



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Exodus 2: 1-25

“Prophet, Providence and Covenant”

TRANSCRIPT

Returning tonight to the second chapter of the Book of Exodus in our study, From Egypt to Canaan or studies in Exodus. I am sure that we will be studying every single chapter in Exodus in the way and which we are these opening chapters, but our major message and major emphasis will be on Israel's movement out of Egypt on towards the land and the typical teaching that is found in the experiences of this nation. As Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians chapter 10, describing the experiences of the nation as they came out of Egypt, all these things happened unto them as in samples, and so we look up them in that way.

Exodus is a marvelous canvas on which God's attributes are displayed. And, Exodus chapter 2, the chapter we look at now, is one of the most enlightening parts of the canvas because you can see first of all, God's providential control of history. Take for instance the way Moses is born and then is adopted into the family of the Pharaoh of Egypt who has just charged all of the people saying that every male son of the Hebrew shall be cast into the river, and so one can see the way in which God in his marvelous providence controls affairs so that Moses, the Hebrew, is brought up in Pharaoh's house. And then later, we notice in verse 15 through verse 22, Moses arrives in Midian at the well, sits down by the well, and it is not long before he is in association with Hobab or

Reuel, the father of the woman that is soon to be his wife, and then we see other things as well besides this marvelous providence.

John Flavell, the Puritan said, “Some providences like Hebrew letters must be written backward and read backwards,” and so no doubt Moses did not have any idea of what was happening to him and it may be doubtful that even his mother and father understood the things that were happening, but God was controlling history in order to bring the redemption and blessing that he had promised in the Abrahamic Covenant. One also sees particularly this sovereign mercy in covenant because in verse 24, we read, “And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.”

And then finally in Exodus chapter 2, we notice God’s loving concern for his suffering people and Moses is the instrumentality, humanly under God, by which the redemptive pilgrim makes some steps forward. In the 11th verse, we read, “And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens.” And then also in verse 23, “And it came to pass in process of time that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage.” So, all of these things are transpiring in this marvelous little chapter, Exodus Chapter 2.

Another thing that is very interesting and we will take a look at it at the conclusion of the message tonight is this: The New Testament uses Exodus chapter 2 in two places. But if you have been listening on Sunday morning to the messages on the Book of Acts, you remember, just recently we looked at Stephen’s sermon and Stephen in his sermon recorded for us in Acts chapter 7, speaks of this very chapter, in verse 17 of Acts chapter 7, you need not turn there, I will just read it for you, but if you want to turn, you can.

“But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt, till another king arose, which knew not Joseph.

The same dealt subtly with our kindred, and evil entreated our fathers, so that they cast out, their young children, to the end they might not live. In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months: And when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own son. And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds. And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel.”

You know it is so interesting to me that we can, here in 1984, December 11th or whatever it is today, we can open up Exodus chapter 2 and we can read what Steven saw in Exodus chapter 2, when he started that chapter and preached with it mind.

“When he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel. And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian: For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver, them: but they understood not. And the next day he showed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another? But he that did his neighbor wrong, thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us? Wilt thou kill me, as thou didst the Egyptian yesterday? Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Midian, where he begat two sons.”

And, there is another place in the New Testament where the author of a New Testament Book has something to say about Moses and specifically about chapter 2 and it is in the epistle to the Hebrews in the 11th chapter and this author will give us the benefits of his study of Exodus chapter 2 and of Moses’ decisions, but he will look at it in a different light, not contradictory to the other, but he will show us some other truths, that

are found in that account, but will lay stress in a different way. In verse 23 of Hebrews, Chapter 11, we read,

“By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible. Through faith he kept the Passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them.”

And so on. Now, I notice the way in which these authors have used the account on Exodus chapter 2 and have drawn their own lessons from it and some of those things of course are not specifically stated in Exodus chapter 2, but they are reasonable inferences drawn from the chapter and of course the fact that the Holy Spirit has let them in Stephen’s case to preach them and Luke to write them in his book, and the writer of the Epistle of the Hebrews to record them in his letter.

Well, we take that as the indication that in these cases, their inferences as well as the things that are specifically stated in Exodus to their inferences on Exodus chapter 2 are fully justified. Now, let us turn to Exodus chapter 2, and first of all, the first 10 verses give us the rise of the prophet who is going to be God’s man in the deliverance of Israel from the bondage in Egypt. Remember, later on, Moses was given that great prophecy in Deuteronomy 18 referred to several places in the New Testament in which he has said that in the future, the Lord God is going to raise up a prophet for the nation like him and

he went on to say, “Unto him, you will listen.” And, so Moses is a prophet, but he is a typical prophet, he is a typical prophet, typical of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, let me read the first 10 verses and then we will make just a few comments on his birth, his adoption, and his training.

“And there went a man of the house, of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi.” (See, Moses is from the tribe of Levi, he is from the priestly tribe.) “And the woman conceived, and bore a son: and when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months. And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink.” (It was just like a little ark, because that is the way in which Noah made the ark water worthy, by using bitumen pitch.) “And his sister stood afar off, to wit what would be done to him.”

You know, we often hear people say, “We need modern versions, because we do not have modern versions, we cannot understand the Bible.” That is nothing against the modern version. If you have one, that is fine. But I do not believe for one moment that a person reading the authorized version, would not understand the message and further more, I think there is a great value in being acquainted with the authorized version text. If you want to use a New American Standard Bible or a New International Version or some other version, that is fine. I do not have anything against it. I just say this.

If you are not acquainted with the Authorized Version text, even from the standpoint of literature, you have missed something and then from the standpoint of scripture and the history of the church and the things that characterized the history of the church down through the years, it is theology. You have missed something significant in not being acquainted with the text of the Authorized Version. So read your version, but do not fail to be acquainted with the Authorized Version.

Now, a person does not have to have much “wit,” to know the meaning of “wit” in a passage like this, “And his sister stood afar off, to wit what would be done to him.” And, a person who would say, “I don’t understand that - to wit what would be done to him- is a person who may not have all his wits. That is true, but after all it is not bad to learn the meaning of some of these words “to wit.” Obviously, that means “to know” what would be done. So you are missing something if you don’t get acquainted with the Authorized Version.

Something of your own English language, and something in history, incidentally, that helps you to understand words like “outwit someone.” It is related to this. That is a very common word, isn’t it? Like Washington outwitted us someday in the last second half. We understand exactly what that means. Well, anyway, I do not want to get too far astray here. That is one of my, as that lady said, one of my peregrinations. Verse 5:

“And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river; and her maidens walked along by the river's side; and when she saw the ark among the flags, she sent her maid to fetch it. And when she had opened it, she saw the child: and, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, ‘This is one of the Hebrews’ children.’”

I wonder how she knew that. I know what you are thinking? Bailey Smith said, “You know the Hebrews because they have those funny noses.” Well, I do not think that really is the way that Moses was known. After all we have already been told he was beautiful child. But it was the circumstances, no doubt, and she knew that this was one of the Hebrew’s children. Incidentally, the Hebrews do not have funny noses; some often do. I am not going to say anything more because I have a nose that disqualifies me for talking about anybody else’s funny nose. [Laughter] Mine does not turn down, mine turns up. I and Bob Hope have ski noses. This is going out on tape. [More laughter] I am

sorry, but, you will have to erase that part of it. Anyway, she had compassion on him.
She said,

“This is one of the Hebrews’ children. Then said his sister to Pharaoh's daughter, shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee? And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. And the maid went and called the child's mother. And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and will give thee thy wages. And the woman took the child, and nursed it. And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name Moses: and she said, because I drew him out of the water.”

The word “Moses” is related to the Hebrew word that means, “to draw.” And, so, it is a kind of pun on his name, but that is why he is called Moses. Now, we said that this is the rise of the prophet. F.B. Meyer has two little volumes on the Book of Exodus. They are very nice little volumes and they have some interesting illustrations in them, and Mr. Meyer points out something that is just a fact of daily life. Every morning, the time comes when the dawn arrives and the darkness and the day struggle for just a little while to gain the sovereignty. But when the first little flash of light comes, we know that it is all over for the darkness, because the day is to home.

And, Exodus, chapter 2, is something like that, because in the midst of Israel's bondage now, for so many years in Egypt, the flash of the light of the dawn has come in the birth of the man, Moses. Moses is the third child of Amram and Jochebed. Those were the names of his father and his mother. His father married his aunt. Rather unusual, and they had two children before Moses. The oldest was Miriam and then Aaron was the second child that Scripture speaks about. They may have had others. But Aaron was 3 years older and Miriam was at least, I think, 12 years older. So, Miriam is just at the right age to be interested in a little baby boy in the family, and so, Miriam evidently is the one

who is involved in this, and the birth is described here and it is stated concerning him that when she saw that he was a goodly child -- have you ever seen a mother who did not think her child who looks like a stewed apricot was not a goodly child? You just know that a mother thinks that every child born of them is a beautiful child.

But this one, evidently, was a special one, because twice it is stated, not simply here, but in the New Testament, and both Stephen and the writer of the epistle of the Hebrews lay some stress on that. Steven says, “According to the English text of Acts, chapter 7, verse 20: “In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair.” The Greek text says, “fair to God,” and then the writer of the Epistle of the Hebrews in describing Moses also says that he was a proper child, that is, a godly child, a fair to God child. So, they agree and may have got their interpretation from Exodus chapter 2. Moses was a beautiful child. And, evidently, Moses was such a good-looking child that he made quite an impression upon the Egyptian, the daughter of Pharaoh.

Now, his adoption is described here and evidently for the first three months the parents had kept Moses even though the word had gone out from Pharaoh, the king, that all of the male Hebrew children were to be put to death. In fact, it is stated in verse 22 of chapter 1 that Pharaoh charged all the people saying, “Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river and every daughter ye shall save alive.” Well, for three months, they could disguise the fact that they had a beautiful little child, that finally, Moses’ lungs made it necessary that there be a change because it was very clear that it was not going to be long before he would be heard.

And, so the father and mother obey the letter of the law. Notice, it is the letter of the law. Pharaoh said, “Cast all the male Hebrew children into the river,” the Nile. Well, that is exactly what they did. They cast him into the river. Pharaoh did not say, “Cast them in the river in a little ark that would keep them afloat and a little roof to hide them from the sun, but they obeyed the letter of the law and then Miriam stands out off the side to see what is going to happen to this child.

Now, everybody came down to the river. Because, that was like, in ancient times in Continental Europe, and even today, in many of the small towns in Germany and Switzerland, in the morning, where they do not have the kind of water that we have, everybody gathers down at the well, in the center of the little village, and there everybody finds out what has been happening everywhere else. That is the way you learn what is happening in the little town. You go down to the well and there the ladies bring their wash and all of the other things that they want to do and they wash the clothes and talk and tell on each other down there. It is the place where they gossip.

So, it is obvious that the mother of Moses knew that if they took the child and put the child down there in the water, he would be noticed, and so they put him also in among the bulrushes, among the reeds, by the river’s bank, in order that you might not float out into the Nile river and be lost of him, but see he had some protection. But nevertheless, he was there, and so now we see the providential hand of God. And Moses is there and it’s not long before the daughter of Pharaoh comes down to wash herself there and her maidens walked along the river sides and they saw this little ark among the flags in it looked very interesting, and so Pharaoh’s daughter said one of her maids over to get it and bring it to her, and when she opened it, she saw the child and Moses was crying.

Have you ever seen a mother that does not respond to that or a female that does not respond to that? So, Moses is crying and she had compassion on him and she said, “This is one of the Hebrews’ children.” You know, there is a marvelous little text over in the Book of Job that says something like this. It is chapter 5 and verse 13. And I did not memorize it before this message because it just occurred to me right as I was finishing up and it is the little verse that reads, “He taketh the wise in their own craftiness: and the counsel of the forward is carried headlong.” He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And so, God is superintending all of these affairs and Moses is there and Pharaoh’s daughter comes with all of her maids and now Pharaoh’s daughter is touched by the little babe and about this time Miriam comes up and she says, “Shall I go

and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee?”
And so, Pharaoh’s daughter thinks that is a pretty good idea. “Go get a Hebrew nurse.”
“And the maid went and called the child’s mother. And Pharaoh’s daughter said unto her,
Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages.”

Now, think of this. Moses comes under the care of Pharaoh’s house. God arranged that. He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. Pharaoh says, “Kill all the Hebrew sons.” And, one of them now is going to be raised in his own house. And not only that, nursed by his own mother. And not only that, paid by Pharaoh, and furthermore, will have a royal education at government expense. Why, even an Egyptian child was not taken care of like that, and so God makes the wrath of men to praise him.

Now, Exodus 2 does not tell us anything about Moses’ training, but it is obvious that that is the kind of training he had and tradition incidentally says this about it. Josephus, the Jewish historian, said that Moses became one of the most, one of the greatest men of his day and in fact, was a man that was noted for his later military triumphs, and he led the Egyptian army down against one of the places in Ethiopia and won a great battle there and became famous among the Egyptians for his wisdom and also his works. You, probably attended the University of Heliopolis, which was located on the Nile, not far from Cairo, and there it got all of the training that enabled Stephen to say that he was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and it was manifested in his works and in his words. So, you can see the God in his wonderful providence is carrying out his purpose for the people.

Forty years of Moses’ life is engaged in preparation. But there comes a time when the fact that he was a Hebrew makes its greatest impression upon him, and he decides that he must go out and take a look at what is happening to them. Now mind you, the chances are that Moses’ mother had had control of him for a lengthy period of time. It would have been customary for her to have him for years, so she would train him in the lore of the experiences of his people. So, Moses was not an individual who did not know

anything about Israelites’ history. He knew that history. And, it is not unnatural then to expect the time to come when God will work in his heart and will say to him in effect, “Moses, the time has come for you to look at the condition of your people.”

He is a mighty man in Pharaoh’s house. He is Pharaoh’s daughter’s son and the time has come now to take a look at his own family. So, we read in verse 11 through verse 15: “And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown,” Steven tells us he was 40 years of age. So, when Moses was grown, or when he was great, then, “he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens: and he spied an Egyptian, smiting a Hebrew, one of his brethren. And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand.

And when he went out the second day, behold, two men of the Hebrews strove together: and he said to him that did the wrong,” by the way that is a legal expression - to him that was in the wrong. “Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow? And he said, who made thee a prince and a judge over us? Intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian? And Moses feared, and said, surely this thing is known.” You remember, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says, “Moses did not fear.” But here we read, “Moses feared, and said, surely this thing is known.” I will try to explain how we harmonize those things in a few moments. “Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian: and he sat down by a well.”

Forty years of age now, he is, you might think, at the height of his powers. He lived up to 120 years old, however. So, 40 years does not mean what it means now. Forty years now is 5 years past middle age. But if you are strong, it is right at middle age, God gives you 80 years, then you are right at middle age then but if you have a 120 years, well that is like maybe 30 to 33. So, he is at the height of physical strength.

Few Old Testament men have the training that Moses had. You can think of some of the unusual men like Solomon, for example, who had unusual wisdom, but Moses

stands right at the top of the list. Well, he goes out and he looks on the burdens that his own people are laboring unto. And that word in verse 11, “looked on their burdens” is a word that means not simply that he just saw, but he looked with distress at the things that were happening to them. It is the word that is translated in verse 25, “And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them.”

Now, he kills the Egyptian. When he sees the Egyptian, who is smiting one of his brethren, there has been a lot of discussion over this down through the years in the Christian church and also in Judaism. So many thought Moses was wrong in doing this. There were Christian men, Augustine, for example, thought this was definitely wrong and he compared this to some other things that Peter did impetuously, and so he thought of it as being wrong.

On the other hand, other Christians have argued this was very justifiable. This Egyptian was smiting one of his brethren and obviously was mistreating him and so they have argued that it was a justifiable slaying and Tertullian, the great Latin Church father; Luther, Calvin, and practically all of the Jewish interpreters have said this was a justifiable slaying. Perhaps, we can say, it was certainly an unadvisedly done deed. Later on, remember, Moses is described as the meekest men on the earth. That is about 40 years or so later on. So, he has a lot to learn before he becomes the meekest men on the earth.

But what is so interesting and which Stephen makes so much of is that the next day, when Moses comes out, he sees two Hebrews that are struggling and he said to him that was in the wrong, “Why are you smiting your fellow.” And the man turns on Moses and says, “Who made you a prince and a judge over us. Do you intend to kill me like you killed the Egyptian?” And Moses knows now that though it appears that he had a guilty conscience for slaying the Egyptian and he hid him in the sand; the truth is out and it would not be long before Pharaoh knows about it, and so he better flee. But Stephen points out that the rejection by the Hebrews of Moses at this point was an evidence of their own blindness and hardness of heart and is illustrative of the way that they have

treated the Lord Jesus Christ. So Stephen sees this as an anticipation, a typical anticipation of the rejection of the Lord Jesus by the nation.

Now, in verse 16, we go on to read of Moses’ experiences in Midian. “When Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian: and he sat down by a well. Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters: and they came and drew water, and filled the troughs to water their father’s flock. And the shepherds came and drove them away.” Evidently, this was going on all the time. Every day, the ladies would come down, they would go through the laborious task of putting down the vessels into the well and drawing up the water, and when they got it all up to feed their animals, the shepherds will say, “They have got the water now. Let’s drive them off and feed ours and we won’t have to do all of that work. So, evidently, that was going on constantly, but this time, Moses happened to be there.

“And the shepherds came and drove them away: but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock. And when they came to Reuel their father, he said, how is it that ye are come so soon today?” See, this happens every day, it was the kind of thing. They were not feminists in those days. “And they said, An Egyptian, delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds, and also drew water enough, for us, and watered the flock. And he said unto his daughters, And where is he? Why is it that ye have left the man? Call him, that he may eat bread. And Moses was content to dwell with the man and he gave Moses Zipporah his daughter. And she bore him a son, and he called his name Gershom.”

Now that means something like a stranger there. So, Moses realizes that he is not where he will ultimately be, or even where he wants to be. “For he said, I have been a stranger in a strange land. And it came to pass in process of ...” Well, I want to say just a word about this before we look at verse 23 and following. There had been a treaty made between Ramses II and the Hittites regarding fugitives. So, when Moses fled from

Egypt, if he fled the normal way and went up toward the land, Palestine, then they had a treaty by which he would be taken and he would be sent back to Egypt. So, evidently, he crossed over to the east a bit and then went down south and east in the peninsula of Sinai and was there in the land of Midian. We do not know exactly the location of Midian, but probably, down in that area. So, that is where he went as a fugitive and happened to be there at the well when the women came with their flocks.

He is faced with a wrong again, this time, not a wrong of tyranny of a man over men, but tyranny of men over women, and again he responds boldly and courageously and makes contact with the priest of Midian. We know that the Midianites were monotheists and so in this sense, Moses would have found a bit of a home with them, and finally the chapter concludes with what one of the commentators has called that the “frame of reference.”

Now, I want you to notice this carefully, because this explains why all of this is happening. Verse 23:

“And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them.”

This is the goal of all history – covenantal blessing. So, right at the precisely proper time, when Israel has come to the place where now she is so burdened with what she has suffered that she appeals to the Lord God. God has already made preparations for their deliverance through the coming of Moses. Egyptian kings were noted for their cruelty. They were noted for the great buildings they built. Someone said that every stone in their edifices that was reared was cemented by the blood of human victims and

Israel’s sighing comes, someone has said, it is terrible to hear a sigh. A child’s sigh, a woman’s sigh, a man’s sigh, but how much more to hear a nation sigh? Afghanistan, a Poland, a Hungary, a Nicaragua, an El Salvador, or the South. Some of you in the back are Yankees, [laughter] I can tell. You wonder whether I am speaking the truth or not. I am kidding.

Well, Israel is sighing because they finally have reached the place where they are willing to look up instead of around. That is the kind of thing that all others at one time or another experience individually. We sense our sin in the burden of it. We all often know our sin, but we do not feel the burden of it and finally get to the place where he feels the burden of it and we feel our need. We feel the condemnation that we are taught, which we are hating, and finally we are willing to cry out to the Lord God in thanks for the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ and renouncing all trust in our own good works, we lean upon him who is offered the work that is satisfying to God for sinners.

So, God responds. He heard their groaning, he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and Jacob. We notice the four statements that are made there. We read, “And God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them.” That last expression is very vivid in the Hebrew text. It is simply, “And God knew.” That is all. No object. “And God knew.” So, it is an expression of the fact that when we look about and we see that God seems silent, He is not really silent. People talk about the silence of God. He is not really silent. Oh, we often do not see specifically the evidence of God working because heaven’s clock does not operate according to Greenwich Mean Time, and God works in His own way and He works constantly and He works according to His own pattern, and when the moral and spiritual conditions are right, then He acts.

There is a great illustration of this in the New Testament. I know you remember it. It is one of incidents recorded in more than one of the gospels. In Mark, Chapter 6,

we read that the Lord Jesus sent the children of the disciples over to the other side of the lake. I am going to read here, after the reading of the five thousand, we read in verse 45 of Mark, Chapter 6, “And straightway He constrained His disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side, before unto Bethsaida, while He sent away the people. And when He had sent them away,” and there around the Sea of Galilee now, “He departed into a mountain to pray. And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land. And he saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night,” as you know that is in the morning, really, just before the dawn, “fourth watch of the night, He cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them. But when they saw Him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out: For they all saw Him, and were troubled. And immediately He talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid.”

That is a beautiful story, is not it? They were out on the sea, they were toiling, the wind was contrary to them, but our Lord saw them and came to them. That illustrates what we have here. And so we have Israel sighing, we have God’s marvelous response. I would like to say just one or two things in conclusion. I would like to remind you of those two things, those two passages in the New Testament, which are expanded uses of this passage in Exodus, chapter 2. If you want to know how the New Testament authors read the Old Testament, this will give you a good bit of help, and remember, the way we are to read the Old Testament is best taught us by learning how the New Testament writers read the Old Testament.

In other words, the hermeneutics, principles of interpretation that we should use in interpreting the Old Testament are the principles the apostles used. If the apostles are guards for us in biblical doctrine, and we believe that, they are guides for us in interpreting biblical doctrine. So, to learn how the apostles and the other New Testament authors read the Old Testament, what they saw in it, how they used it is to instruct us and

to be instructed in how to read the Bible. We often make such nonsense of the Bible because we do not learn how to interpret it.

Today, someone called me from Believers Chapel. I do not think they are in the audience tonight, but making a difference but, called me about a friend who was referring to our Lord’s mission of the 70 and the message he gave to them, and the friend was applying the things that our Lord told the 70 in the historical context. The friend was applying them to us in the present day. That was just an illustration of how not to interpret the Bible. We interpret the Bible according to the context and take things out of context and imply them to us today is to misinterpret the Bible.

Now, what sense does Stephen make out of Exodus, chapter 2? Well, it is obvious that he uses Exodus 2 as a kind of apologetic for our Lord Jesus Christ and His ministry. He uses Exodus, chapter 2 to illustrate Israel’s disobedience in crucifying the Lord Jesus Christ. He in effect says just as those Hebrews rejected Moses, when he sought to unite them and to reconcile them, so you have done to our Lord Jesus Christ. You have said, as they said, “Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? Intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian?” And you have rejected him just as Moses in whom you have put your trust was rejected by the nation.

Now, a Jewish man might say at this point, “Well, we have never rejected the Messiah. We just did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah. We don’t reject the Messiah. We accept the Messiah. We just don’t believe that Jesus is the Messiah.” Yesterday, I got another long distance call from a man in Houston, a man who has had theological education. His wife got on the phone too. They have been listening to the tapes of Believers Chapel for 15 years. He is a graduate of Grace Theological Seminary. He had a very good discussion. He has called before and she, his wife, brought up a question and said, “We have some friends who are Completed Jews.” She said, “Do you like that terminology, Completed Jews?” And I said, “Well, if you are thinking about a Jewish person who has become a Christian, believing in the Messiah, and if the term, Completed

Jew, is used in that sense, I don’t say any objection to that. I wouldn’t use it myself, but I don’t have any objection to it.”

But then she said, “A person who has affirmed that he is a Completed Jew has also said that they do not believe in accepting the Lord Jesus Christ, but they believe in accepting a Messiah.” And so, they are Jewish people who believe that the Messiah is coming, but Jesus Christ they do not accept. And then she asked me, “Do you think that that person has saving faith?”

And I said, “No, do not, they do not have saving faith because while it is proper to believe that Israel has a Messiah, and that Israel will have a Messiah who will come, the Messiah has come in his first coming, and we cannot reject our Lord Jesus in his first coming, and yet at the same time, believe that God is going to send the Messiah in the future and be saved thereby.” And, when I think and see from this particular incident, some reasons for saying that, because when the Lord Jesus came, what he did was of the quality that authenticated him as the Messiah.

And when John, the Baptist said, “Art thou He that should come or do we look for another?” what did the Lord Jesus say? He said, “Well, notice John, the things that are happening. The lepers are being cleansed, the dead are being raised, the deaf are hearing, the blind are seeing, and blessed is that man who is not offended in Me.” The signs, the self-authenticating signs have taken place. To reject the signs is to indicate that you are blind. And so, our Lord affirms the fact that we cannot reject him and at the same time, hold to the Old Testament and claim faith, a saving faith. If you do not accept Me, you will not accept Moses’ words really.

That is the way Stephen uses it. He says, “This is an illustration of the nation’s unbelief.” The writer of the epistle of the Hebrews says, “Look at the faith of Moses’ parents and look at the faith of Moses.” He says, “By faith, his parents hid him. And so the father and the mother illustrate faith. And the writer of the epistle of the Hebrews

makes much of that. He also says that, “Moses, by his experiences, demonstrated faith too.” He made a choice.

Now, you do not read about this specifically in Exodus 2. But it is obviously involved. He went out, he looked at the burdens that the people were suffering under, and then he acted in accordance with a decision that it had been made in his mind to help them. And God has been working in his heart and so he made a choice. Now, Exodus says, he was afraid and he fled. Hebrews says, he was not afraid. How can we explain this. Well, we do not have to really explain it, we just have to read the Scriptures. That is, not long before we will see what the writers of Scripture mean when they use terms that look as if they are contradictory. When Moses says that he was afraid, he is talking about the fact that he was afraid of what Pharaoh would do to him physically because he had killed that Egyptian. But then when the writer of the Epistle of the Hebrews says that he was not afraid, he is talking about how Moses conducted himself later on when he went in before Pharaoh over and over again and stood up for the truth and the revelation of God in Yahweh, and finally let the children of Israel out. So, it is true, at one time he was fearful, but at another time, he was bold and courageous, and fearless and his actions before Pharaoh later on certainly indicate that.

And finally, the writer of the Epistle of the Hebrews says, “Moses identified himself with the Messiah in the fact that he made that choice, identified himself with the nation Israel and acted as their deliverer. And so, in that sense, as the writer of the Epistle of the Hebrews says, “He chose to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. He esteemed the reproach of Christ, greater riches than the treasures of Egypt because he had respect unto the recompense of the reward,” and in choosing the reproach of Christ.

It is evident that the writer of the Epistle of the Hebrews regards the Lord Jesus as present in the life and history of Moses and the children of Israel. Do you remember what he says in the last chapter of his book? That is, the writer of the Epistle of the

Hebrews, he says, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.” And Moses, in what he did was identified with our Lord and bore the reproach of Christ.

Now, how much you think Jewish people would understand Moses’ decision? Christians understand it as an expression of faith and they understand that faith that Moses exhibited as being illustrative of the hope that he had because he had come to understand that he was saved by grace. How do you think the Jewish interpreters think of this? Well, they have a little different view of Moses’ experiences. They say that Moses acted out of righteousness and because Moses acted out of righteousness, God rewards his righteous activity by blessing him. In other words, they see a salvation by works. Christians see what Moses did as an expression of the faith that saves. That is the difference between Christianity and other religions. “For by grace are we saved through faith and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ for good works which God has before prepared that we should walk in them.” The difference between the interpretations of Exodus 2 is the difference between life and death.

May God help us to understand that difference, and may our faith and trust be in Moses’ great God, Yahweh. Let us bow in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the good shown to us in Christ. We thank thee also for Moses and what thou didst do through Him for the nation Israel, illustrative of the blessings that we enjoy in Jesus Christ. May these things strike home to our hearts for Jesus’ sake. Amen.