

LESSON 26 - June 30, 1888

SUGGESTIONS FOR QUARTERLY REVIEW.

1. GIVE a brief Bible description of the character of Abraham.

2. What was the foundation of Abraham's righteousness ?

3. Tell how Abraham's faith was tested.

4. What made this such a test of his faith?

5. How did Jacob come to leave his father's house ?

6. Relate the dream which he had while on his journey.

7. What vow did he make ?

8. Give proof that it is right for us to make such vows.

9. Where is this narrative recorded?

10. Relate the circumstances of Jacob's wrestling with the angel.

11. Who was the angel ?

12. What was the cause of Jacob's importunity, and what did he receive ?

13. For what purpose was this narrative recorded ?

14. What led to Joseph's being sold into Egypt ?

15. How did he suffer there, and what for?

16. What subsequent position did he occupy?

17. What was the real cause of Joseph's prosperity ?

18. Show how God overruled the purposes of wicked men for good.

19. How did the Israelites come to settle in the land of Egypt ?

20. After they became very numerous, what was done to them ?

21. Tell how Moses was fitted for the work of delivering the people.

22. Relate the circumstances of his call to return to Egypt to deliver Israel.

23. What was God's special object in delivering his people?

The Signs of the Times

February 26, 1880 The Call of Moses

To the oppressed and suffering Hebrews the day of their deliverance seemed to be long deferred; but in his own appointed time God designed to work for them in mighty power. Moses was not to stand, as he at first anticipated, at the head of armies, with waving banners and glittering armor. That people, so long abused and oppressed, were not to gain the victory for themselves, by rising up and asserting their rights. God's purpose was to be accomplished in a way to pour contempt on human pride and glory. The deliverer was to go forth as a humble shepherd, with only a rod in his hand; but God would make that rod powerful in delivering his people from oppression, and in preserving them when pursued by their enemies. {ST, February 26, 1880 par. 1}

Before Moses went forth, he received his high commission, his ordination to his great work, in a way that filled him with awe, and gave him a deep sense of his own weakness and unworthiness. While engaged in his round of duties he saw a bush, branches, foliage, and trunk, all burning, yet not consumed. He drew near to view the wonderful sight, when a voice addressed him from out of the flame. It was the voice of God. It was He who, as the angel of the covenant, had revealed himself to the fathers in ages past. The frame of Moses quivered, he was thrilled with terror, as the Lord called him by name. With trembling lips he answered, "Here am I." He was warned not to approach his Creator with undue familiarity: "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." "And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God." {ST, February 26, 1880 par. 2}

Finite man may learn a lesson that should never be forgotten,--to approach God with reverence. We may come boldly into his presence, presenting the name of Jesus, our righteousness and substitute, but never with the boldness of presumption, as though he were on a level with ourselves. We have heard some address the great and all-powerful and holy God, who dwelleth in light unapproachable, as they would not address an equal, or even an inferior. We have seen some behave themselves in the presence of God as they would not dare to do in the presence of an earthly friend. These show that they have not a proper view of God's character and the greatness of his power. They should remember that God's eye is upon them; he reads the thoughts of their hearts concerning him. He will not be mocked. God is greatly to be revered; wherever his presence is clearly realized, sinful man will bow in the most humble attitude, and from the depths of the soul cry out, "How dreadful is this place!" {ST, February 26, 1880 par. 3}

As Moses waited in reverent awe before God, the words continued: "I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey." "Come now, therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." {ST, February 26, 1880 par. 4}

Amazed and frightened at the command, Moses drew back, saying, "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" The reply was, {ST, February 26, 1880 par. 5}

"Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee. When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain. Moses thought of the difficulties to be encountered, the blindness, ignorance, and unbelief of his people, who were almost destitute of all knowledge of God. {ST, February 26, 1880 par. 6}

"Behold," he said, "when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you, and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say to them?" The answer was, {ST, February 26, 1880 par. 7}

"I AM THAT I AM. Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." Moses was commanded first to assemble the elders of Israel, the most noble and righteous among them, who had long grieved because of their bondage, and to declare to them a message from God, with a promise of deliverance. Then he was to take the elders before the king, and say to him, {ST, February 26, 1880 par. 8}

"The Lord God of the Hebrews hath met with us, and now let us go, we beseech thee, three day's journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God." {ST, February 26, 1880 par. 9}

The Pharaoh before whom Moses was to appear was not the one who had decreed that he should be put to death. That monarch was dead, and another had taken the reins of government. The name Pharaoh was a title borne by nearly all the Egyptian kings. {ST, February 26, 1880 par. 10}

Moses was forewarned that Pharaoh would resist the appeal to let Israel go. Yet the courage of God's servant must not fail; for the Lord would make this the occasion to manifest his power before the Egyptians and before his people. "And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof; and after that, he will let you go." {ST, February 26, 1880 par. 11}

The mighty miracles wrought for the deliverance of the Hebrews, would give them favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and when they should leave Egypt they were not to go empty-handed. They were to ask or seek from their Egyptian neighbors valuable articles, such as jewels of silver and gold, which could be easily transported. The Egyptians had been enriched by the labor unjustly exacted from the Israelites; and now, as the latter were to start on their long journey to a new home, it was right that they should receive a portion of the wealth which they had fairly earned. This would be a small recompense for their many years of unpaid servitude. {ST, February 26, 1880 par. 12}

Moses saw before him difficulties which seemed unsurmountable. What proof could he give his people that God had indeed sent him? "Behold," he said, "they will not believe me, nor hearken to my voice; for they will say, 'The Lord hath not appeared unto thee.'" Evidence which appealed to his own senses was now given. He was told to cast the rod in his hand upon the ground. He did so; it became a serpent, and he fled before it. He was recalled and commanded to seize it. As he obeyed, it became again a rod. He was bidden to put his hand into his bosom. He did so, and on taking it out, saw it all covered with the white scabs of leprosy. On being told, he put it again into his bosom, and on withdrawing it saw that it had become like the other. By these signs the Lord assured Moses that his own people as well as Pharaoh should be convinced that one mightier than the king of Egypt was manifest among them. {ST, February 26, 1880 par. 13}

But the servant of God was still overwhelmed by the thought of the strange and wonderful work before him. In his distress and terror he now pleaded as an excuse a lack of ready speech: "O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore nor since thou hast spoken to thy servant; but I am slow of speech and of a slow tongue." He had been so long from the Egyptians that he had not so clear knowledge and ready use of their language as when he was among them. This hesitancy on the part of Moses would seem to imply a fear that God was unable to qualify him for the great work to which he had called him, or that he had made a mistake in his selection of the man. The Lord said to him, "Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the Lord?" What an appeal! What a rebuke to the distrustful! {ST, February 26, 1880 par. 14}

To this was added another assurance of divine aid: "Now, therefore, go, and I will be with thy mouth, and will teach thee what thou shalt say." But Moses still entreated the Lord to select a more competent person. These excuses at first proceeded from humility and self-diffidence. But after the Lord had promised to remove all his difficulties, and to give him final success, then any further shrinking back and complaining of his unfitness showed unbelief and distrust of God himself. {ST, February 26, 1880 par. 15}

Moses was now directed to Aaron, his elder brother, who was eloquent, and who, having been in daily use of the language of the Egyptians, understood and could speak it perfectly. He was told that Aaron was coming to meet him, and when he came would rejoice at the meeting. The Lord then commanded Moses, {ST, February 26, 1880 par. 16}

"Thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth; and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do. And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people; and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God. And thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs." {ST, February 26, 1880 par. 17}

Moses could make no further resistance, for all ground for excuses was removed. He returned to his father-in-law's tent, and asked permission to visit his brethren in Egypt. Jethro gave it, with his blessing, "Go in peace." So, taking his wife and children, Moses set out on his journey. He had not dared to make known the object of his mission, lest they should not be allowed to accompany him. Before reaching Egypt, however, he himself deemed it best, for their own safety, to send them back to her father's tent. {ST, February 26, 1880 par. 18}

The Lord said unto Moses, "When thou goest to return unto Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand; but I will harden his heart, that he will not let the people go." That is, the display of almighty power before Pharaoh, being rejected by him, would make him harder and more firm in his rebellion. But the Lord would overrule the course of this haughty monarch, so that his obstinacy and perverseness would cause the name of God to be magnified before the Egyptians, and before his people also. {ST, February 26, 1880 par. 19}

Moses was directed to say unto Pharaoh, "Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my first-born. And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me. And if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy first-born." The Lord called Israel his first-born because he had singled out that people to be the depositaries of his law, obedience to which would preserve them pure amidst idolatrous nations. He conferred upon them special privileges, such as were generally granted to the first-born son. {ST, February 26, 1880 par. 20}

As Moses journeyed to Egypt, the angel of the Lord met him, and assumed a threatening posture, as though he would slay him. He did not explain the reason for his appearance in this manner, but Moses knew that there was a cause. He was going to Egypt in obedience to the express command of God; therefore the journey must be right. He at once remembered that his youngest son had not been circumcised. In compliance with the wishes of Zipporah, he had postponed the ceremony, contrary to the divine requirement. Now the wife, fearful that her husband might be slain, overcame her feelings of undue affection for her son, and performed the rite herself. After this, the angel let Moses go. In his mission to Pharaoh, he was to be placed in a perilous position, where his life would be exposed to the will of the king, if God did not by his power, through the presence of angels, preserve him. While Moses was living in neglect of one of God's positive commands, his life would not be secure; for angels could not protect him in disobedience. {ST, February 26, 1880 par. 21}

In the time of trouble, just previous to the coming of Christ, the lives of the righteous will be preserved through the ministrations of holy angels. But there will be no security for the transgressor.

Angels cannot then protect those who are living in neglect of a known duty or an express command of Jehovah. {ST, February 26, 1880 par. 22}