

What's the Message – Lesson 21

Today's study is the first lesson in Part Two of our study of the Old Testament . . . and is entitled . . . the Birth and Early Training of Moses.

Greetings in the name of Jesus, our Savior. Once again we ask our Lord to bless you through this study, and enable you to see the lessons learned by Moses and the Children of Israel apply to us also, and are very relevant to our lives today. Amen.

Teacher, right off the bat here in the first few verses of Exodus a statement is made that I have a question about. Verse eight states: "Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph." It seems incredulous that the one nation . . . of all the ancient nations in history . . . one that kept extensive records . . . would not have some account, somewhere, of the person of Joseph. After all, he led the country through a disastrous famine. How could this be?

A very good question it is, Dale. And it is one that puzzled me as a young man, when it was presented as a challenge to me by an un-believer who was trying to use this absence of historical records in the archives of Egypt as proof that Joseph, and the entire Exodus experience of Israel, is a myth.

There is a hole in the official historical record of Egypt of over 100 years, in the period labeled by historians as between the "Middle and New Kingdoms". No records of any pharaoh and his accomplishments appear during this time, as no records of Egypt being overtaken by an outside country exist either. For the first time in its already long history, Egypt was in the hands of foreign conquerors. And archeologists had not published enough data on their findings of the past century for this knowledge to reach our public awareness. We didn't know of this conquest, and we didn't know who the conquerors were, because the prideful Egyptians didn't want us, or anyone, to know. But now, we do know.

This hole in the record just happens to coincide very nicely with the rise of a Hebrew slave into the service of a king of the Hyksos, who was now the ruler of Egypt. Eventually, as history records, the Egyptians did reclaim their country under Pharaoh Ahmose of the 18th dynasty, and drove the Hyksos out. Then they proceeded to erase this terrible insult, and all the events that occurred during it, by cutting off any mentions on their stone carvings and putting it completely out of their memory. But the Hyksos are historically real . . . just not admitted to by the official Egyptian record . . . and copies of communication to their foreign agents have been found. Once again, the Bible has been validated when it comes to historical events.

Thanks for clearing that up for me. And I take it that also explains the oppressive attitude of the new pharaoh and his followers towards the Israelites . . . an attitude that made the Israelites slaves and their lives bitter.

The best-known part of the first chapters of Exodus deal with the birth of Moses at a time when Egyptian midwives had been instructed by the Pharaoh to kill all newborn Israelite baby boys. The parents of Moses hid him for the first three months, but then took a chance on having him taken in by Pharaoh's daughter. Just as the second chapter of Exodus tells us, the scheme worked, and Moses was eventually raised as a child of Pharaoh's family.

When he grew to be an adult, Moses saw an Egyptian task-master beating a Hebrew, and in a fit of rage killed the Egyptian. He then had to flee for his life, and went to the land of Midian to hide. There he married a woman named Zipporah and began to raise a family as a shepherd in the desert. Now, what I have just stated is a highly condensed summary of the events of the first two chapters of Exodus, but what does all this really mean to us today? Teacher, what is the message?

What we have here are two separate events in the early life of Moses, but they both illustrate the same point. Namely, that Moses was being trained and prepared for what God had in-store for him in his future. Stop and think about what Moses was learning while he was in the household of Pharaoh. He would not only become an educated man, but could meet the top generals of the army, learn about logistics and the management of large groups of people and supplies. At the time he probably never thought about applying that knowledge, but it certainly came in handy later.

The second phase of his training was to teach him about the secrets of survival in the desert. Think of the importance of this step. It took years to learn, and he lived close to the land as a shepherd. Although it appeared mundane and commonplace at the time, his training was now complete and God would call to him, telling him of the plan in which he was to play a major role.

The thing for us to realize is that God is using many things – even this Bible study – to teach us to be His workers, and that as He did for Moses, He will supply us with the knowledge we need to do the job He wants us to do as His disciples and witnesses.

Our next lesson will deal with the call of Moses and his response.