in a very large container; it's an eloquent picture of her poverty, and how she was down to the last little bit of flour in a large container that was once full. And the Lord through Elijah demanded this of her, that He might save her.

In 1 Kings 21:21 Elijah simply announces to Ahab: "Behold I will bring evil upon thee...". We expect this to be prefaced by a "Thus saith the Lord"- but Elijah was so close to God he assumed he was speaking directly from Him. And yet Elijah doesn't repeat what God had told him to say in v. 19. Was he too familiar with God? Assuming he knew God's will and words? But it must be said that he improves- in 2 Kings 1:6 he says that what he says is the word of Yahweh, and he repeats verbatim what he was told to say. We too know God's word. We know the Bible text well. But this can lead to an assumption that we speak for God; that we must be right in all our attitudes and positions we adopt on issues.

One of Elijah's problems was that because he spoke the truth, God confirmed his words; but this didn't mean that Elijah himself was always morally acceptable to God. Thus Ahab accuses Elijah of being the one who troubles Israel, like Achan, for whose sake many of the people suffered. Elijah replies that it is Ahab who is the troubler of Israel, the Achan character. And he lived up to this, for in his days they sort to rebuild Jericho, and the curse associated with Achan came true at that time (1 Kings 16:34). Elijah's words were justified, just as the truth we speak to those around us may be- because it is the truth of God. But this doesn't of itself mean that we are right before God personally, nor does it mean that we can in any way presume to 'play God'.

Another example of Elijah playing God is when he proposes the contest on Carmel- and then claims that he did all that at God's command (1 Kings 18:36). And yet there's no record of any such word from the Lord to him. He appears to have set it all up at his initiative- and then assumed that actually God had told him to do so and that God would respond as he expected. We can so very easily do the same. And yet- despite all that, he had undoubted faith, and God rewarded that faith, despite Elijah's

crude sarcasm about Baal being in the rest room (1 Kings 18:27). God didn't give up working with Elijah, and Elijah still had a relationship with God. And this is how we have to see those brethren whom we perceive as arrogant and so terribly deficient in the spirit of Christ. When Elijah demands that the people chose which lord they will serve- Baal [= 'lord'] or Yahweh, he is really getting to the very crux of spirituality- for truly, there can be no halting between the two opinions of serving Baal and serving Yahweh. The Lord Jesus surely based His words of Lk. 16:13 on those of Elijah in 1 Kings 18:21: "No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon". So although on one hand the Lord Jesus Himself quotes Elijah's 'truth' approvingly, there is evidence galore that at the very same time, Elijah's attitudes were far from Christ-like, as we will show below. At the very same time, Elijah mocks the Baal worshippers, teasing them to shout louder, because maybe their god has gone 'in a journey'- a Hebraism for 'gone to the toilet' (1 Kings 18:27). This kind of mockery and crudeness is surely not how the Father and Son would have us act. Yet Elijah did this whilst at the same time deeply believing the fire would come down, and bringing it down by his faith. And saying other words which were alluded to with deep approval by the Lord. Elijah's mocking attitude is also shown by the way in which he demands they find him four barrels of water- on the top of a mountain, after a major three and a half year drought (1 Kings 18:33). Presumably they took the water from the sea at the bottom of the mountain- and thus Elijah's sacrifice would be offered with salt. He was strictly obedient to the requirements for sacrifice- yet amidst an abusive, self-justifying mindset. The very possession of truth can take our attention away from our need for self-examination and right attitudes towards others. In this lies one of our most subtle temptations.

9.2.3 Elijah And Others

Elijah purposefully set up the contest with the Baal worshippers so that he was alone against so many Baal worshippers; he rejoices almost that "ye are many" (1 Kings 18:25). He didn't invite any other worshippers of Yahweh; he was convinced that it was him against the world / the rest of the ecclesia. When we read Elijah inviting all the prophets of Baal to be gathered to Carmel, we expect him to match this by inviting the prophets of Yahweh- for we have just read that Obadiah hid 100 of them in a cave. But Elijah doesn't. He asks Ahab to call "all Israel" there- he wanted to set himself up as alone against all Israel. Elijah almost seems to have revelled in assuming *all* Israel were apostate when he met them on Carmel. " Call ye on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the Lord" (1 Kings 18:24) definitely sounds as if he was setting himself up against them. And thus he asks God to make all Israel know Him (1 Kings 18:37). Elijah's hyper sensitivity to he alone being acceptable before God is perhaps shown in the way he repairs the Lord's altar and then himself builds another one (1 Kings 18:30-32). It was as if he felt some kind of guilt by association- he could only serve Yahweh on the altar of his own making. Perhaps he justified it by suspecting that the first altar has been built contrary to Mosaic law, perhaps an iron tool had been used on it...and so, Elijah had to go his own way. And how often have our brethren done this. Nothing is any good unless we ourselves are doing it; we can't be made guilty by association with the work of others whom we doubt. God tried to correct Elijah's despal of the other prophets of the Lord. Elijah was in a cave, and was also fed bread and water- just as the other prophets were (1 Kings 18:4). And yet Elijah didn't see, or didn't want to see, that connection- after having been reminded of this experience of the other prophets, he claims that "I, even I only, remain a prophet of the Lord" (1 Kings 18:22)- he wrongly believed that all other valid prophets had been slain (1 Kings 19:10). In fact the record shows how that during Elijah's lifetime there were other prophets of Yahweh active in His service (1 Kings 20:13,35). And yet the lesson is that God still works through the conceited,

the spiritually superior, those who despise their brethren. God didn't give up on Elijah because he was like this, and neither should we give up in our relationship with such brethren.

Elijah's focus on Israel's sinfulness may have been tainted with the syndrome of pulling others down to make yourself look taller. He says repeatedly: " I have been very jealous for the Lord... *for* the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant...and I, even I only, am left" (1 Kings 19:10). It's as if he felt that his zeal [s.w. " jealous"] was in the fact they were apostate and he wasn't. His zeal for the Lord was, he reasoned, in being the only one left when they had all quit. And this basic mistake has hamstrung us- you are righteous, zealous, a defender of the Faith, if you merely hold on to a certain academic proposition of truth which others are rumoured or assumed to have apostasized from. Zeal for the Lord surely involves infinitely more than this. Elijah prayed his prayer from the cave mouth, protesting his own righteousness as he cowered before the glory of the Lord. Yet the same word occurs in Is. 2:12,13, where apostate Israel will hurl away their idols and then cower in a cleft / cave of the rock before the presence of Yahweh's glory. The connection perhaps shows that although Elijah was so proudly not an idolator, yet his pride and arrogance was essentially the same. On one hand Elijah may have gloried in the similarities between his position and that of Moses, when God's glory passed by him in the cleft of the rock; and yet Moses too was effectively being rebuked and humbled for his pride.

9-2-4 Elijah And Moses

When he was told to go and stand upon mount Horeb [i.e. Sinai] before the Lord, this was evidently seeking to invite him to see himself as Moses (1 Kings 19:11 = Ex. 24:12; 34:12). Consider the following parallels:

Elijah as a Type of Moses

Confronted Ahab (1 Kings 17:1)	Confronted Pharaoh (Exod. 5:1)
Fled into the wilderness fearing for his life (1 Kings 19:3)	Fled into the wilderness fearing for his life (Exod. 2:15)
Miraculously fed "...bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening..." (1 Kings 17:6)	Miraculously fed "...meat to eat in the evening, and bread to the full in the morning..." (Exod. 16:8, 12)
Spoke authoritatively for the Lord in his own name (1 Kings 17:1)	Spoke authoritatively for the Lord in his own name (Deut. 5:1)
Gathered all Israel to Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:19)	Gathered all Israel to Mount Sinai (Exod. 19:17)
Combated the prophets of Ba'al (1 Kings 18:20-40)	Combated the magicians of Pharaoh (Exod. 7:8-13, 20-22; 8:1-7)

Successful in his intercession for Israel to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel (1 Kings 18:36-39)

Elijah took twelve stones at Carmel “...according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob...” (1 Kings 18:30-32)

The Lord accepted Elijah’s offering by sending fire from heaven and consuming it completely. The people threw themselves down on their faces. (1 Kings 18:36-39)

By Elijah’s authority 3 000 idolatrous prophets were slain (1 Kings 18:40)

After killing the prophets of Ba’al Elijah climbed Carmel to pray. (1 Kings 18:42)

Went without food for forty days and forty nights (1 Kings 19:8)

Elijah (re)commissioned at Horeb (=Sinai) (1 Kings 19)

Elijah was in “the cave” on Horeb (=Sinai) when the Lord “passed by” (1 Kings 19: 9-11)

Elijah saw storm, wind, an earthquake and fire upon Horeb (=Sinai). (1 Kings 19:11-12)

Prayed that he might die. (1 Kings 19:1-4)

The Lord brought down fire from heaven upon his enemies. (2 Kings 1:9-12)

Elijah parted the waters of the Jordan by striking the waters with his cloak and passed over on dry ground. (2 Kings 2:8)

His successor was one who had served him and came to resemble him in many ways, parting the waters of the Jordan as he had. (2 Kings 2)

Successful in his intercession for Israel to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel (Exod. 32:11-14)

Moses had twelve pillars set up at Sinai “...corresponding to the twelve tribes of Israel...” (Exod. 24:4)

The Lord accepted Moses and Aaron’s offering by sending fire from heaven and consuming it completely. The people threw themselves down on their faces. (Lev. 9:22-24)

By Moses’ authority 3 000 idolaters were slain (Exod. 32:25-29)

After killing the idolaters Moses climbed Sinai to pray (Exod. 32:30)

Went without food for forty days and forty nights (Exod. 34:38; Deut. 9:9)

Moses commissioned at Sinai (Exod. 3)

Moses was hidden “in the cleft of the rock” when the Lord passed by Sinai. (Exod. 33:21-23)

Moses saw storm, wind, an earthquake and fire upon Sinai. (Exod. 19:16-20; 20:18; Deut. 4:11; 5:22-27).

Prayed that he might die. (Num. 11:10-15).

The Lord brought down fire from heaven upon those who rebelled against him. (Num. 16; cf. Lev. 10:1-3)

Moses parted the waters of the Red Sea by stretching out his staff and passed over on dry ground. (Exod. 14:16, 21-22)

His successor was one who had served him and came to resemble him in many ways, parting the waters of the Jordan as he had the Red Sea. (Josh. 3)

Was taken away in the Transjordan. (2 Kings 2:9-11)

Died in the Transjordan. (Deut. 34:5)

Mysteriously translated (2 Kings 9-18)

Died mysteriously and buried in a valley, but his burial place was unknown. (Deut. 34:6)

Table based upon Allison, Dale C. *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993) pp. 40-42.

The point of these similarities was that the Angel wanted Elijah to be like Moses; to pray for the peoples' salvation, to return to the people and lead them and teach them. Moses had begged for God's mercy for His people; but Elijah was so full of self-justification that he prayed *against* Israel. And so with us, we are potentially led into situations where we are to discern the similarities between us and Bible characters; we are set up with opportunities to respond in a way that reflects how we have learnt the lessons from them. The way the Lord Jesus perceived this in His wilderness temptations is a great example.

9.3 How God Worked With Elijah

God knew all Elijah's weakness as He knows ours, and He perceives them far better than we do. And He actively worked with Elijah to bring him to a greater perception of Him. 1 Kings 21:29 has Elijah being told by God that Ahab "humbleth himself *before me*". Yet Elijah also lived a life "before the Lord" (1 Kings 17:1); it's as if God was trying to get Elijah to see himself in a similar position to Ahab. Living "before the Lord" is not only about faith in prayer and being aware of God. It's also about being contrite before our Father, aware of our own very personal spiritual desperation. And it was this humility which Elijah lacked. And the Father sought to teach him it by drawing a similarity between Elijah and the man whom he spiritually despised- Ahab. In many Christian lives, we are much more spiritual than others around us. Yet we may be lead to perceive that actually we are in essence no better than those to whom we consider ourselves so spiritually superior. When the Lord passed by, there was a whirlwind which broke "in pieces the rocks *before the Lord*" (1 Kings 19:11). Yet it was Elijah who described himself as the one who stood before the Lord- and even prided himself on this (1 Kings 17:1). He was the rock being broken in pieces by the display of God's glory. And insofar as we too meditate upon the glory of His character, the attributes outlined in, e.g., Ex. 34:4-6, we likewise will be broken men and women. The "earthquake" is the same word found in Ez. 3:12,13 about a theophany / passing of the cherubim chariot. That whole display of God's physical glory was intended to stop Elijah just repeating his prepared statement [he says the same thing 3 times]. Grasping the wonder of who God really and essentially is can and must shake us from the mediocrity of entrenched positions, of forms of expressing and understanding our faith which are mere set formulas...

The whole incident on Horeb was to make Elijah see the supremacy of the still small voice; that it is in humble, quiet service rather than fiery judgment of others that the essence of God and spirituality is to be found. But God had prepared Elijah for this earlier. Elijah had to hide by the brook Cherith (1 Kings 17:3) for three and a half years (Lk. 4:25,26). Elijah was characterized by wearing a hairy garment like sackcloth (2 Kings 1:8 RV). In Rev. 11:3,6 we meet another Elijah figure- also clothed in sackcloth, with the power to bring fire down from Heaven, who for three and a half

years...prophesies / preaches. We would expect Elijah to have been preaching during his time hidden by Cherith- but there is not a word of this in the record. Could it not be that the Father wishes to show us what He was then trying to teach Elijah- that the essential prophetic witness is through us being as we are, the still small voice of witness through example...? It is also significant that the triumph on Horeb involved making an offering on an altar of Yahweh which was in one of the "high places" (1 Kings 18:30)- whereas Israel were repeatedly criticized for offering on these "high places" and not in Jerusalem. Elijah even criticizes Israel for throwing down these "high places" altars of Yahweh (1 Kings 19:10,14). Surely Elijah knew that the use of the high places was not what Yahweh ideally wanted; and yet he was driven to use a high place in this way. And with us, God will work through circumstances to remove from us the crutches of mere religion, to challenge the essence of our faith and relationship with Him. The way Ezekiel had to eat unclean food and defile himself is another such example.

Elijah evidently didn't have too positive a view of anyone apart from himself- and that included faithful Obadiah. Obadiah repeatedly calls Elijah "my Lord" and describes himself as "thy servant"; but Elijah responds to this by calling Obadiah the servant of Ahab- he tells him to go and tell "thy Lord", i.e. Ahab (1 Kings 18:7-14). Elijah is insisting that he and Obadiah have nothing in common- Obadiah serves Ahab, and he is nothing to do with Elijah. 'Obadiah' means 'servant of Yahweh'- the name surely reflects very faithful parents to have called him that at the time of the Baal cult. But Elijah insists that Obadiah is really a servant of Ahab, not of Yahweh. The fact Elijah was hidden by God meant that he was forced into fellowship with the prophets of Yahweh whom Obadiah hid in a cave (1 Kings 18:4). Elijah was thus intended to see a link between Obadiah and God, and himself and the other prophets of Yahweh. But Elijah's pride didn't let himself make the connection, just as ours often doesn't. For he continued doubtful of Obadiah's sincerity, and still insisted that he alone remained a faithful prophet of Yahweh- even though Obadiah had hidden one hundred other prophets from Jezebel's persecution. Those one hundred prophets were presumably part of the 7,000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal. And maybe they weren't that strong- they are set up as representative of those who will only be saved by grace, not their works (Rom. 11:4-6). But, by implication, Elijah, for all his love of Israel, did not look upon them through the eyes of grace. Elijah insisted that he alone was "left"; yet God says that He has "left" Himself the 7,000 (1 Kings 19:18). The preservation of the people of God, or 'the truth', can be done, and *is* done, by God Himself; yet the likes of Elijah consider that it is *they* who 'preserve the truth'. Again, Elijah had to learn that we are all saved by grace. God will leave for and to Himself His people, without requiring the help of man. Elijah struggled with this issue of accepting others and not thinking he was the only one who could do the job right up to the end of his ministry; for he ascends to Heaven clutching his mantle, the sign of his prophetic ministry. It seems to me that he took it with him because he felt that not even Elisha was really fit to do the job and take his place; but perhaps in what were possibly the last seconds of his mortal life, he learnt his lesson and let go of it, allowing it to fall to the earth to let another man take it up.

Admittedly Elijah was depressive, and I think God took that into account as He did with Job. Lk. 1:17 gives the Spirit's commentary upon Elijah's achievement. The "spirit and power" of Elijah had been to turn "the disobedient to the wisdom of the just" and to "make ready a people prepared for the Lord". And yet Elijah felt his ministry had been a failure; that nobody had responded. And yet his achievement is used as a prototype for the later achievement of both John the Baptist and the latter day Elijah prophet. There's a great encouragement for us here. We may feel our witness, our ministry, even our life's work- be it in formal preaching, in raising children, in seeking to be the salt of the earth- has been without fruit. But actually, according to the pattern of Elijah, we may achieve far more ultimately than we realize, even if the fruits are seen after our death. What's important, as it

was in Elijah's life, is the spirit and power we personally develop and set as an example; even if concretely and materially we don't achieve what we aim to in the lives of others. It was in this sense that God used Elijah, and uses us.

Circumstances Repeat

Elijah felt he was the only faithful man left in Israel. Yet 1 Kings 18:4 records how he was reminded that Obadiah had fed Yahweh's prophets in a cave with bread and water. Elijah also had been hidden in a cave and fed with bread and water. 1 Kings 17:4,9; 18:4,13 all use the same Hebrew word for feed / fed / sustain. The connection was to try to teach him his linkage with the prophets, whom he felt were still apostate. God tries to teach us things but we often fail to grasp the potential understanding made possible; be aware that He is trying! Elijah was fed by both ravens and a widow, as the prophets were fed by Obadiah. The raven and the Gentile widow woman were both 'commanded' [s.w.] to feed Elijah by God. Both would have been seen by him as unclean. God repeatedly tried to teach Elijah that true spirituality is about doing what is counter-instinctive in terms of personal self-control- rather than about blasting others for their apostacy, hard words when provoked, etc. Hence God begins by making Elijah's very life depend upon being fed by unclean birds bringing him food. Those ravens had to avoid bringing him dead meat- which is their usual food. They had to surrender their food to him, when there was little food around; and they had to come up to a man and give him their food, all of which was counter-instinctive for ravens. And thus Elijah was shown that life itself, especially spiritual life, depends upon counter-instinctive behaviour.

The woman "gathering sticks" (1 Kings 17:10) would likely have stimulated his Bible-steeped mind to think of the illegal gathering of sticks in Num. 15:32,33. Later, the Angel gave Elijah cake and water (1 Kings 19:6) just as the unclean ravens and Gentile widow woman had done- to teach Elijah that God works through those people. There were two occasions in which God fed Elijah with a cake when he was hungry. Once when the widow woman baked him one (1 Kings 17:13), and once when the Angel did (1 Kings 19:6). Surely God was trying to show Elijah that He was manifested through that desperately poor, weak, sick, starving widow woman who was at the point of death from starvation. It was the same message- that God wasn't in the earthquake and fire, but in the still small voice. And the way the woman talks about "Yahweh *thy* God", to which Elijah responds by speaking of "Yahweh, the God of Israel", implies that she did not even believe in Israel's God (1 Kings 17:12,14). She didn't even believe at that time that Elijah was a man of God (1 Kings 17:24); and so, we can conclude, the daily miracle of the meal and oil not drying up did not deeply touch her, just as the daily provision of manna did not seem to register with most of Israel in the wilderness. She even seems to have been cynical in calling him a "man of God", because only later did she say that she really believe he was this (1 Kings 17:18, 24).

But this was all to teach him that God works not only with the clean, and not only with those in covenant with Him. And he was being paralleled with an apostate Israel, who were also sustained by food 'commanded' by God (s.w. Neh. 9:21); the brook is described as "dried up", using the same word about the Red Sea drying up. Yet Elijah felt himself to be so superior to Israel generally. But God was trying to teach him that in essence, he wasn't. We have shown earlier that God sought to again show Elijah the same lesson when he went into the Sinai wilderness and was fed by an Angel. Perhaps he did learn the lesson when he says that he felt that he was not better than the Jewish fathers? For they walked 40 years as he walked 40 days in the very same place, also fed by Angels. God told Elijah that He had commanded unclean ravens to feed him (1 Kings 18:4); and thus He

reminded Elijah of a basic fact, that God speaks to even unclean animals (Gen. 1:22; Job). Elijah likely considered that the fact God spoke to him meant that he must therefore have some automatic superiority over others. But not so. It's the same with us. We can consider that because we have heard God's true voice, we thereby are justified before Him. But He speaks to and uses all, clean and unclean.

Another example of circumstances repeating is found in 1 Kings 19:8, where he goes in the strength of a little food just as the widow's flour didn't run out. He is being paralleled with the Gentile widow woman- either to reinforce the lesson taught, or because he had failed to learn the lesson that he truly was no better in essence than a Gentile woman. One wonders whether he not only despised Gentiles but women too...hence the way God sought to teach him the parallel between himself and that woman.

Taking this line of thought further, it's apparent that God 'set up' Elijah's experience at Horeb / Sinai to compare *and contrast* with that of Moses. There are so many intended similarities between Elijah's meeting God at Horeb and Moses' meetings with God at Sinai- the same place, it seems. In both records it is called "the mount of God" (Ex. 3:1; 18:5; 24:13); there was a journey through the desert both before and after the meeting; the use of the number forty (Ex. 34:28; Num. 14:34 cp. 1 Kings 19:8); miraculous provision of food by God; an accompanying Angel; a cave, standing on a rock, Yahweh passing by, covering the face (Ex. 33:21-23; 34:5,6), earthquake, wind and fire (Ex. 19). Moses met with God there, and received the words of God. Elijah was all set up for the same. But it doesn't happen. Yahweh Himself doesn't appear; and instead of words of command, there is a deafening silence- for I understand the "still small voice" to actually be silence, and that silence was in itself a voice / word to Elijah. And then when God finally does say something, it is simply: "What are you doing here, Elijah?". Surely Elijah saw himself as Moses, and was looking forward to being given a covenant, and seeing a special manifestation of Yahweh. But instead, silence. No appearance of God, and finally, the great anticlimax of being asked what exactly he's doing there. The similarities with the Moses history were arranged by God, but surely they played along with Elijah's assumption that he was the next Moses. Perhaps he idolized Moses, as men today idolize heroes, e.g. from earlier days of their denomination. Elijah was being taught that actually, he was not Moses; God had no such message or covenant or special revelation to give him. And there is a type of believer who needs this same lesson; that God speaks through silence and insignificance to us. We are to be ourselves, and not to ever seek to replicate the experiences or spiritual path of faithful men who have gone before us. Such desires are really a running away from our personal responsibilities.

9.4 Elijah And Angels

In achieving all these things with Elijah, God worked through His Angels. When Elijah introduces himself as being a man who stood 'before the Lord' (1 Kings 17:1), he used a phrase which is very often, if not normally, applied to standing before an Angel- Gen. 18:22; 19:27; Ex. 14:19; 17:6; Dt. 4:10; Ps. 106:23; Zech. 3:1,3. Elijah sensed his Angel always before him and lived life as if in the Angel's presence as we should. He assured Obadiah that he was really telling him the truth, because Yahweh of Hosts (Angels) is real, and he stood before those Angels (1 Kings 18:15). A sense of Angelic presence and observation will likewise inspire us to transparent lives, seeing that "thou God seest me" too. Angels also stand before the Lord (1 Kings 22:21; 2 Chron. 18:20), as we stand before the Lord in standing before them; they are our representatives in the court of Heaven. In this sense, therefore, our Angels behold the face of our Father, as do those of the "little ones" in the

ecclesia or in our lives. Therefore to turn our faces away from the little ones is to make a breach between our attitude and God's. For their Angels who represent them are constantly before the presence of God Himself in Heaven.

The Mantle Of Elijah

In 1 Kings 19:11 the Angel tells Elijah to actually go and stand before the Lord and learn what it really meant; so he had to literally stand before the Angel as He passed by. Yet Elijah hid his face; he was no longer so happy to be before the Lord once he realized the humility and breaking in pieces of a proud man's spirit that it really implies. So (1 Kings 19:13) he wrapped *his face* [s.w. "before" the Lord] in his mantle and "stood" [s.w. 'stand' before the Lord] in the cave mouth before the Angel. In Hebrew, the words for 'face' and 'before' are the same. Too ashamed to really stand before the Lord, Elijah therefore wrapped his face. Earlier, he had been so keen to use this phrase of himself (1 Kings 17:1; 18:15); he had prided himself on the fact that he stood before the Lord. But now he hid his face, a common idiom often used by God for withholding fellowship. The fact we too are God's covenant people can initially be a source of pride to us as we do our theological gladiatorship with others. But the implications are so far deeper; and through Angelic work in our lives, we too are brought to see this. The word for "Mantle" is translated "glory" in Zech. 11:3; Elijah wrapped his presence in his own glory, rather than face up to the implications of God's glory. A desire for our own glory prevents us perceiving God's glory. Perhaps Elijah was being pseudo-humble, misquoting to himself a Biblical precedent in all this, namely that the cherubim wrapped their faces (Is. 6:2). In this case, Elijah was doing a false impersonation of the cherubim, manifesting himself before God's manifestation of Himself. Only at the very end does Elijah cast away his mantle (2 Kings 2:13), his human strength, allowing himself to merge with God's glory. He should have cast away his mantle earlier, when he stood before the still small voice on Horeb. The question of 1 Kings 19:13 "Why are you still here, Elijah?" may imply that Elijah should have allowed himself to be carried away by the cherubim, he should have surrendered himself to the progress of God's glory, rather than so obsessively insist upon his own personal rightness and the wrongness of others. And this was why God's ultimate response to Elijah's attitude on Horeb was to dismiss him from his prophetic ministry and enstate Elisha as his successor (1 Kings 19:16). Elijah seems to have finally learnt his lesson, for he calls Elisha to the ministry by 'passing by' Elisha as in a theophany, taking off his mantle and throwing it upon Elisha (1 Kings 19:19). He realized that he had hidden behind that mantle, using it to resist participating in the selfless association with God's glory [rather than his own] to which he was called. But he got there in the end; hence the enormous significance of Elijah giving up his mantle when he finally ascends to Heaven in the cherubim chariot (2 Kings 2:13).

We read that whilst in the cave, "the word of the Lord came to him, and he said unto him, What does thou here, Elijah?" (1 Kings 19:9). This personification of "the word of the Lord" surely refers to an Angel who spoke to Elijah. When we read that the Lord was not in the fire etc., but was in the "still small voice", perhaps the idea is that the Angel was not visible in the fire, earthquake, wind etc.- but He simply stood there at the end in front of Elijah and quietly spoke to him. The Angel, in a magnificent manifestation of the 'humility' of God, was quietly spoken and calm ("still"). The Angel was inviting Elijah to be like Him, to be God manifest by following the pattern of his guardian Angel.

It could be that after the triumph on Carmel, there had been another vision of God's glory in order to humble Elijah. I say this on the basis that the description of the cloud in 1 Kings 18:44 "like a man's

hand” recalls “the likeness of a man’s hand” under the cherubim in Ezekiel’s visions. Clouds and rain are invariably part of theophanies. Elijah spoke of how, by faith, he heard “the feet of rain” (1 Kings 18:41 LXX), as if he believed that the Angels were coming with rain. Perhaps Elijah therefore told Ahab “prepare *thy* chariot” and ride with the rain- i.e. ‘be part of the vision of glory / cherubim chariots on the ground as it passes overhead’. This was the point of Ezekiel’s vision; Israel were to reflect the Cherubim on earth, just As David moved in step with the Spirit / the sound of marching in the mulberry trees. Therefore in 1 Kings 19:42 when in the face of all this, Elijah places his face between knees, he may be doing the same thing as when he hides his face in the mantle. He sensed the glory of God near him but didn’t want to face up to it personally. He didn’t want to become part of the Cherubic vision of glory, even though he advised Ahab to do so. We must identify ourselves with the vision of God’s glory, and face up to the life-changing implications of it. Elijah ultimately did this, although it took him a lifetime- he was caught up in another cherubic vision and threw away his mantle and became part of the vision of glory; and hence he was called “the chariot of Israel and the [great] horseman thereof” [reading “horsemen” as an intensive plural]. The chariots and horsemen of God appeared; and Elisha perceived that Elijah had finally become identified with them. For Elisha sees them and then describes Elijah as being them- the chariot and horseman of Israel (2 Kings 2:11,12). Finally, Elijah became part of God’s glory; He merged into it rather than resisting it for the sake of his *own* glory. He was the charioteer of the cherubim; for his prayers had controlled their direction. This identification of ourselves with God’s glory, this losing of ourselves and our own insistence upon our rightness, and our focus on others’ wrongness...this is the end result of our lives if they are lived out after the pattern of Elijah’s.

Elijah And Us

Elijah’s example clearly influenced Elisha, both in the nature of the miracles which he performed, and in how when Elisha died, he was likewise seen as “My father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof” (2 Kings 13:14). How Elisha related to Elijah, was how people came to relate to Elisha. This is not only a neat cameo of the immense personal influence which we have upon each other; it reflects how Elisha learnt the lesson from Elijah, which we too must learn, of freely and totally absorbing ourselves in the progress of God’s Angelic, cherubic work to bring about *His* glory and not our own.

Elijah was a "man of like passions" with us, James says. Contrary to how Judaism perceived him, Elijah is set up as truly our example. Elijah like Moses was seen in very exalted terms by the Jews of Christ’s day. Yet He invites the disciples to see themselves as Elijah, when He comments that they “will not taste of death” until they have seen Him in His glory- a clear reference, in the context, to the appearance of Christ in glory at the transfiguration, along with Elijah. Those who did not “taste of death” “is an expression from the world of Jewish apocalyptic where it refers to men who have been removed from the earth without dying, especially... Elijah”(1). Yet the Lord applies this well known reference to Elijah to all His followers.

Notes

(1) Norman Perrin, *Rediscovering The Teaching Of Jesus* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967) p. 19.

Chapter 10: Daniel

10-1 The Character Of Daniel

Reading through Daniel it is evident that we are being invited to try to enter into the character of Daniel. Our fascination with the prophecies can result in us failing to realize that a lot of information is being given about his character. Daniel always seems to me to be portrayed as actually part of the prophecies he gave; he was no fax machine just relaying God's words. He seems to be presented as representative of all those of later times who would hear the word of prophecy. It is for this reason that we are given so much insight into his character. For example, Daniel's spirit of "How long...?" is so exactly reflective of the attitude of all God's children down the years that it is hard to deny that Daniel is being framed as the representative of all the saints. Indeed, these very words are quoted in Rev. 6:10 concerning the attitude of the slain saints of the last days. Daniel's representative role is most clearly shown in the figurative death, resurrection and judgment which he receives in Dan. 10. In this Daniel is acting out the experience of each of the approved. His refusal to obey the command to worship Babylon's King is alluded to in Rev. 13:5; 14:9, which prophesy how the saints of the last days will be tested just as Daniel was, with a like miraculous deliverance. Thus Daniel seems to especially symbolize the latter day believers. The comforting "Fear not Daniel" (Dan. 10:12,19) slots in to many other instances of Angels saying these words to frightened men. Fear was part of the character of Daniel. This makes it appropriate to speculate that the latter day believers will hear the same words from the Angel who comes to gather them (and cp. Is. 35:4, which gives the same "fear not" message to the generation which sees the second coming). Again, Daniel's relationship with the Angel appears to be representative of that enjoyed by all the saints.

Gritting teeth

So there seems little doubt that Daniel is representative of the us. The character of Daniel is so similar to ours. And yet this makes the following observation hard to come to terms with: Daniel is without doubt portrayed as depressed, at odds with his surrounding world, earnestly desiring an understanding and relationship with God which seemed denied him, desperately lonely, disappointed that he was not seeing God's purpose reaching its climax. The New Testament message of joy, hope and peace must be balanced against the typology of Daniel. It seems that our Christian thinking and perception goes in cycles; we started in the nineteenth century with the grim, hard almost Puritan attitude of British Protestantism; now we seem to have gone the other way, towards a view of God and Christian life that focuses solely on positive experience, e.g. peace, joy and hope. It may be significant that both these attitudes are related to those seen in the contemporary religious world. I'm not suggesting that we swing back to the nineteenth century; instead, what we need is a truly balanced approach.

Yet in Daniel we see not only the grim gritting of teeth of the true servant of Yahweh; we sense (rather than learn explicitly) his exaltation of spirit at the prophecies of the Kingdom. This balance of attitude is brought out by a series of allusions to Daniel which show him to be representative of all those in Christ:

1 Peter 1 (re. the saints)

"An inheritance...reserved...for you" (v.4)

Daniel

"Thou shalt... stand in thy lot (inheritance) at the end of the days" (12:13)

In heaviness of spirit (v.6)	Daniel's heaviness of spirit
" The proof of your faith...is proved by fire...unto praise and honour and glory" (v.7 RV)	The experience of Daniel's friends Daniel praised, honoured and glorified (2:6 cp. 4:37)
" Whom having not seen ye love...now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice" (v.8)	The spirit of Daniel?
" Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls" (v.9)	Cp. Daniel's assurance of salvation (12:13)
" The prophets have <i>enquired</i> and <i>searched</i> diligently... <i>searching</i> what manner of time the spirit...did signify" (v.10,11)	Peter was certainly writing here with his eye on Daniel's enquiring and diligent searching " what manner of time" his prophecies referred to (8:15,27; 9:2; 12:8)
" Unto whom it was revealed (in response to their enquiries) that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister... ... which things the Angels desire to look into" (v.12)	This is definitely alluding to Dan. 12:4, where Daniel is told that he cannot understand his own prophecies, but they will be understood by latter day believers to whom they will be relevant. Angelic interest in prophecy is mainly demonstrated in Daniel.

Enthusiasm for prophecy

There is an impressive intensity in Daniel's desire to understand the prophetic word. By all means this needs to be contrasted with a Christendom growing sadly indifferent to the study of latter day prophecy. That prophecy is difficult to interpret and apparently confusing should inspire us to study it more rather than de-motivate us; Daniel was in an even worse expositional dilemma than we are, and yet this very dilemma inspired him even more to want to understand. We need to really soberly consider the force of the descriptions of Daniel's yearning to understand: " My thoughts much troubled me, and my countenance was changed in me: but (i.e. despite the trouble it gave) I kept the matter in my heart" (7:28). This suggests that it would have been easy to allow his inner turmoil to be visibly expressed in his appearance; but he kept the intellectual pain within him. Such deep *pain* at not being able to fully understand the word of prophecy needs to be contrasted with our easy indifference to finding prophecy a closed book. " I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me" (Dan. 7:15) expresses the deep physiological effects of Daniel's lack of understanding. This grief of spirit can be connected with the words of Is. 54:6, describing a woman " forsaken and *grieved in spirit* , and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused" . The same level of spiritual and emotional pain was seen in Daniel. It may be that Daniel felt his lack of understanding was somehow related to his own moral weakness (or that of his people).

" The wise shall understand"

The same deep frustration is found in 8:27: " I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days; then I rose up, and did the King's business: and I was astonished at the vision, but there was none to make it understood" (RVmg.). We are invited to imagine Daniel earnestly explaining the vision to the other priests in Babylon, and finding no one to explain it. Daniel was doing a high-flying, executive job; a job where you didn't take days off. Yet his frustration at not being able to crack open Bible prophecy made him so intellectually frustrated that he just had to take some sick leave. " Then I rose up" suggests he was bed ridden for those few days, his physical energy sapped by his vast expenditure of mental effort. *Do any of us come anywhere near to this kind of zeal?* There is reason to think that the believers of the last days will need special strength to overcome the special temptations they face; part of that strength will be given through being able to accurately understand the prophecies of the last days, so accurately that everything will just be mapped out before us ⁽¹⁾. " Knowledge shall be increased...the wise shall understand...Understand, O Son of man: for at the time of the end shall be the (understanding of the) vision" (12:4,10; 8:17). Note that " the vision" seems to be used by metonymy for " the understanding of the vision" (as in 8:26; 9:23,24; 10:14,16; 11:14; 10:1 cp. 7). Most of us, including the present writer, have fallen into the trap of thinking that we can't expect to accurately understand the pattern of events in the last days. Yet perhaps we are only finding excuse for our own lack of spiritual effort in searching the word.

It is significant that all Daniel's recorded petitions are asking God to either explain or fulfill His word. In 6:10-12 we read of Daniel making some unspecified request to Yahweh, praying facing Jerusalem; it seems fair to assume that he was asking to see the fulfillment and explanation of God's purpose with Zion. Yet there can be no doubt that Daniel was going out of his way to put his life on the line in doing this. He was fully aware of the King's decree that anyone caught praying like this was for the lions; and even more aware that he was being constantly watched to see if he towed the line or not. Most of us (and presumably most of the others in the Jewish ecclesia in Babylon) would have prayed silently, to ourselves, without opening the window to advertise the fact. Yet it seems that in Daniel's conscience, prayer to God was something which was so important that it was worth dying for. In this we see a cameo of how earnest was Daniel's desire for the understanding and fulfillment of God's word. And let's remember what we said at the outset; we really are intended to see Daniel as our example and representative. Do we really long for Messiah's coming as he did? For the restoration of Israel's kingdom, for the coming of Zion's King? The more clearly we understand the basic doctrines of the Hope of Israel, the more we daily *delight* in God's Law, the more we will capture the spirit of Daniel.

In the last days, " the wise shall understand" (12:10). Wisdom and Daniel are clearly associated, at least eight times (Dan. 1:17; 2:13,14,18,24,27,48; Ez. 28:3); as are Daniel and a desire to understand. Yet Daniel did not fully understand his latter day prophecies; " the wise shall understand" in the last days, Daniel was comforted. In other words, there will be a 'Daniel' category in the last days who will share his wisdom, sharing the character of Daniel, and who will be given the understanding he so earnestly sought. We showed earlier that Rev. 6:10; 13:15; 14:9 describe the persecuted Christian remnant of the last days in the language of Daniel ⁽²⁾. The conclusion is that they (we?) will find strength to endure through the understanding of prophecy. Those who can't find time to do their daily readings in this era of ease will either go under- or abruptly wake up to the vital power of the word.

Clear conscience

We each have our reasons for not having the spirit and character of Daniel in our Bible searching. 'Too much else on my plate', or some such related excuse, will be the response of most. Yet Daniel was one of the highest flying Christians of all time; Prime Minister of Babylon was analogous to being President of the USA in the Middle Eastern world of those days. In the face of almost every conceivable spiritual distraction, Daniel fought hard to maintain his fine spiritual conscience through devoting himself to a love of God's word. The importance of *constantly* maintaining a clear conscience is demonstrated throughout Daniel's life. The book begins with Daniel refusing to eat the meat offered to idols; it must surely be intentional that the Spirit in Paul declares that there was nothing wrong with eating this- it was purely a matter of conscience, seeing that the pagan associations of the meat are meaningless to the true believer. Yet at sweet seventeen, the young Daniel dug his toes in, at whatever cost, to maintain his conscience; and, by implication, is commended for it.

The record reveals that Daniel went through a yo-yo pattern of being promoted into the limelight, and then (in an unrecorded manner) slipping out of the limelight into relative obscurity, from which he was promoted again. Thus in 2:48 Daniel is made Prime Minister, in the events of Chapter 3 he seems to be strangely absent, in 4:8 Daniel is brought in to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's second dream almost as an afterthought, implying he was out of the limelight; by 5:11 King Belshazzar was unaware of Daniel, but promoted him to "third ruler in the Kingdom" (5:29). Daniel was "made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans and soothsayers" by Nebuchadnezzar; but by the time his son was reigning, this had largely been forgotten (Dan. 5:12)- because Daniel evidently was nowhere near that job to which he'd been promoted.

Why did Daniel slip out of the limelight? Was it not for the sake of his conscience? As a member of the Jewish community, it would have been so easy for Daniel to stay where he was, reasoning that holding down a job like that would enable him to do so much for the Truth. But he realized that his personal conscience and devotion to the spiritual life must be given number one priority if he was to help his people. There is an exact correspondence between the mind of Daniel here and the fervent believer who refuses promotion, jumps out of a career that is rubbing too strongly against the conscience... would our community featured more examples of men and women like this ⁽³⁾.

The character of Daniel refused to allow the world around him to push him into its mould; rather was his mind transformed after the mould of God's word (Rom. 12:2 J.B. Phillips). His Hebrew name, 'Daniel', was changed to 'Beltshazzar'- the prince of Bel. And yet by the time of Belshazzar ⁽⁴⁾, he was remembered as 'Daniel'- "Daniel, whom the King named Beltshazzar: now let Daniel be called, and he shall shew the interpretation" (Dan. 5:12). The changing of the young men's names had clearly been an attempt to force them into the mould of Babylonian paganism. But Daniel had evidently gently insisted that he be known by his Hebrew name- 'God is / will be judge'. The record gives several examples of the Babylonians and Persians calling Daniel by his Hebrew name- Daniel (6:13,20; 7:15). This is quite some testimony- considering that they had purposefully changed his name to a pagan, Babylonian one, to make him forget his God and adopt their worldview. But he must have made it very clear that he was to be called by his Hebrew name. There are few Bible characters who use their own name so much- but Daniel is always calling himself "I, Daniel" (7:28; 8:1,15,27; 9:2; 10:2,7; 12:5). His self-perception was very clearly that he was a Hebrew, and a witness to God's justice / judgment. Daniel has much to teach the man or woman caught up in the corporate life, the engrossing pull of business, education or social contact. His self-perception was that he was not of his surrounding world, even though those around him wanted to see him as one of them. And further, God Himself frequently addresses Daniel by his name- "Daniel". Daniel realized that this was how *God* perceived him; and he wished to perceive himself as God perceived him. And

he didn't show one face to the world, and one to God. He openly showed himself to the world as he perceived himself, and he perceived himself as God perceived him. We too should show no shadow self to this world, no appearance; but the person whom we essentially are, and whom God perceives us as being. His children, His witnesses, His people.

Loving the word

The book of Daniel gives the exact dates when Daniel had both his promotions and his visions. Careful analysis of the record shows how his exaltations in this life occurred at the same time as major steps forward in his own personal Bible study and spiritual growth. When Darius came to power, Daniel was made chief of the three presidents of the Kingdom, promoted from being the third ruler of the Kingdom, i.e. the *least* senior of the three (5:29-6:2). Yet in that very same first year of Darius, " I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet... and (at that time) I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes...and whiles I was speaking..." Gabriel came to give him the prophecy of the 70 weeks (9:2-4,20). It doesn't take much imagination to picture the pressure on Daniel as Prime Minister in a new Government with a new King; probably he was the only survivor from the previous Government. Yet in the midst of this, he took time off to fast and wear sackcloth. His real enthusiasm was not for that high flying career he found himself in; rather it was for prayer, and coming to understand Jeremiah's prophecies. 'I've started a new job, I can't do my readings *every* day....I've got exams on at the moment, I can only pray briefly before meals... I've got to build up my new business, I'll just have to glance at the Bible readings for the next 6 months or so'. These are all common Christian attitudes. I have wandered close to each. The example of Daniel *mocks* each of them. " I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation" (Heb. 13:22).

We have suggested that Daniel chose to slip out of the limelight in the changeover from Nebuchadnezzar to Belshazzar. Thus he was exalted under Nebuchadnezzar, but appears insignificant at the time Belshazzar sees his vision (5:11). Significantly, Daniel was blessed with a vision in the first year of Belshazzar (7:1), presumably in response to his desire for further understanding. This could imply that Daniel was blessed for his resignation by more spiritual insight. Do we see things in those terms? Do we not suspect God may compensate us materially if we resign the things of this life? Do we dream of deeper spiritual knowledge as a response to our separation from the world? Or do we write such things off as unnecessary intellectualism, fascinating for those who are into Bible study but unnecessary for our personal relationship with God?

Double life

Daniel lead a double life in this world; and he was all too painfully aware of it. No doubt this had a part to play in his depressions. He was at one stage official interpreter of the King's dreams; yet he had his own dreams, which he could not understand. He went through deep depression because of this, and then struggled up off his bed to " do the king's business" , i.e. interpret his dreams (8:16 cp. 27). This neatly highlights the duality of Daniel's life. The book of Daniel is not written in chronological order. One reason for this may be to give the sense that his visions of God's word increasingly dominated Daniel's thinking. We start off reading much information about his worldly life, interspersed with the visions; but increasingly, the emphasis is on the visions. This is not because Daniel got older, retired from political life and then had more time for visions. He seems to

have had a 'career' all his life, but the implication from the way the record is put together is that the word of God progressively dominated his thinking and sense of priority.

The word of God so dominated the Lord Jesus that he became " the word...made flesh" . He died as soon as he reached the necessary level of spiritual maturity; as soon as the word of God achieved the desired effect. On the cross we see him spiritually perfected, at the ultimate, highest level of spiritual maturity a human being could reach (Heb. 5:7-9). Daniel as the " Son of man" , innocently thrown to the lions and miraculously delivered from death, is an evident type of the Lord Jesus. The spirit of Christ was certainly in him as a prophet (1 Pet. 1:10-12). Christ too ran the gauntlet of this worldly life, day by day, he too fought for his conscience every moment. He too, he too, he too....

Daniel As A Type Of Christ In Daniel 6

6:14 Ruler labouring not to kill a righteous man, manipulated by his own underlings = Pilate

6:17 Den of lions- den s.w. pit Is. 14:15, where it is paralleled with the grave.

6:17 Stone sealed and put on the mouth of the cave [den]. Mt. 27:66

6:17 the purpose could not be changed regarding Daniel's death- Jesus died by the determinate counsel of God, Acts 2:23

6:22 An Angel sent

6:19 'resurrection' early in the morning

6:22 Daniel not hurt because innocency found in him = Acts 2:24

6:23 Daniel taken up out of the den = resurrection and ascension, s.w. Ps. 139:8 who shall *ascend* to Heaven

6:23 no damage was found on Daniel implies they examined his body- as Lk. 24:39; 1 Jn. 1:1

6:25,26 decree = great commission to spread the knowledge of God's Kingdom which we must fulfill after the Lord's resurrection

Notes

(1) These reasons are presented in my *The Last Days* pp.192,281.

(2) In no spirit of glib suggestion do I conclude from many Scriptures that the ecclesia will almost certainly go through a period of persecution in the last days. See *The Last Days* pp.144-182.

(3) Real life examples of this will be found chronicled in Robert Roberts, *My Days And My Ways* (Birmingham: CMPA, 1980).

(4) Note how the names 'Belshazzar' and 'Belteshazzar' are almost identical in Chaldee. Is it possible that Daniel could have been prince of Babylon? For the name means 'He whom Bel makes prince'. He came very near to being the leader of Babylon several times. If 'Belshazzar' is simply a title for the King of

Babylon, is it not possible that Daniel like Moses *could* have been the most powerful man in the world- yet always pulled away from the possibility, just as the Lord did in the wilderness?

Chapter 12: Jonah

12.1 Jonah: A Type Of Christ

The prophecies of the crucifixion often draw on the language of Jonah, for clearly Jonah was a type of Christ. The following notes on the book are based on the fact that on the Lord's own authority, Jonah being in the whale represented him being in the tomb. The whale died; it vomited Jonah onto dry land, not into the surf breaking on the shore. It vomited up Jonah in its death throes. The beached whale died once Jonah had been ejected; pointing forward to how the grave was destroyed by the Lord's resurrection.

The sailors who threw Jonah to his figurative 'death' must represent Pilate in their unwillingness to be guilty of innocent blood (Jon. 1:14); yet they also seem to have been Jews, from their use of the covenant name and sacrificing to Him after the sea calmed (Jon. 1:14,16). Seeing the ship left from a Jewish port, it is not unreasonable to think that the sailors were Jews. Yet they also believed in the pagan gods (Jon. 1:5), suggesting they were apostate Jews- the type who crucified the Lord.

Jonah's prayer to God is packed with allusions to the Psalms and Lamentations- it appears to have more connections with other Scriptures than almost any other Bible passage. This for one thing indicates the spiritual mindedness of Jonah which was required for one who would so accurately typify the Lord. If Jonah's mind was so full of the word in his sufferings, our Lord's was even more so. It also indicates that his refusal to go to Nineveh was not just rank disobedience to God, but rather an unwillingness to give Assyria a chance to repent- he wanted to see God's glory executed in her judgment. Likewise Jesus must have been tempted to disregard the calling he had received to preach, especially in connection with the Gentiles. But he was able to reflect that " (unlike Jonah) I was not rebellious, neither turned away back" (Is. 50:5).

" All thy billows and thy waves passed over me" (Jon. 2:3 cp. Ps. 42:7) perhaps indicates a throbbing sense of continuous waves of opposition- seen in the different groups of people coming up to the cross to hurl their abuse, as well as in the throb of pain due to the posture of crucifixion.

" I will look again unto thy holy temple" (2:4) is quoting the words of Solomon at the dedication of the temple, that Israel in their sin and dispersion could always pray towards the temple and be heard. So firm was Jonah's belief in this that even inside a whale somewhere in the Mediterranean he knew that it applied to him. Likewise our Lord took upon himself the curses of Israel, and also prayed as no man has ever done toward the Heavenly temple.

" The depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head" (2:5). These feelings of gradual suffocation, loss of vision and control of the head, all echo the crucifixion situation. " My soul fainted within me" (2:7) indicates Jonah's tremendous fear of death, which our Lord, as any man, also shared.

It took Jonah three days to walk through Nineveh (3:3). On the first day in the city, he told them that in 40 days God would destroy them (3:4); it follows that by the time he was in the middle of the city

he was telling them that they had 37 days left. So too the Jews had between 37 and 40 years notice of the destruction of Jerusalem. It is a worthwhile speculation that for Jonah to be a sign to the Ninevites by reason of being three days in the whale (Mt. 12:38-40), he must have borne in his body the marks of his experience for all to see, as our Lord did ⁽¹⁾. Being inside the fish for that period may have made his flesh change colour or bear some other physical mark so that he could be a sign to them of what had happened. Doubtless he recounted his story to them- so that they were encouraged by the fact of God's love to the resurrected Jonah to repent and likewise throw themselves on God's mercy. In all this we see Jonah as a type of Christ. They would have looked upon that man as we look upon Jesus, to see the love of God manifested in him; they responded by repenting in sackcloth, casting off their materialism, and living in a way that showed their complete belief that " the judge standeth before the door" . What is our response to Jonah/Jesus?

Notes

(1) See Dudley Fifield, 'Jonah and the Ninevites', *The Testimony*, Vol. 54 (1984) p.112 for an excellent devotional study of the Ninevites.

12-2 The Preaching Of Jonah

Reluctance To Preach

Jonah had initially been told to "cry" over Nineveh (1:2). He ran away from this commission, and yet he ended up in the belly of the whale using the very same Hebrew word- this time, to describe how he "cried by reason of mine affliction" (2:2). The same word is translated "preach" in 3:2; Jonah 'preached' by reason of his affliction. He realized that it was his "affliction" which led him to "cry" in any case. We are each called to witness; and there is no way out. That witness flows out of our deeply personal experiences. If we won't make that witness, then God will work in our lives to bring us to a position where we have no choice but to do so. This was how the Lord worked with the family of Lazarus. The Jews had commanded "that if any man knew where he was, he should shew it" (Jn. 11:57). And "Jesus *therefore*... came to Bethany" (Jn. 12:1 RV). He purposefully attracted attention to His connection with the Bethany home. And so it was that "much people of the Jews learned that he was there" (Jn. 12:9), and the context makes it clear that this was a source of witness to them (Jn. 12:10,11). The Lord sought to expose their secret discipleship, to take the bucket off their candle. And He will do likewise with us. Jonah is of course the great example. He refused to "cry" the message of repentance to Nineveh; he wanted to be an incognito prophet. But an incognito prophet is a contradiction in terms, an oxymoron. So the Lord brought about a situation in which he desperately "cried" to God; and then told him to go and "cry" to Nineveh. The very same Hebrew words are used about his crying to God and his crying / proclamation to Nineveh (Jonah 1:2; 2:2; 3:2,4). Jonah was forced by circumstance to share his relationship with God with the world around him which he despised. The Lord wants to use us as His candle, and He will arrange situations in life to enable this.

Jonah perhaps didn't want to preach to Nineveh because the contemporary prophets, Hosea and Amos, had predicted that Israel would go into captivity there (Am. 5:27; Hos. 11:5-7). Jonah, like many conservative Christians today, didn't want to entertain the notion that God's word can be

changeable, so sensitive is He to human repentance. And out of all the prophets, Jonah had to learn that this is not the case; for he pronounced an unconditional doom on Nineveh, which did in fact change because of their repentance. He didn't somehow want God to be that sensitive to human repentance; and he was therefore led through his own failures to realize that grace means that God does 'repent' in response to human repentance. And further; Jonah evidently didn't want Israel to go into captivity to Nineveh. He just wanted to cut out of his mind the possibility that Israel would go to Nineveh; and he lived this out, by refusing to go there himself. Yet he was brought to see that owning up to sin simply has to be done; he simply had to go to Nineveh. Refusal to face up to the result of our sin is a very real problem for us all.

So strongly did Jonah feel this that he effectively wished to resign from being a prophet. "He fled 'from the presence of the LORD.' To stand in the presence of someone is often used in the sense of acting as one's official minister. (Cp. Gen. 41:46; Deut. 1:38; 10:8; 1 Sam. 16:21f.; 1 Kings 17:1; 18:15; 2 Kings 3:14, etc.) To flee from His presence = to refuse to serve Him in this office" (1). But there is no way we can resign from our calling to be witnesses. We are now with the Lord, and we cannot just resign from His purpose and calling. Jonah intended to flee to Tarshish, the very end of the known world; going the very opposite direction to Nineveh. And we too need to be impressed by the reality of the fact that we can never resign from the Father and Son; we are in their grip. We cannot just 'pass' on the piercing issues of commitment day by day.

But Jonah got there in the end. Finally, as God intends for each of us, he got to a position where he was preaching with the spirit which God intended. Jonah wrote the book of Jonah. His prayer of Jonah 2 was uttered within the belly of the fish; yet it is praise for deliverance, full of careful allusions to the Psalms and organized as a poem. It seems unlikely that he composed it whilst in the fish, but rather that these were his basic thoughts whilst there, which he later wrote up as a poem. And he concludes it with the pregnant comment: "Salvation is of Yahweh" (Jonah 2:9), the very meaning of the Hebrew word for "Jesus". In the end, he came to perceive the essence of Christ; and only then was he ready to preach.

The Repentances And Preaching Of Jonah

Jonah is described as going progressively 'down' - down into the ship, down into the hold of the ship, and then down into the depths of the sea (1:3,5; 2:6). Yet he was brought up from it. This was the depth of his degradation. Jonah was like Nineveh- the "wickedness" of Nineveh (1:2; 3:8) is the same word used in 4:1 Jonah was displeased "exceedingly", i.e. 'wickedly'. Their wickedness was paralleled with the wickedness of his hard heartedness towards them. When the sailors awoke him with the words "Get up and call ...", they were using the very words which God had used perhaps just days earlier to call him with. We can't escape the call- God will repeat it to us through life's circumstances, even through our very efforts to avoid the call. The obvious lesson is to willingly and in love respond to the calls we receive, rather than go through the agonies of seeking to avoid them. Jonah's response: "I am an Hebrew..." was basically his response to God...he didn't want to give Nineveh a chance of salvation because he was a patriotic Jew. Perhaps as soon as he uttered the words, he realized what God was doing to him...

It was his repentant spirit which had been the power behind his conversion of Nineveh; Jonah had been through what was threatened to come upon the Ninevites, had repented, and was alive to tell the tale. He had been cast into the sea (2:5), a figure elsewhere used in Scripture to describe condemnation and the destruction of sin (Ex. 15:4; Mic. 7:19; Zech. 9:4; Mk. 9:42; Rev. 8:8; 18:21).

He had cast himself into the sea voluntarily, realizing his worthiness of condemnation. He fled from the presence of God- which is exactly the language of the rejected fleeing from God's presence at the last day. He realized that he had lived out his own self-condemnation. He recognized "I am cast out of thy sight" (2:4), the very language of condemnation used at his time (1 Kings 9:7; 2 Kings 17:20; 21:2; 23:27; Jer. 7:15). He seems to have drowned and then been swallowed by the whale, in whose belly he then resurrected (2:5; and this is the whole point of the Lord's allusion to Jonah as a type of His resurrection). He was condemned; but saved by grace. And this was exactly the position of Nineveh. Their condemnation had been pronounced. Only grace could change it.

Jonah's conversion of 120,000 people is probably the greatest record of conversion for any single handed preacher. The same realizations are required of any successful preacher; that he too has sinned, is worthy of condemnation, has in fact been condemned but has been saved from it; and now seeks to witness to those still in his position. This, it seems to me, was what the Lord Jesus was referring to when He spoke of the sign of the prophet Jonah. The sign to Jesus' generation was not just His resurrection after three days- for most people never actually saw Him. The sign was His compelling witness to the world through His church. The Ninevites were ignorant of God's ways (4:11), but this didn't mean they were not culpable to judgment. The sheer tragedy of the world around us who like Nineveh do not know, and yet are speeding to destruction, ought to weigh as heavily upon us as it does upon our Father. And yet like Jonah, we may prefer to see ourselves as prophets to Israel, as he was (2 Kings 14:25), operating within the comfortable environment of God's people whom we know, rather than reaching out to a distant world... If we seek to write down the actual prophetic words spoken by Jonah, they are very few. Rather, like Hosea with Gomer, he was a prophet, a teller forth of God's word, by his experience of life. This ties in to a major Biblical theme; that as the Heavens silently declare God's word, their voice unheard, as the faithful wife witnesses without words to her unbelieving husband, so the essential witness is in who we are and how we have responded to sin.

The boat was not far from land- for the sailors tried to row the boat to land. Jonah would have come ashore somewhere on the coasts of Israel. We are left to imagine him walking away up the beach from the dying whale, naked, disfigured by the acids of the whale's belly, determined to pay his vows of sharing God's grace with others, getting some clothes, gathering some money, and making his way on camel to Nineveh. In this he is our pattern. In the parable of the two sons, the Lord divides us into two groups- those who respond to a calling to 'go' by saying they will, but don't go; and those who refuse to go but afterwards go. This is clearly an allusion to Jonah. But Jonah is thus made typical of each and every one of us.

Repentance And Preaching

Jonah says he will "look again" towards God's temple (2:4); yet the same words are used in Ps. 102:19 (and Is. 63:15) to describe how God looks from His temple to His people on earth. For a mind as familiar with the Psalms as Jonah's was, this cannot be accidental. He perceived the mutuality of His relationship with the Father; as He looked to God in His holy temple, so God was looking to Him from His temple. This is where true repentance and renewed devotion lead- to a wonderful mutuality between a man and his God.

When Jonah recognizes that his life has been brought up from "corruption" (2:6), his mind may again be in the Psalms; for we have seen how very often he is alluding to them. Ps. 9:15 says that the Gentiles are "sunk down" into "the pit" [s.w. "corruption" in Jon. 2:6]. Jonah is perceiving that he is

sharing what was to happen to the Gentiles; he too had sunk down [drowning language!] into the same pit as they had. And so it was on this basis that, once delivered, he was able to so powerfully appeal to them. For he had grasped the simple fact that he had been in just their position, and yet had been saved by grace; and he needed to share this wonderful news with them. Likewise Ps. 55:23 speaks of the wicked, those who had 'broken the covenant' which Jonah was so proud to be part of, being 'brought down' into "destruction"; and these very same two Hebrew words occur together in Jonah 2:6. They also occur together in Ez. 28:8, speaking of how the Gentile king of Tyre was to be 'brought down' to "the pit". This would have been the sort of prophecy which nationalistic Jonah would have loved to hear; but now he recognized that he was essentially like a wicked Gentile, and had shared their condemnation- but been graciously saved from it. The preaching of Jonah is surely our example.

In 1:12 Jonah asks the sailors to "take me up"- the Hebrew means 'to lift up' in the sense of exaltation; the very idea used by the Lord to describe His exaltation and 'lifting up' on the cross. The language of Jonah suffering in the whale and drowning in "great waters" is full of allusions to Messianic Psalms which point forward to the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus- and His saving out of it in resurrection. Yet Jonah was suffering for his sins, as it appears David was when he wrote Psalms like Ps. 23 and Ps. 69, evidently prophetic as they are of the crucifixion. What is the point here? Surely that in suffering for sin, in grappling at close quarters with the reality of our sins and the result of them, in realizing our own desperation and urgency of need for salvation, we find ourselves drawn closer to the spirit of our Lord in His time of dying. And in perhaps the finest and most complex of all paradoxes, it is that feeling of being 'lifted up' with Him in crucifixion which is also related to our 'lifting up' in exaltation with Him. And further; in probing *why* the Lord suffered as He did, He who never once sinned, we stumble towards some kind of an answer: He suffered as He did in order to be able to know the feelings of the sinner, even though He Himself never sinned. Repented sin in this sense need not separate us from God, therefore, but rather it brings us closer to our Lord.

When Jonah heard the men of Nineveh praying that they 'might not perish', he should've thought back to how the men in the boat to Tarshish prayed the very same words. The men in the ship prayed earnestly that they 'might not perish', both in the storm and for the sake of Jonah's life (1:6,14). The men of Nineveh prayed to God that they too 'might not perish' (3:9)- the record uses the same Hebrew word in both cases. Jonah should've learnt his lesson; the men in the ship didn't perish because of his self-sacrifice- and the implication could be that they turned to Israel's God as a result of the whole dreadful experience. And Jonah's self-sacrificial preaching, just as painful for him as voluntarily suggesting he be thrown to his death, was eliciting in Jonah the same response from those he was preaching to. But he couldn't maintain the intensity of the self-sacrificial life of witness; he gave up and got angry that they were responding, and, it seems, stopped preaching once he had entered into the city and the response had started. Take another lesson from this; we would likely have been inspired to continue preaching by such a good response. But for Jonah, the response was what discouraged him. What is encouraging for one in the work of witness is a great discouragement for another.

In summary, there was real bridge building between Jonah and his audience on the basis that he had sinned and been saved by grace, just like them. The resultant mutuality between Jonah and his converts is further brought out by bearing in mind that the word used about Jonah 'preaching' to Nineveh is that used about their 'proclaiming' a fast in response (3:4,5). His 'crying out' to them elicited a crying out in them. They 'cried unto God' (3:8) just as Jonah had done in the whale (2:2).

Likewise the king of Nineveh “arose” in response to the word he heard, just as Jonah ‘arose’ and obeyed the word which he heard (3:3,6). The preaching of Jonah is surely our example.

Notes

(1) Theodore Laetsch, *The Minor Prophets* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1956), p. 222.

12-3 Jonah And The Gourd

This incident was to make Jonah understand how God valued Nineveh. God had made each of the Ninevites to “grow” (4:10,11), just as He had made the gourd grow (4:6). Jonah was so grateful for the gourd; he valued it. And this was to show him God’s value of Nineveh. Yet Jonah was angry with the worm, who had made the gourd perish. The perishing of Nineveh (3:9) and the perishing of the gourd (4:10) are clearly parallel. He was being led to realize who he really was- a worm, who unthinkingly had sought to fell and cause to perish a wonderful and beautiful part of God’s creation. Jonah’s anger that Nineveh had been preserved is set against his anger that the gourd had perished. He was being shown that he was not in step with God’s thinking / Spirit here. If Nineveh had perished, God would have been angry and sad and depressed, just as Jonah felt on the perishing of the gourd. This was the whole purpose of the gourd incident, and it is the purpose of many incidents in our lives- to show us how God feels. Jonah was angry that Nineveh had been preserved, when instead he should have been angry if it had perished. His anger, his feelings, were not in step with God’s. And the gourd incident beautifully brought this out to him.

Jonah “fainted” as a result of the gourd perishing, just as he “fainted” [s.w.] when he refused to preach to Nineveh initially (2:7; 4:8). Circumstances so often repeat in the lives of God’s people, and this is in order to seek to teach us something. It seems that Jonah only preached on the outskirts of Nineveh and then gave up; for it was only word of his message that reached the King (3:3,4). Jonah couldn’t maintain the intensity; he wilted as the gourd did. He couldn’t maintain a sense of God’s grace, of His tremendous desire to save, and his motivation waned. And so, circumstances repeated. His half hearted preaching was like his refusal to preach; and he fainted as a result of each of these things.

Sharing Heaven’s Joy

As thousands of people repented, there was joy in Heaven. But there was sadness on earth, because Jonah would not walk in step with the Spirit, reflecting Heaven’s joy on earth. Right at the start, he had been told to go to Nineveh because “their wickedness is come up before me” (1:2). This was exactly the language of Sodom, to whom Angels had been sent, as Jonah was now being sent. Note how both Sodom and Nineveh were to be “overthrown” (Gen. 19:21,25,29) as Nineveh was. The implication was surely that he would be walking in step with an Angel in going to Nineveh. But he fled from the presence of the Lord (1:3)- perhaps a reference to a literal Angel who appeared to him. Another likely possibility is that the presence of the Lord refers to Jonah’s own conscience. For whenever the Lord touches our conscience with the call of the need of others, we are in His presence. Jonah knew his Bible well; his poem is absolutely full of references to the Psalms. And yet Ps. 139 had clearly stated that we cannot flee anywhere from God’s presence; for even in the deep sea, He will find us. Jonah knew this; and yet he didn’t know it. He had to learn what this meant in practice. And so, incident by incident, blow by blow, our theoretical knowledge is turned into flesh, into reality for us; for the same God who worked *so* hard in Jonah’s life is at work in ours.

Our community has failed tragically in this, in the same way as Jonah did. This is the lesson of Jonah and the gourd. Let's imagine a brother we dislike or another fellowship makes a convert in China. Or anywhere. What should our response be? I get the impression from some that the response would be anger and sadness, because 'they' are 'getting a foothold there!'. But look at this from God's perspective. There is *joy* in Heaven over one sinner who repents. We should share that joy. Phil. 1:17,18 RV are directly relevant. Paul rejoiced that Christ was preached, even if the motive was "faction" . I have to assume that each of my brothers and sisters is preaching Christ from a pure motive. I wouldn't dare impute any other motives to any preacher amongst us. But *even if* it happens they are preaching from a motive of what Paul calls faction, then, what should our response be? To *rejoice!*

Nineveh repented; thousands repented, and there must have been a party of joy in Heaven! But on earth, God's preacher, Jonah- didn't share Heaven's joy. He was angry. He didn't walk in step with the spirit. He didn't reflect Heaven's joy on earth. The Lord said: " Is your eye evil [i.e. are you clouded by a mean spirited feeling], because I am good?" . We are all prone to this; to respond to God's grace by being evil-eyed, by our worldview, our " eye" , becoming narrower and clouded because of the extravagance of His grace. By these comments I do not in any way underestimate the sadness and urgency of resolving divisions in the body of Christ; but we must remember that all true Christians who are in the one body preach, by that token, the same true Gospel. Their baptisms are valid- so, we can rejoice. For who, after all, is Paul or Apollos, or Steve Z or Steve A, or Andy A or Andy Z, or any of us, but ministers. The essence is Christ.

Jonah didn't share Heaven's joy. He was angry. He didn't walk in step with the spirit. It is apparent from the lesson of the gourd, and God's final approval of Nineveh's repentance, that His motive in asking Jonah to preach judgment to come upon Nineveh was because God wanted their repentance. Jonah's initial response had been to refuse to preach, because He feared God's grace might incorporate them too (4:2). We need to probe the motives for our reticence in not preaching as we might. It's too easy to excuse it as our personal shyness. Can there not be a sense in us too that we actually don't want our potential audiences to share in God's grace, even though we may not express this to ourselves directly? And another lesson arises for our preaching. It was God's intention, surely, that an upfront confrontation of Nineveh with their sins and the reality of God's coming judgment *if proclaimed with love in the heart and a sense of our own unworthiness* would bring about their conversion. We must ask whether we have perceived this in our approach to preaching.

The Meaning Of Persons

"Should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than 120,000 persons" (4:11) reflects the tremendous value that God places upon people. The greatness of the city was the basis for His feeling of compassion, His desire that they would not perish [although they were worthy of it] and come to repentance. This enables us to read 1:2 in a somewhat different light: "Go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against". When God described Nineveh as a "great city", the very fact of its size elicited a desire to spare it. And of course we meet the same phrase in Revelation (Rev. 18:21), where a condemned Babylon is described as a "great city". This was not God gleefully preparing to destroy a huge city. He surely had Nineveh in mind when He inspired those words. This was, and will be, a God whose very heart is touched by the tragedy of sinners having to be punished, and who is open to a change of purpose if they will repent. Thus the latter day appeal to "Come out of her!", whether we understand 'Babylon' as false religion, the Moslem world, the world of sinners or whoever, is rooted in God's spirit of passionate love towards Nineveh. As Jonah "cried" against

Nineveh, so God ‘cries’ against Babylon (Rev. 18:2). We who make that appeal in these last days should be reflecting here on earth the mind of God in Heaven; not merely pronouncing doom and gloom against ‘Babylon’, but warning them of God’s stated intentions towards them *with a heart that bleeds for them and seeks their repentance*. The heart of God Almighty responded in harmony to the hearts of the Ninevites- brought out by the repeated word play in Jonah 3:8-10, whereby the ‘turning’ of Nineveh in repentance is reflected in how God ‘turns’ and repents of what He had said He would do to them.

The Pattern Of The Preacher

In all true spiritual endeavour and genuine spiritual progress, there seems almost inevitably to be a process of two steps backward and three forward. Consider the pattern of Jonah’s life:

- Encounters the presence of God
- Flees from his preaching responsibility; faints
- Saved by God’s grace
- Repents and obeys the call to preach
- Loses his intensity
- God shows Jonah how He feels about Nineveh
- Jonah faints
- Repents and obeys the call to preach by writing up his poem and writing the book of Jonah.

Within the course of a few hours, we can go through the essence of this process, learning again the lesson of Jonah and the gourd. We are encountering the presence and call of God to minister every hour; for the need of the world around us is the call.

12-4 Jonah and Nahum

Nahum also prophesied against Nineveh. When we read his words, it would appear that there was no chance for Nineveh. And yet presumably there was always a chance for them, just as there was at Jonah’s time some years previously. But it seems to me that the essential message of Nahum was that of Jonah. They could have repented, even then. Not surprisingly, we find many allusions by Nahum back to Jonah:

Nahum

God is slow to anger (1:3)

Jonah [re. Nineveh]

4:2 [same Hebrew words]- and therefore He saved Nineveh.

“Who can abide in the fierceness of His anger?” (1:6)

God turns away from “the fierceness of His anger” [s.w.] against Nineveh (3:9)- Nineveh had survived God’s fierce anger by repenting, and so they could even in Nahum’s time. The Hebrew word translated “abide” in Nah. 1:6 is that used in Jonah to describe how the King of Assyria “arose” (3:6) in repentance. The answer to the question: “Who can abide / arise in the [presence of] the fierceness of His anger?” is: ‘The King of Assyria if he repents’.

The wickedness of Nineveh “came up” before God’s face (2:1)

The same words are used about Nineveh (1:2).

God was “against” Nineveh (2:13)

Same word in 1:2

Judged for “wickedness” (3:19)

Same word in 1:2; 3:8

It becomes apparent that the Ninevites of Nahum’s day are being directed back to the repentance of their city at the time of Jonah; but clearly they are also being invited to share in Jonah’s personal repentance.

Nahum

Jonah [re. Jonah]

God has His way in the storm (1:3)

Jonah’s experience in the storm

God rebukes the sea (1:4)

As God stilled the storm which Jonah was in

Who can stand before God? (1:5)

Jonah had to be ‘stood up’ [s.w.] from his hiding in the ship when fleeing from God’s presence (1:15)

The Lord is a stronghold “in the day of trouble” (1:7) to those who trust Him.

Jonah cried to God in his “affliction” [s.w. “trouble”] (2:2)

An “overrunning flood” will overtake Nineveh (1:8)

“The floods...passed over [s.w. “overrunning”] Jonah (2:2); but Jonah repented and was saved. Note how the connections between Nah. 1:7,8 and Jonah 2:2 are in close proximity- surely an allusion is intended here.

Affliction (1:9)

Affliction [s.w.] (2:2)

From this it becomes apparent that Jonah is seen by God as in essentially the same position as the Ninevites. This was why his appeal to them was so strong. For he had been in just their position, in essence, yet had repented. The fact Nahum makes all these allusions to Jonah's personal repentance indicates that they well knew the story of Jonah; and his repentance had inspired that of the audience he preached to. In these we see a very real pattern for ourselves; it is our identity with our audience, as repentant sinners ourselves, which will elicit their response.

Nahum's message was not only a warning of judgment to come upon Nineveh. It was an appeal to Israel, that unless they repented, they would likewise perish. The appeal to Judah to "perform thy vows" (Nah. 1:15) is couched in the very same words as Jonah used in Jonah 2:9: "I will pay [s.w. perform] that which I have vowed". Judah were being asked to be like Jonah, and not despise Nineveh, but rather appeal to her to repent.