

2. MOSES

(1526 – 1406 BC)

Moses was born and educated in Egypt in the sixteenth century BC during Israel's captivity. At eighty years of age, he answered God's call to lead Israel out of Egypt and back to the promised land. At the time of the exodus (1446 BC), Moses performed many miracles before Pharaoh and led the Israelites for forty years in the wilderness of the Sinai Peninsula and died at Mt Nebo in Jordan, 16 km east of Jericho. He compiled and wrote the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, also known as the law of Moses. Jesus called it the Law of Moses (Lk 24:44).

Moses was called a friend of God. He communicated with God directly in the Tabernacle, and received the Ten Commandments from God on Mt Sinai and subsequently many other regulations and guidance.

The first Messianic prophecy

I will put enmity between you and the woman,
between your offspring and her offsprings.
Her offspring will crush your head,
and you will strike his heel (Gen 22:18).

This is called the *protevangelium*, the first mention in the Bible of the victorious Messiah, the Savior of the world. The serpent had successfully tempted Eve and brought about the fall of mankind, and later on, he would enter Judas Iscariot and bring about the crucifixion of the Lord, Jesus the Messiah, but it is only a temporary setback. In fact, by his crucifixion, Jesus disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities and made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross (Col 2:15). There will be war in heaven and Satan will be defeated by Michael and his angels. He will be thrown down to earth instigating the Great Tribulation. Just as he was permitted to bring

about the death of Jesus, he will also be permitted to bring about the martyrdom of millions of Christians, but as in Jesus' case, they will be the conquerors because of Jesus' powerful saving blood and their faithful word of testimony. They will not love their lives, even unto death (Rev 12:9-11). When the Messiah returns, he will slay the Antichrist, Satan's false messiah, and an angel will seize the dragon, that ancient serpent who is the devil and Satan (Rev 20:2), and bind him for a thousand years. At the end of the millennium, Satan will be released from his prison and instigate a final rebellion but fire will come down from heaven and consume the rebels, and Satan will be thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur which is hellfire.

This is the mysterious side of the Christian life and the spiritual battle of the ages. Many details about Satan and the forces of evil in the heavenly places have not been revealed to us, but the victory of the offspring of the woman, as foretold by God in the protevangelium, will be acted out in history as described above.

All nations will be blessed by a descendant of Abraham

I will bless all the nations on Earth through your offspring because you obeyed me (*Gen 22:18*).

'Offspring' (seed) is ambiguous in Hebrew as it is in English, it could be singular or plural. Paul interprets it as singular when he says

The promises were spoken to Abraham and his seed. Scripture does not say "and to seeds" meaning many people, but "and to your seed" meaning one person, who is Christ (Gal 3:16).

Paul is quoting from the Septuagint where seed is singular (*spermatos*). This is one illustration of how the Septuagint, which is in Greek and was translated around 250 BC, differs from the Masoretic Text, which is in Hebrew, was maintained by Jewish authorities, and of which the oldest manuscript available is around 1000 AD 1250 years later. OT quotes made by Jesus and the apostles as recorded in the NT are mainly from the Septuagint, which is surprising, it being a translation, but Hebrew had already dropped out of common use.

How does God bless all nations through Abraham, and in what way is it related to the end of the age? Abraham believed God and his faith

was counted to him as righteousness. The doctrine of justification by faith was developed from this, as was the justification of the Gentiles by faith. All who believe in Jesus are adopted into God's family as his children. Because they are saved by faith, they are regarded as Abraham's offspring and heirs of the promise. As children of God, they are his heirs, fellow heirs with Christ. If we suffer with him, we will be glorified together (Rom 8:17). The creation waits with eager longing for the revelation of the sons of God when they are resurrected and reign over the earth with the Messiah. Jesus said, Blessed are you who are poor for the Kingdom of God belongs to you (Lk 6:20), and Blessed are the meek, for they will possess the earth (Mt 5:5).

All nations will submit to a Judean king

Judah is like a lion's cub,
My son returns from the hunt
he stretches and lies down,
who dares to rouse him?
The kingdom will not depart from Judah,
nor the scepter from between his feet,
until he to whom it belongs comes,
and whom the nations will obey (Gen 49:9-10).

In this chapter, Jacob told his sons what would happen to them *in the latter days*. Literally 'in the end or close of the days,' referring to the final period of history that Jacob could foresee. The Reubenites would not have preeminence in Israel, the Simeonites and the Levites would be scattered among Israel, and royal authority would belong to the Judeans, until the one to whom the scepter belongs comes, who will also have the allegiance of the nations, referring to the Messianic era.

Blessings given in the name of God are regarded as powerful, especially when pronounced by the aged. Before his death, Jacob made prophecies about his twelve sons based on their character, so they weren't all positive. We are only interested here in Judah who is the royal lion, the ancestor of all the kings of Judah, including David. Judah is also the ancestor of the Messiah who was to be born in the David's line. The prophecy is made that the royal scepter would not depart from Judah, and it was made 400 years before Israel had a king, and before David, the first king from the tribe of Judah. God had

previously sown the seeds of Messianic thought when he told Abraham that all the families of the earth would be blessed in him (Gen 12:3) and that kings would be among his descendants (Gen 17:6). The kings of Israel were from various families, but the kings of Judah were all descendants of David. Zedekiah was the last king at the time of the Babylonian exile. Subsequent kings of Judea were of the Hasmonean and Herodian dynasties and were not of the Davidic line. Judea was not an independent Jewish nation and since the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, there have been no more Jewish kings. Through Ezekiel, God predicted the downfall of Zedekiah and the Davidic dynasty saying, “The crown will not be restored until *he to whom it rightfully belongs* comes; to him I will give it” (Ezek 21:27).

This Messianic prophecy points to a future king. The royal line of Judah will not culminate until the return of the victorious Messiah who will rule from shore to shore with all the nations in submission to him for 1000 years before he hands the kingship back to God the Father. He must reign until he and the Father (Ps 110:1) have put all his enemies under his feet (1 Cor 15:24-25).

The title given to Jesus in Revelation 5:5, “The lion of the tribe of Judah,” is based on a Messianic understanding of this Genesis passage.

A star will arise from Jacob

“I’m seeing Israel, but not now;
I’m watching him, but the time is not near.
A star will come out of Jacob,
a scepter will arise out of Israel.
He will crush the heads of Moab
And destroy all those tumultuous people.
The land of Edom will belong to him,
he will possess the land of Seir, his enemy,
but Israel will grow strong.
A descendant of Jacob will rule them
and destroy the survivors of the city (*Num 24:17-19*).

Balaam said he would let the Moabite king, Balak, know what Israel will do to his people *at the end of days*, the same phrase used in Genesis 49:1. Some see his prophecy as referring to David; others to the Messiah. Balaam was not a Jewish prophet but a pagan seer whom

the king of Moab hired to curse Israel as they were traveling to Canaan. God used a donkey to speak to Balaam, and he used Balaam to make this wonderful prophecy. Despite his doubtful credentials, God used him to bless Israel. The Spirit of God came upon him, and he spoke as a man whose eyes had been opened to make a true revelation about the future.

Like many Messianic prophecies, the prophecy has a double fulfillment. David partially defeated Moab and Edom, but the Messiah will come in final vengeance to defeat Moab (Isa 63:1), who represents the rebellious nations at Armageddon. Balaam's star is a symbol of a future ruler. Jesus, the root and descendant of David, is called the bright morning star (Rev 22:16), the ruler who will descend from heaven to usher in the glorious Messianic kingdom.

Balaam said about Israel, "May those who bless you be blessed and those who curse you be cursed" (Num 24:9), the same phrase Isaac blessed his son Jacob with (Gen 27:29). In the sheep and goats parable of Matthew 25, there are those who are blessed and cursed by the Messiah. "Come, you who have been blessed by my Father! Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" and "Get away from me, you who are accursed, into the eternal fire that has been prepared for the Devil and his angels." Those he blessed were those who cared for and did good to his *brothers*; those he cursed were those who did not care for or do good to his *brothers*. The Messiah's brothers are those who believe in him. He sees those who do good to his followers as doing good to him. One's attitude toward the people of God (whether Israel or the Church) is a sign of whether they have faith or not.

Further evidence that Balaam is talking about the Messiah here is the disputed identity of Agag in Numbers 24:7. The Septuagint, the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and three other ancient manuscripts all have "Gog," the eschatological enemy of Israel (Ezek 38-39).

God will raise up a prophet like Moses

The Lord said to me: I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites, and I will put my words in his mouth. He will tell them everything that I command him. If

someone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I will call him to account (Deut 18:17-19).

Moses was a prophet, and he prophesied that God would raise up another leader like him, to whom future generations must listen. If he had spoken about God raising up prophets like himself, then many in later history could have fulfilled that role. But when he speaks of “a prophet”, he speaks of a specific prophet who has more authority than Joshua, Elijah, or Jeremiah. It can only refer to the Messiah. As belief in an eschatological Messiah grew, this became the general understanding among the faithful. How much Moses understood about the Messiah, we don’t know, but we know that he was carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet 1:21). His prophecy was certainly interpreted as Messianic by Jesus’ generation. The Jewish leaders asked John the Baptist whether he was *the prophet* (Jn 1:21) that many in the crowds were expecting (Jn 6:14, 7:40) based on this text. Peter confirmed in no uncertain manner that Jesus was indeed that prophet, the Messiah, the offspring of Abraham through whom all the families of the earth would be blessed (Acts 3:19-25). Peter added that Jesus was he whom heaven must receive until the time for restoration of all things about which God spoke through his prophets long ago. The restoration of all things will occur during the Messianic reign. Stephen also quoted this passage in his defense before the Sanhedrin, implying that Jesus was the prophet of whom Moses spoke (Acts 7:37).

Muslims like to think that Moses was talking about Mohamed, but Mohamed was not an Israelite, so he doesn’t qualify.

These prophecies recorded initially by Moses are 3,500 years old, and the Jewish and Christian faithful have always interpreted them as being Messianic, giving them hope for the future and a belief that God has a plan. One day God’s will will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Life is not meaningless, or just a recurring cycle as Solomon expressed in Ecclesiastes. There is progress and it is leading up to a climax that will be accomplished through God’s Son, his Messiah, Jesus. Through the miracle of resurrection, believers from all ages will get to enjoy the glory and splendor of the age to come.

God will regather Israel to repossess their land

(Deut 30:1-6)

The Messiah is not mentioned here, but the context of Moses' prophecy can only be the Messianic end times. Israel will at that time be regathered from the nations where the Lord had driven them, even to *the most distant land under the heavens*. The Lord will cleanse their hearts. This, as Jeremiah tells us, will occur when God makes a new covenant with them and writes his law on their hearts. Then, and only then, will they be able to love the Lord their God with all their hearts and all their souls, with the result that they will live and have eternal life. Everybody needs to be born again. Without the new birth, who can serve God acceptably? It is after the mass conversion of Israel at the beginning of the Messianic reign that the Lord will make them abundantly prosperous. This old prophecy of Moses is still to be fulfilled, Israel's return from exile does not fit the facts and as we know, Israel was finally dispersed among the nations in 70 AD and has only recently returned to their land from all the continents of the world.

The Lord your God will return you to the land that belonged to your ancestors, and you will take possession of it. He will make you more prosperous and numerous than your ancestors. The Lord your God will cleanse your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your soul, and live peacefully (Deut 30:5-6).

The last sentence remains to be fulfilled at the return of the Messiah. In the meantime, Christians should not hesitate to believe that Israel's return is in the will of God and that it is a sign that the Messiah will soon appear to usher in his kingdom which will replace all the current world governments.