

The Birth of Moses

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Advent: The Unexpected King / Birth; Advent; King; God's Providence; Moses; Jesus / Exodus 2:1-10

The birth of Moses Exodus 2:1-10 teaches us about the providence of God.

Introduction

Today is Week 2 in our Advent series that I am calling, “Advent: The Unexpected King.”

Throughout the Bible, births often herald great hope and expectations and are the result of great faith in God. Many births are a foreshadowing of the greatest birth of all, the birth of Jesus Christ.

Last week, Pastor Scott examined the birth of Isaac. We learned that what God promised will happen according to God’s timing.

Today, I want to examine the birth of Moses. The birth of Moses teaches us about the providence of God. The birth of Moses teaches us about the providence of God in the birth of Jesus.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism Question 11 asks, “What are God’s works of providence?” The answer is:

God’s works of providence are, his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving, and governing all his creatures, and all their actions (*The Westminster Shorter Catechism: With Scripture Proofs*, 3rd edition. [Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996]).

We see a wonderful example of God’s providence in the birth of Moses.

Scripture

Let’s read [Exodus 2:1-10](#):

¹ Now a man from the house of Levi went and took as his wife a Levite woman. ² The woman conceived and bore a son, and when she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him three months. ³ When she could hide him no longer, she took for him a basket made of bulrushes and daubed it with bitumen and pitch. She put the child in it and placed it among the reeds by the river bank. ⁴ And his sister stood at a distance to know what would be done to him. ⁵ Now the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her young women walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her servant woman, and she took it. ⁶ When she opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the baby was crying. She took pity on him and said, “This is one of the Hebrews’ children.” ⁷ Then his sister said to Pharaoh’s daughter, “Shall I go and call you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?” ⁸ And Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, “Go.” So the girl went and called the child’s mother. ⁹ And Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, “Take this child away and nurse him for me, and I will give you your wages.” So the woman took the child and nursed him. ¹⁰ When the child grew older, she brought him to Pharaoh’s daughter, and he became her son. She named him Moses, “Because,” she said, “I drew him out of the water.”

Lesson

The birth of Moses in [Exodus 2:1-10](#) teaches us about the providence of God.

Let’s use the following outline:

1. God Works Through Faithful Parents (2:1-2)
2. God Triumphs Over Evil (2:3-9)
3. God Works from Beginning to End (2:10)

I. God Works Through Faithful Parents (2:1-2)

First, God works through faithful parents.

We read in [Exodus 2:1-2](#), **“Now a man from the house of Levi went and took as his wife a Levite woman. The woman conceived and bore a son, and when she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him three months.”**

These verses give the impression that the child born was the first-born child of the man and woman. However, the child had an older sister, whose name was Miriam (see [Exodus 15:20](#)), and an older brother, whose name was Aaron (see [Exodus 4:14](#)).

So, the child born to the man and woman in [Exodus 2:1-2](#) was their third child, whose name we later learn was Moses (see [Exodus 2:10](#)).

Moreover, [Exodus 2:1-2](#) does not give us the names of the parents. Later, however, we are given their names in [Exodus 6:20](#). There we learn that their names are Amram and Jochebed.

At this time, however, they are just referred to as a man and a woman.

Commentator Michael Bentley noted, “Jesus often talked about a certain man or a certain woman, without naming the individual. This is so that we can concentrate on him, not the people concerned. Also, the Gospel writers say, ‘A certain man’ to imply to their readers, ‘It could have been you.’ ” (Michael Bentley, *Traveling Homeward: Exodus Simply Explained*, Welwyn Commentary Series [Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 1999], n.p.).

All we are told in our text is that the man and woman came from the **house of Levi**. Later, the Levites were called by God to facilitate the worship of God’s people.

In one sense, this man and this woman were just an ordinary couple.

In another sense, however, this man and this woman were an extraordinary couple. How do I know that?

[Hebrews 11](#) is often called “The Bible’s Hall of Faith.” This chapter is filled with men and women who exercised faith—often in very difficult circumstances. In that chapter, we read in verse 23, “By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king’s edict.”

This couple demonstrated that they feared God more than they feared any human king. They were determined to live their lives by faith in the true and living God.

Did they know what the future held? No.

Did they know the outcome of their decision to hide the baby? No.

At this point in their lives, they had no idea what God had in store for their child. They were simply determined to trust God and obey him even in the face of extremely difficult circumstances.

About 25 years ago, Barna Research Group surveyed how born-again Christian parents raise their children.

The survey discovered that the majority of Christian parents said that the church and the Bible did not influence how they parent their children.

Only 33 percent of born-again parents said their church or faith has been a dominant influence in the way they parent, and only half of the born-again parents mentioned anything related to faith (including the Bible, church, or religion) as a significant influence on how they raise their children.

The main influences listed by parents included: their own upbringing (45 percent); friends, relatives, and spouses (35 percent); and books, magazines, and articles on parenting (34 percent) (“Ministry Matters” from Ministry Today, April 1998, p. 13).

Friends, there is a much greater need today than 25 years ago for parents to be faithful in the way in which they raise their children.

Furthermore, you may not see the fruit of your faithfulness for many decades. I am not sure that Moses’ parents were still alive when God called him to lead the people of God out of Egypt.

Do you know old Moses was when God called him to lead the people of God out of Egypt? He was 80 years old!

So, the first principle we learn about the providence of God is that God works through faithful parents.

II. God Triumphs Over Evil (2:3-9)

Second, God triumphs over evil.

Let me give a bit of background to our current narrative.

You recall that Jacob had twelve sons. Joseph was his eleventh son and his favorite son. When Joseph was a teenager, his jealous brothers sold him to passing travelers who sold him into slavery in Egypt.

While in Egypt, Joseph was used by God to save that nation and indeed the surrounding people from a massive years-long famine. Because of Joseph's God-given visions and administrative ability, he became second in command behind the Pharaoh himself.

Pharaoh invited Joseph's family to come and live in Egypt, which they did. They settled in the district of Goshen.

All was harmonious for decades. In fact, all was harmonious for centuries. The Bible tells us that the people of Israel lived in Egypt for 430 years ([Exodus 12:40](#)).

But Exodus opens with these ominous words in [Exodus 1:8](#), "Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph."

This Pharaoh was very concerned about the growing numbers of Israelites. He wanted to slow down the growth of the ever-increasing Israelites.

First, he forced God's people to become his slaves, "but the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad" ([Exodus 1:12](#)).

Since that did not work, Pharaoh then ordered the midwives to kill every Israelite boy that was born ([Exodus 1:16](#)). But the midwives defied Pharaoh's order, and "the people multiplied and grew very strong" ([Exodus 1:20](#)).

Pharaoh must have been extremely frustrated. The harder he tried to slow down the population growth of the Israelites, the more they grew in numbers. Finally, Pharaoh resorted to genocide: "Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, 'Every son that is born to the Hebrews you shall cast into the Nile, but you shall let every daughter live'" ([Exodus 1:22](#)).

It was while this order from Pharaoh was in place that Moses was born to Amram and Jochebed. He was kept in their home for three months.

Then we read of Moses' mother in verse 3 of our text, **"When she could hide him no longer, she took for him a basket made of bulrushes and daubed it with**

bitumen and pitch. She put the child in it and placed it among the reeds by the river bank.”

Let me make two comments here. First, she hid her child in the very place where every baby boy was to be cast—the Nile River. What a wonderfully clever place to hide the child. That is the last place the authorities would look for a newborn baby boy.

And second, I love the detail that the word of God gives us, for the Hebrew word for **“basket”** can also be translated as “ark.” Just as God told Noah to build an ark to save 8 people from the coming worldwide flood, Moses’ mother built an ark to save her son from Pharaoh’s genocidal command to kill all baby boys.

Moses’ mother had his older sister stand at a distance to see what would happen to him.

Then Pharaoh’s daughter came to bathe in the Nile River. She saw the basket and the baby crying inside it. **She took pity on him and said, “This is one of the Hebrews’ children”** (2:6b).

Moses’ quick-thinking sister then said to Pharaoh’s daughter, **“Shall I go and call you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?”** (2:7).

Pharaoh’s daughter told her to do so and Moses’ sister went and called Moses’ mother. Astonishingly, when their mother arrived, **Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, “Take this child away and nurse him for me, and I will give you your wages.” So the woman took the child and nursed him** (2:9).

I love the way that God triumphs over evil. Pharaoh wanted all the Hebrew boys killed. Instead, one of them was protected by his own daughter, and Pharaoh’s plan was once again thwarted.

In his book titled, *Uncommon Decency*, Richard J. Mouw writes:

Imagine a city under siege. The enemy that surrounds the city will not let anyone or anything leave. Supplies are running low, and the citizens are fearful. But in the dark of the night, a spy sneaks through the enemy lines. He rushed to the city to tell the people that in another place the main enemy force had been defeated; the leaders had already surrendered. The people do not need to be afraid. It is only a matter of time until the besieging troops receive the news and lay down their weapons.

Similarly, we may seem now to be surrounded by the forces of evil—disease, injustice, oppression, death. But the enemy has been defeated at Calvary. Things are not the way they seem to be. It is only a matter of time until it becomes clear to all that the battle is really over (*Uncommon Decency*, Richard J. Mouw, pp. 149-150).

So, the second principle we learn about the providence of God is that God triumphs over evil.

III. God Works from Beginning to End (2:10)

And third, God works from beginning to end.

We read in verse 10, **“When the child grew older, she [that is, the baby’s mother] brought him to Pharaoh’s daughter, and he became her son. She named him Moses, ‘Because,’ she said, ‘I drew him out of the water.’ ”**

Scholars believe that Moses was about five years old when his mother returned him to Pharaoh’s daughter.

During his first five years, Moses was taught basic truths that he carried for the rest of his entire life. He learned about the true and living God, the people of God, and the history of God’s people.

In Pharaoh’s household, Moses then received the finest secular education one could receive.

Moreover, some scholars believe that it was possible that Moses could even have been in line to succeed to the throne of Egypt.

However, we read in [Hebrews 11:24-25](#), “By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.”

Moses had come to understand that all the advantages and pleasures he might have enjoyed in Egypt pale in comparison to belonging to God and his people.

He came to understand that God works from beginning to end.

Pastor Tony Evans said of God’s providence:

Providence is the hand of God in the glove of history. It is the work of God whereby he integrates and blends events in the universe to fulfill his original

design for which it was created. It is God sitting behind the steering wheel of time. Providence refers to God's governance of all events to direct them toward an end. It is God taking what you and I would call luck, chance, mistakes, and happenstance and stitching them into achieving his program (Tony Evans, *Tony Evans' Book of Illustrations: Stories, Quotes, and Anecdotes from More than 30 Years of Preaching and Public Speaking* [Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2009], 240).

Or, in the words of *The Westminster Shorter Catechism*:

God's works of providence are, his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving, and governing all his creatures, and all their actions (*The Westminster Shorter Catechism: With Scripture Proofs*, 3rd edition. [Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996]).

So, the third principle we learn about the providence of God is that God works from beginning to end.

Conclusion

I began this message by saying that many births are a foreshadowing of the greatest birth of all, the birth of Jesus Christ.

That is true of the births of Moses and Jesus as well.

Like Moses, Jesus was born at a time when the people of God were under the yoke of a foreign power. In Moses' time, it was the Egyptians and in Jesus' time, it was the Romans.

Like Moses, Jesus was born when the king issued a decree to kill all baby boys. In Moses' time it was Pharaoh who ordered all Hebrew baby boys to be thrown into the Nile River and in Jesus' time it was Herod who ordered that all baby boys under the age of two be killed.

Like Moses, Jesus was born to faithful parents. Moses was born to Aram and Jochebed who trusted God rather than obey Pharaoh and Jesus was born to Mary and her husband Joseph who did what God told him to do through the angel.

Like Moses, Jesus was born to become the savior of his people. Moses was the one whom God used to save his people from slavery in Egypt through the Exodus and Jesus is the one whom God uses—still to this day—to save his people from slavery to sin.

Moses' birth and life point to the far greater work of Jesus. That is why the writer to the Hebrews reminds us in [Hebrews 3:1-6](#) how important it is for us to fix our eyes on Jesus and to recognize that he far surpasses the glory of Moses:

Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house. For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses—as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself. (For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.) Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house, if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.

Yes, Moses was raised up by God to be used by God to lead his people out of physical slavery.

But Jesus was also raised up by God to lead his people out of spiritual slavery.

God is providentially working out all things for his glory and our ultimate good. If God did what he did for Moses, and if God did what he did for Jesus, then you can “know that for those who love God, all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose” ([Romans 8:28](#)). Amen.