

Moses's Heavenly Glory

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In the previous paper I have meditated on Moses's loss of Canaan. I would now trace the testimony to his heavenly glory. For though he lost the one, the Lord through abounding grace had prepared for him the other.

From Acts 7, we learn that the rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ by the earth was the occasion (I speak, of course, as remembering that "known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world") of giving him a glory in heaven, and in connection with a family there, of an order higher than any glory He would have known or gathered, had the earth received, instead of rejecting Him. But that chapter also tells us, that that mystery had been typified in the histories of both Joseph and Moses. Joseph was sold, and Moses was refused by their brethren, but, by reason of that, Joseph got joy and glory and a family in Egypt, and Moses got the same in Midian; and each of them was thus, in his day, a foreshadowing of the glory and joy of the Son of God, in the midst of the church or heavenly family, consequent on His being rejected in His day also by Israel and the earth.

But, in the progress of Moses's history, we get him a second time separated from Israel, such separation being also followed by the same heavenly results. The sin of Israel at the foot of Mount Sinai, by which the covenant was broken and the blessing forfeited, casts Moses again into the same heavenly character. Upon that sin of the golden calf the tabernacle is removed, and pitched without the camp, the Lord in righteousness disowning His revolted people. But there Moses meets Him, and meets Him too in a new way, "face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend" (Ex. 33: 11). This had not been so before. It was the expression of increased intimacy between the Lord and Moses. It was letting him into friendship with the Lord, such as the church now stands in (John 15: 15). It was a new thing with Moses, a fresh character of glory in Him, as his previous dwelling in Midian among the Gentiles had been new in its day. And it was just the thing that distinguished Moses from all Jewish worthies or prophets, and took him above them; as we read, "there arose not a prophet since in Israel, like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face" (Deut. 34). And being in this place of intimacy, or in this heavenly place, he acts according to the high prerogatives of it. He passes and re-passes between the glorious tabernacle which the cloud guarded, and the camp of the congregation (Ex. 33: 11). And this movement expressed his equal access to heaven and to earth, and thus that he was the mediator, the shadow of our heavenly Priest, Christ Jesus. Joshua the while was kept in the tabernacle, as the servant separated, it is true, from the defiled and revolted people (as the righteous remnant will be in the latter day), but still not let into the place of intimacy, the heavenly place, which Moses filled.

And in another case he acts according to the high prerogatives of this new and heavenly character. He marries an Ethiopian woman (Num. 12). He takes another wife from among the Gentiles, and those too who were, in common esteem, the very basest of the Gentiles (Jer. 13). His natural kindred, his connections in the flesh, were not prepared for this; and they speak against him, and are for refusing his place and authority. He being a man of heavenly temper, more meek than any who could have been found on the earth, says nothing to all this. But the Lord pleads his cause, and in doing so vindicates him on the very ground of that heavenly character which he had acquired in the days of the golden calf, or of the apostasy of the earthly people. "Hear now my words," says the Lord to Aaron and Miriam, "if there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream; my servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all my house; with him

will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches, and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold: wherefore, then, were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?"

Here the Lord very strikingly pleads in favour of Moses, and in full vindication of his doing an act which earthly or fleshly kindred did not understand, and were not prepared for, the intimacy with Himself which Moses had acquired by the former sin of that earthly people. That intimacy, or speaking "face to face" with the Lord, had thus raised him quite above the Jewish or earthly level, and had clearly given him a heavenly character, one of the prerogatives of which he had been now exercising, in marrying an Ethiopian woman, as he had before, as I have shown, exercised another of them, in passing and re-passing between the Lord in the tabernacle of glory and the camp of the people.

And I must notice the value of the word "all" in this passage. It is very striking in connection with my subject — "who is faithful in all my house," says the Lord, words which went to tell Aaron and Miriam that Moses was a person of special dignity, having access to all parts of the Lord's house. It was not only that he was faithful, but faithful in all parts of the house, having title to be in the holiest, or heavenly place, as well as in the tabernacle of the congregation or the courts. For it is Moses's dignity as well as fidelity that his divine Advocate is here pleading.

And this strikes me as being very clear and strong; and thus Moses's second marriage, or with the Ethiopian, has the same voice as his first marriage, or with the Midianite. Both show him in heavenly character, or as the type of the Lord in union with the church.

Thus Moses becomes a partaker of the heavenly calling, and according to this, as we may now further see, at the end he occupies the heavenly place.

We see him for instance, in the Mount Pisgah, viewing the land of Canaan stretched out beneath him (Deut. 34). That was a new mount of God to him. It lay a little outside the promised land, but it afforded him a full view of it. It was a high eminence, the top of Pisgah on Mount Nebo, in the mountains of Abarim. The earth had now ceased to own Moses, Israel also knew him no more, the wilderness too had all been passed, and the Lord alone is his company on the hill that overlooked the land of promise. What an expression of the place of the church or heavenly glory, the whole of this is! On high with the Lord, Moses looks down on the earthly inheritance, the place of the tribes of Israel, Gilead and Dan, Naphtali, Ephraim and Manasseh, with all the land of Judah to the sea, the south too, and the valley of Jericho, with the city of palm trees unto Zoar! A place that could command such objects beneath, and in such company, is heavenly indeed Moses is on high with the Lord, looking on the cities and plains where the redeemed and happy families of the earth were to dwell. It is from heaven alone that such blessing and occupation of the earth, in righteousness and peace, will be seen by the Lord and His children of the resurrection.*

*We have also a witness to the heavenly glory of Aaron, Moses's associate. He dies as a priest on the top of the hill, the earthly people being beneath him, and knowing him only as a priest in the high places (Num. 20).

And again as another witness of Moses in the heavenly place, we see him in the New Testament, on another mount, the Mount of the Transfiguration. Peter, James, and John are there, presenting Israel and the earthly people, and they are on the outside. But Moses is there, again in company with the Lord and another co-heir of the heavenly glory, and they are within, enwrapped in the cloud of the excellent glory, the true veil that is to separate the holy place from the courts, or the heavens from the earth. Moses is on the heavenly side of that veil, glorified in the likeness of the very Lord of the glory Himself.

These are two strong and clear testimonies to the heavenly glory of Moses — striking exhibition of him in the heavenly place, being in company with the Lord on the top of two hills, from the one of which he sees the earthly inheritance beneath him, and from the other, the earthly people outside him. And thus I judge, from all these witnesses which we have here listened to, we gather both the heavenly calling and glory, or the heavenly character and place of this honoured and faithful servant of God. A child of the resurrection he is, and a joint-heir of God with Jesus Christ.

Thus does Moses lose the earth, but gains heaven. He loses Canaan by his own wrong, trespassing, as we have seen, against the grace and power of the budding rod, but he gains glory on the top of the hill that overlooked Canaan, through the abounding kindness and love of God his Saviour. Law says that "no man shall take advantage of his own wrong," and justly so; for righteousness forbids the thought that anyone shall gain a benefit by his own mis-doing. But grace does not act by law, for the glory we reap through it, as pardoned sinners, is richer and brighter far than that which Adam in innocency knew. God's riddle is solved in our history — the eater has yielded meat, and the strong man sweetness. Moses and the church both illustrate it; both are travelling onward through forfeiture of the earth, led by the hand of the Son of God, to the top of that hill which looks down on the goodly tents of Jacob beneath. O beloved, what manner of people should we be! May the life and energy of the indwelling Spirit keep us more and more separated to heavenly character and heavenly hopes! Amen, Lord Jesus.